

Musical Treasure Chest #16

Sunset arrives a bit earlier now, and ever so slightly a cool edge to the night touches our skin. I have always found August rather special—summer still holds court, but you know that autumn is now not so distant and the rhythm of life begins to swing back into its more rigid schedule. I have special memories of August nights lying on the lawn at the Saratoga Performing Arts Center listening to the Philadelphia Orchestra while looking at the magnificence of the starry sky, somehow the music and the celestial view only enhance each other.

The last weeks of summertime also make me think of festive, fun, sultry music. As many of you know, I love ballroom dance, and I particularly love tango. Really fine tango dancers are music in motion—so exciting to watch, so subtly athletic and powerful. The music drawn from the dance has become its own form, as rich as any classical genre and includes influences of many elements including flamenco and mazurka. The rhythms are driving and persistent, while the musical flavor is often moody and highly charged. Tango ensembles can vary greatly in instrumentation and size, but almost always include a violin and a guitar.

Several years ago Musicians of Ma'alwyck guitarist Sten Isachsen introduced me to *L'Histoire du Tango* by the brilliant Argentinian composer Astor Piazzolla. This work saunters through the changes in the tango from 1900 to the 1980s, with *Bordello 1900*, *Café 1930*, *Nightclub 1960* and *Modern-Day Concert*. Each movement captures the essence of the tango of the period. *L'Histoire* is a great piece and has entered the repertory of many classical violinists (though it was originally written for flute and guitar). I adore this work, and Sten and I have played it many times.

I thought for this midsummer Musical Treasure Chest tango might be the perfect prescription and I share some of my favorite interpretations of the Piazzolla *L'Histoire* below.

Movement 1: I have always enjoyed the playing of Emmanuel Pahud, flutist, and I

really enjoy the feel he gets to the first movement, it feels authentic. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=seFpvxmXTKE>

Movement 2: Here is a deliciously sexy interpretation of this gorgeous movement. Armenian violinist Sergey Khachatryan is accompanied by his sister Lusine on this “hot” performance. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e_9Vi-4b2gs

Movement 3: I found this video of Roumanian violinist Rusanda Panfili a few months ago. Wow! What a violinist, and I love the way she plays this movement. Such energy, nuance and complete embodiment of the style. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NCkeaa-z1MU>

Movement 4: Without question this shows the influence of Bartok and Stravinsky, a completely different beast than the three movements before it (and often players omit this movement). Here is violinist Andrea Kim and guitarist Peter Ernst in a virtuosic performance.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qIHFVJ1CfOs&list=RDRbnAKvNuk0M&index=2>