

A man and a woman are captured in a dynamic tango pose on a stage. The woman, on the left, wears a vibrant pink, sleeveless, tiered dress and high-heeled sandals. She has a small star tattoo on her left ankle. The man, on the right, is dressed in a white long-sleeved shirt, a dark blue vest, and dark trousers with a chain belt. He wears dark tango shoes. They are both looking down at each other, creating an intimate and dramatic atmosphere. The background is dark, with stage lights highlighting the dancers.

# ARRABAL

EDUCATIONAL  
TOOLKIT

EXPERIENCE THE  
**art.**

2016/17 Season





# Welcome!

This Toolkit includes materials collected to deepen engagement with the artists, music, dance style, and historical context behind the A.R.T. production of ***Arrabal***.

A new tango-infused dance theater piece, ***Arrabal*** follows one woman's quest to understand the violence that took her father and disrupted a nation. Told through dance and propulsive music, ***Arrabal*** invites audiences into the underground world of Buenos Aires' tango clubs for a dance between the present and the past.

The materials included here are selected, organized, and contextualized for ease of use in a classroom setting and for personal enrichment in preparation or as a follow-up to attending the A.R.T. production of ***Arrabal***.

See you at the theater!

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@americanrep #ArrabalART

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## **Thank you for participating in the A.R.T. Education Experience!**

If you have questions about using this Toolkit in your class, or to schedule an A.R.T. teaching artist to visit your classroom, contact the A.R.T. Education and Community Programs department at:

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# *Arrabal* and the A.R.T.



The ***Arrabal* and the A.R.T.** section of this Toolkit (pages 4-19) introduces provides insight into the creative process behind developing ***Arrabal***, outlines the plot, and introduces major influences behind the storytelling of the play.

In “A Tango with the Past” (pages 5-7), book writer John Weidman introduces the inspiration behind the play and what drew the creative team together.

In “Meet the Artists of ***Arrabal***” (pages 8-10), get to know the creative team behind the play.

In “Sergio Trujillo Talks About ***Arrabal***” (pages 11-12), director and co-choreographer Sergio Trujillo talks about his early involvement with the play.

In “Gustavo Santaolalla Puts Argentina’s History in ***Arrabal*** Music” (pages 13-15), composer Gustavo Santaolalla talks about growing up in Argentina and the development of his music.

The “***Arrabal*** Synopsis” (page 16) outlines the main plot points of the story.

The “***Arrabal*** Glossary” (pages 17-19) introduces terms, concepts, and historical figures important to the context of the play.



Image: Cylla Von Tiedmann

# A Tango with the Past

by John Weidman

**Arrabal** writer John Weidman introduces the inspiration behind the play, how the exceptional creative team came together, and how they approach storytelling using the tools of music and dance.

Two years ago, On December 10, 2013, Argentina celebrated “30 Years of Democracy,” a national holiday marking the longest period of uninterrupted democratic rule in the country’s history. Thirty years without a military coup. A milestone. In a country which declared its independence only fifty years after our own.

The most recent coup took place in 1976, when a democratically elected government was overthrown by a brutal military junta led by General Jorge Rafael Videla. Determined to eradicate anyone who opposed its rule, the Videla dictatorship systematically kidnapped, tortured, and in most cases murdered as many as 30,000 Argentines—young men and women “disappeared” by a regime which claimed to have no knowledge of who had abducted them or where they had gone.

Discredited and humiliated by their loss to the British in the Falklands War in 1983, the Videla regime finally stepped aside, bringing to an end the seven-year period known in Argentina as the Dirty War.

But there is an Argentine expression: “the past is predator.” And the searing scars which the brutal experience of the Dirty War had inflicted on the people of Argentina and on the Argentine psyche linger to this day.

Arrabal and the A.R.T.

## A Tango with the Past (cont'd)

It is no accident that there are more psychiatrists per capita in Argentina than in any other country in the world.

My first connection to this intense and tumultuous history, my first connection to Argentina, came not through the newspapers, or a book, or a documentary. It came first through music and then through dance.

The music was, in a word, amazing. Vibrant, vital and—to my ears—incredibly theatrical. And it was produced by the Argentine/Uruguayan band Bajofondo, which I heard play for the first time at the Highline Ballroom in New York. Fronted by their lead guitarist and composer, Gustavo Santaolalla, Bajofondo's music was thrilling and electrifying, yes, but even more compelling (to me) was the fact that it clearly proceeded from a cultural sensibility which I knew little or nothing about.

I was hooked. This music came from elsewhere, and that elsewhere was Argentina. And when I found out that Gustavo was anxious to move his music into the world of musical theater, I wanted to be part of that process, however it might develop and wherever it might lead.

Which several months later was to Buenos Aires and to my first real experience of the tango.

The tango, I learned, was born in the working-class neighborhoods of Buenos Aires at the end of the 19th century—neighborhoods largely populated by immigrant men who had come to Argentina to make their fortunes, often leaving their wives and children behind in Italy and Spain. The intense emotions evoked by the dance, the passionate bond between tango partners, are said to reflect the feelings of these lonely men yearning for contact and connection.

At once melancholy and joyful, constraining and liberating, “the tango,” said Argentine author Jorge Luis Borges, “is a direct expression of something that poets have often struggled to state in words: the belief that a fight may also be a celebration.”

Intensely theatrical music, now married to intensely theatrical dance.

Almost all the work I have done in the musical theater has involved taking an unnerving but exhilarating step into the unknown. And helping to create **Arrabal** was clearly going to be no exception. The creative team assembled to bring this new musical to life consisted of Gustavo and his remarkable collection of Argentine musicians; Julio Zurita, a brilliant Argentine choreographer with an innate sense of theatricality and story-telling; a cast made up entirely of Argentine dancers and actors; and multi-talented and multi-award-winning director and co-choreographer, Sergio Trujillo.

The story which we crafted was both political and personal. The coming-of-age tale of Arrabal, a young girl on the verge of womanhood, whose father, Rodolfo, was “disappeared” by the junta when she was just an infant. Eighteen years later she takes her courage in her hands and sets out to discover what became of the father she never knew, embarking on a journey which leads her into the sultry, shadowy world of Buenos Aires’ underground tango clubs.

And the tools we would use to tell this story were the two things which hooked me in the first place—not words, but music and dance.

Crafting the book for a musical is a peculiar and challenging task, often misunderstood even by the people who attempt it. To do it with virtually no language makes it even more challenging. (Word to the wise: Don't try this at home.)

That said, creating a musical which captures an audience's imagination requires being sensitive to which story-telling tools— music, lyrics, dance, dialogue—are best suited to



## A Tango with the Past (cont'd)

delivering the story with maximum impact. Which tools you need and which ones you don't. And in the case of **Arrabal**, it was clear from the beginning that the most powerful way to tell the story would be to restrict our vocabulary to the music of Bajofondo and the tango driven dances designed by Julio and Sergio.

We're pleased with where we've come out. We hope you will be, too.

*John Weidman is the writer of **Arrabal**. His work for Broadway includes Pacific Overtures, Contact, Anything Goes, and Assassins. This article was first published in the A.R.T. Spring 2017 Season Guide.*

*Continue reading the other articles in the **Arrabal and the A.R.T.** section for perspectives from director Sergio Trujillo and composer Gustavo Santaolalla.*

*This article originally appeared in the **A.R.T. Guide**, published by the American Repertory Theater.*

### DISCUSSION

- Does the historical context outlined by Weidman sound familiar? Had you heard of this period of Argentine history before? Are there any other examples of military rule from history you can think of? What are the similarities and differences between these examples and what happened in Argentina?
- “Dirty War” is a nickname assigned to the period of military rule beginning with Videla’s regime in Argentina. What are the implications or connotations of this term?
- What does the phrase “the past is predator” mean in this article? Does this phrase resonate with you in any particular way? Compare this phrase with a similar predator and prey metaphor used by composer Gustavo Santaolalla (page 13-15).



## Meet the Artists of *Arrabal*



### GUSTAVO SANTAOLALLA Composer

Two-time winner of the Oscar for Best Original Score for a Movie, earner of 15 various Grammy awards since 2002, and co-founder of the band Bajofondo; Gustavo Santaolalla is the creative force behind the unique Tango music in *Arrabal*. In 2006 and 2007 Gustavo won his two Oscars for the movies *Brokeback Mountain* and *'Babel'*. These two wins make Gustavo only the third composer ever to win an Oscar in consecutive years. In addition to these recognitions, Gustavo was inducted to the Songwriters Hall of Fame in 2015. Having achieved great success with both his band and composing movie scores, Gustavo now turns his attention to theatre, in the form of *Arrabal*. Gustavo comments, 'I thought [*Arrabal*] was a fantastic opportunity to put together a show, a spectacle, that would bring this music with this choreography together in a story that had some weight and that really represented Argentina'. And indeed, Gustavo has been a critical force on *Arrabal*, not only as the composer but also as the artist who brought the creative team together. Even the nascent days of Bajofondo, which was founded in the early 2000s, Gustavo was thinking about the project that would become *Arrabal*. He remembers, "I noticed that it was a music that was, for me, very conducive to dance. It had the dance element already, intrinsically in the shape that the music took, you know. So, from the very beginning I'd been thinking about, you know, we should do something with this, with Bajofondo music and dance". The music of Bajofondo had proven its popularity in Argentina by 2002, when the first album, *Bajofondo Tango Club*, went triple platinum, won a Latin



## Meet the Artists (cont'd)

Grammy Award, and received an Argentine Gardel Prize. The band is often categorized as 'electronic tango', but Gustavo insists that their genre is more complex than that. Bajofondo takes Tango music, a traditional music of Argentina, and melds it with elements of other musical genres such as blues, jazz, rock, and electronic, just as Arrabal takes traditional Tango dance steps and creates a new vocabulary for storytelling.

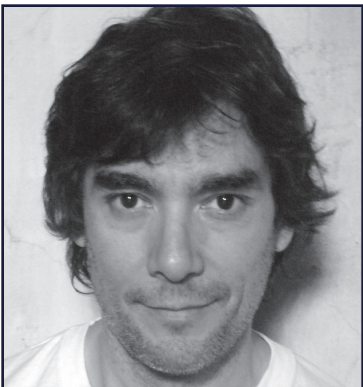


### SERGIO TRUJILLO

#### Director & Co-Choreographer

Sergio Trujillo, a Colombian dancer-turned-director and choreographer from Toronto, was a 2016 Tony nominee for best choreography for *On Your Feet!* (with Gloria Estefan). Sergio has worked on many Broadway shows since the mid-2000s, having earned an Olivier Award for Best Theatre Choreographer in 2015 for *Memphis* and five Drama Desk nominations for Outstanding Choreography since 2006 (for shows including *Hands on a Hardbody*, *Leap of Faith*, and *Saved*). In 2011, Sergio had four shows with his choreography running simultaneously on Broadway: *Jersey Boys*, *Next to Normal*, *Addams Family*, and *Memphis*. His first-ever choreography for Broadway

was creating additional choreography for the *All Shook Up* revival in 2005. Though he still identifies as a choreographer, Sergio is focusing on directing for **Arrabal**. Reflecting on the importance of the project for himself as an artist, he says, "I thought that it was important for me as a creative force to tell stories that are specific to South America, and the desaparecidos are part of the tapestry of the Argentinian political history and culture. And it's something that other countries in South America have also gone through." Before **Arrabal**, *Guys and Dolls* and *On Your Feet!* were the only opportunities Sergio had to incorporate Latin styles of dance into his work. Besides being personally relevant to Sergio, **Arrabal** also presented a creative challenge. Having no interest in "a generic tango show," Sergio starting working with Julio Zurita on creating their own unique dance vocabulary for **Arrabal** as soon as he joined the project. Describing the process with Julio and the dancers, Sergio says, "we're [Julio and Sergio] not just asking for them [the dancers] to dance traditional tango, we're asking them to be actors; the basis of the movement is very contemporary." The goal was to cast native Argentinian dancers with classic training, such as ballet, as opposed to exclusively Tango or Ballroom dancers. Sergio feels that casting dancers from Argentina because he wanted performers who understand the intricacies and importance of the storytelling of **Arrabal**. Sergio found another important aspect of his creative inspiration for the dance style in the production in the music of Bajofondo. Speaking about the early days of the project, he remembers, "coming on board as the director and choreographer, I was attracted to the music and I felt like, 'I can tell really wonderful stories with this music.'"



### JULIO ZURITA

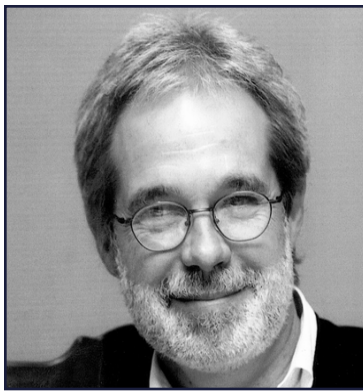
#### Choreographer

Winner of the 2003 Capezio A.C.E. award for his co-direction and co-choreography on *Cirtango*, Julio Zurita, an Argentinian choreographer, has overseen the creation of the unique dance style of **Arrabal**. A graduate from the Workshop of Contemporary Dance out of San Martin Theatre in Buenos Aires, Julio not only has training in both ballet and tango but has also danced and choreographed around the world, including work in Peru (choreography for *Broadway Nights*), France (as a principle dancer for *Ballet Argentino*), and Korea (choreography for *Evita*). His well-rounded dance background has been a huge asset to the choreography and storytelling of **Arrabal**. "He's

the only choreographer, in my view, that has really captured some of the deeper feelings that

## Meet the Artists (cont'd)

tango has in its dance, and combined it with some contemporary elements,” says composer Gustavo Santaolalla of Julio’s work on the production. When the artistic team expanded, Julio worked collaboratively with Sergio Trujillo, who says of working with Julio, “Julio Zurita and I, and mainly Julio, created a vocabulary that is very specific to the show. And only these dancers understand what we’re asking of them.” Julio has an intimate knowledge of what he was asking of his dancers because he has danced the principal role of Rodolfo in both Argentinian and Canadian productions of **Arrabal**. The gems of his choreography, as acknowledged in reviews, are the terrifying arrest of Rodolfo and the haunting dance of the mothers of the desaparecidos, the citizens who disappeared. *The Toronto Sun* writes about Julio’s choreography: “The choreography by [Sergio] Trujillo and Julio Zurita is also unlike anything you’ve ever experienced. Forget the clichés of tango you’ve picked up from dozens of second-rate revues. This is ‘the thing itself’, sensual, brutal, tender and terrifying, all at the same time.” When Julio started choreographing, he was already familiar with the music of Bajofondo; as he had already worked with the band on some of their video projects, most notably “Bajofondo Tango Club.”



### JOHN WEIDMAN

#### Book Writer

John Weidman’s artistic range is large; not only has he has been nominated for a Tony for Best Book of a Musical three times (*Pacific Overtures*, *Big: The Musical*, and *Contact*), he was also a writer for *Sesame Street* for many years, winning multiple Daytime Emmy Awards for Outstanding Writing in a Children’s Series. John has also been on creative team for several musicals that have won the Tony for Best Musical or Best Musical Revival including *Anything Goes*, *Contact*, and *Assassins*. Sergio Trujillo, as director, and John, as the writer, helped composer Gustavo Santaolalla and co-choreographer Julio Zurita apply plot to their music and dance. Because the goal is to tell the story of **Arrabal** with no dialogue, the role of book writer for this production was atypical. John describes his role in the process: “I wrote the scenes as if they were going to be performed. Spoken from the stage in English, they were translated into Spanish, then that was used as a model for how to shape the scenes.” Before his work on **Arrabal**, John started his career as an intern to the American musical giant, Hal Prince (producer of classics such as *West Side Story*, *Fiddler on the Roof*, *Cabaret*, and *Company*). While he was an intern, John was paid \$500 to write the book for *Pacific Overtures*, which was not originally a musical. It was working on this production that John met Stephen Sondheim; with whom he went on to create *Assassins* and *Bounce*. Stephen Sondheim said about collaborating with John on *Assassins*: “Ordinarily, I start reading the librettist’s work after he has written one or two scenes, but John never offered to show them to me... Within five minutes of reading, I knew the reason for John’s hesitation in showing me what he was writing: far from uncertainty, he knew exactly what he was doing, and he was on a white-hot roll.” In 1999 John collaborated with Susan Stroman on the controversial *Contact* which won, among other things, the Drama Desk Award for Outstanding New Musical. *Contact* sparked debates after winning awards meant for musicals because like **Arrabal**, this was a story told through dance and not words.

*This article originally appeared in the [A.R.T. Guide](#), published by the American Repertory Theater.*

# Sergio Trujillo Talks About *Arrabal*

## An Interview with Richard Ouzounian

**Arrabal** director and co-choreographer Sergio Trujillo discusses how he became interested in the music of *Bajofondo*, the early development process of the play, and how he thinks about integrating Argentinean history with a coming-of-age story.



The many faces of Argentina's Disappeared projected behind the ensemble portraying mothers, desperate to find their missing children.

Sergio Trujillo became one of the most successful and prolific choreographers in musical theatre today, best known for the worldwide hit *Jersey Boys*. His current project is different: a highly political dance musical. *Arrabal* is set in Argentina and spans several decades, starting with the “Dirty War” of the late 1970s. The Colombian-born Trujillo’s collaborators are Tony Award-winning playwright John Weidman and Oscar-winning composer Gustavo Santaolalla.

### How did you and Gustavo Santaolalla wind up working together?

About 15 years ago, I was working on a dance piece for Ballet Hispanico in New York and I came upon this album by the [Bajofondo Tango Club](#). I hadn’t known what to expect, but the music positively blew me away. It was an amazing mixture of acoustic and electric, tango and hip hop, house music and traditional sounds. It absolutely grabbed me and I learned that Gustavo was the major force behind it. Man, on that one disc, he composed, produced, sang, arranged and played various instruments. I told myself I had to meet him, but like it often happens in this business, I didn’t continue working on that dance piece and nothing



## Sergio Trujillo Talks About *Arrabal* (cont'd)

happened.

### So what changed that situation?

A few years ago, Scott Zeiger (former co-CEO of BASE Entertainment and recently appointed director of theatrical projects for Cirque du Soleil) had been working with Gustavo on a project and wanted to make me a part of it. The idea was to create a dance musical about a very poor young Argentine girl who went to Buenos Aires and got involved with the whole tango club scene there. She would meet a very rich man and climb the social ladder. A real Cinderella story. That part of it didn't appeal to me. I was fascinated, however, by the whole milieu, not just the Buenos Aires tango clubs, but the world of a poor girl in Argentina. I felt there was so much more we could say.

### What did you want the piece to talk about?

Argentina is one of the most outspoken and highly politicized countries in the world and with good reason. So much has happened there ever since the era of Peron. As Latin men, there was so much that I felt Gustavo and I could say, especially about the whole world of the desaparecidos, the ones who disappeared. During the "dirty war" against the generals, which began in the late 1970s, thousands of people just vanished for speaking out against the regime.

### How did you bring the two stories together?

I asked myself what it would be like if the young girl Gustavo had invented was the daughter of one of the desaparecidos, and she came to Buenos Aires not for fame and fortune, but for knowledge about what really happened to her father 18 years before. Her search is what drives the piece and coupled with the energy of the tango and the whole authentic sense of Argentinian culture that we're using, I think it's going to be a very exciting work.

*This is an excerpt from an interview originally published by The Toronto Star, preceding an early run of the production in Toronto. [Click here](#) to read the full interview.*

## DISCUSSION

- What are the historical, cultural, and storytelling influences on the development of *Arrabal*? How does Sergio describe the early progress of his collaboration on the story?
- Sergio mentions that the original idea of a Cinderella story set in Buenos Aires was less compelling to him than where the story eventually landed. What role did the historical context of the desaparecidos and tango culture in Buenos Aires play in the early development of *Arrabal*?
- Visit [bajofondomusic.com](http://bajofondomusic.com) and listen to some of the music that inspired Sergio to collaborate with Gustavo Santaolalla and eventually become involved with *Arrabal*. Do you hear the same electric, tango, hip hop, and house music influences that Sergio mentions? What type of story does the music tell? Is there anything about the style and/or instrumentation that make the music dramatic?

# Gustavo Santaolalla Puts Argentina's History in *Arrabal* Music

by Richard Ouzounian

**Arrabal** composer and multi-instrumentalist Gustavo Santaolalla discusses his experiences growing up in a turbulent Argentina, discovering and developing his musical style, leaving his home country, and his involvement in feature films.



The two-time, back-to-back Oscar-winning composer (*Brokeback Mountain* and *Babel*) is playing his beloved ronroco, a diminutive stringed instrument that looks like the offspring of a lute and a guitar. As his fingers move across the strings like a hummingbird in flight, the music he's creating conveys both incredible hope and bottomless despair.

Then you look at his face and see those emotions mirrored there so strongly that you have to ask the reason.

"What was I thinking of just then? That I always felt I belonged to a generation who wanted to change the world and maybe now I'm finally doing it."

He's talking about **Arrabal**, the dance-musical he composed, John Weidman wrote and Sergio Trujillo directed. [...]

Its theme is Argentina's history, how a contemporary young woman learns about her country's past and how it touched her life directly.

## Gustavo Santaolalla Puts Argentina's History in *Arrabal* Music (cont'd)

That past is the horrors of the “Dirty War” of the late 1970s, waged against the people of Argentina by the worst of the military juntas that governed the country from 1966 through 1981.

Santaolalla is 62 now, but his struggles with the military began in his teens. “I had been in and out of jails since I was 15, mainly because I had long hair and played an electric guitar.

“The first time I was arrested, my father came to pick me up. I remember him fuming at the authorities, ‘What is he accused of? What crime has he committed?’”

No answer was given. To be different was enough of an excuse to be incarcerated indefinitely or, even worse, to become one of the *desaparecidos*, the “disappeared,” who vanished, never to return.

“I was very frustrated with what was happening in those days. I became afraid even to go out, because you knew you might never come back,” Santaolalla says.

An acid smile plays across his lips. “The plainclothes cops all drove Ford Falcons. When you saw a Falcon, you knew that you were the prey.”

But the result wasn’t so amusing.

“I felt threatened, I was scared, I was blacklisted on the radio. Creatively, everything was so dark. I was reminded of it when I saw the movie *Being John Malkovich*. You know, you have to walk with your head down like you’re in a tunnel.”

And so, in 1978, he left Argentina, cutting himself off not just from the bitter political memories but the far sweeter familial ones.

“I came from a middle class suburban family in suburban Buenos Aires. A place called Garden City, one of a series of communities built on British urbanistic movement of the same name. Rotundas, winding streets, trees and sand and insects.

“My mom stayed at home, my father worked in advertising for J. Walter Thompson. Oh yes, he was absolutely one of the *Mad Men*. They weren’t musical themselves, but they were great fans of music, with a huge collection of 78s.

“There was one song I responded to very strongly. Every time they played it, my parents said I would dance around the room. It was called ‘*Tirando manteca al techo*,’ which means ‘Throwing Butter at the Ceiling.’”

He laughs out loud as he plays it in a brisk foxtrot tempo, its melody instantly recognizable as the Eddie Cantor favourite “Makin’ Whoopee.”

“When my family saw how much I loved music, my grandmother gave me a guitar for my 5th birthday. Next, they found a woman to teach me how to play. That’s when the trouble began.

“I taught myself and was pretty skillful at playing by ear, but she would have none of that and tried to make me start from the beginning. After five years, she gave up and quit. She told my parents, ‘His ear is stronger than my music.’”

That didn’t discourage Santaolalla. Quite the opposite. “I felt free to start writing my own music. Kind of simple Argentine folk songs. But when I was 12, I got my first electric guitar. Then when I was 13, The Beatles came along and I knew that kind of sound is what I wanted to make.

“Rock music became the folk music of my generation and I wanted to make a contribution to it.”

He helped create a group called Arco Iris in 1967, which not only melded Latin American folk with contemporary rock, but lived a whole communal lifestyle, involving celibacy, vegetarianism



## Gustavo Santaolalla Puts Argentina's History in *Arrabal* Music (cont'd)

and Eastern religions.

Although he stayed with the group for seven years, he now admits that, “A bit more than halfway through that time, I knew I had to change. Any group that is so inner directed runs the risk of turning into a cult. I didn’t want to be a part of that.”

He broke away, briefly formed a hard rock group called Soluna but then packed his bags and moved to California, only to be let down in another way.

“The personal freedom, that was wonderful, but the music disappointed me. Styx, Boston, Kansas, Journey. Those groups didn’t move me musically or represent anything I felt music could do.”

Fortunately, times were changing and the influence of the Ramones and the Sex Pistols opened up a whole new world.

He grins. “I cut my hair, I got my skinny tie and I formed a group called Wet Picnic.”

Although democracy returned to Argentina in the 1980s, Santaolalla chose to remain in America, although he frequently worked as a mentor to groups back home.

He worked happily as a musician through the 1990s and released an album called *Ronroco* in 1998, which featured him “playing songs I wrote on my little instrument.”

It got a lot of play on a Santa Monica College radio program called Morning Becomes Eclectic, which is where film director Michael Mann heard it. He asked for a meeting with Santaolalla, where he showed him a scene from his movie *The Insider*, which he had edited to the composer’s song “Iguazu.”

“I was amazed at how beautifully it fit. It reminded me that I had always wanted to make movies and here was a chance for me.”

He successfully scored two more experimental films, *21 Grams* and *The Motorcycle Diaries*, and then he got word that Ang Lee wanted him to provide the score for *Brokeback Mountain*.

“He sent me the script and, as soon as I read it, I knew why it was right for me. When I compose, I often use big spaces with big silences. The people in this movie don’t talk that much. Silence plays a very important part in their lives.

“We met once, talked briefly and then, 20 days later, I sent him my music. He lived with it and shaped the movie around it as he filmed it.

“When I won the Oscar for writing that music, my friend, I was the most surprised person in the world. Almost 10 years later, I still am.”

*This article was first published in The Star on February 7, 2014. [Click here](#) to read the full article.*

*For more in-depth insight into how Gustavo Santaolalla composes music for storytelling, [click here](#) to listen to his spot on the podcast “On Being” with Krista Tippett.*

### DISCUSSION

- What were the major influences on Gustavo’s musical development? Can you hear these influences when listening to his music or the music of Bajofondo?
- Based on the experiences outlined in this article, what does Gustavo mean when he says, “I always felt I belonged to a generation who wanted to change the world and maybe now I’m finally doing it,” in reference to playing music and developing *Arrabal*?

# Arrabal Synopsis

*As a dance-theater piece, **Arrabal** uses music and dance rather than language to tell a coming-of-age story rich in emotion, artistry, historical and cultural power. The following synopsis is meant to be a helpful tool in understanding the intricacies of the play's plot and may be used as a refresher and a primer for conversation.*

Rodolfo is awakened by his young infant daughter and he puts her back to sleep. He puts on his Peronist T-shirt and much to his mother's dismay, leaves the house to go dancing. Once at the club, Rodolfo meets up with El Duende, as well as the owner of the club, El Puma, and his wife Berta. Dancing ensues. A General is revealed to be working the club. The club lights go off and dancers scatter. Men break in and surround Rodolfo. They beat him, and drag him out of the club for being a "left-wing militant." Rodolfo's bloody shirt is left behind on the floor.

18 years later, Arrabal, Rodolfo's daughter, dreams of him, clutching her father's red scarf. A woman's voice wakes her up and her grandmother enters. She has a white scarf tied around her head and is going to march with the Madres of the Plaza de Mayo. Arrabal wishes to go with her, but her grandmother refuses because it is too dangerous. Arrabal begins to put the laundry away on the laundry line. When she turns back, El Duende appears with his two assistants. El Duende snatches Arrabal's red scarf and runs off. She follows him into El Encuentro, El Puma's milonga where she gets her scarf back. El Duende hands Arrabal a letter from El Puma... Arrabal reads it. As Arrabal considers what she has just read and El Duende steps back out of the shadows. He indicates the letter, then gestures—revealing a beautiful, shimmering dress. He smiles, connecting the two. His message: "Put this on and the man who summoned you will take you on the next step of your journey."

The atmosphere in the milonga is electric. Dancers fill the floor and are full of excitement. All except for El Puma, who remains preoccupied, on edge. Arrabal enters carrying her letter. El Duende welcomes her, takes the letter, and gestures towards El Puma. El Puma and Arrabal approach each other, but El Puma, clearly struggling with intense emotions, steps aside and directs Arrabal to his hostess partner, Berta, who helps her to a table.

Juan enters and Arrabal is drawn out onto the floor, where she watches El Puma and Berta dance and then is drawn, into the dance itself. After dancing with multiple men and women, she is left alone in the bathroom with a box. Before she can open it, El Duende appears and takes the box away. But something has been left behind. She picks it up and, with a jolt, finds herself staring at a photo of her father, her mother, and herself as an infant. She gets drawn into the dance.

Arrabal returns to the club as if looking for something. She is greeted by El Puma and Berta. They give her the box with her father's shirt in it. After years of not knowing what happened to her father, Arrabal receives closure.

*This synopsis is adapted from the rehearsal treatment developed by John Weidman in collaboration with Sergio Trujillo and the creative team of **Arrabal**.*

# Arrabal Glossary

While there is no dialogue in **Arrabal**, there are a number of terms, concepts, and historical figures essential to understanding the historical and cultural background of the play, organized alphabetically. Read more below for an introduction to some of these concepts. Bolded terms referenced in each entry refer to an expanded entry with more information.

## **ABUELAS DE PLAZA DE MAYO**

This group, called Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo (sometimes they are referred to as *Madres de Plaza de Mayo* or Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo), were a group of women who began meeting publicly in 1977. They were the mothers and grandmothers of the disappeared people (see “*Los Desaparecidos*”). The Abuelas hold demonstrations wearing headscarves, carrying signs holding the images of their lost relatives. The phrase they most commonly chanted and was “*Quien soy yo?*,” which means “Who am I?”

## **BAJOFONDO**

Sometimes described as “electronic tango,” Bajofondo is a band founded in 2000 by Gustavo Santaolalla, the composer of **Arrabal**. All of the music featured in **Arrabal** is Bajofondo’s. The band’s first album, *Bajofondo Tango Club*, released in 2002, won a Latin Grammy Award and went triple-platinum.

## **CARLOS MENEM**

Menem, a Peronist, was President of Argentina from 1989-1999. In an attempt to help his country move past the atrocities, he granted many presidential pardons to perpetrators of Argentina’s military repression of the previous two decades. Most of his pardons were deemed unconstitutional by later presidents and the Argentinean Supreme Court.

## **CORPORATISM**

Corporatism is a social system in which citizens are in corporate groups based on their social functions and interests (e.g. health-care workers, ethnic groups, those with particular political associations, etc.). Within these groups, individuals work on collective efforts. When implemented in government, corporatism often means that the government is in some way involved with brokering agreements between employers and workers. This government involvement can become problematic, as is the case in Argentina, when the employer has more to offer (money, influence) to the government than the workers’ groups.

## **DEATH FLIGHTS**

One of the most common ways that disappeared citizens were killed was being pushed off of an aircraft over the Atlantic ocean or the Rio de la Plata. Victims were typically drugged into a heavy stupor before being loaded into the aircraft and pushed to their deaths.

## **DESAPARECER**

The Spanish verb for “disappear.” During the military rule of the 1970’s and 80’s in Argentina, this verb came to mean the government practice of ‘disappearing’ Argentine resisters. If an individual was disappeared, it meant that the government had imprisoned them and any evidence of their lives was erased (birth and marriage certificates, social security cards, etc). Typically, being disappeared also meant eventually being killed.

## **LOS DESAPARECIDOS**

Meaning “the disappeared,” this is the term Argentines use for those kidnapped and often killed during Argentina’s military rule. These people often were brutally tortured, raped, and women who gave birth while in captivity generally had their babies stolen. An estimated 30,000 Argentines were killed and another 10-12,000 were eventually released due to increasing international pressure.



### DIRTY WAR

The nickname for an infamous campaign waged from 1976 to 1983 by Argentina's military dictatorship against suspected left-wing political opponents. This was the time when dissenting Argentines were disappeared by their government, free press was essentially abolished, and the military ruled the government. The term "Dirty War" is controversial, and some prefer to refer to these years as a period of genocide.

### THE FALKLANDS WAR

In April of 1982, Argentina invaded the barely-defended British Falkland Islands/Islas Malvinas. Argentina had long maintained that the islands were rightfully Argentine, and the current ruler of Argentina, **Leopoldo Galtieri**, needed a cause that would unite and distract Argentines. After a few days of unsuccessful negotiations, Britain deployed forces to the Falkland Islands. The conflict lasted only 74 days, and in June of 1982, Galtieri surrendered an embarrassing defeat that would eventually lead to the collapse of Argentina's military rule.

### JUAN PERÓN

Born in Buenos Aires in 1895, Perón was elected President of Argentina three times. Initially elected because he promised workers better wages and hours, Perón's party held a majority in congress, and he brokered constitutional changes to gain increased power. A coup led by Argentine armed forces pushed him out of office in 1955. Perón fled to Paraguay and eventually moved to Spain. Héctor Cámpora, the President of Argentina in 1973, bowed to enormous political pressure and resigned his presidency. A relatively peaceful transition of power back to Perón in September 1973 was short lived, as he died in July of 1974. Perón's third wife and Vice President, Isabel, took over the presidency upon his death.

### JORGE RAFAEL VIDELA

Videla was the dictator of Argentina for the majority of the military rule after deposing and killing Isabel Martínez de Perón in March of 1976. Under Videla's power, freedom of speech was collapsed, and the military was put in charge of local governments. He also opened secretive detention camps that he filled with dissidents. His power lasted from 1976-1981, when he relinquished power to **Roberto Viola**. In 1985, Videla stood trial for the first time, when he was convicted of numerous human rights violations and sentenced to life in prison. He was released five years later when newly-elected President **Carlos Menem** pardoned him and many others involved in the military rule. President Néstor Kirchner pushed again to exact justice on the regime's leaders in 2003. In 2006, the Argentine Supreme Court ruled Videla's Presidential Pardon from President Menem unconstitutional. In 2010, Videla was put on trial for more than 30 human rights violations and in 2012 he was sentenced to 50 years in prison. He died from internal hemorrhaging in 2013 after falling in the shower at Marcus Paz Prison.

### LEOPOLDO GALTIERI

Galtieri was the leader of the military coup which took over **Roberto Viola**'s dictatorship. Galtieri was then installed as president in 1981. In April 1982, he initiated the **Falklands War** by invading the British-occupied Falkland Islands/Islas Malvinas. He believed, falsely, that Great Britain would not respond to the invasion with military force. Argentina lost the Falklands war very quickly, and in July of 1981 Galtieri was removed from power and was replaced by Reynaldo Bignone. In 1983, Galtieri was arrested and in 1986, he was sentenced to 12 years in prison. President **Carlos Menem** pardoned him in 1989, but new charges were brought against him in 2002. Due to his incredibly poor health, he was allowed to stay home under house arrest. Galtieri died of pancreatic cancer in July of 2002.

### MAURICIO MACRI

The current president of Argentina, elected in 2015, Macri is the first elected president since 1916 to not be associated with Peronism or the Radical Civic Union. In 2016, Macri was named the most influential president in Latin America by *Time* magazine. Macri has improved Argentina's international image, and publicly denounced the human rights crisis in Venezuela.

## Arrabal Glossary (cont'd)

### MILONGA

Milonga refers to both a place specifically for dancing, most often tango, to a specific style of music. Milonga music is a four-beat rhythm with a weak fourth beat, somewhat like a waltz. Many scenes in **Arrabal** take place in a Milonga.

### PERONISM

Peronism is a political viewpoint that is based on the policies of Juan Perón. The three tenets of Peronism include social justice, economic independence, and political sovereignty. Perón was a controversial President, and Peronism can seem contradictory, since many of his actions as president—imprisoning dissidents and shutting down newspapers, for example—seem to conflict with the values held up by Peronism. Peronists reject both capitalism and communism, relying instead on **corporatism**, a political viewpoint receiving criticism from liberals and conservatives alike. Conservatives claim that Peronist ideologies are too liberal and called for too drastic increases in services for poorer citizens such as housing projects, social security, and free education for the impoverished. Liberals oppose the quashing of political dissidents and argued that **corporatism** still exploited the most vulnerable citizens. Peronism has gone through several phases, including periods of vicious anti-communism under Isabel Perón and a wave of socialist Peronists who gained national attention in 2003.

### RAÚL ALFONSÍN

The winner of the 1983 Presidential election, Raúl Alfonsín was a member of the Radical Civic Union, a leftist political party. Alfonsín reversed legislation from Bignone's time that had granted amnesty to military regime leaders and personnel.

### REYNALDO BIGNONE

Bignone took over leadership of Argentina in July of 1982 after **Leopoldo Galtieri** failed in the **Falklands War**. Under Bignone's rule, more typical government functions were allowed to resume, and the military presence was drastically decreased. However, the government at this time was also frantically working to cover up the crimes of the past decade. Bignone also passed legislation that granted amnesty to those involved in the atrocities. Bignone was replaced by **Raúl Alfonsín**, who won the presidential election in 1983.

### ROBERTO VIOLA

Viola took over the Argentine dictatorship from **Jorge Videla** for only 8 months in 1981. A military coup led by **Leopoldo Galtieri** removed Viola from power in December, 1981. In 1985, Viola was sentenced to 17 years in prison for his war crimes before his pardon in 1990 by President **Carlos Menem**. Viola died in 1994.

### SECRETARÍA DE INTELIGENCIA DE ESTADO (SIDE)

The Secretariat of Intelligence of the State is the main intelligence agency in Argentina and is in charge of the National Intelligence System. SIDE was founded in 1946 under President **Juan Perón** to gather foreign and domestic intelligence for the federal government. During the military rule, SIDE agents were often the ones disappearing citizens, and the agency has since undergone drastic reforms.

### TANGO

Buenos Aires, Argentina, is one of the capitals of tango. Argentinean tango relies more on improvisation than formal ballroom tango, and generally is reliant more on the relationship between the two dance partners than on preordained steps. Argentinean tango typically moves in a counter-clockwise direction to four-beat music. The center of the dance floor is usually reserved for couples performing flashier moves that take up more space. Dancers are expected to have spatial awareness, as impeding other dancers and/or cutting across the dance floor are both considered bad form.

*Explore the historical context of the play further by reading the articles in the **Engaging with History** section of this Toolkit (pages 20-31).*

# Engaging with History



**Arrabal** engages deeply with a 40-year-old historical truth in Argentina that still resonates today. The violent military dictatorship of 1976-1983 included unspeakable violence that tore families apart. The reverberations of these events are still felt today, and similar patterns of dictatorial violence can be found throughout history and the present day around the world. Explore the materials in the **Engaging with History** section of this Toolkit (pages 20-31) to learn more about this period of Argentinean history and how its effects continue today.

“Final Countdown for a Coup d’Etat” (pages 21-22) is a 1975 *New York Times* article reporting on the imminent military coup in Argentina.

“Blaming the Victims” (pages 23-25) outlines a more recent phenomenon of dictatorship denialism in Argentina.

“40 Years Later” (pages 26-28) tracks the mission, development, and challenges of the Abeulas de Plaza de Mayo.

“Key Events in Argentina from 1946 to the Present Day” (pages 29-31) is a timeline outlining major historical events from the rise of Juan Perón through 2017.



# Final Countdown for a Coup d'État

By C.L. Sulzberger

*The following New York Times article from 1975 reports on the imminent military coup in Argentina. Consider the circumstances outlined in this article, including the necessity of change within the country and the hesitations around greater military involvement.*



Nov. 22nd, 1975

BUENOS AIRES—At this moment it seems inevitable that the Argentine armed forces will stage a military coup d'etat, probably within a few weeks, in order to oust the feckless, incompetent Government of Mrs. Isabel Martinez de Peron, the late President's widow. The countdown has started.

In December a reshuffle of commands, promotions and retirements is due. Almost everyone believes the widely discussed action will take place before then. According to the present hierarchical listing, it would be led by Gen. Jorge Videla, commander of the army, assisted by his politically minded chief of staff, Gen. Roberto Viola.

But if the coup unexpectedly should be put off, it is anticipated other generals would stage it later because it is regarded as an "institutional" necessity. On this point the navy and air force support the army view. All services agree that Peron's widow has only one strong characteristic—ambition—and is not capable of administering a country that has slipped into quasi-anarchy and economic decline during the sixteen months since her husband died.

It was a sign of Juan Peron's megalomaniacal disdain for his country that he designated his wife to succeed him. She has been overwhelmed by the responsibilities. For months she relied upon a righting astrologer as a gray eminence but charges of corruption forced him to flee the country. Nevertheless, he left many toadies in key positions.

The one basic fact in the prevailing situation is that the 35-year era of Peronism is over. Whatever legend Juan Peron left has been dissipated by his wife. A historical cycle that engulfed Argentina has ended. The vast majority of people are ready for change because the existing Government has no coherent support.

The probability is that the first move will be creation of a military government. The officers have been discussing a possible ultimatum to party leaders and Parliament, urging them to form a united "national" regime, but this seems unlikely. The question that preoccupies many Argentinians is how to avoid an extremist or fascist dictatorship.

## Final Countdown for a Coup d'État (cont'd)

Chief among this group is Gen. Alejandro Augustin-Lanusse, a highly respected retired officer who was President from 1971 to 1973, following another coup. General Lanusse, who was imprisoned by Peron for years in a tough Patagonian jail, harbors astonishingly little bitterness. His great dream is to see a second stage after any coup that would produce a strong national leader and bring prominent civilians into what had started as a military regime.

The obvious man for the position of strong leader is General Lanusse himself, although he is said to hate the thought. He respects his army but holds it is not superior to other branches of society and he worries deeply about a military lurch rightward. Years ago, when he met Pope Pius XII, the Pontiff said: "I can see you are an anti-militarist just as I am anti-clerical."

General Lanusse wants re-establishment of order to replace the widespread terrorism running wild in Argentina—but not "the order of the cemetery." He doesn't think any government can depend solely on support from the armed forces and hopes to see increasing participation by other groups. "Participation" was a favorite political concept of General de Gaulle, whom Lanusse much admired.

Above all he wants Argentina's democratic institutions re-enforced. These still exist on the statute books but have been weakened by disuse. He wants institutions powerful enough to survive the death or disgrace of individuals, as happened in the United States after President Kennedy's assassination and after Watergate.

To give shape, this concept he apparently sees he need to avoid three dangers: (1) continuation of the present chaotic situation; (2) a military effort to govern alone; (3) the holding of premature national elections before restoration of tranquillity.

In May 1972 he said (as President) that the armed forces are necessary as "an instrument of the state" but not to "govern that state." He still believes this.

General Lanusse himself brought back Peron from exile and the latter returned permanently in 1973 two months; after his stooge, Hector Campore, won the presidential elections and then handed over. General Lanusse's idea was to let Peronism destroy itself once and for all—which it now has done.

The price has been terribly high but the ghost of the old order has been laid. Argentina is about to open a new chapter, hopefully a good one, guided by restraint, intelligence and sense.

*This article was first published in The New York Times in 1975. [Click here](#) to read the full article.*

### DISCUSSION

- Why does General Lanusse emphasize government institutions? Based on the article, why are they important in this context? What are the specific dangers of military rule?
- Based on this article from 1975, a military coup in Argentina was expected and anticipated by many as a necessary shift. What are some of the reasons why a shift was necessary? Which hesitations about military rule are expressed in this article? Are there examples of similar events involving extreme violence, loss of control, necessity of change, and drastic governmental shifts? How do the events in Argentina compare to events from history or to current events?
- What do you make of the statement made by Pope Pius XII to General Lanusse: "I can see you are an anti-militarist just as I am anti-clerical"?

# Blaming the Victims: Dictatorship Denialism is on the Rise in Argentina

By Uki Goñi

*The following Guardian article from 2016 analyzes a recent phenomenon of denying the acts of military government violence from 1976-83. This movement, supported by some government and private groups, calls to reframe the events to associate less sympathy and heroism with the desaparecidos. Goñi's article outlines the rise of this problematic movement, including the major influences shaping denialist perspectives in Argentina.*



People participate in the 'Marcha de la Resistencia' (March of the Resistance), which was organized by Plaza de Mayo Mothers Foundation, in downtown Buenos Aires.

Almost uniquely among nations that have suffered mass killings under brutal dictatorships, Argentina was able not only to put a large number of its former torturers behind bars, but to establish a consensus across all political sectors that its 1976-83 military regime had executed a lower-intensity Nazi-style genocide that lacked any moral justification.

The country's dictator Jorge Videla was tried barely two years after the return of democracy, and since then more than 1,000 other former officers have been sentenced, making the country a standout among former South American dictatorships. Chile has attained a similar number of convictions, but its dictator Augusto Pinochet died without ever facing a day in court. In Brazil and Uruguay, where wide-ranging amnesties remain in place, a free pass was given to torturers to ensure a smooth democratic transition.

But Argentina's consensus on the gravity of dictatorship-era crimes has suddenly shattered under centre-right President Mauricio Macri.



## Blaming the Victims (cont'd)

Earlier this month, Macri rattled nerves in the human rights community when he appeared to doubt the long-accepted historical understanding that 30,000 people died under the dictatorship. Asked in an interview with BuzzFeed how many people had been murdered, he testily replied: “I have no idea. That’s a debate I’m not going to enter, whether they were 9,000 or 30,000.”

Some sympathisers with the former regime have long raised doubts over the number of desaparecidos, but Macri’s words marked the first time that such denialist rhetoric gained admittance to mainstream political discourse.

Mario Ranaletti, professor of history at Tres de Febrero university, has specialized in the mindset of Argentinian denialist groups. “They consider military repression was a good and morally unquestionable act,” he says. “To them the cold war was a religious war.” Even today Ranaletti overhears Argentinians who argue that “they should have killed them all.”

Macri’s 9,000 number refers to a list of names compiled in the first years of democracy by the National Commission on the Disappearance of Persons (Conadep). Long touted by denialists as the only valid accounting, the list was never meant to be final. The military themselves reported 22,000 killings to Chilean intelligence in mid-1978. Five months later, the dictatorship informed the papal nuncio in Buenos Aires that it had killed 15,000 people, declassified US documents show.

Work still continues today on the identification of human remains in clandestine unmarked graves. And the Conadep list did not include non-disappeared victims whose bodies were returned to their families – or the undoubtedly vast number of unreported victims.

Taken together, such factors make the 30,000 estimate by human rights groups a reasonable assumption; perfectible by academic research perhaps, but never questioned before by an acting president.

Macri’s use of the term “dirty war” also chimed with denialist thinking, which holds there was no genocide – only an internal battle between the dictatorship and terrorists.

Partly to stop such creeping denialism, Argentina’s supreme court ruled in 2009 that the dictatorship’s killings between 1976 and 1983 constituted “crimes against humanity within the framework of [a] genocide”.

The fracture over dictatorship-era crimes exploded into verbal abuse last Thursday in the central city of Córdoba, after judges handed down 28 life sentences to former officers found guilty of 365 killings at the city’s La Perla death camp.

Outside the courtroom, pro-military activist Cecilia Pando hurled abuse at Estela de Carlotto, the 85-year-old head of Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo, a group of heroic grandmothers who over almost four decades have recovered 120 of their grandchildren from the families they were given to by the military once their mothers were murdered after giving birth.

“They were not young idealists, they were terrorists,” Pando yelled at the ageing grandmother, referring to the “disappeared” children of Carlotto and thousands of other mothers.

Possibly emboldened by recent meetings with Macri’s justice minister, Germán Garavano, Pando was giving vent to a belief fervently held among regime sympathisers that none—or few—of those murdered by the military were innocent victims.

But the US embassy in Buenos Aires at the time knew otherwise: Argentina’s military quickly eliminated the few hundred guerrillas who had been involved in lethal action, before they began to murder thousands of other young people unconnected to any violent activity. “Few who have disappeared since about mid-1977 could be considered terrorists or security threats,” reads a US state department cable recently declassified by Barack Obama after his visit to Argentina in March.

The killing numbers also refute any notion of a war. In a 1980 report titled “Terrorism in Argentina”, the dictatorship estimated that guerrillas killed only 687 people during the entire 1970s, compared with the 22,000 people the dictatorship told Chilean intelligence it had killed by 1978 alone.

At the Esma death camp in the capital city of Buenos Aires at least 3,000 civilians were murdered by the dictatorship. But only one Esma officer, Lieutenant Jorge Mayol, perished in a skirmish with guerrillas in 1976.

The military had a much wider target than just the guerrilla groups, which by 1976 were already in disarray. The regime openly vowed to defend “western and Christian civilization” by turning Argentina into “the moral reserve of the western world.”

To do that, thousands of young people with ideas borrowed from America’s hippie culture, the Paris of May 1968 and the Cuban revolution had to die. “Our Christian identity was in danger,” police commander Miguel Etchecolatz testified during his trial, kissing his white rosary before the judges.

But men like Etchecolatz are “political prisoners” who should be amnestied, say the pro-dictatorship activists who now have the ear of Macri’s government. Victoria Villarruel believes it was the guerrillas, not the military, who committed crimes against humanity.

She represents CELTYV (Centre for Legal Studies on Terrorism and its Victims), a group pressuring to reopen trials against former guerrillas even though the supreme court has conclusively ruled that guerrilla actions constituted ordinary crimes that have long fallen under the statute of limitations.

Those opinions appear to have found a sympathetic hearing from Macri’s administration. “What they seek is very valid, the recognition of civilians killed by terrorist groups,” said Claudio Avruj, the human rights secretary who has met with Villarruel.

Alejandro Rozitchner is Macri’s speechwriter and a longtime personal friend of the president. A philosopher who speaks openly about his marijuana use, he feels Argentina has dwelt long enough on the 1970s. “It has to do with keeping open a past that recedes increasingly further into the past,” he said.

Such words draw low, painful sighs from grandmother Carlotta. “It’s not the past to me or the other mothers, grandmothers and children of missing people,” she said.

Carlotta was united with her grandson only two years ago, 36 years after the military murdered her daughter after she gave birth in one of their death camps. She estimates 280 missing grandchildren remain still to be found.

“What do they pretend with this new language they’ve invented for human rights?” Carlotta asks. “Why do they meet with representatives of groups who claim that convicted murderers are political prisoners? They’re not political prisoners, they are genocidal killers, abominable assassins who refuse to confess who they gave our grandchildren to.”

*This article was first published in The Guardian in 2016. [Click here](#) to read the full article.*

## DISCUSSION

- This article begins to analyze current events in Argentina, featuring a number of weighty terms currently in the country’s discourse: “terrorists,” “dirty war,” “genocide,” “denialism,” and “repression.” How are each of these terms used within the discourse, and what are some of the beliefs currently fuelling denialist beliefs?

# 40 Years Later, the Mothers of Argentina's 'Disappeared' Refuse to be Silent

By Uki Goñi

*The following Guardian article from 2017 tracks 40-year legacy of the Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo as well as the historical and contemporary challenges and threats to the group's mission of searching for and raising awareness of the violence committed against Argentines under the military dictatorship in the 1970's and 1980's.*



The Mothers of Plaza de Mayo march against the military commanders who had planned the systematic murder of thousands.

Haydée Gastelú was among the first to arrive. “We were absolutely terrified,” she recalls.

On the afternoon of 30 April 1977, 14 courageous women set aside fear – and their families’ warnings – and left their homes to confront the dictatorship that had stolen their children.

That day marked the first weekly march by the mothers of Argentina’s “disappeared” against the military commanders who had planned the systematic murder of thousands.

Four decades on and 2,037 marches later, the mothers are still marching, though some of them must now use wheelchairs.

The mothers’ white headscarves became a symbol of courage and the relentless battle for justice – and they have largely succeeded in their original aims: as of 2016, more than 1,000 of the dictatorship’s torturers and killers had been tried and 700 sentenced.

But the mothers – most of them now in their late 80s – warn that the current era of alternative facts and revisionist history poses a new kind of threat for the country.



## 40 Years Later... (cont'd)

"Argentina's new government wants to erase the memory of those terrible years and is putting the brakes on the continuation of trials," says Taty Almeida, 86, whose 20-year-old son, Alejandro, disappeared in 1975.

Four decades on and 2,037 marches later, the mothers are still marching.

"This struggle began when we were in our 40s. Now, 40 years later, we have to start all over again."

These days, the mothers are hailed as human rights champions around the world and feted by the likes of Pope Francis and the former United Nations secretary-general Ban Ki-moon.

Forty years ago, however, they couldn't even get their neighbours to hear their plight. The mainstream press was silent, and a large segment of the country sympathized with the dictatorship.

"People were scared," recalls Gastelú, now 88. "If I talked about my kidnapped son at the hairdresser or supermarket they would run away. Even listening was dangerous.

"But I couldn't keep quiet. We needed everyone to know, even if nobody believed us. That's probably why they called us the Mad Mothers at first," she says.

"Of course we were mad," Almeida says. "Mad with grief, with impotence. They took a woman's most precious gift, her child."

At the time, the women couldn't gather in groups of more than three or four if they wished to avoid arrest. Instead, they marched two by two, around the Plaza de Mayo in front of the presidential palace every Thursday at 3.30pm.

Like thousands of other young people who were forcibly "disappeared" during the dictatorship, Gastelú's son Horacio – a biology student – was not actively involved in politics when he was seized by a group of armed men in August 1976 and disappeared without trace.

It took another 24 years before forensic anthropologists confirmed that he was one of 30 youths murdered by the army in revenge for the assassination of a general by leftwing guerrillas.

'But I couldn't keep quiet. We needed everyone to know, even if nobody believed us.'

Photograph: Eduardo Di Baia/Associated Press

After staging a coup in 1976, the military rapidly put into action a plan to crush any potential opposition, eventually murdering some 30,000 people – almost all of them unarmed non-combatants.

But in recent months the historical consensus over the 1976-1983 dictatorship has been challenged under Argentina's current centre-right president, Mauricio Macri.

His government suggests that the number of victims may have only been around 9,000, citing a provisional figure drawn up by a special commission after the return of democracy in 1983. But the military themselves reported killing 22,000 people in a 1978 communication to Chilean intelligence.

The Mothers of Plaza de Mayo – aware that their watch is drawing to a close – are deeply concerned by efforts to whitewash history – in Argentina and around the world.

"Among us there are mothers who escaped from the Nazi Holocaust, only to lose their Argentinian-born children to another dictatorship – so we know for a fact that these tragedies can repeat themselves," Gastelú says.

## 40 Years Later... (cont'd)

"The Argentine military took lessons from the Nazis," says Sara Rus, a 90-year-old Auschwitz survivor who settled in Argentina after the second world war – and whose son, Daniel, was killed by the military in 1977.

"I don't even have his bones to bury," says Rus, originally a Polish Jew from Lodz who still speaks Spanish with an accent.

And the mothers are painfully aware of the risk that can face those who speak out against tyranny. In December 1977, three of the group's leaders – along with two French nuns and seven young helpers – were abducted in a series of coordinated raids. All 12 were drugged and loaded on to aircraft – then thrown unconscious but still alive into the freezing waters of the South Atlantic.

Robbed of their original leaders, the mothers fell under the sway of Hebe de Bonafini, an energetic and highly politicized woman who had lost two sons to the dictatorship and who prioritized political aims over the search for truth and justice. The mothers eventually split into two groups.

Bonafini's group, while still active and important today, became embroiled in a corruption scandal during the government of former president Cristina Fernández de Kirchner that discredited her cause in the eyes of many.

Despite the split, the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo can look back with some satisfaction at the work accomplished.

A sister group – the Grandmothers of Plaza de Mayo – grew up alongside the Mothers, and have also had success tracking down the children of women who were abducted by the dictatorship while pregnant.

The young women were murdered shortly after giving birth and their babies handed over to military couples to raise as their own.

On Tuesday the Grandmothers announced that DNA had confirmed the identity of another victim – the 40-year-old son of two desaparecidos – Enrique Bustamante and Iris Nélica García Soler – bringing the number of "recovered grandchildren" to 122.

"We know that because of our age we will probably not live to see every single culprit condemned," says Taty Almeida. "But though we may need wheelchairs and walking canes today, for the time being the Mad Mothers are still around."

*This article was first published in The Guardian on April 28, 2017. [Click here](#) to read the full article.*

### DISCUSSION

- How was the Madres' mission initially received? Is this surprising, considering what you know about Videla's regime? Why or why not? Which cultural shift marks a "new threat" to the Madres' mission, and how is it a threat?
- What are the parallels drawn between Argentina and Germany? Are there parallels with other dictatorial regimes that you could draw, either from history or present day?

# Key Events in Argentina from 1946 to the Present Day

*The following timeline outlines and describes major events in Argentine history beginning with the rise of Juan Perón through the present day.*

**1946:** Juan Perón wins election for the presidency. He had promised workers higher wages and social security. His second wife, Eva Perón, is put in charge of labour relations.

**1949:** A new constitution strengthens the power of the president, including the ability to be re-elected. Congress, dominated by Perón's supporters, passes legislation providing jail terms for anyone showing disrespect for the government.

**1951:** Perón is re-elected president with an overwhelming majority.

**1955:** In September, a coup to overthrow Perón, staged by all three branches of the armed forces succeeds after three days of fighting, during which thousands are killed. Perón is ousted and takes refuge on a Paraguayan gunboat. He subsequently goes into exile in Paraguay, and later in Spain. The federal constitution of 1853, based on that of the United States, is restored.

**1966:** Military rule is imposed by a coup led by General Juan Carlos Onganía.

**1969:** In May, disturbances and riots in the cities of Corrientes, Rosario, and particularly Córdoba rise out of student and labour conflicts.

**1970:** The armed forces overthrow the Onganía government in June. General Roberto Marcelo Levingston replaces Onganía, but inflation returns and terrorist acts increases.

**1971:** Levingston is overthrown in March and replaced by General Alejandro Agustín Lanusse, who promised to re-establish democratic elections by the end of 1973.

**1973:** The Peronist party wins elections in March. Héctor Cámpora is inaugurated president. Argentina is wracked by acts of violence. Juan Perón returns to Buenos Aires in June. Cámpora resigns and Perón is elected president for a third time in a landslide September election.

**1974:** Juan Perón dies in July. His third wife, Isabel, succeeds him to the presidency. Violence from right and left escalates, leaving hundreds dead. There are strikes, demonstrations and high inflation.

**1975:** Inflation rises to more than 300% in Argentina.

**1976:** On March 29, five days after Argentine President Isabel Perón was deposed, a military junta appoints Lieut. Gen. Jorge Rafael Videla president. The Junta closes the National



Former Argentine President Juan Perón



## Timeline (cont'd)

Congress, imposes censorship, bans trade unions, and brings state and municipal government under military control. Meanwhile, Videla initiates a campaign against suspected dissidents. Throughout the country, the regime sets up hundreds of clandestine detention camps, where thousands of people were jailed and persecuted.



Jorge Rafael Videla

**1977-1981:** As the repression continues, the military government abducts, tortures, and kills left-wing militants, and anyone they claim are “subversives,” including all political opponents of the regime. Many of the targeted are young people, students and other youth trying to express their dissatisfactions with the regime. Many also had no political connections to a resistance group. The kidnapped people become referred to as “Los Desaparecidos” (the disappeared). The government obliterates any records that would help the families find the bodies of their children or reclaim their grandchildren who were kidnapped. The Regime steals babies born to pregnant prisoners.

**1977:** A group of mothers begins to meet each Thursday in the Plaza de Mayo in Buenos Aires, where they walk in non-violent demonstrations. The women become known as Las Madres/Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo. They march each Thursday holding the pictures of their grandchildren and wearing white scarves on their heads to represent peace and hope. Some of these women still march today, 40 years later.

**1981:** Videla is succeeded in March 1981 by General Roberto Viola, who, with the regime near its end, has difficulty controlling his military allies. In December, he is shouldered aside by Lieutenant General Leopoldo Galtieri.

**1982:** In April, Argentine forces occupy the British-held Falkland Islands, known to Argentines as Islas Malvinas, over which Argentina had long claimed sovereignty. The UK dispatches a force to re-take the islands, which it does in June. More than 700 Argentines are killed in the fighting. Galtieri is replaced by General Reynaldo Bignone.

**1983:** Democracy is restored in Argentina when Raúl Alfonsín of the Radical Civic Union, a major centre-left political party, wins the presidential election. Shortly after his inauguration, Alfonsín reverses legislation passed under Bignone by announcing plans to prosecute several members of the defunct military government, including former presidents Videla, Viola, and Galtieri. He also repeals a law granting amnesty to those accused of crimes and human rights violations, and hundreds of military personnel are prosecuted.

**1985:** In the trial of nine former junta members, five are convicted, including Videla and Viola. Galtieri is acquitted at the time, but is re-tried and convicted later this year.

**1986-1987:** Under increased pressure from the military, President Alfonsín pushes two amnesty laws through the National Congress: the full stop law and the due obedience law. The



The Madres de Plaza de Mayo

## Timeline (cont'd)

former sets a deadline for introducing new prosecutions, while the latter grants immunity to hundreds of military officers below the rank of colonel who are determined to have been following orders. Exceptions to this amnesty are made for cases of rape or abducting babies. Nevertheless, rebellion breaks out within the military in the spring.

**1989-1990:** Alfonsín resigns and is succeeded by Carlos Menem, who pardons Videla and other top officers convicted of human rights violations.



**1990:** Full diplomatic relations with the UK are restored. Argentina maintains its claim to the Falklands.

**1997:** A judge in Spain issues orders for the arrest of former Argentine military officers on charges of participating in the kidnapping and killing of Spanish citizens during military rule. Argentine amnesty laws protect the accused.

**1998 and through 2012:** Argentine judges order arrests in connection with the abduction of hundreds of babies from women detained during the military rule. Videla is charged with kidnapping babies and giving them to childless military couples during his regime. He is placed under house arrest in 1998 and sent to prison in 2008 after a judge revokes his house arrest status. Viola and Galtieri die before 2005, the year that Argentina's Supreme Court votes to repeal the amnesty laws passed by Alfonsín. Hundreds of military officers are tried, and several are convicted. In 2007, Bignone is charged with human rights abuses and taken into custody; he is convicted in 2010 and receives a 25-year sentence. In 2012, Videla, Bignone, and seven others are found guilty of the systematic abduction of babies born to political prisoners; Videla is given a 50-year sentence, while Bignone receives 15 years.

**2014:** Videla dies at the age of 87 in a prison outside of Buenos Aires.

**May 2017:** The Argentine Supreme Court rules to reduce a sentence for one prisoner convicted of crimes during the militaristic regime. In response, half a million people in Buenos Aires march in protest. Congress works to pass a bill that intends to prevent reducing any future prison sentences for crimes against humanity.

*To learn more about the events detailed below, [click here](#) to watch ¿Quién soy yo?, a documentary about the disappeared.*

# Tango Dance & Music



A unique fusion of present and past characterizes the dance and music style of **Arrabal**. The **Tango Dance and Music** section of this Toolkit introduces the essential elements of traditional Argentine tango and elaborates on the materials from the **Arrabal and the A.R.T.** section of this Toolkit (pages 32-40), giving a vivid picture of the important cultural implications of the dance and music style inspiring the play.

In “There is No Audience” (pages 33-34), members of the Arrabal band Orquesta Bajofonderos talk about the traditions and experimental evolution of Argentinean tango.

In “A Brief History of Argentine Tango” (pages 35-36), learn more about how the tango form developed in Argentina.

“Argentine Tango Styles” (pages 37-38) outlines the development of dominant tango dance styles in Argentina.

“10 Principles of Impeccable Tango Floor Craft” (page 39) introduces concepts of dance etiquette typical of Argentine tango.

“Bandoneon” (page 40) introduces the unique instrument, its development, and what sets it apart from other accordion instruments.



# There Is No Audience: An Interview with Orquesta Bajofonderos



Orquesta Bajofonderos performing at a Milonga night at A.R.T.'s second stage OBERON.

*Music is at the heart of **Arrabal**. The show's propulsive, electro-tango score (drawn from the music of Gustavo Santaolalla and his band Bajofondo) is played live by a five-piece ensemble. "Orquesta Bajofonderos," as the band is called, is at the center of the action, playing for virtually all of **Arrabal**'s 90 minutes. Patricio "Tripa" Bonfiglio (Bandoneon) and Pablo Martín (Double Bass/Ronroco)—both professional musicians active at the center of Buenos Aires' tango scene—took a few minutes out of rehearsal to talk with A.R.T. Publications & Artistic Programs Fellow Robert Duffley about tango's rich history and experimental, evolving present.*

**Audiences of Arrabal enter the theater to find themselves in a milonga, with dancers and musicians all around them. For audiences who might not have visited a tango club before, what is a "milonga"?**

TRIPA: Milonga is a lot of things. It's a subgenre of tango, and it's also a place where people go to dance tango. The word comes from African languages—along with other words like candombe, and tango, because the tango has roots, partly, in Africa, and also parts in Europe, the south of Italy, Spain, Poland. In Buenos Aires, at the end of the 19th century, there were a lot of immigrants—French, Italian, Russian, and Jewish people all living together. And tango comes out of that mixture, of all those peoples and cultures in one place, in Buenos Aires.

PABLO: The tango is a particular mix of all those pieces of things that people brought from their countries to Buenos Aires. The Bandoneon is a German instrument...

TRIPA: The strings come from Jewish and Eastern European music, the melancholy and lyric mood from Italy; there are elements of Spanish and African music. But it's not a fusion. It's a totally new thing, made by the people, not for the market.

PABLO: Tango comes from the music all those immigrant communities played in the big tenement houses. All those poor people, living together, invented it from scratch, and it's greater than the sum of its parts.

**Bajofondo, which created the music in Arrabal, is beloved in part for incorporating electronic elements into tango music. How does the addition of electronic music interact with tango's history?**

TRIPA: It's similar to what we were talking about earlier—the mixture between different styles of music that formed tango in the first place. And Orquesta Bajofonderos is a mixture, too. Each of us has his past. I play traditional tango, and with my group, Rascasuelos, I also play new music. We have a milonga of our own.

**In a milonga, what is the relationship between the band, the dancers, and the audience?**

PABLO: There is no audience. In a milonga, everyone dances. You can go to watch, but that's rare—it's a place to dance. Music, theater—I don't know, thousands of years ago, there was no separation between audience and artists. When it was your turn, you danced; when it was your turn, you played; when it was your turn, you sang. And when it was your turn, you listened. Milonga is that. Something like 400, 500 years ago, theaters separated the stage and the people, but it wasn't always that way.

TRIPA: The whole place is a show, which everybody together is part of. Some of them can be a little more orthodox, less open to change. But as a musician, for me, a milonga is place that I can try out new arrangements, new aesthetics, new music—I can see whether they work with the dancers. It feels like a laboratory—like you're trying things all the time. It's an investigation.

**How does this concept of mixture—between peoples, cultures, and histories—influence the structure of Arrabal?**

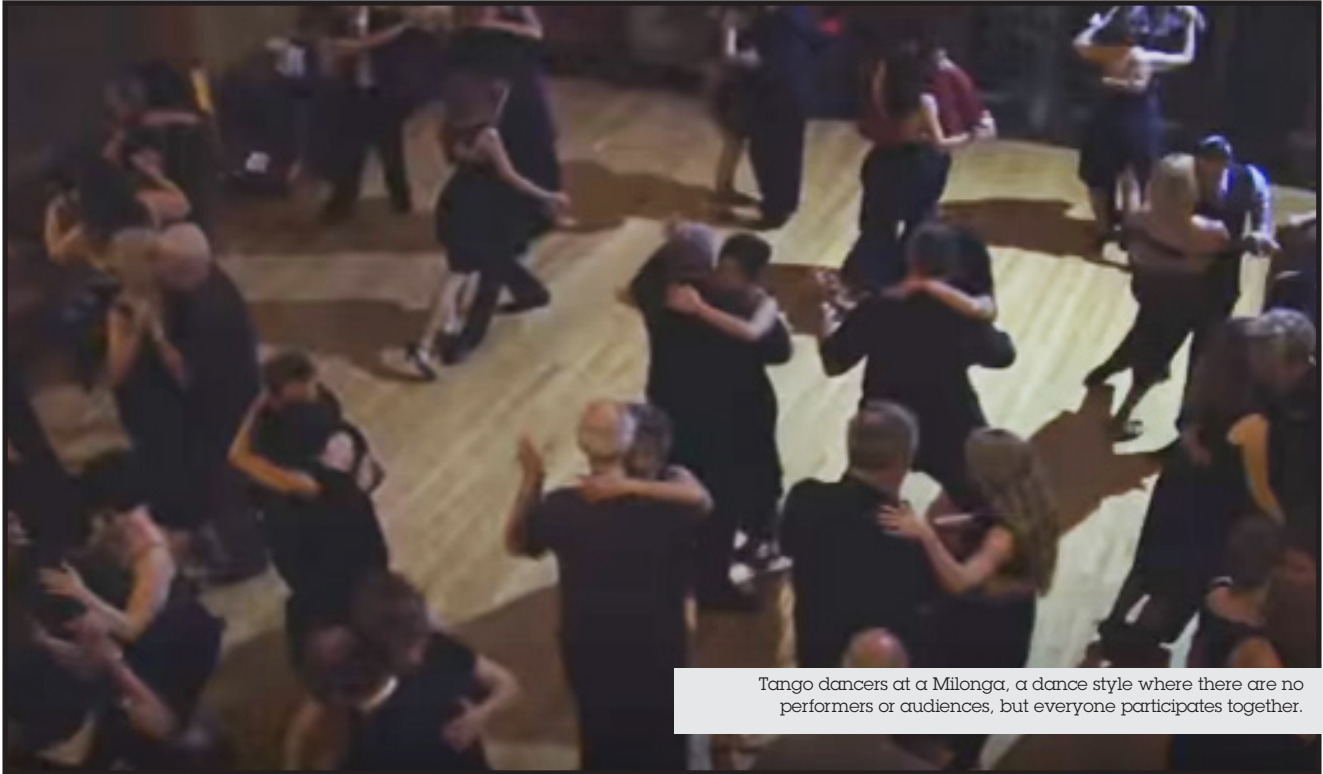
PABLO: Arrabal is a new thing. Again, created from scratch. The show starts with a tango lesson, and the dancers come offstage and interact with people. The idea is that you experience everything—I remember when they called me to ask me to be a part of the show, they said, “You go through every state of emotion—through sexual arousal, through fear, crying, everything.” It's really sensitive for us. Especially, in one sense, because we're living our recent history onstage. We all have someone we knew who suffered torture, who's still missing. And we are professionals—we come here and do our job, but as soon as you pinch the nerve, we can start crying in a second. So it's challenging, and also thrilling.

TRIPA: It's a bit of a catharsis for us. And on the other side, it's also interesting to present this in the US—it's important that people here know this history.

**It's a history that isn't over, for you and so many others.**

PABLO: It's interesting for us, because we are the generation that is carrying the flag. We say, “Ni olvido, ni pardon,” like, “We don't forget, and we don't forgive,” and that's the theme; never again. We don't want this anywhere. Anywhere in the world.

# A Brief History of Argentine Tango



Tango dancers at a Milonga, a dance style where there are no performers or audiences, but everyone participates together.

When talking about the history of the Tango, the reader should consider that although there were many 'influences' in the creation and life of the Tango, it is very important not to assume that it was some form of linear development.

Whilst dances and music from around the world have had some influence, this rather detracts from the people who really created and evolved the Tango into its current form. These are the people of Buenos Aires, who in the bars, cafes and dance halls made the Tango, danced the Tango, lived, loved and occasionally died for the Tango.

It is the voice of the streets of Buenos Aires. Any suggestion that they may be dancing some sort of second hand steps or regurgitating music taken from Europe or Africa must be rejected as some what insulting to all the great milongueros who have danced and innovated down through years. It is equally insulting to the great Tango maestros who have drawn on their own life experiences when composing music.

Almost certainly, the most important factor in the evolution of the Tango was the influence brought in by the Habanera, created in Havana, Cuba, and also known as the Andalusian Tango.

Unfortunately there is now insufficient information to assess exactly how this was originally danced. The Habanera was based on the concept of a 'walk', the same as the Tango.

At some point the Milonga and The Habanera were fused to form the embryonic version of the Tango. At this point you have a dance which has influences from around the world.

From about 1880, large scale immigration, most of whom were men, increased the



## A Brief History of Argentine Tango (cont'd)

population Buenos Aires. One figure suggests that at one point the ratio may have been about 50 men for every woman.

Men tempted by the idea of a better life and streets paved with gold, instead found a lonely squalid place with muddy streets and poor accommodation. Often they were stranded on the outskirts of the city and everyday became a struggle to survive.

It is here in the brothels and bordellos on the back streets of Buenos Aires, that the Tango really came to life. These illegal brothels, most became known as Academies de Dance, were the massage parlors of their day. The dance had to be simple, so if the police raided the joint there would appear to be “dancing instruction” going on.

The dance probably started out as some form of acting out of the relationship between the prostitute and pimp. This was often reflected in the titles of the first tangos which referred to characters in the world of prostitution. It must also be noted that when written lyrics began to appear, women were often portrayed as evil temptresses, there to lead men into sin and degradation.

At this time the dance was totally rejected by the upper class elite of Buenos Aires society as a dirty street dance, although many of the young well-to-do gentlemen would allegedly visit the ‘Dance Academies’ for instruction.

Around 1880, a new instrument arrived from Germany, the Bandoneon. A difficult instrument to master but its wailing sound caught the very feeling of the Tango. It became inextricably linked to the music of the Tango, from then to now.

From the early 1900’s, however, a new type of lyric began to appear: one recalling bygone times, often with a sad melancholia, recalling wasted lives, lost loves, unrequited love, the missing of a mother, the missing of your barrios [district] or street but most all, the love of the Tango itself. The lyrics were written in the language of the streets of Buenos Aires: Lunfardo, a mixture of Spanish, Italian, Native Creole and words strangely twisted.

The change in the Tango lyrics may also have occurred at this time because it is thought that Tango was first demonstrated by the Argentinean playboy Ricardo Güiraldes in 1910/1911 in Paris. It was so different from the dances of the time and considered somewhat obscene. It challenged the conventions of acceptable public behavior of the time. The Comtesse Melainie de Pourtalès stated, upon seeing a demonstration of the dance in 1912, “Is one supposed to dance it standing up”.

The dance was banned by the Pope after a private viewing, and Kaiser Wilhelm I forbade his officers to dance it whilst wearing their uniforms, effectively banning it from all state balls.

Yet the Tango survived, and evolved, thanks to the people of Buenos Aires. But it is not the end of the story. In a way, the Tango is even more threatened today than in its early years. Why?

Because of the creeping Europeanization of the dance. The Europeans and the North Americans see the dance in terms of “steps” and “I want more steps, and more steps”.

More than anything else, the Tango is about a connection, an empathy between two people, the need to embrace, and be in the arms of another, to escape, albeit for just a brief moment of time, and in that moment, to live a lifetime...

Tango must be simply danced, with immense feeling, with a sense of energy flowing between the dancers. This energy grows or decreases as the music ebbs and flows. It is a seduction, or a private conversation, something to be quietly shared, not publicly displayed.

*This article was first published by the Tango Club of Albuquerque. [Click here](#) to read the full article.*

[Click here](#) to watch a video about Argentine Tango.

# Argentine Tango Styles



Argentine Tango is separated into two main types; social tango and stage tango. The formal name for all styles of social tango is Salon Tango (a salon is what a dance hall is called in Buenos Aires). Salon Tango places emphasis on connecting with your partner and the music, dancing in harmony with others in the salon (requiring good navigation skills), and good etiquette (called Códigos, or Codes). Stage Tango is danced for the entertainment of people watching, with emphasis on big, flashy movements. These two main groups of tango are further broken down into more specific ways of dancing (often referred to as a style).

Most people dance their own personal mix of several styles, and may even change how they dance based on conditions in the salon. In Buenos Aires they say if you watch ten couples dance Tango you will see ten different styles.

## **Orillero-Style, Villa Urquiza-Style Tango**

Orillero style is a social style that originated in the late 1800's. It is danced with a more upright body posture. The embrace can open and close, and is offset (with the follower slightly to the right side of the leader) and in a V (the embrace is close on leader's right and open on the leader's left). Villa Urquiza style has influences from Orillero style, but is danced in a smoother more refined way than the bouncy, rhythmic Orillero style. Both styles were more common in the suburbs of Buenos Aires where the dance floors were less crowded, allowing for more embellishments and use of more floor space.

## **Milonguero-Style, Almagro-Style, Apilado, Estilo del Centro, Club-Style**

Milonguero-style tango is a social style danced with a slightly leaning posture that joins the couple at the chest. The couple maintains upper body contact, taking a minimum of

## Elements of Argentine Tango (cont'd)

space on the dance floor. This style of dance was developed for the crowded dance floors in downtown Buenos Aires. It is also referred to as Apilado (“piled-up,” describing the look of the embrace), or Estilo del Centro (“Style of Downtown”). Although this style developed in the 1940’s, it was not called Milonguero-Style until the 1990’s by Susana Miller. The term created controversy, but at the time the term Salon Tango (which Milonguero Style is classified as) had been in wide-spread misuse by dance instructors who were actually teaching something closer to show tango with no emphasis on navigation or the códigos. Susana Miller taught this style with Oscar “Cacho” Dante in barrio Almagro in Buenos Aires, which is why it is sometimes called Almagro-Style.

### Tango Nuevo

Tango Nuevo originally referred to the style of music pioneered by Astor Piazzola’s orchestra, decades before the dance style emerged. Tango Nuevo in reference to dance originally did not refer to a particular style, but rather to tango’s evolution since it’s resurgence in Buenos Aires in the 1990’s. At that time Argentines new to tango, but experienced in modern dance, took an analytic approach to understanding tango. This method of analyzing and teaching tango has affected virtually all other styles of tango. Since the 1990’s, usage of the term Nuevo Tango has evolved and is now used to describe tango danced in an flexible embrace, upright posture, and emphasis placed on each dancer maintaining their own separate axis. It is characterized by large, showy moves, placing this style on the boundary of social and show tango.

### Fantasia, Escenario, Stage Tango, Show Tango

Show Tango is usually choreographed and danced by professionals in stage shows and movies. It is frequently the first style of Tango seen by people outside Argentina. This style of Tango incorporates many steps from other styles of Tango and includes many elements from ballet and modern dance. It is danced very large and flamboyantly which is why it is a beautiful dance to watch. However, its lack of emphasis on navigation and the need for large spaces makes it unsuitable for social dancing.

*This resource and more can be found in the Tango Club of Albuquerque’s collection of Argentine Tango resources [here](#).*

*[Click here](#) to watch a video about Argentine Tango.*

# 10 Principles of Impeccable Tango Floor Craft

By Daniel Boardman

1. Maintain a lane. When danced socially, tango is danced in strict circular lanes with couples advancing around the room in a counterclockwise direction (called “line-of- dance”). There may be one or more concentric lanes moving simultaneously. Once in a lane, avoid changing lanes during the dance.
2. Look before backing up. Never step backwards against traffic blindly. Likewise, avoid other movements that cause you or your partner to suddenly occupy space behind you in line-of-dance because the dancer behind you may have already begun advancing into that space.
3. Avoid passing. Tango is not a race. If the dancer in front of you is advancing more slowly than you would like, alter your dance so that it is more circular and less linear. Learn to dance well and happily without much forward advancement.
4. No parking. Standing and chatting with your partner between songs is fine, but keep an awareness of when the couples around you start dancing again and move accordingly. If the other dancers have begun to dance and you wish to continue your conversation, simply step off the floor so you don't obstruct them.
5. Never zigzag. Cutting in and out of line-of-dance is very poor form and disturbing to the dancers you are cutting in front of. If you choose to dance in the center of the room, remain there throughout the song. If you dance in a given lane, finish the dance in that same lane.
6. Don't monopolize the space. There are many styles of tango. Some require a relatively large amount of floor space; some require a minimal amount of floor space. All styles are fine under the right conditions. If a floor is crowded, dance small, not taking up any more space than any of your fellow dancers. If the floor is not crowded, and you are so inclined, dance large.
7. Avoid dangerous moves. Certain moves, such as high in-line boleos, can be dangerous on a crowded floor. Save them for less crowded conditions.
8. Don't talk, dance! Talking while dancing is bad form, reveals the dancer's lack of presence in the moment, and is distracting to other dancers. Save the conversation for when the music stops. Teaching or correcting your partner is particularly inappropriate at a milonga. Save it for a practica.
9. Dance with the room. Endeavor to dance with an awareness of all of the dancers around you. Do not allow gaps in the line-of-dance in front of you to form as this will cause a pileup of dancers behind you. When the music begins, start dancing when the majority of other dancers do.
10. Ask before merging. Before stepping onto a crowded dance floor, if you are a leader, make eye contact with the leader whom you wish to enter the floor in front of. The leader should understand your request and indicate his assent with a nod or wink, and you may then enter line-of-dance.

*This resource and more can be found in the Tango Club of Albuquerque's collection of Argentine Tango resources [here](#).*

*[Click here](#) to watch a video about Argentine Tango.*



# Bandoneon



The bandoneon was developed by Heinrich Band in the 1840's. Although invented in Germany, it quickly made its way to Argentina and became synonymous with the Argentine tango. The first instruments were constantly being changed and most of the early versions of the instrument have different number of buttons in different positions on the face plates. In 1924, the number and positions of the buttons were standardized to include 72 buttons that cover a five octave range. Both the accordion and concertina were being developed around the same time as the bandoneon.

With the appearance of a square accordion, the bandoneon is actually closer to the concertina (using all buttons rather than a traditional piano keyboard as the mechanism to sound the notes). Each end of the bandoneon is a square wooden box containing a small reed organ operated by several rows of buttons. These boxes are connected by a folding bellows. Expanding and contracting the bellows provides air to the reed organs producing the sounds, and depressing the buttons directs air to the appropriate reed. The right side is a descant reed organ with 37 buttons for playing the melody notes. The left side is a bass reed organ with 35 buttons for playing bass notes. Unlike the accordion, the bandoneon buttons are not arranged like a normal keyboard and the bass buttons do not sound full chords. Each button can sound up to two notes, one note with the air flowing out (blowing as the bellows are compressed) and a second note with the air flowing in (sucking as the bellows are expanded). This means with 72 buttons there are 144 possible notes. This is arranged with 37 buttons (74 possible notes) on the descant side for the right hand and 35 buttons (70 possible notes) on the bass side for the left hand. The descant side also has a thumb lever that disengages the reed organ, so the bellows can expand or contract without sounding any notes.

*This article was first published by Argentine Tango. [Click here](#) to read the full article online.*

# Lesson Plan: Movement Storytelling

## OBJECTIVES

*Through this exercise, featuring the music of Bajofondo in **Arrabal**, students will practice making connections between abstract concepts, music, movement, and storytelling. Through this exercise, students will work on the following skills: metaphorical thinking, social-emotional connection, musicality, communicating through body language, spatial awareness, critical thinking, and drawing thematic and emotional connections between diverse artistic media..*

*This activity is designed as a pre- or post-show activity before or after seeing **Arrabal**.*

## MATERIALS

Sticky notes  
Paper  
Writing utensils  
Bajofondo music (see below)  
Speakers

## SETUP

The room should have enough open space for all students to walk around at the same without running into each other.

## PROCEDURE

### A. "CONNECTION"

1. Provide students with one piece of paper and one sticky note each.
2. Write the word "Connection" on the board.
3. Students brainstorm for 1-2 minutes about the word "Connection" and what that word means to them, recording their thoughts on their piece of paper.
4. Students choose one item from their brainstorm list to write on their sticky note.
5. One at a time, students read their sticky note out loud, and stick it on the board.

### B. MOVEMENT: SPATIAL AWARENESS

1. Inform your students that this exercise will encourage them to tell a story through their bodies. This is not something to get anxious about.
2. Instruct students to walk around the room at what they consider to be their normal speed. On a scale of 1-10, their normal speed is a 5. Encourage the whole group to find a "5" they agree on.
3. Guide students through different speeds, focusing first on larger shifts (i.e. from level 5 to level 1), and allow them to find different speeds from 1-10.
  - Students should not interact or speak with each other. Instead, they should focus on their own movement and try to fill all of the empty space in the room.
  - If students start to create a predictable pattern (usually a circle), encourage them to try different pathways.
4. Tell them to stop, sit, and sit down.

## Lesson Plan: Movement Storytelling (cont.)

5. Check-in with the class about what they are feeling about the activity:

- What was fun? What were the challenges?
- What were you focusing on while you were moving?
- Did you have a sense of being a part of a group?
- What did the song make you feel?
- How did it impact the way you moved?
- Were you able to make any connections with anybody? Did you choose to do so?
- How do you think what we just did relates to dance?

### C. MUSIC & MOVEMENT

1. Students find their own place to sit in the room with their paper, and a writing utensil.

2. Play a song by Bajofondo for the students. While listening, students write down descriptive words (adjectives) the music makes them think of. Music can be found here:

- “Pide Piso”: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GnekEPW4Okq>
- “Cuesta Arriba”: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RuOWJVNILzs>
- “Pa’ Bailar”: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=riuF\\_Ur3unc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=riuF_Ur3unc)

3. Students get up and walk around the space as before, this time while listening to the Bajofondo song.

- Students move however they would like to the music. This exercise is for them to respond to the music they are hearing with their movement. They can continue to walk, they can dance, etc.
- Students may also interact with one another, without words.
- The group’s goal is to tell one collective story inspired by the music.

4. When the song has finished, have students break into groups of 4 or 5.

5. Each group chooses three of the descriptive words from their Bajofondo music brainstorm (3 words per group).

6. Each group has 10 minutes to create a 20-second movement piece telling a story of “connection” inspired by the three words they have chosen.

7. Once each group has finished working, each group shares their music piece with the whole group.

8. Discussion of each movement piece should include: What did you see? What words would you use to describe this scene? How would you summarize the story of this scene?

### Starting Points for Reflection

- What is something new you thought about during this activity?
- What was challenging?
- How did the song influence your movements?
- How does the activity we just did relate to dance or storytelling?

# Lesson Plan: *Arrabal* History Tableau

## OBJECTIVES

*Through movement and making personal connections, this exercise guides students to understand the historical background of **Arrabal** and the dictatorial military rule in Argentina more deeply.*

## MATERIALS

Copies of articles “Final Countdown” (pages 21-22), “Blaming the Victims” (pages 23-25) and “40 Years Later” (pages 26-28)  
Copy of the timeline on pages 29-31  
Scissors  
Paper and writing utensils  
Sticky notes

## SETUP

Have enough room for the students to move.  
Each student receives paper, sticky notes, and a writing utensil.  
Cut the timeline into slips (one slip per entry). Select a number (1 for every 3 or 4 students) of events to be the focus of the students’ analysis.

## PROCEDURE

1. Write the word “Lost” on the board.
2. Give the students 1-3 minutes to write down words and phrases they relate to the theme “lost.” This is private and should be stream-of-consciousness.
3. Invite students to write anything they feel comfortable sharing on a sticky note. Give them 1-2 minutes to add their sticky notes to the board. Let them know that these will be read out loud.
4. Once all of the sticky notes are collected, read them out loud.
5. Pose a question for 1-2 minutes of silent reflection: “When you think of ‘losing someone’ what does that make you think of?”
5. Explain that very recently (40 years ago), a military dictatorship kidnapped, harmed, and killed almost an entire generation of students, teachers, families, and more.
6. Explain that the students will learn about these events and they will respond to the events creatively.
7. Divide the class into groups of three or four.
8. **Extension Option:** Provide one of the three articles to each group. Allow them 10 minutes to read and summarize the article in 2-3 sentences. Each group may present their article to the full class. These articles may also be assigned as homework or in-class reading *before* this exercise.
9. Hand out slips of paper with events from the timeline, one per group.
10. Each group brainstorms words that describe the event on their slip of paper. Each group should select 3 words from their brainstorm.
11. Give the students 5 minutes to create a tableau (a still picture pose involving everyone in the group) based on the the three words they have chosen, inspired by the timeline event and the idea of loss.
  - Encourage students to use gestures and movements that are not literal depictions of their event.
  - Encourage students to think about how each person can have a different role in the tableau.



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12. **Extension Option:** Give each group an additional slip of paper from the timeline for them to create a second tableau. After each group has two tableaux, they must find a creative way to move from the first tableau to the second, creating a short movement piece.

13. Each group presents their tableau to the whole class. Make sure to build-in time for reflection with each group, starting with audience reactions before allowing the presenting students to comment:

- What kind of story is being told in this tableau? What is happening? What is each person doing?
- How does this relate to the idea of loss? What other words would you use to describe this tableau?

### Starting Points for Reflection

Use the following questions to prompt discussion

- What did people lose during the years of the military regime in Argentina?
- What parallels do you see in today's world?
- Why does something like this happen?
- How do you think events like these affected arts and culture?

# Resources

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