

Exposé of the scholarly dissertation proposal

Proposed dissertation topic:

Music, dance, and social structures in the tango argentino scene of North-Eastern Italy from the 1990s until today.

The history of tango argentino between the 1960s and 1970s marked a progressive decline of the genre, especially as a social dance. In Argentina, beside the compositions of Astor Piazzolla which, nevertheless, represented a parting of the ways, tango argentino was overshadowed by the popularity of other genres, the presence of a military dictatorship, and was only little promoted. The following decade would present a radical change: in 1983 Héctor Orezza and Claudio Segovia presented their music and dance show *Tango Argentino* in Paris. This event is regarded as one fundamental cornerstone for the revitalization of the genre. The huge success of the premiere was followed by tours in other European countries, Northern America, and Japan. The consequent reconsideration of tango argentino led to an internationalization of the genre, and finally to a revival promoted by a growing number of local scenes with learning and dancing facilities that started in the early 1990s. From that point onwards, the international scene of tango argentino developed in its structure, its interaction among local communities, the promotion of different tango dancing events, the pedagogical as well as stylistic approach to the dance, and the way music is selected and used. The way these different aspects changed and interrelated over the last approximately 30 years, by analyzing one selected tango scene (in North-Eastern Italy), will be the topic of the proposed doctoral dissertation project.

A historical reappraisal of the tango argentino scene in order to understand its present aspects and mechanisms is an issue which has not been considered so far in the relevant literature, which only began to define single local scenes in recent times. The main focus of these publications lies on the social aspect of tango scenes in metropolitan centers like Buenos Aires, Paris or Berlin amongst others [Kailuweit 2008; Sartori 2016; Törnqvist 2015]. Further analyses of their relation to music and dance are not present, and even sociological approaches tend to lead towards general topics as national identity [Kipphan 2009] or gender dichotomy [Kanai 2015; Resetarits 2010]. As already mentioned, the consolidation of an international scene as interaction of local tango communities is a relative recent phenomenon. Furthermore, between its beginning and the present situation

a continuous development occurred. These aspects are partly responsible for an academic interest in the topic that started recently. For these reasons, I aim to a more complete analysis including all three aspects of the tango argentino scene (the music, the dance, and the social aspect) without focusing on one bigger urban center, but on an area which nowadays is characterized by a dense network of single communities.

The proposed project focuses on the following main research question: taking the tango communities in North-Eastern Italy as an example, how did the scene of tango argentino, intended as a triangular interrelation of music, dance, and social structures, develop from the revival of the genre in the 1990s to the present day? Firstly, I intend to analyze individual tango communities to individuate them within the considered scene, and to illustrate how their inner mechanisms work. Secondly, I will compare them in order to indicate if and how they differ according to their own size as well as to the dimension of the urban centers in which they are located. Thirdly, I will focus on the interaction between them, meaning how individual communities operate on a broader level forming a scene. Finally, these three points will be considered historically as a process that led to the actual situation of the tango scene. In every step, the interrelation between music, dance, and social structure will constitute the focus of the analysis. The consideration of these three aspects is due to their impossibility to be separated from each other. In fact, the term 'interrelation' suggests a mutual relation between these aspects: social structures define how and what people dance (referring to different approaches and manifestations of tango argentino dance) as well as what tango music (in terms of different composers' or orchestras' styles) is chosen according to various purposes (e.g. dancing class, different kinds of tango dance events). On a similar level the dance itself defines the social structures (e.g. closed tango dance events for specific tango dancers) as well as the music (e.g. influencing the music selection of the DJ). Ultimately, the music defines the dance (e.g. the application of different styles and various musical parameters) and the social structures (e.g. the consolidation and professionalization of the DJ). Nevertheless, in order to not exceed the framework of the proposed study, I will concentrate more on the musical and social level excluding an in-depth analysis (e.g. micro-movements) concerning the dance.

The selection of North-Eastern Italy, concretely the two regions of Friuli-Venezia-Giulia and Veneto, for my proposed study is based on three factors which are observable nowadays: (1) the presence of a more active and dense tango community network

compared to the rest of Italy; (2) the geographical proximity to Austria, Slovenia and Croatia which allows an international exchange with other tango argentino scenes; (3) the role of one nodal point for the tango argentino dance scene which means it is one of the local scenes that shape the genre on an international, in this case European, level. The historical reappraisal of the tango communities active in this specific part of Italy could give insights on the factors that led to the actual status of the scene, and, on a more general level, on the mechanisms of local tango communities to find their position within a broader scene.

The methods for the proposed study are primarily the ones inherent the discipline of ethnomusicology. Fieldwork will constitute the main part of the research process. My personal further education in tango argentino dancing as well as the exchange with tango dance teachers and active dancers in the communities shall facilitate the acquisition of information concerning the dance level. Interviews with tango-DJs and other active members responsible for shaping the scene will also be part of this process in order to understand the social and musical levels. The historical reconstruction of the scene will mainly rely on interview material as well as on secondary sources. Further analysis will include a descriptive analysis of dancing movements on a general level, an in-depth music analysis, and the application of social theories [Bennet & Peterson 2004; Hitzler & Niederbacher 2010; Wenger 1998] concerning the inner structures of the scene in order to define its mechanisms both on a specific and a general level.

The results of the intended study may offer new insights on the methodical approach relevant for the historical reappraisal of the tango argentino scene in a specific area. Furthermore, the inclusion three aspects of music, dance, and social structures in the analysis could shade light on an fundamental interrelation which has not yet been regarded in the relevant literature. Finally, the focus on an area which differs from the bigger urban centers related historically with tango argentino as Buenos Aires, Paris, and Berlin would analyze the revival of the genre from a different perspective offering further comparison possibilities.

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