

ISSN 1435-5795

JOURNAL  
OF THE  
WORLD ASSOCIATION  
FOR  
SYMPHONIC BANDS AND  
ENSEMBLES

13 • 2006

# WASBE Journal

Published for the  
World Association for Symphonic Bands and Ensembles

Volume 13 (2006)

William Berz, Editor  
David Chapman, Editorial Associate

Buchloe/Germany 2006  
Druck und Verlag Obermayer GmbH

Die Deutsche Bibliothek – CIP-Einheitsaufnahme  
Ein Titeldatensatz für diese Publikation ist bei  
Der Deutschen Bibliothek erhältlich

ISSN 1435-5795

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Herstellung: Druck und Verlag Obermayer GmbH,  
D-86807 Buchloe/Germany

## Table of Contents

Editor's Foreword .....	6
 <b><u>ACCEPTED THROUGH PEER REVIEW</u></b>	
An Introduction to Finnish Music for Wind Band Daniel Gordon and Kari Laitinen .....	8
 A Chronicle of the Pre-World War II Cavalry Bands of the U.S. National Guard – with Recollections of Those Who Rode Bruce Gleason .....	17
 <b><u>ACCEPTED THROUGH EDITORIAL REVIEW</u></b>	
The Wind Band Ensemble in Singapore: Presence and Practice Eugene Dairianathan .....	31
 An Analysis of Moncho's ... <i>de Tango</i> Glenn Garrido .....	51
 Gustav Holst's <i>Songs of the West</i> John A. Darling .....	61
 Composer and Conductor: Michael Colgrass and Gary Green reflect upon the birth of <i>Urban Requiem</i> Daniel A. Belongia .....	73
 An Annotated Bibliography of Materials Written about H. Owen Reed William Berz .....	83
 Moving Music: Incorporating Aspects of Classical Ballet into the Training of Expressive Conductors Alix Miller .....	100
 Guidelines for Contributors .....	106

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### An Analysis of Moncho's ... *de Tango*

Vicente Moncho was born in San Juan, Argentina in 1939. He studied violin and viola in the School of Music at the National University of Cuyo in Mendoza. Before completing the degree requirements, he moved to Buenos Aires to study violin with Humberto Carfi at the Santa Cecilia Academy of Rome, Italy. He played violin in the Young Symphony Orchestra of Buenos Aires from 1962 to 1963. From 1963 to 1965 he played for the Symphony Orchestra of the Argentinean Theater of La Plata. In 1965, he settled in Cordoba, the second largest city in Argentina. For the next seven years, Moncho studied music theory and composition privately with several maestros in Cordoba.

In 1973, Moncho graduated with "honors" and received a bachelor's degree in composition from the School of Arts at the National University of Cordoba. Among his most important teachers were Teodoro Fuchs for harmony and Miguel Corrado for counterpoint and fugue.

Moncho has taught at all of the levels of music education in Argentina. In 1985, he was appointed Professor of Orchestration and Instrumental Techniques at the National University of Cordoba, a position that he still holds. From 1982 to 1986 he organized the XX Century Music Workshop in Cordoba, one of the most important international events to take place in Argentina during the 1980s. In 1987 he was the general coordinator of the XXXIII Young Musicians International Federation World Congress. In 1993 he was commissioned by the Canadian government to conduct a study on the original repertory for medium and large wind ensembles of Canadian music.

Moncho has also participated in many different workshops and conferences in his own country and internationally as well. Some of the most important of these events are: the First Three Americas Workshop (Buenos Aires, 1980); the Latin American Composers Meeting (Belo Horizonte, Brazil, 1986); the Second Meeting of the South Cone Composers (Santiago, Chile, 1987); and the Third Meeting of Latin American Composers (Santiago, Chile, 1989). In addition, he has participated in WASBE conferences held in Valencia, Spain (1993), Schladming, Austria (1997), and San Luis Obispo, California (1999). He has received a number of awards and honors. One of the more recent of these important prizes and awards include the "Tribuna Nacional de Compositores" from the musical competition organized by the Argentinean Council of the Music in 1994. He was appointed as a member of WASBE Board of Directors in 1995.

Moncho's symphonic compositions have been performed by most of the orchestras in Argentina, including the National Symphony Orchestra and the Buenos Aires Philharmonic Orchestra. The compositions that he has written for winds have been played not only in Argentina but internationally as well. Among the most important international wind bands that have performed Moncho's compositions are the Sao Paulo Symphony Band (Brazil), the Philharmonic Band of Caracas (Venezuela), the Colombia National Symphonic Band (Colombia), the Central Band of the Royal Air Force (London), and the Wiener High School of Music (Budapest-Hungary). In the United States some of Moncho's compositions have been played by the Meadows Wind Ensemble at Southern Methodist University (Dallas), the Emory Wind Ensemble (Atlanta), the Rutgers Wind Ensemble (New Brunswick, New Jersey), and the Jordan Winds (Boston).

A partial list of Moncho's works written for winds includes the following:

- *Invention* for flute, clarinet, violin, viola, and cello (1978)
- *Three Pieces* for clarinet, violin, and piano (1982)
- *Dialogues* for violin and flute (1985)
- *Six Bagatelles* for flute, clarinet, and guitar (1985)
- *Abstrales* for flute and piano (1987)
- *Nazuna* for clarinet quartet and vocal quartet. (1989)
- *The Gift of the Eagle* for band (1991)
- *Vibs* for soprano and wind ensemble (1992)
- *I Heard You Solemn-Sweet Pipes of the Organ* for band (1992)
- *... de Tango* for wind ensemble (1994)
- *Music for Flute and Guitar* (1996)
- *Music for Violin and Wind Symphony* (1999)
- *Tango Band* (2005)

### *... de Tango*

*... de Tango* is based on the first measure of *La Cumparsita*, one of the most popular tangos in Argentina, and perhaps in the whole world. Gerardo Matos Rodriguez, a Uruguayan composer, wrote this instrumental tango. The first four measures of *La Cumparsita* are shown in Figure 1.



Figure 1. First four measures of *La Cumparsita*

The famous tango, *La Cumparsita*, opens with the following intervals (counted from the root): minor seventh, perfect fifth, and major third. Moncho's work ingeniously opens with a major seventh, a perfect fifth, and a minor third – a clever reconfiguration of *La Cumparsita*. The melodic line and the harmony in Moncho's piece are not as clearly defined and conventional as they are in the well-known original work.

Moncho's work, commissioned by the University of Cordoba School of Arts, is very dissonant and structurally free; it does not fall into any of the traditional form structures. However, the work does show great consistency, structurally, melodically, and harmonically. A modern use of counterpoint and orchestration can be found in it. The instrumentation of this contemporary work is shown in Figure 2.

Piccolo	Bassoon I & II	Tuba	Suspended Cymbals
Flute I & II	Alto Saxophone I & II	String Bass	Snare Drum
Oboe I & II	Tenor Saxophone	Piano	Bass Drum
E♭ Clarinet	Horn I & II	Tympani	Tom-tom
B♭ Clarinet I & II	Trumpet I & II	Xylophone	Temple-blocks
B♭ Bass Clarinet	Trombone I & II	Vibraphone	

Figure 2. Instrumentation used in *... de Tango*

The work begins with the famous tango rhythmic pattern initially presented by the string bass and complemented by the bassoon and the bass clarinet. However, it is written in a four-eight meter unlike the original. This rhythmic pattern is present throughout the work with only three exemptions.

The three segments in which the rhythmic pattern is replaced or modified are: measures 39 through 58; measures 69 through 77; and measures 132 through 141 (see Figures 3, 4, and 5; Figure 6).



Figure 3. Alternative rhythm pattern found in measures 51 through 54.

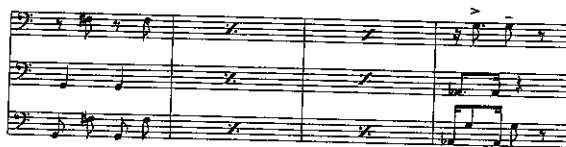


Figure 4. Alternative rhythm pattern found in measures 70 through 77.



Figure 5. Alternative rhythm pattern in found measures 132 through 135.



Figure 6. Motives

Even though Moncho's work has a very strong rhythmic orientation as its most significant focus, expressive melodic lines can also be found throughout this piece. The lines are based on short motives. The composer thereby creating different textures and sonorities very carefully manipulates these brief musical ideas. Each motive is individually introduced at first and then combined with other motive(s) that were presented previously. In other words, the motives serve

melodic, structural, and harmonic functions. This creative use of motives reflects the sophistication of this Argentinean composer.

In measure 13, the first of these motives appears; it is one measure in length. A second motive – also one measure long – is then presented. In measure 26, yet a third motive of the same length is introduced. The first and third motives are then combined to produce the fourth motive of this work. It is presented in measure 28, and like the earlier motives, it is also one measure long. A two-bar clarinet solo, based on the second motive, represents a fifth motive in measures 32-33. The longest motive in this work then appears in measures 62-69. This sixth motive is comprised of two four-measure segments (meas. 62-65 and meas. 66-69). Finally, the seventh and last motive is presented in measures 84 and 85.

The most important manifestation of melody in this work is found in the seventh motive presented (meas. 62-69). This eight-bar melody is comprised of two four-measure segments. The composer uses these two ideas separately as well as together as a complete unit. The eight-bar melody is initially presented by the flute, oboes, Eb clarinet, and bass clarinet at *mezzo-piano*. Measures 70-77 represent an eight-bar bridge.

In measure 78 and 84, the second segment of the referenced melody is presented with some compositional modifications. This is used by the composer to establish the platform for the restatement of the seventh motive in measure 91. It is presented here with more brass emphasis featuring the trumpets, the horns, the tenor saxophone, the Eb clarinet, and the bass clarinet. The restatement of the seventh motive culminates with a tutti presentation of the fifth motive that serves as a bridge to the next section that begins in measure 101.

Secondary or derived motives are also found in Moncho's work. For example, the initial motive found in measure 13 is then developed or modified in measures 14, 15, and 16. One measure later, the second motive is presented by the bass clarinet, bassoons, alto saxophone, tenor saxophone, tuba, and string bass. This second idea is then developed in the very next measure. Also, it is important to observe the relationship between the latest modified first motive in measure 16 and the second motive in measure 17.

The following are additional examples of secondary motives that are presented in this work. In measures 33 and 34, the fifth motive is developed and restated. In measure 101, a secondary motive is derived from the main melody (the sixth motive of this work). In measure 111, the first motive is presented and developed in the very next measure. This secondary idea is frequently repeated in the section that goes from measures 111 to 128. Many other relationships may be found throughout the work since all the ideas contained in it seem to be interrelated.

Undoubtedly, the consistency of this work is one of its strongest overall features. For instance, the harmony of ... *de Tango* is based on the four pitches presented by the bass lines throughout the work. In the opening measures, the string bass line not only represents the rhythmic pattern of the piece but establishes the harmonic pattern as well. The opening four pitches are: [A - G# - E - C], a set that may be reordered as [A - C - E - G#].

The last setting of pitches represents an A minor chord with a major seventh. The intervals from the root are: minor third, perfect fifth, and a major seventh. The composer consistently uses this intervallic relationship throughout this work. For

example, in measures 13 and 14, a vertical analysis of the woodwinds shows how an initial setting [F# - A - C# - F(E#)] moves to [A - C - E - Ab(G#)], and then to [B - D - F# - Bb(A#)], and finally to [C# - E - G# - C(B#)]. It is possible to see in this sequence how the composer harmonically preserves the cited intervallic relationship.

The minor third, perfect fifth, and major seventh configuration is not only utilized by the composer vertically but horizontally as well. By analyzing measures 13-17 horizontally, it is possible to see how the second clarinet goes from F# to A in measure 13, reaches C# in measure 14, and finally touches F at the end of measure 15. The second oboe moves from A to C in measure 13, reaches E in measure 14, and finally arrives at G# at the end of measure 15. In the same way, the flute goes from C# to E in measure 13 and then reaches G# in measure 14, finally reaching C at the end of measure 15. The first oboe goes from F to Ab in measure 13, touches C in measure 14, and finally reaches F# in measure 15. Figure 8 shows the general harmonic movement that takes place from measure 13 through measure 17.

F	Ab	(Bb)	C	(c#)	E	F	Ab	C	(db d)	D
C#	E	(f#)	G#	(Bb)	C	C#	E	G#	(a Bb)	C
A	C	(d)	E	(f#)	G#	A	C	E	(f f#)	G#
F#	A	(B)	C#	(a)	F	F#	A	C#	(d eb)	F

Pitches in (parentheses) denote passing tones.

Figure 8. Harmonic sequence in measures 13 through 17.

The general harmonic structure of ... *de Tango* can be seen in Figure 9. This figure maps the direction of the harmonic journey used by Moncho in his piece. It is important to point out how the composer creates the climax of the composition. From measures 114 through 125, the harmonic pattern moves by a half step every three or four measures. Measures 125 to 128 represent the most exciting moment of this work. The climax is reached at measure 129 with the tutti restatement of, for the second time, the fifth motive. The composer has used the second motive consistently to connect the subsequent section with the two big moments of the piece: the main melody (sixth motive) and the climax, as well as at the end (measure 145) of this work.

1	10	19	28	33	59	78
A-G#-E-C	D-C#-A-F	G-F#D-Bb	Ab-G-Eb-B	A-G#-E-C	C-C#-B-A	Bb-A-F-Db
101	114	118	121	125	142	148
Eb-D-Bb-Gb	E-D#-B-G	F-E-C-Ab	F#-F-C#-A	G-F#-D-Bb	A-G#-E-C	V-1

Figure 9. General Harmonic Structure of the composition.

The rhythmic pattern found early in this work and previously discussed is the most important structural element of the composition. It is three measures long, and is initially presented by the string bass in measures 1-3. Much of the piece continues with this original rhythmic pattern. However, it moves harmonically with significant frequency, as can be seen in Figure 9. This pattern not only unifies the structure and establishes the general harmonic pattern, but also provides the basic materials from which the melodic motives are derived. There is a close relationship

between the first motive (measures 13-14) and the second measure of the string bass line. The second motive (measure 26) is comprised of two pitches which, when combined with the first pitch of the rhythmic pattern presented by the bassoon at this point, produces a cluster. Other clusters can be found in this work in measure 4 (clarinets and flute), measure 6 (Eb clarinet and Bb clarinets), and measure 21 (Eb clarinet and Bb clarinets).

The rhythmic pattern is presented by different instruments throughout the work. From the beginning of the piece until measure 10, the line is introduced by the string bass. From measure 10 through measure 22, it is assigned to the piano. The two bassoons assume the responsibility from measure 22 to measure 32. The bass clarinet takes over from measure 33 until measure 39. The string bass and the bassoons take responsibility in measures 59-69. The tuba and string bass take over from measure 78 to measure 100. From measure 101 to measure 106, the Bb clarinets present the line with the help of the flute, Eb clarinet, trumpets, and piano for the first four measures. From measures 106 to 110, the piano is the instrument in charge of keeping the rhythmic pattern (the tenor saxophone assists for three measures). From measure 110 through measure 128, the bassoons are responsible for the rhythm. Finally in measure 142, the piano and two bassoons present the rhythmic pattern for three measures. Figure 10 illustrates how the composer uses different instruments in the rhythmic pattern line to create different colors.

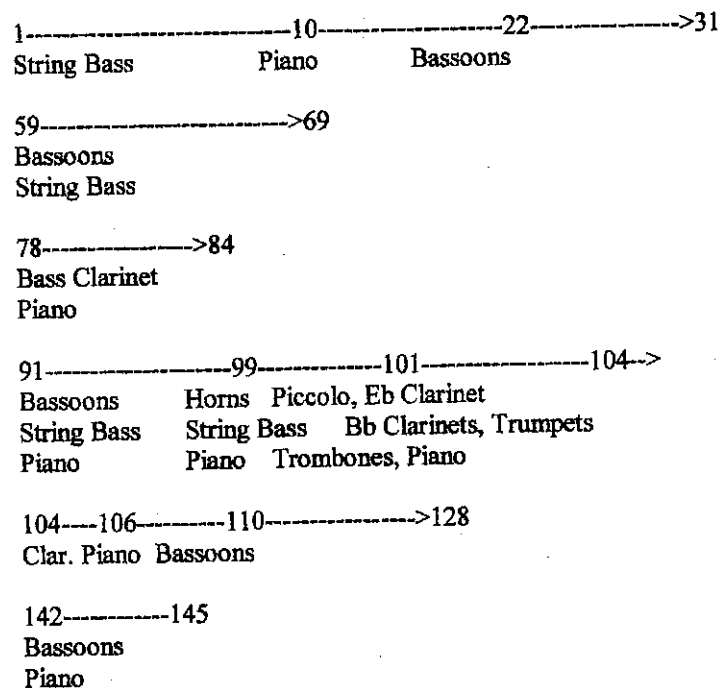


Figure 10. The rhythmic pattern line in ... *de Tango*.

There are other musical elements in addition to rhythm and melody that enrich this piece. The use of counterpoint is another musical element that can be observed in ... *de Tango*. One of the most important examples is seen in measures 39–59. The fifth motive is presented in an imitative way, first by the alto saxophone, second by the tenor saxophone, and third by the clarinet. Chromaticism plays a strong role in these two measures as well. The fifth motive is transposed up by a half step every time (see Figure 11) in this sequence. In measures 47 and 48, the composer employs contrary motion. First the piano (measure 47) and then the two alto saxophones and two horns move up while the tenor saxophone, tuba, and string bass move down.



Figure 11. Imitative counterpoint and chromaticism in Moncho's work.

In measures 51 and 52, the composer employs a mirror technique. A secondary figure derived from the fifth motive is presented first by the alto saxophones and piano and then by the Bb clarinets. This secondary figure, presented in an imitative way, is also mirrored in the next measure by the bass clarinet and the tenor saxophone with the help of the piano. This compositional creativeness can be seen in Figure 12.

One of the areas of this piece with the thickest texture is the section that begins in measure 91 and continues until measure 100. Here the composer combines three motives with very elegant counterpoint and uses a full orchestration. The sixth motive is presented by the trumpets, horns, tenor saxophone, bass clarinet, and Eb clarinet. In the same initial measure, the alto saxophones present the seventh motive to provide ornamental support to the main melody of this work. This motive is presented as an ascending progression that culminates at the end of the first four measures (see Figure 12).



Figure 12.

The same procedure of mirroring is used during the second four-measure segment. It is important to note that the first measure of the sixth motive is presented by the alto saxophones and repeated for the next three measures. In the fourth measure of this segment (measure 94), the alto saxophones repeat the sixth motive, but this time in retrograde. At the same time, the second measure of the sixth motive is presented by the piccolo, flutes, oboes, and Bb clarinets. In measure 92, the fifth motive is added as a counterpart. This motive is first presented by the piccolo and two oboes, and two beats later by the flutes and Bb clarinets. In this section, the piano plays the seventh motive (RH) along with the rhythm pattern (LH).

**Figure 13.**  
Three-part  
counterpoint in  
measures  
91 through 94.

Counterpoint also plays an important role in the section that begins in measure 108 and continues until measure 128. The composer combines the third motive with the first motive along with some of its derivatives. In measure 108 the third motive is individually presented by flutes and Bb clarinets. Three measures later the third motive presented just by the flutes is combined with the first motive in the bass clarinet, alto saxophones, and tenor saxophone lines.

From measures 121 to 128 the first motive is presented in an imitative way by the piccolo, oboes, Eb clarinet, Bb clarinets, and alto saxophones with the tenor saxophone, horns, and trombones responding. All of this is combined with the insistent third motive presented by the flutes. The piano plays the third motive (RH) and the response part of the first motive (LH). The first five measures of this section are shown in Figure 14.

**Figure 14.**  
Counterpoint in  
measures  
121 through 125.

... *de Tango* is a work that is in large part linearly conceived. It is a one-movement composition, without breaks between sections. The only fermata is found in the penultimate bar (measure 147). After this fermata, a conventional V-I cadence is the only event remaining. Obviously, the composer wanted to end his piece, like most tangos, with a very simple and conclusive V-I unison cadence, this a very clever salute to this dance.

Like many other contemporary compositions, this work does not follow any rigid formal structure. The melodic motives reoccur, but not with the necessary regularity that they are presented in a cyclic form. However, by analyzing the different textures of this work, the following formal structure proposal presented in Figure 15 can be considered.

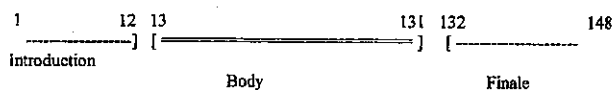


Figure 15. General formal structure of ...*de Tango*.

This work may also be divided according to the three tempo markings that are provided. At the beginning of the piece, the tempo marking indicates an eighth note equal to 100 bpm. At measure 59, the initial tempo changes to the eighth note equal to 80 bpm. The original tempo returns at measure 91 and continues until the end of the piece.

As has been stressed earlier, the basic structure is generated from the beginning of the work where different motives are derived from the opening rhythmic pattern. A review of the appearance of these motives provides more details about its construction. Also, the presence of counterpoint can be graphically visualized. Figure 16 provides the sequence of how motives were presented throughout ... *de Tango*. The composer used rehearsal letters to identify large sections of the work.

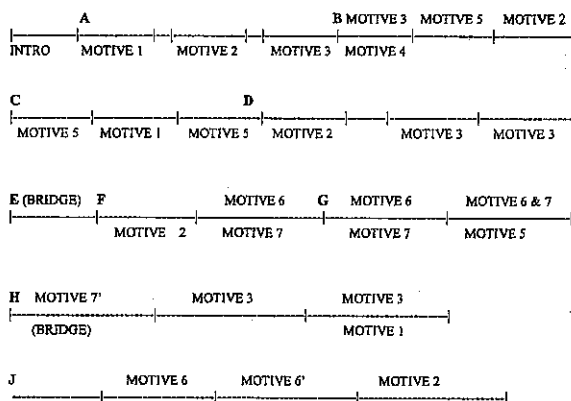


Figure 16. Motivic sequence in Moncho's ... *de Tango*.

### Conclusion

Vicente Moncho's ... *de Tango* was commissioned by the University of Cordoba School of Arts. This piece was composed in 1994 and is dedicated to Frank Battisti.

Moncho's ... *de Tango* features one of the most popular rhythms from Argentina, the tango. Written by one of the most respectable contemporary Argentinean composers, this composition represents an excellent addition to the band repertoire for several reasons: its origin, the compositional technique, and for the medium for which it was written. It may be considered especially notable, as it is a genuine example of a modern tango written by an Argentinean composer.

To a very large degree, this piece was built using motives derived from the opening tango rhythm and features a sophisticated compositional technique. It does not fall into any of the traditional formal structures and is somewhat structurally free. Moncho's use of harmony is quite advanced resulting in a dissonant style. However, this work shows great consistency both melodically and harmonically with prominent examples of highly-developed counterpoint and chromaticism.

Given the rather sophisticated compositional techniques that are employed, the work does present some performance challenges. It is probably classified as a Grade 5 work.

**Glenn R. Garrido** was born in Maracaibo, Venezuela. He received a bachelor's degree in industrial engineering from University of Zulia in 1988 and a bachelor's degree in music from Maracaibo Conservatory of Music in 1989. He served from 1991 to 1993 as Assistant Director of Bands at the University of New Hampshire, where he received the Master of Arts in Music with emphasis in conducting in 1993. In 1997, he entered the University of Florida to study for a PhD in music education with emphasis in conducting. In 1998 and 2000, he was the recipient of the Award for Outstanding Academic Achievement by an International Student given by the College of Fine Arts of the University of Florida. He completed his PhD degree in music education in May of 2000. Dr. Garrido has been teaching for more than 15 years at all levels from Kindergarten through college. He is a member of the College Band Directors National Association, the Music Education National Conference, Georgia Music Educators Association, and the World Association for Symphonic Bands and Ensembles. Currently, Dr. Garrido is an Assistant Professor of Music and Director of the Symphonic Band and Ensembles at Fort Valley State University in Fort Valley, Georgia.