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## Amsterdam Meets New Tango— Pablo Ziegler & Metropole Orkest



Pianist Pablo Ziegler will always be remembered for his auspicious role from 1978 to 1989 in Astor Piazzolla's transcendent New Tango Quintet. Upon Piazzolla's death in 1992, Ziegler became a key force in New Tango, his mentor's innovative blend of tango, jazz, and classical music. Ziegler plays both his own and Piazzolla's compositions in various settings while expanding upon Piazzolla's vision, and has drawn many jazz musicians into the fold, including Joe Lovano, Paquito D'Rivera, James Carter, Joe Locke, and Stefon Harris, all attracted by the challenge and passion of the music. This CD presents selections from a 2009 concert that brought together Ziegler's quartet with Amsterdam's Metropole Orkest, founded in 1945 and the world's largest pop and jazz orchestra, which has shared the stage with such artists as Andrea Bocelli, Ella Fitzgerald, Stan Getz, and Pat Metheny. It's a tribute to both the versatile musicianship of the Orkest's members, and Ziegler's ever-present inspiration, that the orchestra is able to play these arrangements of Ziegler's tunes with such conviction and authenticity. Ziegler's quartet includes Quique Sinesi on guitar, Walter Castro on bandoneon, and Quintino Cinalli on percussion and cajón, and while it's clear when someone from this group is soloing, this is not the case with the Orkest players since the CD notes provide no such details.

For "Buenos Aires Report," Ziegler's reverberating tones and the dissonance-tinged string section create a tense atmosphere to evoke "the chaotic, urban city of Buenos Aires." A magnetic uncredited trumpet solo, and Castro's fluid, expressive bandoneon outing precede Ziegler's energetic foray, as the Orkest blares behind him. A contrapuntal volley between strings and horns makes for an exciting finish capped by the pianist's jabbing, circular theme (first heard as the title tune of an earlier CD). The only non-Ziegler composition is Sinesi's "Milonga par Hermeto," dedicated to Hermato Pascoal, and it successfully captures Pascoal's harmonic and melodic personality. The infectious milonga rhythm builds up to the Orkest's interjection and the swirling them itself with Castro in the lead. The full textures at times give this piece a movie theme sound, but Sinesi's nimble, lucid solo, a brawny (uncredited) tenor sax statement, and Ziegler's prancing improv, with fiery orchestral support, bring things down-to-earth. The reprise has great climactic impact. Blues meets New Tango on "Blues Porteño." The initial bass ostinato is reminiscent of the one on the Beatles' "Come Together," and a darting Castro and bluesy Ziegler are backed by a sultry string orchestration that ebbs and flows gracefully. Sinesi contributes a subtle solo, while a saxophonist comes on more forcefully. Muted trumpets add to the overriding heady atmosphere.

"Desperate Dance" is in 7/4 rather than the usual 2/4 tango rhythm, as Ziegler visualizes "desperate dancers" trying hard to adjust to the novelty. His quartet and the Orkest have no such problem, with the dramatic, insistent pulse spurring a probing trombone solo, Castro's finely threaded trip, and an assertive trumpet turn. The zesty rhythmic framework serves as the main element of the arrangement's final section. The title "Murga del Amanecer" also defines a primitive rhythm from the 1920's of African origin. Ziegler's vamp and the strings lustily pave the way for Castro's recital of the celebratory theme. The Orkest appropriates the theme for itself in soaring fashion prior to dancing solos by Ziegler, Sinesi, and a trumpeter. The pianist entrances during the easing down of the out chorus. "Places" has a provocative melodic and rhythmic opening, and the variety of moods and harmonies in the sections that follow make this work very reminiscent of Piazzolla's *modus operandi*. Castro and Ziegler offer melancholy improvs prior to a more upbeat interlude sparked by the bandoneonist, Sinesi, and unyielding projections from the Orkest.

The slow waltz "Pájaro Angel" begins with interplay between Ziegler and Sinesi before romantic strings and horns emerge and oscillate around the pianist and guitarist's lyrical and thoughtful solos. This beautiful tune was originally written for a '70's episode of a popular Argentinian TV series of the same name, and was no doubt quite evocative of its subject matter. Ziegler composed "Buenos Aires Dark" during the tumultuous 2001 political crisis in Argentina. The orchestration is indeed dark and foreboding, with a biting Castro up front as he and the Orkest reach a crescendo that is transformed into a mournful interlude and then a staccato urgency that frames vibrant solos by a trombonist, Sinesi, and a tenor. Castro and Ziegler's tango rhythm launch the dramatic cry of protestation that comprises the finale. "Que Lo Parió" revolves around Malambo, an Argentinian folk rhythm danced to by the Gauchos, and is a tribute to the late author Robert "El Negro" Fontanarrosa and his comic strip "Inodoro Pereyra" that featured a Gaucho and his talking dog. The performance seems to portray the spirit and determination of the dancers, with Ziegler, Castro, and Sinesi cavorting gaily and a trombonist expounding with gusto. The Orkest's concluding passages mix whimsy with assertiveness to dizzying effect.