THE SOUL OF TANGO

WORLD PREMIERE RECORDINGS

BACALOV: Triple Concerto for Bandoneón, Piano and Soprano

PIAZZOLLA: Tres Movimientos Sinfónicos, Buenos Aires

BACALOV: Theme from *Il Postino*

PIAZZOLLA: Oblivion

GISÈLE BEN-DOR, conductor

Santa Barbara Symphony

Juanjo Mosalini, bandoneón • Luis Bacalov, piano • Virginia Tola, soprano

SOUL OF TANGO

Luis Bacalov: Triple Concerto for Bandoneón, Soprano & Orchestra (2003) [29:01]
world premiere recording

1 Allegro moderato (8:12)
2 Cantá, cantá *(text by Luis Bacalov)* (9:02)
3 Cadenza – piano and bandoneón (1:46)
4 Allegro *(text by Luis Bacalov)* (10:01)
Virginia Tola, soprano; Juanjo Mosalini, bandoneón; Luis Bacalov, piano

5 **Bacalov: Theme from *Il Postino*** (3:41)
Juanjo Mosalini, bandoneón

Astor Piazzolla: Tres Movimientos Sinfónicos, Buenos Aires (1953) [21:43]
world premiere recording

6 Moderato (6:06)
7 Lento (6:37)
8 Presto marcato (9:00)
Juanjo Mosalini, bandoneón

9 **Piazzolla: Oblivion** (3:53)
Juanjo Mosalini, bandoneón

Total Playing Time: 58:20

Gisèle Ben-Dor, conductor
Santa Barbara Symphony Orchestra

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The Tango and Malambo Festival, held in Santa Barbara February 6 to 15, 2004, was a ten day long celebration organized by Gisèle Ben-Dor, music director of the Santa Barbara Symphony, and with Georgina Ginastera, daughter of the composer, as Honorary President.

Festival events included concerts, dance, films, young people's concerts and other programs encompassing a comprehensive survey of early and more recent Latin American music. Especially noteworthy were the American premieres of *Tres Movimientos Sinfónicos, Buenos Aires*, the only work for large orchestra with bandoneón composed by the young Astor Piazzolla, and the new *Triple Concerto for bandoneón, soprano and piano* by Luis Bacalov, contemporary Argentinean pianist and composer, renowned for his distinguished film scores.

This recording features these two American premieres plus Bacalov's Academy Award® winning theme from *Il Postino* and one of Piazzolla's signature tangos, *Oblivion*.

The unusual repertoire and outstanding performances on this CD all contribute to a unique sampling of a memorable event.

Bacalov's new **Triple Concerto** calls for an extraordinary combination of soloists—the bandoneón (Piazzolla's instrument), the piano (Bacalov's own instrument), and soprano, all linked to the fundamental urban Argentine tradition of the tango. Regarding this work, the composer writes:

"The Triple Concerto for soprano, bandoneón, piano, and orchestra is a composition in four movements whose formal structure draws its nourishment from the stylistic contributions of the 20th century with a clear and significant incursion into the world of the Tango, the musical roots of which are constantly present in the work. The text sung in the second movement is a poem invoking the immortal figure of the greatest singer of tangos in the history of the Rio de la Plata, with its two cities, Montevideo and Buenos Aires, which have given birth to this particular urban art form that is the Tango. The text evokes the figure of Carlos Gardel, begging him to continue singing 'of overpowering walls, of sadly embittered towns, of defiant headscarves armed only with whiteness and with humbled dignity,' this last phrase a clear allusion to the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo during the last Argentine military dictatorship.

"The third movement is an 'expressionist festival,' a broad cadenza for bandoneón and piano, followed by a fourth movement which, in its first section, aims in some way to evoke and reaffirm 'the hope of a young country in a better future.' In the finale of

the work there appears the author's nostalgia for a time that 'never was to return again,' the time of 'lovesick Juans and Marias and of youthful dreams.' Ernesto Sabato writes that 'the tango is a gloomy sentiment that dances.' The composer has been unable, in the finale of the Triple Concerto, to escape and renounce this characteristic of the Argentinean depth of soul, inundated with sadness and nostalgia, so many times enunciated in the words of the popular tangos."

Triple Concerto, second movement (Poem by Luis Bacalov, Translation: Gisèle Ben-Dor)

Cantá, cantá de paredones abrumados
Cantá del Sur, de villas tristemente amargas
Y de pañuelos desafiantes.
Armadas solo de blancura
y de la dignidad humillada.
Cantá, zorzal, de cartoneros repetidos
Mirá, cantá las noches infinitas de negrura
Ni lunas ni estrellas al caminante de ayuda
Sin miedo alza tu canto
contra el muro del olvido
Que mil angustias y desvelos
no se cancelen para siempre.
Llevame ya al tiempo aquel de la esperanza
Donde los sueños se confundían con la vida
Llevame ahora al tiempo azul
perdido en brumas y retazos
Al tiempo aquel perdido que jamás ha de volver.

Sing, sing of overwhelming, worn out walls
Sing of the South, of sadly embittered towns
and of defiant headscarves
armed only with whiteness
and humbled dignity.
Sing, songbird, of numerous cardboard boxes.
Look, sing of never ending dark nights.
Moons and stars aid the traveler not.
Fearless, raise your song
against the wall of oblivion
so that untold anguish and care
may not be forever erased.
Take me to that hopeful time
when dreams and life were one.
Take me to a time of blue hues,
lost in mists and fragments.
Take me to that never returning, long lost time.

Triple Concerto, fourth movement (Poem by Luis Bacalov, Translation: Gisèle Ben-Dor)

Cantá, cantá de mil balcones florecidos
Cantá, zorzal, de mi Buenos Aires querido
y de arrabales perfumados,
de Juanes y Marias enamorados,
de atardeceres suaves, de misteriosas calles serenas,
de un bandoneón, que llore amargas notas de consuelo
de ayer que nunca ha de volver.
No, que nunca mas ha de volver.

Sing, sing of a thousand blooming balconies.
Sing, songbird, of my beloved Buenos Aires,
of perfumed slums,
of lovesick Juans and Marias,
of balmy twilights, of serene, mysterious streets,
of a bandoneón crying bitter notes in consolation
for yesterday, never to return.
No, never, ever, to return.

The **Theme from *Il Postino*** (The Postman), scored for bandoneón and strings, was written for the 1994 film directed by Michael Radford. A French/Italian/Belgian production, the film garnered 1995 Academy Award® nominations for Director, Best Actor, Best Original Score, Writing (based on previously publishing material), and Best Picture. Composer Luis Bacalov won the Academy Award® for Best Original Score.

Tres Movimientos Sinfónicos, Buenos Aires (3 symphonic movements), Opus 15

Americans think of the tango as a social dance first introduced from Latin America by Vernon and Irene Castle in 1914 and then used for such popular songs as Sigmund Romberg's "Softly as in a Morning Sunrise" (The New Moon, 1928). Just as American jazz developed in the yeasty mix of cultures in New Orleans, Argentine tango blends elements of African and European — Spanish, German, and Italian — with New World elements. The Argentine tango celebrated with poignancy as well as laughter, evoking the tragedy of life, our universal mortality, in a way that grabbed the emotions and often got the feet moving.

Tangos in America came to be associated in the popular mind with bordellos and lascivious activity, partly through the films of Rudolph Valentino, a favorite with female audiences in the '20s for his sultry sensuality. By mid-century, tangos were parodied in Broadway shows (as in "Hernando's Hideaway" from The Pajama Game, 1954). But in Latin America, the tango went through no such decline. It was and has remained a popular form of music-making, often approaching the level of light classics and regularly, aspiring still higher.

The most universal master of the tango was Astor Piazzolla, a master of the bandoneón and of the compositional art of the tango. He was extremely popular in his homeland as a composer of dances and songs, but in creating the "Nuevo Tango" he also extended the concept of tango to a degree not recognized by many purists, who wished to stick with the old-fashioned tradition. Indeed, it would be fair to compare Piazzolla to a handful of other composers who succeeded in transforming popular dance genres to substantial works of art—Chopin, Johann Strauss the younger, and Scott Joplin.

But Piazzolla aspired to write works in larger genres, and by 1953 he had composed nineteen works to which he gave opus numbers, implying that they were somehow more "classical" than his tango compositions. All of these concert works, he explained in 1980, were related in some way or another to Buenos Aires (the appearance of the word "porteña" — relating to the "port city" — is always such a reference in his work). In 1951 he wrote the three-

Piazzolla with his own Bandoneón, circa 1990

movement symphonic work *Buenos Aires*, which received its first performance under the baton of Igor Markevitch. Ginastera made the crucial suggestion that Piazzolla send the score to the composer Juan José Castro, who liked it and entered it in a competition run by Fabien Sevitzky, the nephew of Serge Koussevitzky. Piazzolla's piece won the prize, amounting to about $250, and a performance in Buenos Aires with Sevitzky conducting.

The performance, on August 16, 1953, attracted a mixed reaction. The usual response of the "classical audience" was disdain for the presence of two bandoneónes, the mark of the "lower class" genre of the tango, in the orchestra. Yet much of the audience was enthusiastic and applauded heartily.

On the strength of this performance and his existing body of work, Piazzolla traveled to Paris to study with one of the most influential teachers of the century, Nadia Boulanger, friend of Stravinsky and teacher of a whole string of French, American, and British composers, most notably Aaron Copland.

It was Boulanger who helped Piazzolla find his true métier. She admitted that the work he brought her was "well written, " but felt that it lacked feeling. Boulanger finally asked him what music he played in Argentina. Piazzolla, concerned about her reaction to the confession, admitted that he played the tango. She told him that she herself loved that music, and asked him what instrument he played in tango ensembles. When he told her about his bandoneón (a type of button-accordion, or concertina, developed in Germany about 1840, which became the principal solo instrument connected with the tango in Argentina at the beginning of the 20th century), she asked him to bring it and play one of his own tangos for her. At the end of a single phrase, she stopped him and exclaimed, "This is Piazzolla. Don't ever leave it."

Buenos Aires is the piece that set Piazzolla on his path, first in winning the prize that took him to Boulanger, then in anticipating later tango-drenched orchestral scores that were to come. This is not a work intended for dancing, but rather for serious listening. Unlike many of Piazzolla's individual tango compositions, there are no programmatic titles (on the order of "Buenos Aires winter" or "The death of the

angel") to offer any guidance. It is purely abstract music, passionate, songful, dark, romantic, rhythmic—imbued with the spirit of everything connoted by the word "tango."

One of Piazzolla's most famous tangos, **Oblivion**, arranged for bandoneón and orchestra, ends this recorded program. The work was recorded here in a version for one bandoneón instead of two, commissioned by Gisèle Ben-Dor, who also commissioned the creation of all the orchestral material, from the single manuscript copy entrusted her by Daniel Piazzolla, the composer's son.

— with thanks to Steven Ledbetter, for his invaluable contribution to these notes

Conductor **Gisèle Ben-Dor**'s active career in four continents has encompassed music directorships, numerous guest appearances, recordings and the creation of festivals celebrating music she champions, with wide audience and critical acclaim. She has led major ensembles such as the New York Philharmonic, London Symphony, London Philharmonic, English Chamber Orchestra, BBC/Wales, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Boston Pops, New World Symphony, Israel Philharmonic, Israel Chamber Orchestra, Helsinki Philharmonic, Houston Symphony, Minnesota Orchestra, and Orchestre de la Suisse Romande among many others. She has also led many others in the United States,

Europe, Australia and Latin America.

In March 1999, Ms. Ben-Dor returned to the New York Philharmonic substituting for Daniele Gatti in a program of Mahler and Beethoven, without a rehearsal or scores. Following a recent Philharmonic appearance, the *New York Times* wrote, "If Ms. Ben-Dor had merely survived in a work as complex as the Mahler under the circumstances, she would have done well; she did more, making the interpretation… her own."

The groundbreaking Revueltas Festival which she created and realized in Santa Barbara (January 2000) elicited high praise world-wide for its imaginative approach and wide-ranging commitment to the cause of the composer. ("Gisèle Ben-Dor can be counted on to unearth something important every season," *Los Angeles Times*). The festival Tango and Malambo, which includes the world premiere recording of music by Astor Piazzolla

and Luis Bacalov, as well as the founding of The Ben-Dor Music Discovery Project: Celebrating the Art Music of Latin America, further cement her commitment, confirming the *Los Angeles Times*' "just the conductor we have been waiting for to make a really persuasive case for Latin composers."

Music Director of the Santa Barbara Symphony since 1994, Ms. Ben-Dor has been credited with raising the standards of excellence and for her committed work within the community, particularly in the area of music education. She is also Conductor Emerita of the Boston Pro-Arte Chamber Orchestra where, having been chosen exclusively by the musicians, she has also garnered the highest praise from both audience and critics. Other major recordings by Gisèle Ben-Dor include three world premiere discs of works by Ginastera, as well as Villa-Lobos' gigantic 10th Symphony "Amerindia" and a disc of Revueltas' works. Four of these CDs, including this one, have been with the Santa Barbara Symphony.

Hailed as a "ferocious talent" by the *Los Angeles Times*, her talent was also recognized by Leonard Bernstein, with whom she shared the stage at Tanglewood and at the Schleswig-Holstein Music Festival. She made her conducting debut with the Israel Philharmonic in Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring*, an event broadcast throughout Europe by the BBC. Born and raised in Uruguay of Polish parents, she also studied at the Rubin Academy of Music in Tel-Aviv and at the Yale School of Music before residing in the U.S., together with her husband and two young sons. To learn more about Gisèle Ben-Dor, visit www.giseleben-dor.com.

The Santa Barbara Symphony is recognized as a top regional orchestra for the excellence of its performances, adventurous programming, dedication to youth education and outreach, and outstanding contributions to the community. In the past, the orchestra has been chosen as one of only three orchestras in the nation to receive an Advancement Grant from the NEA. In 2004 the orchestra was voted Best Classical Ensemble by *The Independent*. Under Music Director Gisèle Ben-Dor the orchestra has grown in every respect.

The Santa Barbara Symphony was founded in 1953 by violinist Stefan Krayk and oboist Clayton Wilson, members of the faculty at the University of California Santa Barbara. They encouraged leading musicians and music teachers to join the orchestra, which gave its first concert performance at The Lobero Theatre on December 12, 1953.

Four full-time conductors served in the music director position beginning in 1960. Erno Daniel (1960–1966), Ronald Ondrejka (1966–1978), Frank Collura (1978–1983) and Varujan Kojian (1984–1993) each brought a distinctive style to the orchestra.

The Santa Barbara Symphony's Music Director Gisèle Ben-Dor was unanimously appointed to the position after she first showcased her unique style as a guest conductor for the Symphony in April of 1994, and continues to lead the orchestra, which celebrated its 50th Anniversary in 2004.

Pianist and composer **Luis Bacalov** was born in Buenos Aires, where at the age of five he began his music education with Enrique Barenboim and continued then with Berta Sujovolsky, a pupil of Artur Schnabel. His concert activity started very early in Argentina. He appeared as a soloist, in a duo with the violinist Alberto Lissy and in several chamber music groups. Luis Bacalov researched popular music all over Latin America and worked in this same field for the Radio and Television of Colombia, for which he also performed and recorded extensively 19th and 20th century American repertoire for the piano.

From the sixties onward, Luis Bacalov has been an active composer for cinema in Italy, France and the United States. He has worked with film directors such as Lattuada, Damiani, Scola, Petri, Giraldi, Wertmüller, Kurys, Stora, Lefebvre, Borowczyk, Greco, Frazzi brothers, Pasolini, Fellini, Radford and Rosi, among others.

Bacalov won several prizes and nominations for original soundtracks of films. Among the latest prizes are the Oscar® of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, the "Globo d'Oro" of the foreign press in Italy, the "Nastro d'Argento" of the Association of Film Critics, the Bafta prize (British Academy for Film and Television Arts) and the "Prize Nino Rota," all of them for the film "Il Postino," directed by Michael Radford. He was also awarded the "Davide di Donatello" for the soundtrack of the film "La Tregua" directed by Francesco Rosi.

In addition to his activity as a composer, Bacalov continues to perform extensively throughout Europe and Latin America as a soloist with orchestra as well as recitalist, and as a member of his own quartet — piano, bandoneón, percussion and double-bass — dedicated to the "tango and around" repertoire, a result of his deep knowledge of ethnic, urban and contemporary music.

Soprano **Virginia Tola** was born in Argentina and graduated from the Superior Institute of Art of the Teatro Colón, where she studied voice with Maestros Sirulnik and Valerio. In 1997 and again in 2000, the Foundation of the Teatro Colón and the Argentinean Foundation

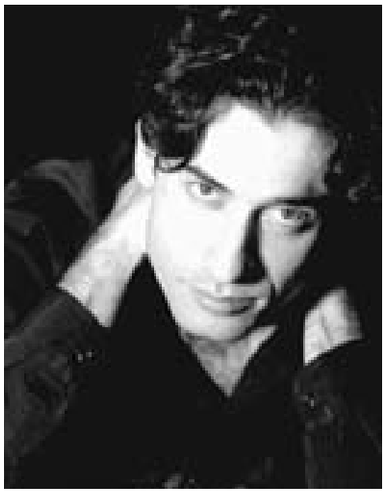
of Chamber Music granted her a scholarship to study with Maestro Guillermo Opitz. In 1999 she was the First Prize winner of the International Competition of Song Queen Sonja in Oslo, Norway. That same year, Ms. Tola was named Revelation of the Year by the Association of Argentinean Critics. In 2000 Ms. Tola won the International Competition Operalia, sponsored by tenor Placido Domingo. She was awarded Prize of the Public, Prize of the Zarzuela and the Prize Lloyd Rigler.

She made her debut with Teatro Colón in the world premiere of *Don Juan* by J. Carlos Zorzi, and also inaugurated the National Symphonic Orchestra's 2001 season.

Ms. Tola has performed leading roles in operas such as *La Bohème*, *The Barber of Seville*, *Carmen*, and *The Tales of Hoffmann*, with the Washington, Cleveland and Los Angeles Opera houses, at the Bregenz Festival, the Teatro dell'Opera di Roma, Klagenfurt Stadttheater, the Royal Theater of Madrid, Teatro Colón, and many others.

The young soprano has also performed in numerous concerts alongside tenor Plácido Domingo: *4 ° Latin Gala* at the Theater of Fine Arts in México D.F.; Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington D.C., *Kennedy Awards*; Gala for Operalia Winners in Los Angeles; Concert of Zarzuela in Benidorm, Spain; Gala Concert in Halle, Germany; *A night of Zarzuela with Friends* in Los Angeles; and at the Gala Concert of *Die Fledermaus* at the Washington Opera.

Ms. Tola's future commitments include performances at the Theater Regio di Torino in *La Bohème* and *Carmen*, at the Theater of Opera in Liège, Belgium in *Luisa Miller*, at Oslo Norskeopera in *The Barber of Seville*, and in *Carmen* at the Theater of Trieste.



Born in Buenos Aires, bandoneónist **Juan Jose (Juanjo) Mosalini** began playing the piano at the age of seven. Later, in France, he continued his piano studies with Gustavo Beytellman, and subsequently began learning to play the bandoneón with his father, Juan Jose Mosalini, Sr. After completing his conservatory studies, Mr. Mosalini studied composition with various French masters. Rapidly becoming part of the music world, he associated with some of today's most notable tango musicians, such as Leonardo

Sanchez, Gustavo Beytellman and Gustavo Cancedo, with whom he performed on the most prestigious concert stages in France.

Mr. Mosalini has distinguished himself in the diverse roles of soloist, recording artist, accompanist and teacher. He is accomplished in a wide variety of genres, including popular music, authentic tango, classical and film music. He has participated in the creation of numerous film scores, working with Eric Serat and Luc Besson in the film "Leon"; Gabriel Yared, Jean Jacques Arnaud in the film "Wings of Courage." Mr. Mosalini has also performed on stage with Lalo Schifrin and Luis Bacalov.

Mr. Mosalini's prestigious appearances have included the Schubert *Winterreise* in New York and solo performances with the Bourgogne Camerata and the Milan Orchestra. He has also distinguished himself as a collaborator with world renowned singers such as Julia Migenes, Silvana de Luigi, and Sandra Rumolino. Additionally, he has become an integral part of innovative programs such as the Electronic Music Ensemble *Gotan Project*.

Mr. Mosalini's career has included dozens of recordings, including those with Trio Gomina, Grand Orchestra de Tango de Juan Jose Mosalini and Gustavo Gancedo Tango Septet, before devoting himself completely to the stage. As a teacher of the bandoneón, Mr. Mosalini has been on the faculty of the Conservatories of Gennevellier and Alforteville in France.

For more information about the Tango and Malambo Festival, please visit www.tangofestival.net

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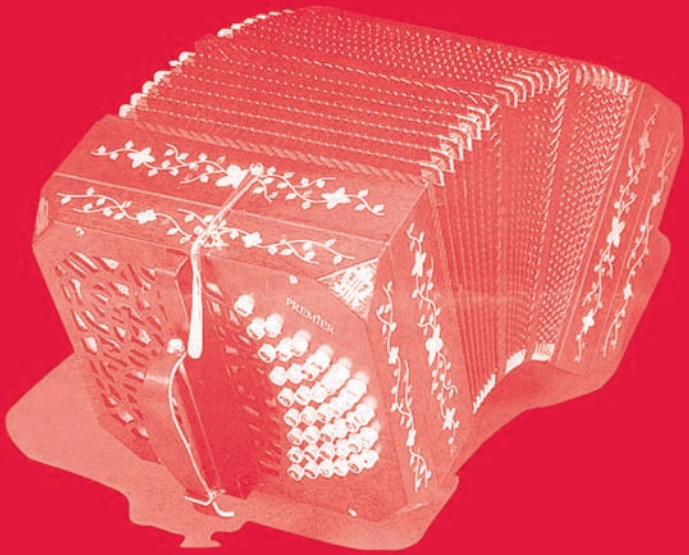

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