

LÁTIGO TRACK NOTES



1- **CACHITA:** This hugely popular *rhumba* by the Puerto Rican composer, singer, and actor, Rafael Hernandez, swings with the most joyful Latin style. Xavier Cugat's band turned it into a hit in the 1940's with singer Machito and 60 years later we heard this tune again in the film "Pleasantville." The happiness evoked by *Cachita's* simple melody and exuberant rhythms provided a perfect palette for combining a string quartet with Latin percussion.

2- **MILONGUEANDO EN EL CUARENTA**, composed by Armando Pontier, is a highly-stylized piece of programmatic music. The string-playing tango technique – *látigo* – for which this album is named can be heard in this piece when I quickly sweep up the neck of the violin to create the sound something like the crack of a whip. This piece puts us in a public dance palace (a *milonga*) in the 1940's (*en el cuarenta*) where the local folk are out for an evening of tango. The music embodies this dance form's perfect elegance and refinement and, at the same time, suggests a certain joy and innocence. When I play this piece I like to think that these tango dancers are fully aligned in those hours of dancing – happiness, beauty, movement all come together in their movements to this music. And then back to life's harsher realities ...

3- **CROWDAMBO:** I wrote this piece as an homage to my teacher and mentor, Anne Crowden, who passed away in 2004. Anne instilled in me a dedication to musical expression that truly became the basis of my violin-playing. She communicated to me how important it is that the joy of music-making be evident in my playing at every moment. In this little musical "thank you" to Anne I found myself cooking up a musical soup of favorite sounds, techniques, and rock and classical-infused ideas held together by a *mambo* rhythm.

4- **A LOS AMIGOS:** Translated, "To the friends," this piece was written by a musician for musicians. Armando Pontier of Buenos Aires was a bandoneonist, a composer, and a very successful bandleader. This work displays a wide range of emotion and intensity using broad elements of string playing from extremely soft and light to incredibly intense and passionate. *A los amigos* beckons us to bring this music out from inside our souls.

5- **FELICIA:** Born in Uruguay to Spanish parents, Enrique Saborido moved to Buenos Aires where he developed as a violinist, pianist, composer and, perhaps fittingly, a dance instructor. *Felicia*, a traditional tango, conjures up a lovers' spat characterized by an intensity which carries through the entire piece from start to finish. Truly an "athletic" tango for dancers and musicians alike!

6- **FELIPE:** This Brazilian *choro* was written for Quartet San Francisco by Evan Price of the Turtle Island String Quartet. Evan named it for his friend Felipe who returned to his native Brazil after studying at the Berklee School of Music. We really enjoy playing this piece which holds some fun rhythms and special effects as well as some stretches of free improvisation.

7- **LA CUMPARSITA:** Written in 1917 and perhaps the most famous and beloved tango of them all, it is thought that *La Cumparsita* has its roots in an Uruguayan march called *La Cumparsa*. Re-worked as a tango in Buenos Aires, it quickly became its own craze which continues to hold true these ninety years later. The element of controversy that exists surrounding the origins and authorship of this piece perhaps contributes to its popularity among tango lovers everywhere.

8- **MELODIA EN LA MENOR:** The great *nuevo tango* composer and bandoneonist of our era, Astor Piazzolla, had an uncanny ability to compose simple yet beautifully-crafted melodies that communicate a deep soulfulness. *Melodia*, with its rhythmic strength requiring certainty and calmness of the players, is a fine example of his mastery.

9- **LIBERTANGO:** One of Astor Piazzolla's most familiar works, this piece demonstrates *bravura* from its first bars. Its driving harmonic tension carries the listener on a thrilling rise of excitement. *Tango* and romanticism meet here in a brilliant example of what we call a "classical crossover" style and this work seems headed toward a permanent place in that genre.

10- **ARMANDO'S RHUMBA:** Chick Corea's popular *rhumba* suggested to me a chamber music "prêt-a-porter" – it was ready to go, so well-suited for a string quartet arrangement. While simple it contains an inherent complexity that takes the listener on a meandering journey. I enjoy this piece for its ribbon-like melody which agrees with the singing nature of stringed instruments.

11- **EL DÍA QUE ME QUIERAS:** This Carlos Gardel classic is near and dear to all tango lovers. "The day that you would love me" describes the yearning that lives within the sad soul of a man hoping that the woman of his dreams will someday love him. I wrote this arrangement for the quartet to take to the 2004 International Tango Competition at the Argentinian Consulate in New York. When we performed this in the final round of competition the romantic spirit of Carlos Gardel seemed to be in the room with us. We were awarded the grand prize and went to Buenos Aires to perform in the summer of 2004.

12- **TAQUITO MILITAR:** The title of this *milonga* implies the tap on the sole of a military boot. The sound of boots marching down the streets of Buenos Aires provides the rhythmic foundation of this energetic and animated piece by the living tango legend, Mariano Mores.

13- **COMME IL FAUT:** *Comme il faut*, "exactly as it should be," is the *tango* that was my vehicle to understanding the level of musical and stylistic elegance required of good tango musicians. Using a combination of muscle, grit, and nearly-fanatical elegance our job is to demonstrate great strength with fine finish.

14- **GALLO CIEGO:** Augustin Bardi's *Gallo ciego* or "blinded rooster" tells the tale of the lone survivor of a cock fight, perhaps a metaphor for the Argentine male. The blinded rooster walks tall in spite of the damage incurred in his struggle to survive. We try to demonstrate dignity and pride in our performance of this dramatic piece.

15- **COOL:** Turtle Island String Quartet founder, David Balakrishnan, arranged this Leonard Bernstein "West Side Story" classic for string quartet with loads of craft and understanding for string writing. These tools come together in an arrangement as vibrant and thrilling as it is in its original orchestral form. We love to sink our teeth into Dave's arrangement of this piece from perhaps one of the greatest theatrical scores of the twentieth century.

16- **NUEVO TANGO:** Astor Piazzolla gives us in his "new tango" an angst-filled, modern, metropolitan masterpiece. It holds all of life's essential ingredients – passion, *sturm* and *drang*, *pathos* and wild intensity. Playing this piece is a significant journey and this seems true with every performance of it. In playing *Nuevo Tango* I feel connected to the largeness of Piazzolla's passion still so evident in his music these fifteen years after his death.

NOTES BY JEREMY COHEN, ARRANGER AND PRODUCER