

## FOUR SEASONS OF BUENOS AIRES

Saturday 29 May, 5.30pm and 8.30pm  
Federation Concert Hall, Hobart

**Emma McGrath** violin/director  
**Greg Stephens** conductor\*  
**Lucy Carrig-Jones** violin  
**Miranda Carson** violin  
**Edwina George** violin  
**David Robins** trombone  
**Mitchell Nissen** bass trombone  
**Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra**

**PIAZZOLLA (arr. Verhelst)** Suite from Maria de Buenos Aires\* (11')  
**VERHELST** Angel's Tango (4')  
**PIAZZOLLA (arr. Desyatnikov)** The Four Seasons of Buenos Aires (26')

Born in Argentina to Italian immigrant parents, Astor Piazzolla (1921-1992) played piano and bandoneon (a type of concertina) from a young age. Keen to make a name for himself as a composer of 'serious' music, he studied with Alberto Ginastera and, in the mid-1950s, travelled to Paris to take lessons with one of the great composition pedagogues of the 20th century, Nadia Boulanger. It was Boulanger who convinced Piazzolla that tango was his destiny and he returned to Argentina, where he gave traditional tango a makeover by introducing jazz elements, complex techniques borrowed from classical music and non-traditional instruments such as the electric guitar. At first, tango purists were outraged by Piazzolla's 'Tango Nuevo' (New Tango) but they eventually came around. By the end of his life, Piazzolla was hailed as the saviour of tango. He had breathed fresh life into a tired and moribund genre.

In 1968 Piazzolla collaborated with Horacio Ferrer on a music theatre work, *Maria de Buenos Aires*. This fantastical drama plays with symbolism, allegory and the unreal while also inhabiting the world of pimps, prostitutes and gangsters. The Suite from *Maria de Buenos Aires* brings together four episodes from the stage work. It is performed in this concert in an arrangement for brass and percussion by Belgian composer, arranger and bass trombonist Steven Verhelst.

Steven Verhelst is the composer of the second work on the program, *Angel's Tango*. Written for tenor and bass trombone, *Angel's Tango* is a companion piece to an earlier work by Verhelst, *Devil's Waltz*. Like *Devil's Waltz*, this short work opens with a slow and slightly gloomy paragraph before it casts off its miserable mantle for something joyous and upbeat.

The Four Seasons of Buenos Aires began life as four, separate stand-alone works composed between 1965 and 1970. Piazzolla wrote them for a small ensemble comprising piano, violin, bandoneon, electric guitar and double bass. After Piazzolla's death, violinist Gidon Kremer approached composer and arranger Leonid Desyatnikov and suggested that he rework Piazzolla's Seasons into a four-part work for solo violin and string orchestra. It was to be a companion piece to Vivaldi's Four Seasons. Desyatnikov drew Vivaldi and Piazzolla into still closer contact by inserting occasional quotations from Vivaldi's Seasons into Piazzolla's music. But you'll also hear some string sounds that you'd never encounter in Vivaldi's music – sliding between notes, for instance. Every now and again the musicians are called upon to play with the wood of the bow and there's a curious effect we hear from time to time where the players have to bow the strings right down at the bottom of the instrument, where they're untuned and sound raspy. This approximates the sound of the quintessential Latin American percussion instrument, the guiro (listen out for this at the start of the first concerto, Autumn). In this concert, the four soloists are Emma McGrath (Autumn), Miranda Carson (Winter), Lucy Carrig-Jones (Spring) and Edwina George (Summer).

Robert Gibson, Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra, © 2021

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