



The approach to tango, by classical guitarists

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Argentinian Tango – Guitar



Introduction

Since I started to play tango music, I noticed that there were multiple technical and harmonical approaches to playing and studying a piece.

When I started my studies here in the conservatory, I immediately noticed that my main subject lessons were divided in two parts. In the first part my teacher (Kay Sleking) would go through classical pieces (etudes) with me, and the second part of the lesson would be about tango pieces.

Of course, we were working on my technique by playing these pieces, but I also noticed that my overall playing was changing. Even my approach to the tango pieces changed, and I managed to implement my technical skills (obtained by the etudes) in the tango pieces. I came into this conservatory, having the very basic skills necessary to play tango and classical. But what I did not have, was knowledge of, for example, the harmony, or tango vocabulary, or how to phrase.

I was taught that knowledge about harmony for example, is essential for a tango musician to have, especially as a guitar guitarist. This is the main reason that all people in the tango department follow harmony and transcription lessons. In my opinion these lessons are the best way to learn how harmonic structures in different pieces work.

But this is not the only skill necessary. During my studies I was gradually looking for pieces that were more difficult. I noticed that I needed to improve my technique to play these pieces. This I did, by playing etudes, provided by my teacher.

Out of interest, I started to look for virtuosic classical guitarists willing to show their perception of tango. I found several, in real life, but also in videos and recordings. I noticed that their approach to tango was totally different from the original, but certainly not in an inferior way!

In my thesis, I want to elaborate and research the different approaches to tango pieces. Since this subject is way too elaborate, I will define my main question of my theses to the following:

- What are the differences between a classical, and a tango guitarist, when playing tango?

Of course, we will have to look closer to: what defines a tango guitarist? What defines a classical guitarist? I want to analyze the differences by conducting research, doing transcriptions, and interview my main subject teacher Kay Sleking, who (in my opinion) is the perfect example of tango and classical knowledge joining forces.

Table of contents:

<i><u>1 - The definition of a tango Guitarist</u></i>	<i><u>Page 4</u></i>
<i><u>2 - The definition of a classical guitarist?</u></i>	<i><u>Page 5</u></i>
<i><u>3 - Interview Kay Sleking</u></i>	<i><u>Page 6</u></i>
<i><u>4 - My experiment</u></i>	<i><u>Page 9</u></i>
- Making recordings	
- Analysis of recordings	
- Agustín Carlevaro	
- Anibal Arias	
- Analysis of transcriptions	
- Conclusion	
<i><u>5 - Differences in technique between tango and classical guitarists</u></i>	<i><u>Page 20</u></i>
<i><u>6 – Conclusion and reflection</u></i>	<i><u>Page 23</u></i>
<i><u>7 – Sources and appendix</u></i>	<i><u>Page 25</u></i>

What defines a tango guitarist?

There are no sources from the outside available to define what a tango guitarist is. However, for this thesis I will clarify what is my perception of a tango guitarist.

- Someone who studied tango music under supervision of a renowned tango guitarist, or graduated from the tango department of CODARTS Rotterdam.

One of the remarkable aspects of tango guitar is that the guitarists play with a plectrum (pua) on a classical guitar.

The way tango guitarists interpret a solo arrangement is different than a classical approach. The experiment that I conducted will display more information about this interpretation.

They have a specific way of playing the melody and harmony with typical elements belonging to tango (chromatic lines in the melody, appoyaturas, dissonants, phrasings, etc.).

To define my opinion above, I will mention a few names of well known guitarists who earned the title of tango guitarist. More information about these guitarists will follow in the fifth chapter of my thesis.

- Roberto Grella
- Cacho Tirao
- Anibal Arias
- Hugo Rivas

These guitarists changed the way tango was played on the guitar. This not only goes for solo playing, but also in different formations.

Some tango guitarists/instrumentalists spend a lot of time playing “a la parilla”. This is a way of ensemble playing, in which everybody knows the melody and the underlying chord progression. All the guitarists/instrumentalists get the opportunity to show their own interpretation of the song by using different phrasings, embellishments and improvisations.

Since the roots of the guitar within tango are that of accompaniment (singers, bandoneonists, violinists, etc.), this obviously is a major requirement for guitarists. Playing chords in multiple inversions, using harmonic changes and fills are the characteristics of accompaniment in tango music.

Tango guitarists, when compared to classical guitarists, are more seen as arrangers, making their very own version of a (well-known) piece. This also counts for the other instrumentalists in tango.

What defines a classical guitarist?

For this question again, I will give my own opinion on what is a classical guitarist.

- Someone who has a degree in classical music, and/or studied under supervision of a renowned classical guitarist.

Classical guitarists are trained to read sheet music into small detail and reproduce the written music as precise as possible. They have been educated in such a way that they tend to take everything that is written on paper very seriously.

Also, classical guitarists have a different posture when playing. Their guitar has a diagonal, more upright position, and is positioned between their legs. Tango guitarists tend to have



the guitar horizontally on their right leg. To maintain their posture, classical guitarists use an adjustable pedal under their left foot. To clarify, I will give a few names of famous guitarists that changed classical guitar for ever. These are comparable guitarists from approximately the same timeframe.

- Andres Segovia
- Augustin Carlevaro
- Kazuhito Yamashita
- John Williams

Andres Segovia

When listening to classical guitarists, they will define themselves by having a very round, polished tone. This is because they spent a lot of time refining their right hand, making sure the resistance of their nails, when playing a string, is minimal.

For classical guitarists it is very important to have a nail treatment for the hand that plucks the strings, that reduces the friction with the strings. Polishing and cutting the nail in the correct shape is vital.

For classical guitar perfect technique and tone is very important. There are many researches to the best way of using left and right hand technique.

Classical guitarists are trained to play many styles, from renaissance to modern music. All these styles have their own dos and don'ts in the way of performing.

Interview Kay Sleking

Short biography:

“Kay Sleking studied classical guitar at the Rotterdam conservatory. In the second phase of the conservatory, he specialized in Argentinian tango under the supervision of Argentinian guitarist, arranger and composer Coco Nelegatti. Kay graduated in the year 2000, got the ESSO price for young musicians and became a teacher in the tango department of the Rotterdam Conservatory.”

Interview:

Tim: Kay, you started as a classical guitarist, what made tango music so attractive for you?

Kay: I started to play guitar as a 10 year old, and a lot of the classical repertoire I played was from South-America. Simple, but with rhythms and harmony that caught my attention. I also loved to play the standard classical repertoire of Scarlatti, Carcassi, Sor, Carulli, Bach, etc. As a child your teacher hands you most of the sheet music, but after some time you develop a preference towards particular styles. For me this certainly was the music from South-America, not only Argentinian music, but also music from Brazil or Venezuela (e.g. Villa-Lobos or Antonio Lauro). I loved to study and play these rich southern melodic and harmonic compositions. My first Argentinian pieces were more ‘touristic’ pieces, consisting of simple tango elements and leaning towards classical compositions, but it gave me so much fun! My first real tango piece was Milonga Cardoso, composed by Jorge Cardoso. But before I played this composition I got to know a beautiful recording by the Assad brothers (guitar duo). They played the Tango Suite from Piazzolla and I was mesmerized by the music. I never heard a composition like that before, so rich in harmony, rhythm and melody, a beautiful combination of classical technique and jazz harmony. The Assad brothers are amazing guitarists, so they made the music come alive. This was my first experience with tango that made me become curious.

In order to play repertoire like this you need good technical skills in combination with great feeling of rhythm, musicality and improvisation. This challenge was what made me fall in love with tango.

Tim: Before you started taking lessons from Coco Nelegatti, you must have played tango yourself already. What were the first aspects of tango that you learned?

Kay: In the time that I was studying classical guitar in the preparatory year in Amsterdam, I met Carel Kraayenhof (bandoneon player) and he told me he was going to start a tango department in Rotterdam at the Worldmusic Department, together with Leo Vervelde (bandoneon player). I decided to quit my studies in Amsterdam and continue in Rotterdam. My main course was classical guitar and I participated in the Tango department. Via this connection I received tango sheet music and I also transcribed a lot of music, for example the Fugata by Piazzolla. In that period I did not work with Sibelius or Finale but wrote everything by hand, also the arrangements for duo, trio, etc. and the separate parts.

In the beginning I started with listening to all kinds of recordings and later I started with an important part in tango: arranging.

What considers the transcribing of songs, at first I really didn't know how to listen, or what to listen to. And when I caught what happened, I didn't know how to translate it into a score. But I managed by trying over and over.

For the playing, my classical technique was already in good shape. Now I had to know how I could translate the groove in a 'not classical' way. Lucky for me I met Coco Nelegatti (tango guitarist). For me he is an example of tango groove in accompaniment and solo playing. I liked so much the alternation between the warm and the percussive sound of the guitar. Also, the jazz treatment of harmony, the freedom in accompaniment and creativeness in making own arrangements. The exchange between accompaniment, playing lead and playing solo arrangements/compositions makes tango for me incredibly interesting.

Tim: Is classical technique something you need in tango?

Kay: It depends on what you want. There are amazing tango guitarists that cannot read a single note, but perform in a superior way. But these guitarists don't necessarily play with fingers or multiple voicings, like classical guitarists. They often play with plectrum and don't need some of the classical techniques because they never use them. That's a choice you make as a tango guitarist: do you want to play porteno (old school), or do you want to go to the modern way? Some guitarists can move in both worlds, like for example Cesar Angeleri.

Tim: Which things were crucial to "cross the bridge" from classical music to tango music?

Kay: One of the important facts for me was that, during, my classical studies, I learned to play exactly what was written. I played compositions by Monteverdi to modern composers, which is a broad range. To my opinion you will never be able to play every style as it is really meant to be, unless you focus on particular styles, like for example Baroque music. Then you need to go deeper into the culture and the way of performing this music. This way of thinking you need to obtain if you want to cross the bridge to tango. For tango you need to be able to play a score as a solo or accompaniment with only melody and chords, so you need to know about harmony and phrasing melody. This is a different way of working to classical guitarists. As a classical guitarist you will have to let go of the score and play with less information written down. For tango, there is a switch that needs to be flipped, and flipping this switch is a different process for everyone. Some people try to avoid flipping the switch by using their virtuosic skills on the guitar. At a certain point this resistance to let go of the score will stop, and one will ask himself: what really defines the foundation to play tango? What is it all about? For me, the foundation in tango is rhythm. Rhythm is something that you need to feel. The way to deal with rhythm in tango is totally different than in classical music. This is probably the most important aspect where you need to cross over.

Tim: Are there, in your opinion, pieces that lie in between both genres?

Kay: A lot of classical musicians really want to play tango, but actually don't go deep enough into the characteristics of the genre to be able to really master it. On the other hand, you also have skilled musicians who really know the genre, and choose to perform it from a classical angle, like f. ex. Agustin Carlevaro. Yo-yo ma for example, amazing cello player, magically to listen to, what he plays is more a classical translation of tango than it is still a genre piece.

The same goes for the Assad brothers, amazing to hear how they play, while they play Scarlatti and Piazzolla in the same way. It's actually a good thing that musicians like them to this, so it attracts other classical musicians to get to know tango.

On the other hand, somebody that knows the instrument, knows the melodies, but doesn't have the background, and doesn't really go deep into the music, will most likely become a "generalist" in tango, not one or the other.

Then we have for example Gustavo Beytelmann, who mixes classical music, tango, and jazz in his very own, superb way.

Tim: What could tango guitarists learn from classical guitarists, and the other way around?

Kay: The term 'tango guitarist' is really broad, there is a lot of difference between the way musicians play tango. Musicians like Hugo Rivas, or like Anibal Arias, or like Juanjo Dominguez, or like Cacho Tirao, they all have their own unique style. To answer this question we need to look at how the genres work, how do the musicians study, what is their routine etc. As a classical guitarist you first focus on the old pieces, and then you try to reproduce the beauty of the sound as closely as you can. You try to polish every note. As a tango guitarist, if you find a nice piece, the first thing that you will do, is to listen to different interpretations of the piece, played by guitarists or orchestras. If you do this a lot, after some time you will develop a certain taste for certain instrumentalists or orchestras. Then you can start to create something yourself, starting from a single melody line, and/or the matching accompaniment. This is more of a jazz approach.

I would say tango already has taken a lot from classical music, beginning with the very first technique methods for guitar. Without these studies, tango would look a lot different, and so would classical music.

Conclusion interview Kay Sleking

Kay is a guitarist who crossed the bridge from classical to tango. Crossing this bridge required some tools, rhythm-wise, harmony-wise and vocabulary wise. Kay already had a passion for South-American guitar pieces. This obviously helped him harmony and rhythm-wise, to cross the bridge to tango. Also, the fact that he had to make all the tango transcriptions by hand gave him the possibility to develop his ears, and his knowledge about harmony. Kay really managed to create his own style within tango. His way of playing also features the polished technique of classical players. This, in combination with the way that tango music taught him how to arrange, makes Kay a good example of classical and tango music joining forces.

My experiment

In this chapter, I want to deepen the subject of my thesis. I conducted a research amongst guitarists in the classical and tango fields that I know. I made them play a tango standard in their own way, I made them give their perception of the piece.

Also, I made transcriptions of a tango standard being played by a well-known classical guitarist, and the same piece played by a well-known tango guitarist. We will have a look at what's different, and try to catch their idea of the piece.

For starters, I asked Alvaro Rovira Ruiz as a tango guitarist. Alvaro Graduated from the latin/brazilian department, but he comes from Argentina, and he had lessons in tango there. I thoroughly value his opinion and his playing, and therefore I asked him to play for my research. Alvaro also plays the 7 and 8 string guitars (next to the usual 6-string guitar), used in Brazilian music, but also in tango.

Secondly, I asked Lotte Brekelmans as a classical guitarist. Lotte did her bachelor in classical in Tilburg, and her master in tango guitar here at CODARTS, but she still has a strong "classical" attitude in her playing. Her way of playing is still strongly influenced by her classical education. She gives an approach to tango, that I am curious about, and therefore I want to incorporate her playing in my thesis.

The piece that is played by the abovementioned people will be "la casita de mis viejos", from Juan Carlos Cobian. The arrangement was made by Edgardo Acuna. I gave all of them something to start from, and told them to make their own arrangement. I will include this arrangement in the appendix.

Making your own arrangement in tango is so important, it defined almost every famous instrumentalist in the history of tango.

We will now analyze the final recording that I made with Alvaro, of him playing his version of "la casita de mis viejos".

An important note

The classical guitarists that contribute to my research all have an idea of how tango should work, and they have all been in touch with the music before. I approve of this, because if you want to improve your vision on a certain music style, you will have to listen to it, and develop some sort of taste. In my opinion, classical guitarists that understand tango music but still approach it in a classical way are perfect for my research. Therefore, the research subjects in my thesis will have the abovementioned experience.

Points of interest In Alvaro's recording:

I told Alvaro to make his own arrangement/version of the piece, and he didn't even use the sheet music of the basic piece that I sent him.

- 0:22 : Use of a passing bass tone (G#) to go back to the tonic
- 0:25 – 0:28: Dropping bass line(A – G – F – E)
- 0:33 – 0:37: Melodic variation to emphasize the return to the I
- 0:41 – 0:45: Chromatic bass line downwards (G# to E), followed by a G#, to create more dominant pressure
- 0:54 – 0:56: Chromatic melody line to indicate the switch to A major
- 1:34 – 1:52: Improvised interlude, a tool to go to a higher register
- 1:53 – 2:01: Strong phrasing and free playing, harmony also really high
- 2:02 – 2:03: Jumping an octave down by using the same notes an octave lower
- 2:10 – 2:15: A set of diminished chords going up, to reach the high register again
- 2:16 – 2:21: Playing the melody with a tremolo technique
- 2:32 : Using the ring, middle and index finger (in that order) to make a rasgueado, and use it to play the melody
- 2:44 – 2:51: Playing a different bass note every beat, mostly this is the original chord, with an alternating bass, but sometimes Alvaro uses inversions
- 3:04 – 3:07: Changing the chords a little: instead of D major and F#7 Alvaro plays Dmaj7, and F#7#5.
- 3:22 – 4:09: Improvised outro, with incorporation of some parts of the melody

Short summary of overall typical points in the recording:

- melody in different octaves
- a lot of tempo changes
- frequent phrasing
- switching positions during the piece
- using embellishments

Points of interest in Lotte's recording.

I told Lotte that she should make her own arrangement/version of "la casita de mis viejos", but she chose to stick very close to the arrangement that I gave her.

- 0:04 : Chord playing (not arpeggiated)
- 0:05 – 0:23: Steady tempo, clearly designating harmonic changes by playing the chords under the melody.
- 0:28 – 0:30: Playing a fifth of the dominant in octaves up
- 0:38 – 0:42: Playing Ponticello (close to the bridge of the guitar)
- 0:46 – 0:50: Lotte plays this a tempo, this is an opinion based matter, in the original this part has a rallentando and consecutively an accelerando
- 0:52 – 0:54: Partial scale played upwards to indicate the switch to A major
- 1:18 – 1:21: Lotte places the accent on the last 8th beat of both of the bars
- 1:26 : Tonic of the dominant chord (E7) played in octaves
- 1:46 – 1:55: Phrasing by use of triplets

1:56 – 1:57: Lotte plays A minor 9, and puts this 9 in the middle of the chord register as a dissonant
2:11 – 2:12: Playing this chord in the first position
2:42 – 2:44: Playing a staccato bass-line
2:53 – 2:54: These are two lines, one descending, one staying on the E, Lotte puts the accent on the upper E (the one that stays).
3:10 – 3:11: Lotte plays a chromatic line to an F#, in the original this was an F.

Short summary of overall typical points in the recording:

- melody in one octave
- steady tempo
- playing rubato
- Lot of playing in the 1st position of the guitar

We can already draw a conclusion from this. Even though Lotte studied tango for 2 years, she still has a completely different way of playing the pieces. Her vocabulary within the piece is limited compared to that of Alvaro, but also in some points completely different. Lotte treats this tango piece as if she is (still) playing a classical piece!

Analysis of the recordings of Lotte and Alvaro

For starters, let's see what similarities the recordings have.

- They both play the same structure of the piece (A part, B part etc.)
- They both play the piece in the same key

That's about it for the similarities. Of course the recordings are completely different, but let's make an analysis of the things that are different.

Lotte clearly studied the piece very well, there is no hesitation, and the choices she made clearly reflect in her playing. She follows the sheet music very precisely. Alvaro has the tendency to try a lot of new things on the spot, also during concerts. In this case it worked out well for him.

From these recordings we can derive some **conclusions**:

- Both guitarists stuck to their comfort zone, Lotte stayed close to the sheet music, and Alvaro trusted his sense of harmony
- Lotte played this piece like she would play a piece of, for example, Bach: clear articulation, a little rubato, focusing on the tone
- Alvaro tried to remember the lyrics, and the harmony matching with those lyrics, then he adds a lot of embellishments, appoyaturas etc. He tries to enrich the harmony.

These are the typical ways that both styles work, classical guitarists focus on what is on the paper, and tango guitarists also focus on what is not!



Agustín Carlevaro

Carlevaro was born on January 6th 1912 in Montevideo. Agustín and his brother Abel started their classical music studies at seven years old, under the supervision of Pedro Vittone. Eventually, the two brothers chose their own direction within guitar music. Abel chose to be a classical musician and studied further with maestro Heitor Villa-Lobos. Agustín became affiliated with the tango music, and started to write a lot of tango arrangements. Agustín released his first line of arrangements in 1963. He became really famous in Uruguay for being the best solo guitarist and making tango arrangements. In 1972, Agustín recorded a series of records with different labels. Still, his style of playing remained very classical, we can derive this from some recordings that we will listen to. Although Agustín is a well-known guitarist amongst classical guitarists, it was very hard to find substantial information about him.



Anibal Arias

Anibal Arias was born on July 20th, 1922 in Buenos Aires. He started to play the guitar at the very young age of four. At ten years old, he started his guitar studies under the supervision of Pedro Ramirez Sanchez. Besides being teacher and student, Anibal and Pedro became good friends, and Pedro would be one of the reasons of the success that Anibal was going to have. He also studied a lot of classical music, through which he obtained amazing technical abilities. In 1940 he started a series of concerts with classical music, but soon he realized that he was drawn more towards the tango music. In the same year he completely switched repertoire, and had his first professional performance with Angel Reco, a tango singer with whom he would tour a lot. Anibal played the music of tango in a lot of formations with other guitarists, but also as a soloist in cinemas. Between 1969 and 1975 Anibal Arias played with bandoneon player Anibal Troilo, one of tango's most famous musicians. Anibal Arias started as a classical guitarist, and used all the technical abilities that he obtained within the tango music that he plays. He made a lot of arrangements, each of them speaking the clear language of tango. Anibal Arias died on October 3rd in Buenos Aires.

Analyzing the recordings of Anibal Arias and Abel Carlevaro.

I made transcriptions of both Anibal Arias and Abel Carlevaro playing the same piece: Flores Negras, a piece by Francisco de Caro. Both transcriptions will be provided with the thesis.

Immediately I noticed a few things from these transcriptions:

- The transcription of Arias is more dense, more notes are played over the entire range that the guitar has to offer
- Carlevaro works a lot with 2 voices, a thing that happens a lot in classical guitar pieces from Sor or Guilliani
- Both guitarists play in a different key, Arias playing in the original key, C major, and Carlevaro playing in E major, maybe part of his arrangement?

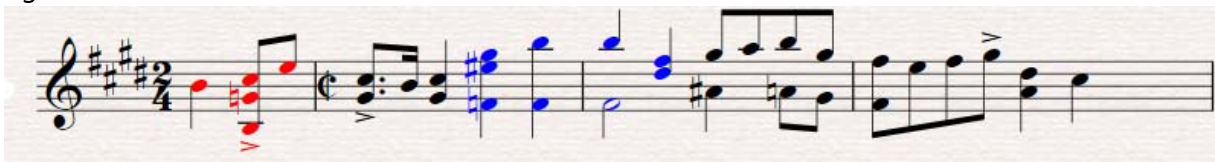
What I noticed is that Carlevaro's way of playing is more open, and that Arias' way of playing is denser. He likes to make chords with 4 or more notes at the same time when he does so. It's still quite unclear for me why Carlevaro chose the key of E major for his arrangement. I guess he could have done this so that he has four sharps in the major part, and no sharps in the minor part. For the piece of Arias, this is the other way around. But also, I can clearly explain why Arias chose this tonality. In his way of playing, he likes to play in the first position a lot, and use some of the open strings available. This creates chords that can be more elaborate, denser.

Both guitarists use more or less the same harmonic structure.

Let's take a look at how both guitarists open the piece:

1)

Agustín Carlevaro



Anibal Arias



Already the upbeats in the first bar are different in timing. Why? Because the upbeat of Carlevaro is played in the normal timing (straight), and the one from Arias is phrased (fraseo). These notes are colored in red.

From the last beat of bar 2, to bar 3, Carlevaro changes the bass note from F to F# as a passing tone. Arias uses the chords Edim – G7, very nice harmonic choice, every time the chord changes, some notes from the previous chord stay. These notes are colored in blue.

In bar 5 there is almost an entire bar empty, this means that there is room for interpretation.

Let's see what both guitarists did from bar 5 to bar 6:

2)

Agustín Carlevaro



Anibal Arias



Carlevaro chooses here to create a syncopating bass-line from B, to G#, which is the first bass-note in bar 6. On top of that, the melody is also syncopated. These notes are colored in red.

Arias plays a Dm/F chord, followed by a fill on that chord in the first half of the bar (red). Then a line upwards, the A# note in this line is just a fill-up for the two neighboring B notes (blue). Then he closes the bar by playing a scale up to the Fmaj7b5 chord in the next bar (green).

The next interesting part occurs from bar 7 to bar 9:

3)

Agustín Carlevaro



Anibal Arias



Carlevaro starts bar 7 in G#m, then uses a chromatic line downwards, and a scale upwards in the transition to bar 8 (red). Doing so, he creates an F# chord (blue). In the second half of bar 8 Carlevaro uses some sort of an appoyatura, he creates the harmonic feeling of F going to F#7 (green), which in turn leads to the B major chord in the next bar (purple). In bar 9 Carlevaro shifts from B major to B7 (yellow), and closes the bar with some add-ons to this chord.

Arias starts off with bar 7 in Am, then goes to D/F# in bar 8, in the second half he uses a #11 (red). In bar 9 Arias uses the G7 chord, and plays a fill, first from G to F (blue), and then from B to A (green), featuring the D#, the #5 in this chord.

Closing the A part.

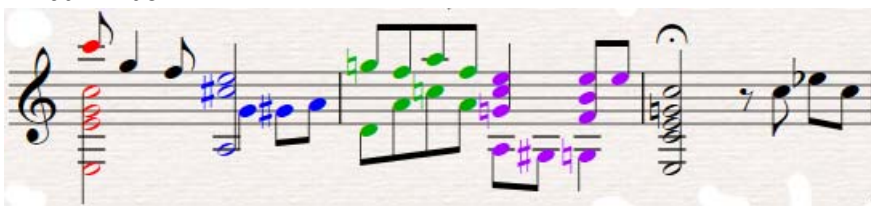
Bars 15 – 17

4)

Agustín Carlevaro



Anibal Arias



Carlevaro puts the focus of bar 15 on the dropping melody line. He emphasizes this line by putting the matching dominant chords underneath (red). This creates a dropping line of E7 – D7 – C#7. Then Carlevaro plays the C – C# notes (blue) as a decoration to go to A major, which is the first chord of the next bar. The first two beats of this bar is the melody, supported by the A major chord (green). Then the last two beats of this bar are used by the A#dim and B7 chords (purple). Both of the chords have a C# and G# on top, this gives the chromatic bass line underneath (A# - B) a nice character. In bar 17, Carlevaro closes the A part by playing the an inversion of E major (Emajor/G#)

Arias starts bar 15 with a very elaborate Am7/E chord, using all the strings of the guitar (red). Then, in the second half of the bar he plays an A7 chord, followed by a line from G to A, as a decoration to the first two beats of the next bar (blue). These beats in bar 16 all have different notes, but the notes that are played all together resemble the Dm7 chord (green). Then, in the last two beats of bar 16, Arias goes from Am7 to G7, by using a chromatic drop in the bass line (A – G# - G) (purple). Then, in bar 17, of course, the tonic of the major part is played to close it down.

Interesting about this part is, that Carlevaro perceives the first half of bar 16 as major (A major), while Arias perceives it as minor (Dminor7).

The opening of the B part

Bar 18 – 19

5)

Agustin Carlevaro



Anibal Arias



We can clearly see how both guitarists deal with a single line melody. Arias uses a lot of phrasing, which I included in my transcription (red). Carlevaro, on the contrary, decides to play this line of 4 consecutive notes in a steady tempo. Then he plays an Eb half diminished, with an A in the bass (blue). In bar 19, Arias uses some separated notes to create a dominant together. He plays Bb – G – and then Db and Eb together (green), these notes together create the Eb7/Bb chord, which is the dominant of the chord played the next bar, Ab major.

Carlevaro uses a chromatic bass line going down from B to A (red), to go to the A minor chord in the next bar. The chord on beat 3 in bar 19 is very strange. I still did not figure out why he would play this chord. On the second beat Carlevaro plays a D7, and this chord sounds like an Eb7, almost like an ornamentation (blue).

Bars 24 – 26:

7)

Agustín Carlevaro



Anibal Arias



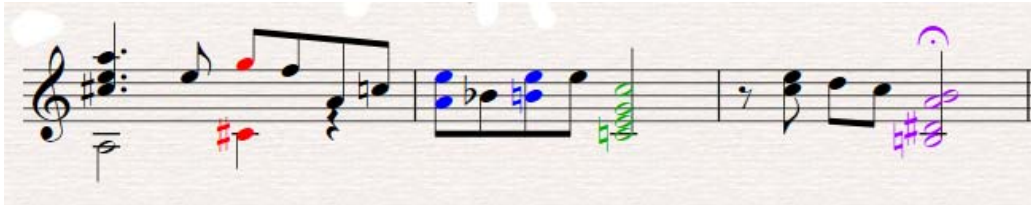
Carlevaro starts bar 24 With an E minor chord (red), then he plays a bass line of C# - D#, symbolizing the change to major (blue), and consecutively a line to the E major chord in the next bar (green). Then in bar 26 we see that Carlevaro starts the B part a second time. The way he phrases here gives a very bumpy atmosphere.

Arias plays some nice chords in bars 24 – 25. A II-V-I-Appoyatura-V-I from Cminor to Bminor. That would be Dm – G7 – Cm – F#7 – F7 – Bm (red). He plays this very low on the neck of the guitar, so that he can use the low bass tones.

Bars 32 – 34:

8)

Agustín Carlevaro



Anibal Arias



Carlevaro plays a C# and a G together on the third beat of bar 32, these notes symbolize the A7 or Cdim chord (red). Then, in bar 33 he plays 2 lines against each other, the upper line being the melody, and the lower one suggesting the chords that come with it. Here the upper one is playing E – nothing – E, and the lower melody plays A – Bb – B (blue) suggesting the chord change from Dm to G7, and then to C (green). Then, Carlevaro plays A line to B7, suggesting the change back to the A-part (purple).

Arias plays a self-composed or improvised outro of the B part, going from Bbm (red) to A7 as an appoggiatura (blue), to Ab major (green). Then another improvised line that goes to Ab7 (purple), and this chord is again an appoggiatura to the G7 in the next bar (yellow). This G7 will introduce the A part that is to come.

End of the piece.

9)

Agustín Carlevaro



Anibal Arias



Both guitarists repeat the A part now, and after that Carlevaro closes the piece in the same way that he closes the A-part the first time. Arias however plays the A and B-part and closes the piece with an outro, using triplets, in the same tonality as the B part, Ab major.

Conclusion analysis Carlevaro and Arias

In most of the points that I made in the analysis, we can see that Arias plays more notes than Carlevaro. This has a number of reasons:

- it is common to make a fill at the end of a sentence in tango
- Arias uses thicker chords, adding notes in the bass (sometimes open strings).

Carlevaro likes to work with 2 voicings, playing together or with syncopation. This is something that rarely occurs in tango solo guitar pieces. It is something that you would find in compositions of for example Carcassi (classical guitar composer). Carlevaro really doesn't phrase a lot. It occurs once in this piece. In my opinion, Carlevaro relies more on the steady tempo, than to phrase like Arias does. Arias plays some self-composed parts in his arrangement, for example the outro. This really gives his own signature to the piece.

The different decisions both guitarists made about tonality did not really matter that much, the results were funny though: In the arrangement of Arias, the A-part has no flats or sharps. In the arrangement of Carlevaro, the B-part has no flats or sharps.

What are the differences in technique between tango and classical guitarists?

There are some points that we will discuss in this chapter:

- Classical technique
- Playing with a plectrum
- Implementation of classical technique in tango

Let's begin with classical technique. Classical technique is something universal that is focused on by most guitarists worldwide.

Different ways of sitting:



When classical guitarists play their instrument, they have a very solid way of sitting. These pictures demonstrate what the requirements are:

The pedal under the left foot is highly important, because you can keep your left shoulder in line with the right. It is very important that you keep a straight axis between your shoulders, and between your lower back and the rear of your skull.



This is Roberto Grela. Immediately we spot that his way of sitting is totally different from the classical method I just described.

*"Grela belonged to the group of guitarists that played "by ear", and who polished their craft by daily performing at stints, improving their skills by their own talent and through the contact with other musicians"****

This quote also shows that Grela was not taught how to sit when playing, he simply found his own approach.



Nowadays, we also have guitarists like Cesar Angeleri, who focus on both playing with a plectrum, and using the classical position and technique. Angeleri has yet another adaptation. He rests the guitar on his right leg, and uses the weight of his right arm to keep the guitar in balance. This technique is difficult to master, and demands that you fully understand your instrument and its weight division. This is a unique way of playing, derived from the flamenco tradition.

Of course, there is no arguing about which way of sitting is the best. The way that Grela sits might look comfortable, but ergonomically seen, this way of sitting might cause back problems faster than you can imagine.

However, for technique, I can say that classical technique is something that almost every guitarist (that is taught how to play the guitar) starts with, since it's one of the oldest techniques for guitar worldwide. This does not mean that it works for tango musicians. Every musician has his/her own preference.

“Classical guitar technique can be organized broadly into subsections for the right hand, the left hand, and miscellaneous. In guitar performance elements such as musical dynamic and tonal variation are mostly determined by the hand that physically produces the sound. In other words, the hand that plucks the strings defines the musical expression. Historically, this role has been assigned to the dominant hand which, for the majority of players, is the right hand. Similar reasoning is behind string players using the right hand for controlling the bow”



Classical guitarists have a special way of playing with the right hand. They have a major gap between their right wrist and the guitar, as demonstrated in this image:

Also, the thumb is resting on one of the bass strings when not playing, the same counts for the other three fingers, (index, middle and ring finger), when the thumb is playing, they rest on the lower three strings of the guitar.

In tango, it is common to play with a plectrum next to playing with your fingers (nails). A lot of famous guitarists in tango play with a plectrum. I already mentioned Roberto Grella and Cesar Angelero, but there are some more, like Hugo Rivas, or Ciro Perez. Playing with a plectrum allows for a more percussive sound when playing accompaniment. Also, it makes playing fast lines a lot easier.



Cacho Tirao is a tango guitarist who played with the great Astor Piazzolla. Tirao played only with his fingers. He also used the posture of sitting without the footstep, but crossing his legs to lift the guitar, as displayed on this picture.



To close this chapter, we will end with a guitarist that we already spoke about: Anibal Arias. Arias was raised with classical music. From his twenties Arias noticed that he was drawn more towards the tango music. He made the decision to stick with the classical position, with the foot pedal.

Conclusion

What are the differences between a classical, and a tango guitar guitarists, when playing tango?

I think that, in the process of making my thesis, I found a number of answers.

The main answers to this question come from my research. I analyzed recordings, and made transcriptions of both tango guitarists and classical guitarists:

- From the recordings, we derived that classical guitarists tend to stick to what is already there, and try to reproduce as precisely as they can
- Tango guitarists on the contrary, try to create something that is their own. Arranging is one of the key elements to play this music.
- When looking at the transcriptions we are able to see, that the harmonic thinking of classical guitarists sticks close to the basic chord progression of the piece. However, they can use material from pieces that they have played in the past (e.g. double voicings, doubling octaves). This clearly happened in Carlevaro's case.
- As for technique, we see that classical technique is something that most guitarists get in touch with. Especially the way of using the left hand is something universal, and goes back many decades. However, there are tango guitarists that never had any education, and still play the guitar in a sublime way. These guitarists are auto-didactic, and often have their own unique style, because they were not influenced by a teacher.

My reflection:

Classical guitarists are able to play tango, but they use a different vocabulary. This is, in my opinion, a choice that they make themselves. Like I said, the classical guitarists try to reproduce a piece as closely as they can, so they listen to examples, and look at other scores/arrangements. If, after doing this, a classical guitarist still decides to play the piece in a classical way, this is his or her choice.

What is my approach?

Since the age of six, I have been playing the guitar. In the beginning I was instantly molded into the classical position, using a foot pedal, and the classical hand positions. I played classical music for the first 6 years of my life. When I switched to another teacher, I saw other forms of music. He showed me flamenco, fingerstyle, latin, tapping, flatpicking, gypsy, and of course also classical music. I noticed that there were more ways to play the guitar. With the help of my teacher at that time (Pieter Nanne Groot), I started to experiment with different kinds of music, holding the guitar differently, and using other techniques. In the end, I tried to play all the different styles in the classical position. This worked for some styles, and failed for others. But it did work for tango. When I came to the conservatory, Kay told me I was free to choose whatever was comfortable for me. Then I had an idea, I will play for example the style of Grela, in the way that grela sits, (and also with the plectrum technique he uses), and for example the style of Arias in the way that he sits (classical, foot pedal). This, in my opinion, also gives an extra dimension to the music that you are trying to play. As for technique, I can only say that the classical technique that I was taught is perfect for any circumstance. Even if you play with a plectrum, the left hand is still so important. All the exercises I did, and still do, are crucial for making any kind of music on the guitar.

Sources:

Pictures:

Picture of Andres Segovia (Page 6):

<http://www.jeffrey-thomas.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/07/segovia-holding-the-guitar2.jpg>

Picture of Agustín Carlevaro (Page 13):

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Picture of Anibal Arias (Page 14):

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Drawing of classical sitting position (page 21):

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Picture of Roberto Grela (Page 21):

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Picture of Cesar Angeleri (Page 21):

<http://www.bcnardelbue.com/home01/es/artists/show/v/artist/3.html>

The picture of classical hand technique on page 22 is taken by myself

Picture of Cacho Tirao (Page 22):

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Picture of Anibal Arias (Page 23):

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<http://anibalarias.wordpress.com/biography/>

Edgardo Acuna's arrangement of "La Casita de mis Viejos", by Juan Carlos Cobian.

Page 1:

LA CASITA DE MIS VIEJOS

C III * C I

Handwritten musical score for guitar, page 1. The score is written on six systems of five-line staves. It features a melody line with various rhythmic values and fingerings, and a bass line with chords and bass notes. Roman numerals (C III, C I, C III, C V, XII, C II) are placed above the staff to indicate chord positions. Performance markings include 'P' (piano), 'Rall.' (rallentando), and 'stc' (staccato). The piece is in 4/4 time. A circled '1' is in the top right corner.

The image shows a handwritten musical score for guitar, consisting of six systems of music. Each system includes a melodic line and a bass line. The score is written in a key with one sharp (F#) and a 4/4 time signature. Various guitar techniques are indicated, such as fingerings (1-4), slurs, and accents. Chord diagrams are provided for several chords, including C IV, C III, C II, C I, C VII, C V, and C II. Performance instructions include "Acellerando" and "movido". The score is marked with a circled "1" and a sharp sign at the beginning. The notation includes notes, rests, and dynamic markings like "p".

(3)

Bajo adelantado / Acorpejado -

With the digital format of my thesis I will provide the recordings that I used in my research in a digital folder via Dropbox.

For the physical format, I will provide a memory stick with the recordings

List of the recordings:

- Alvaro Rovira Ruiz playing his arrangement of “la Casita de mis Viejos”
 - Lotte Brekelmans playing her arrangement of “la Casita de mis Viejos”
- Original piece “la Casita de mis Viejos” is composed by Juan Carlos Cobian.
- Agustín Carlevaro playing his arrangement of “Flores Negras”
 - Anibal Arias playing his arrangement of “Flores Negras”
- Original piece “Flores Negras” is composed by Francisco de Caro.