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Le Grand Tango: The Life And Music Of Astor Piazzolla



Synopsis

Astor Piazzolla was a musical genius, a man who used the national dance of Argentina as raw material for a whole new musical genre. In *Le Grand Tango*, MarÃ- a Susana Azzi and Simon Collier vividly capture the life of this extraordinary musician--a visionary who won worldwide acclaim, but sparked bitter controversy in his native land. Azzi and Collier trace Piazzolla's early life from his birth in Argentina in 1921 to his childhood years on the Lower East Side of Manhattan, where he first developed a talent for the bandoneon, the accordion-like instrument central to the tango. They describe his return to Argentina at age 16 and his rapid rise in the intoxicating world of tango, where he quickly earned a place with the leading dance band, and then formed his own group. But at the height of his success, Piazzolla decided to take tango music to a new level and studied composition with the legendary Nadia Boulanger in Paris. Combining deft musical analysis and intriguing personal insight, Azzi and Collier show how he created a dramatically new style of tango music influenced by jazz and classical pieces--a tango music meant for listening, not dancing. But they also show that, in the birthplace of the tango, he met fierce resistance. He eventually left Argentina for Europe, where he emerged as an international celebrity. Since Piazzolla's death in 1992, his influence has only grown. Jazz giants such as Gary Burton and Al Di Meola--and classical stars Yo-Yo Ma, Emanuel Ax, and Daniel Barenboim--have all recorded albums of his works. Now Azzi and Collier have given us the first biography of this astonishingly gifted musician.

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Customer Reviews

Square-built and accordion-like, the bandoneon is a unique instrument, difficult to play yet adaptable

to many musical styles. One of its most famous masters, the Argentine composer and tanguero Astor Piazzolla, is the subject of this fascinating biography. Painstakingly researched, with revealing quotes from Piazzolla's family, friends, teachers and colleagues, the book provides an intimate look at the musician's life. In 1921, Piazzolla was born in Mar del Plata to first-generation Argentines of Italian descent. He was an only child with doting parents; his transient childhood involved numerous moves between New York and Argentina and was marked by his penchant for practical jokes. Piazzolla had a natural knack for the bandoneon, which he began playing at eight years of age, and he appeared on stage for the first time when he was 11. Seven years later, his collaboration with Anibal Troilo's famous orquesta típica led to his rise as an emerging tango star, and he was soon writing unique, innovative arrangements that caused a furor in Buenos Aires. His studies with Nadia Boulanger in Paris confirmed his love for the instrument, and throughout his travels he incorporated elements of traditional tango, classical music and jazz into his work. The authors concentrate on Piazzolla's relationships with his first wife, Dedé Wolff, and their children, following their breakup and his subsequent marriage to Laura Escalada. Although lacking in deep musical analysis, this captivating tribute excellently portrays the man behind such masterpieces as "Adios Nonino" and "Mari de Buenos Aires." 42 halftones. (Apr.) Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Argentine composer and performer Piazzolla (1921-92) updated tango music and brought it to the international concert stage, attracting a large following while angering tango traditionalists. Born in Mar del Plata on the Atlantic coast, 250 miles south of Buenos Aires, he spent most of his childhood on Manhattan's Lower East Side, slipping into Harlem clubs to hear Cab Calloway and Duke Ellington. A lover of tango, jazz, and classical music, he created and toured with various ensembles, wrote for the movies, and studied in Paris with Nadia Boulanger. Azzi, a board member of the National Academy of Tango in Buenos Aires, and Collier, author of seven books on Latin America, provide both personal and professional details and musical analysis. This first biography in English, with discography (CD only) and extensive notes, will be valuable for collections focusing on world music or Latin American culture.-Kate McCaffrey, Onondaga Cty. P.L., Syracuse, NY Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc.

María - a Susana Azzi and Simon Collier have written a masterpiece! This book - expanded and updated - is a must read to every Piazzolla fan, musicians, music critiques, music educators. An excellent text book for students of Music departments. Piazzolla achieved a masterful synthesis of tango, jazz and contemporary classical music. His idols were Bach, Vivaldi, Bartok, Stravinsky. His

melodies revisit Puccini.

Nearly ten years after Astor Piazzolla's death, the debate still rages about whether or not his music is "tango". Well, some of it is, and some of it isn't. But the roots of all his music lie deep in the tango tradition and whether or not a particular piece is or isn't tango is of no real importance. The fact is that Astor Piazzolla composed some of the finest music in any genre and all Argentines can take pride in that. I have been a fan of Astor Piazzolla for nearly 30 years but only knew the music. After having read *Le Grand Tango*, I now feel as though I know the man. Having "met" him, my understanding and admiration of both the music and the man has increased exponentially. Azzi and Collier have authored an easy to follow, entertaining and informative book about El Maestro. One learns not only about his music but about his forceful personality and the forces which shaped Piazzolla and drove him to be the most dazzling musician of the 20th century. His life, his loves, his triumphs and his failures all spring to life here. Though most readers will likely be hardcore fans of Piazzolla, its flowing style makes it an engaging hagiographical read for anyone who has even a mild interest in music history or in the forces and personalities which have shaped and regenerated tango throughout second half of the 20th century.

One of those composers who takes a regional musical impulse and refashions it into a new statement of world-wide interest. Controversial he is, to be sure. But with the possible exception of the legendary singer Carlos Gardel, no one has expanded the consciousness of the world more with regard to the tango than Astor Piazzolla. Azzi and Collier do justice to that achievement. A fine book. March 23, 2017

If you are discovering or reliving the music of the master composer, the epitome of tango, Astor Piazzolla, then you have to have this book. I cannot over emphasize the clarity it lends to the music. As you listen to *Tango: Zero Hour* and read simultaneously about one of the great 20th century musical figures. This book is fantastic. It is a journey that begins in Mar del Plata, south of Buenos Aires and traverses the globe, highlighting the life of Astor Piazzolla as he spread and expanded his musical vision of the tango worldwide. The authors present a book that begins somewhat dense and challenging at first but then draws you into the magical world of Astor's humble beginnings, continues as he spreads his tango vigor with evangelical zeal and an untiring work ethic that resulted in over 3,000 compositions; all the while as he rubs elbows with all the major dignitaries and artists of his time and goes through several marriages and many bands

with different musicians from different genres.. The authors who collaborated on this great book, about an even greater man, Maria Susana Azzi and Simon Collier, give us a glimpse into Astor Piazzolla that is both intimate and scholarly at once; the balance lends itself to the character of the subject. They both have extensive credentials when it comes to tango and Latin America. The portrait of the man revealed is not sugar coated, as the various first hand accounts of dealing with the sometimes troublesome and difficult genius indicates. This is a complete book and a great compliment to Natalio Gorin's *Astor Piazzolla: A Memoir* that is even more detailed. The book is divided neatly into three parts, Part I Struggle, Part II Man and musician and Part III Fame. the first part deals with his early life up to the mid-seventies and fame takes it from the mid-seventies until his death in 1992. As you can see, from the years indicated, that most of his life was a struggle. As there are many different versions of his compositions recorded, the book serves as a good reference point to distinguish the players or different groups that made the recordings. This is one of the interesting , strong points of the book that helps you understand the music of Astor Piazzolla. The classical-jazz-avant garde-traditional sound of maestro Piazzolla's tango is brought to the forefront with explanations as to the goings on in his life that resulted in such wonderful compositions and the varied interpretations. The book also has several "extras" like a foreward by Yo-Yo Ma *Soul of the Tango: The Music of Astor Piazzolla*, a family tree, a glossary of South American terms, sources and notes and some great photographs that include some from the family archives. Essentially, this is about as complete a book as you can find on Maestro Piazzolla and not to be missed. If you are fan of the tango and the man who furthered the evolution of the soul of the music of Argentina than you need this book. Recommended for people who want to know more about the controversies and music associated with Maestro Astor Piazzolla's tango.

Piazzolla means tango for many people. The first tango music I ever purchased was Piazzolla's music. His music dominated Sally Porter's movie, "Tango Lesson." This is a man that you must know about if you like tango, the dance and the music. Even if your interest is 20th century music, you will be fascinated. The story of Piazzolla's life is a story of how cultures, music, and people are interrelated. As a person who was born in Argentina, his music was tango; as a kid named "Lefty" who grew up in Manhattan, he felt the influence of jazz. As a musician known as "El Gato," he built on the tango traditions of Troilo, Sarli, and Pugliese. He began his musical career as a musician who could not read music. Anibal Troilo hired Piazzolla because he had memorized the band's repertoire. He studied music and composition while playing in tango groups, and went on for more formal training in Paris. Piazzolla loved everything from the classical music of Rubenstein to the jazz of

Gershwin. Although we think of Piazzola in terms of tango, many of his contemporary tango aficionados hated his music because it was nontraditional, evolutionary, and avant gard. This book was of value to me because it increased my understanding not just of Piazzola, but also of the major twentieth century tango musicians and composers. It may not make me a better dancer, but the increase of knowledge added to my appreciation of the music not just of Piazzola, but also of Pablo Ziegler, Romulo Larrea, and Felix Leclerc. It was a fitting complement to "Tango!" a collaborative book by Simon Collier, Artemis Cooper, Maria Susana Azzi, and Richard Martin. You don't have to be a serious student of music to enjoy either book. It will add to your appreciation of tango.

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