April 25, 2010

El Paso, University of Texas. Faculty Recital Series. April 25, 2010.

Oscar E Macchioni, *University of Texas at El Paso*
Ivories on the Border Presents

Faculty Recital Series

Oscar Macchioni, piano

Sunday, April 25th, 2010
2:30 p.m.
Fox Fine Arts Recital Hall
PROGRAM

Lecture-Recital
The Tango in American Piano Music

Two Sentimental Tangos (1923) Virgil Thomson (1896-1989)

Tempo di Tango (1934)
(Scene VII from the Ballet Hear Ye! Hear Ye!)

Hesitation Tango (1952)
(from Souvenirs Op. 28)

Elastic Tango (1983)

Incitation to Desire (1984)

The Dead Moth Tango (1983-84)
(from Three Dance Portraits)

Aaron Copland (1900-1990)

Samuel Barber (1910-1981)

David Jaggard (b. 1954)

Chester Biscardi (b. 1948)

William Bolcom (b. 1938)
Program notes:
In the summer of 2000 I had the opportunity to spend three months in Washington D.C. as a Graduate Research Fellow at the Smithsonian Institution. My office was located on the top floor of the Arts and Industry Building and it faced the Mall. I took daily trips to the Library of Congress, where I felt like a kid in the biggest toys store. The result of my research was presented in a document entitled *The Impact of the Argentine Tango in the United States*, which served as the genesis for my doctoral dissertation *The Tango in American Piano Music. Selected Tangos by: Thomson, Copland, Barber, Jaggard, Biscardi and Bolcom*. In 2008, College Music Society's new publication series, Cultural Expressions in Music, offered to publish my dissertation. This book, which I am presenting this evening, will be available to the public in June 2010 at the College Music Society webpage, http://www.music.org/tango.html.


The *tango argentino* has been a frequent, if not pervasive, influence in both popular and art music since the early twentieth century. A careful study of the tango in American art music and the evaluation of the characteristic features of the *tango argentino* found in these scores reveal several important common traits. In particular, tangos for piano by American composers of art music are based largely on the *tango argentino*, with some borrowing from other tango traditions, and American composers adapted and transformed the tango to suit social tastes as well as conform to their own personal styles.

To demonstrate these observations, I will discuss the tangos for piano by six twentieth-century American composers: “Two Sentimental Tangos” (1923) by Virgil Thomson; “Tempo di Tango” (1934) by Aaron Copland from the ballet *Hear Ye! Hear Ye!* and arranged for solo piano by Yvar Mikhashoff; “Hesitation Tango” (1952) by Samuel Barber from *Souvenirs* op. 28; “Elastic Tango” (1983) by David Jaggard; “Incitation to Desire” (1984) by Chester Biscardi; and “The Dead Moth Tango” (1983) by William Bolcom from *Three Dance Portraits*. These tangos are strong examples of the American perception and adaptation of the *tango argentino* style.

Surprisingly, no major research document or book discusses the role of tango in art music, either in Argentina or abroad. Instead, all books, articles, and theses that address the tango are dedicated to the place of the tango in popular music, or as a subject of cultural studies, gender, and/or anthropological research. The present work represents my attempt to rectify
this oversight. Although the influence and presence of the tango within other music genres, such as orchestral works and musicals, would be worthy of study, this book focuses on tangos written exclusively for the piano.

The tango argentino enjoyed international attention during two major periods. The first, in the early 1900s, was driven by the general fever for the exotic, supported by world’s fairs, as well as by radio broadcasting and the development of the transportation, film, printing, and recording industries. The second period, in the 1980s, was spearheaded almost exclusively by the entertainment, recording, and film industries. The dissemination of tango was encouraged by thousands of exiled Argentines who were escaping the military dictatorship of the time. They brought the tradition of tango argentino to their new lives in different cities around the world.

These different circumstances shaped how the tango was viewed and received outside Argentina. For example, in the early years of the twentieth century, composers working outside Argentina, such as Thomson and Copland, were inspired by the exoticism of the dance. Both composers based their tango compositions almost exclusively on the habanera, the rhythm most often associated with tango in the early 1900s. On the other hand, composers working since the 1980s do not rely exclusively on the stereotypical habanera rhythm. For example, Chester Biscardi’s “Incitation to Desire” is inspired by the eroticism and sensuality of the dance itself, as well as by the character of the tango canción (sung tango).

Most artists are inspired by the social, cultural, and political events that surround them. The six composers discussed in this book were taken by the tango fever and followed its traces from the beginning, as a forbidden low-class dance, to a refined and acceptable musical form. Each one of these composers was attracted to the tango genre and expressed through his own musical utterance, the diverse trends in tango styles in the twentieth century.
Biography:

Oscar Macchioni, a native of Argentina, is an accomplished solo and collaborative pianist, professor, author and adjudicator. Upon graduating with three degrees in music from the Universidad Nacional de Tucumán, he received a scholarship from the Polish Government to study piano at the Krakow Academy of Music. He received his Doctor of Musical Arts degree in piano performance with a minor concentration in ethnomusicology from the University of Arizona in Tucson.

Oscar has performed extensively in his native Argentina, Italy, Poland, Serbia, Mexico, and the USA, at notable locations such as Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall, Teacher’s College at Columbia University, Steinway Hall, the Querceto International Piano Festival in Italy, and the National Conservatory in Argentina. Recently, his live performance in the esteemed Myra Hess Memorial Concerts Series at the Chicago Cultural Center has been broadcast live on radio and television. He is scheduled to make his London debut, on July 30th, at the St. James’s Piccadilly Concert Series.

Although he is a passionate performer of Latin American music, Oscar’s repertoire includes a diversity of musical styles and composers of all periods, from Soler to Piazzolla and Bolcom. He enjoys research activities, and has presented lecture recitals at international conferences such as the Second International Vernacular Conference in Puebla, Mexico (selected the Outstanding Musical Presentation); The European Piano Teachers Association in Serbia; The International Council for Traditional Music in Brazil. Nationally, his presentations have been at the Piano Pedagogy Forum, the College Music Society, and the Society for Ethnomusicology. His book, *The Tango in American Piano Music, Selected Tangos by Thomson, Copland, Barber, Jaggard, Biscardi and Bolcom*, is scheduled to be published in June of 2010 by the College Music Society Press. His debut CD *Mostly Tangos. Piano Music from the Americas* has been released by Eroica Classical Records in 2009.

Oscar Macchioni has been recognized by many prestigious national and international organizations. He has been sponsored by the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. (Fellow Graduate Student, Summer 2000), the Polish Government, the Organization of American States (OAS) and the Leschetizky Association of New York. Most recently, he received the Music Teachers National Association StAr Award, and was named "Distinguished Graduate Student" by the University of Arizona Music Advisory Board. In 2003, Dr. Macchioni joined the faculty at the University of Texas at El Paso. More at: www.oscarmacchioni.net