



MEET THE COMPOSER: Astor Piazzolla

Age Range:	Elementary, Middle School, High School
Introduction:	Composers write music, just like authors write books. In the Class Notes “Meet the Composer” series, we will learn a little bit about the achievements, backstory, and influences of a variety of composers. Get ready to learn about these influential composers and listen to some of their music.
Total Video Time:	13:13
Total Lesson Time:	Approximately 25-30 minutes

BACKGROUND on Astor Piazzolla

Astor Piazzolla was born in 1921 Argentina. Argentina is known for a particular style of music called tango. Tango is closely connected to a certain kind of dance of the same name. Astor Piazzolla was a composer and performer who added classical and jazz influences to tango music to create something called nuevo tango, or “new tango.”

As a child, Astor Piazzolla learned to play the *bandoneon*, an instrument related to the concertina and accordion. A bandoneon has reeds, like a woodwind instrument, but bandoneon players squeeze air through bellows to make the reeds vibrate instead of blowing on a reed like a woodwind player. He became a virtuoso bandoneon player while also studying composition. Many of his compositions featured the bandoneon, which is a common instrument in tango music.

Throughout his life, Astor Piazzolla moved around to many different places, including New York City, Paris, and Italy. Being exposed to different compositional styles and music from different places helped him add new elements to traditional tango music to create something new.

MUSIC of Astor Piazzolla

1. Almost all of Astor Piazzolla’s music featured the bandoneon, the instrument he played so well. Watch and listen to the composer play the bandoneon on his own composition, *Libertango*.

[Libertango](#). Composed 1974. Video approx. 4 minutes.

2. Inspired by Italian composer Antonio Vivaldi, Astor Piazzolla wrote his own version of *The Four Seasons*, Vivaldi’s most famous piece. Like Vivaldi’s work, these pieces are meant to capture the feel and mood of a certain season. Astor Piazzolla called his version *The Four Seasons of Buenos Aires*. Piazzolla originally composed the work for a small tango ensemble. Another musician arranged Piazzolla’s version for full orchestra with a violin soloist and included a few lines of melody from Vivaldi’s piece.

[The Four Seasons of Buenos Aires: Summer](#). Composed 1965. Video approx. 6 minutes.

3. Astor Piazzolla wrote a “tango opera” called *Maria of Buenos Aires*. In this *aria*, or song from the opera, you hear tango elements and see two dancers dancing the tango.

[María of Buenos Aires: Yo Soy María](#). Composed 1968. Video approx. 3.5 minutes.



MEET THE COMPOSER:

Astor Piazzolla, cont.

CREATE, CONNECT, & RESPOND to Piazzolla's music

1. Astor Piazzolla lived and travelled to many places and was influenced by music from many places. Think more about the connection between music and culture in the Class Notes lesson [Music & Geography: Around the World](#).
2. Tango music is deeply connected to dance. Check out these lessons to further connect music and dance.

[Dance Party: Groovy Beats](#)

[Dance Party: Music Through The Ages](#)

Astor Piazzolla

FAST FACTS

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