



Piazzolla's composition lessons in Paris with Nadia Boulanger in 1953 were invaluable, bringing about a musical epiphany whereby he could finally flaunt his tanguero self

in his temperamental performance style. 'He's all in,' Dugatkin says, 'all in for the *fortísimos* but also all in for the *pianísimos*.'

Golijov was nine or so when he saw him live. 'That concert changed my life. My mother was a classical pianist and I loved everything she played – Bach, Beethoven, even Bartók. But when I heard him it was as if I could suddenly see in 3D. I understood the counterpoint I had learnt through Bach, the rhythms of Bartók, but I also understood that Piazzolla was somehow distilling how people spoke and moved, how they provoked and seduced each other. I could make the exact connection between real life and pure music. He was an alchemist.'

*'I've made so many arrangements of Adiós Nonino. I don't want to do the same thing. I have to recreate myself every time' – Piazzolla*

To better understand the alchemical potency of Piazzolla the composer-performer, and how his eagerness to do battle made all the difference in his career, consider Eduardo Rovira. Born just four years after Piazzolla, Rovira was another bandoneonist-composer uninterested in adhering to the musical formula tango dancers expected to hear. Meyer, in addition to his teaching, plays the violin in Sónico, a Brussels-based tango ensemble dedicated to bringing Rovira's work to a wider audience. For those who take pleasure in Piazzolla's music, Rovira's should prove similarly gratifying if not a revelation (Sónico has released two terrific albums, with a third on the way). Ziegler attributes Rovira's lack of exposure to his music being 'too classical', but Meyer argues that the issue was in fact Rovira's reticence to be in the spotlight. 'He was more interested in exploring his ideas in private, and many of the recordings he made weren't even

done professionally.' Suárez Paz agrees, 'Rovira was more introverted, and he died young. But I'm glad people are rediscovering his music. He's a forgotten genius.'

'With Rovira,' Meyer adds, 'people – especially those coming from the classical music world – don't have the same preconceived notions they have with Piazzolla's music. They can listen to it without labelling it as tango and simply experience it for what it is: a mixture of genres.'

Or, to look at it another way, perhaps it's *because* Piazzolla broadened the parameters of what a tango can be that we're now able to appreciate Rovira's genius as well.

Indeed, thanks to Piazzolla, Dugatkin says, tango can now be whatever you want it to be. 'If it's in 4/4 time with a bandoneon, it's tango.' This freedom has allowed younger composers like Fernando Otero, an Argentine pianist-composer now living in New York, to create music that retains something of *tango nuevo's* spirit yet is altogether its own thing. To take Dugatkin's point, the bandoneon is featured prominently on Otero's 2008 debut album, 'Pagina de Buenos Aires' (Nonesuch), and if you know Piazzolla's music, you'd probably file it under 'Tango'. In the case of his more recent recordings without bandoneon, like the 2019 release 'Astrantia', you probably wouldn't.

Piazzolla fought hard for this creative freedom. And, in a sense, all along the way he fought as vociferously with himself as he did with his doubters and detractors. On the one hand, there was the battle for survival – for despite his notoriety, he only