

A NOTE FROM *Johnstone-Music*

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SPECIAL FEATURE on JOSÉ BRAGATO

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Birth: 12th October 1915 - Udine, Italy

Death: 18th July 2017 - Buenos Aires

Original name at birth: Giuseppe Bragato

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José Bragato was born in 1915 into a family of musicians in Italy, but he was clearly defined as an Argentine cellist, composer, conductor, arranger and musical archivist.

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When his family came to Argentina in 1928, the Bragatos settled in the Saavedra neighbourhood, where José resumed his piano studies. Unfortunately, the great flood of 1930 left the family in the streets and their piano was lost. The German maestro Peltz, a cellist, gave a positive support to young José's musical career by giving him his own cello and giving him free lessons - cellists are amazing!

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José's first public performances were around 1935, playing Argentine and Paraguayan folk music whilst at the same time playing classical music with his brothers and father, Enrico. In 1937 he played in several orchestras of tango and jazz and one of his first jobs as a cellist was in the tango orchestra of Mario Maurano.

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In 1946, he joined the orchestra of the Colón Theatre and in the same year he became principal cellist in the Buenos Aires Philharmonic Orchestra and indeed one of its founder members. However, he left the orchestra two years later to return - now as principal cellist - to the Colón Theatre Orchestra. At the same time, and with almost superhuman energy, José was playing cello in several chamber music string quartets, including the Buenos Aires Quartet and the Carlos Pessina Quartet, but alongside this he was also playing in tango orchestras, including the Orquesta Francini-Pontier formed by the violinist Enrique Mario Francini and the bandoneonist Armando Pontier. On top of all that he was beginning to compose!

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In 1950, he also began conducting responsibilities, where his skill for arranging pieces found a good outlet (he produced music for radio stations including the National Radio Orchestra and Radio Belgrano). He was a co-founder of the Channel 13 orchestra, together with the Italian musician Lucio Milena, and joined Leo Lipesker and the Primer Cuarteto de Cámara del Tango.

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In 1955 Ástor Piazzolla formed his Octeto Buenos Aires and Orquesta de Cuerdas (String Orchestra) and invited José to play the cello as a special solo instrument in these new tango ensembles. We have to remember that previously the violin had been the only stringed instrument featured as a solo instrument in tango. But 'Nuevo tango', which included novel harmonic and melodic structures, was to change the sound of tango forever. From that moment on José became a fervent admirer and close friend of Piazzolla who would later dedicate one of his tango compositions, Bragatissimo, to him as a tribute to their close association over many years. Since then he has made numerous and varied arrangements of Piazzolla's compositions.

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During the period of Argentine military dictatorship from 1976 to 1982, he left Argentina and became principal cellist in the Orquesta Sinfonica de Porto Alegre (OSPA) in Brazil. Three years after leaving Argentina he joined the Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Norte (UFRN) in Natal, Brazil, where he was a member of the Quartetto UFRN along with Korean violinist Won Mo Kin, Brazilian violinist Reinaldo Couto and American violist Mark Cedel.

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In 1982 José returned to Argentina and was appointed assessor of music for the Argentine popular music archives of SADAIC (Argentine Society of Music Authors and Composers). SADAIC helps to promote the music of Argentine composers throughout the world by providing free sheet music to non-profit making musical and educational establishments.

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His last solo performance, when he was 80 years old, was with the Atilio Stampone ensemble in Radio City Music Hall, New York City, accompanying the Argentine ballet dancer Julio Bocca and his company.

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His composition 'Graciela y Buenos Aires', a tango for cello (or viola) and string orchestra, has become the mainstay of the symphonic tango repertoire in Europe. It's interesting the regard for him from Europe, where his works are widely performed today. I will list many of his other pieces at the end of the article.

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He died on 18th July 2017 at the age of 101.

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His sound was exquisite and potent; here are a couple of examples: the start of "Bragatissimo" - Nuevo Octeto Astor Piazzolla (1963)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wuzI6LTso_4&feature=emb_logo

and

José Bragato was the cello soloist of the film "La Historia Oficial"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c1Lx7q8kgus>

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I would like to mention that nearly 20 years ago I recorded - alongside the really marvellous Spanish accordion player Javier López Jaso - the composition of José Luis Bragato called "Impressionista" on a CD called "Sensations". We sent a copy to him, not expecting to hear anything back due to his age, but it made us very happy that he replied almost immediately - thanking us for the inclusion and the performance, and enclosing a couple of new sheet music compositions for piano, giving us a free hand to arrange it as we like. I always say: "cellists are the very best, what a community we are!"...

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PRINCIPAL COMPOSITIONS

A Mauricio (Guaranía y Galopa Paraguaya)

A un Amigo

Amo Ka Aru lado

Ave Maria Andina

Campanas de la Encarnacion

Chacarera

Cuatro Fragmentos Liricos

Cuatro Bocetos Sobre Ritmos

Dos Canciones Argentinas

Dos Canciones sobre Ritmos Paraguayos

El Instante Anhelado

El Vals de Laura Andrea

Elsita

Fantasia Folklórica

Farra Jhape Sapucaí

Flauta Retozona

Graciela y Buenos Aires

Impressionista
In Memoriam
Leitmotiv
Lis Ciancons Che Ciantave Me Mari
Luz Del Corazón
Malambo
Marcha Funebre Para Mis Padres
Melodía Para Mis Padres
Mi Paraguay
Milontan
Minibi Retia E
Nieblas
Noposepe
Para Adriana
Para Candy
Para Gina
Paraguay - Yasí Retá
Saudade
Sé Que Te Perdí
Solo Una Vez
Suite For Strings
Techagáú
Tres Canciones Paraguayas
Tres Movimientos Porteños
Triste y Zamba
Tu Silencio
Vanguardista
Villancico

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José Bragato (1915/2017)



José Bragato y Astor Piazzolla

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'documenting the cello'

Please do see other original works for many different instruments and groupings, and also special transcriptions for cellists, and cellists with other instruments on the *Johnstone-Music* web page

Also both general musical and cello based articles, directories of famous historical cellists, and many other items of interest

DOWNLOADS - Many downloads on *Johnstone-Music* are now available, for those that are interested, at a *symbolic* payment, which is to help cover the costs of this web site. Some scores/parts are presented in musical edition programmes but generally they are found here in a most “clear” hand-written manuscript copy (the majority to almost a professional copyist standard) and transferred to a PDF file.

As far as *Johnstone-Music* is concerned you are welcome to publicly perform or record any work or piece found in the web; however you DO need to make mention of the name of the composer and the arranger on any printed information (hand programmes, disc covers etc.).

FREE PUBLICITY - If you care to inform us of any public performance (no matter how formal or informal the event is), recording or other uses of the original music or arrangements of David Johnstone or of other musical colleagues included in this web, we are happy to give your event free publicity on the *Johnstone-Music* web.

To take advantage of this, try to write to us three weeks or more in advance with any information. Last-minute entries are certainly better than not writing at all - however, understandably, once we have past the calendar month of the event it is not usually possible to add old items to the calendar. It is very interesting for the promoters of *Johnstone-Music* to have knowledge of your activity - and so in return for your information you will be entitled to a free gift of a work/s for every diary addition you tell us about. To find out more about this, please visit the “*Cello Club*” section in the web!