

## 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](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*  
*Techagauí*  
*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'

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