



# **Carlos Gardel: His Life and Music**

By Rich Hinrichsen and Tom Bourne

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- *Porteño*—citizen of Buenos Aires
- Latin American superstar
- Greatest singer of tangos
- Still revered
- Also wrote tangos

# Who was Carlos Gardel?





Source: *History Today*, December 1979

# **“The tango made flesh”- Libertad Lamarque**

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# Tango fever in early 1900s

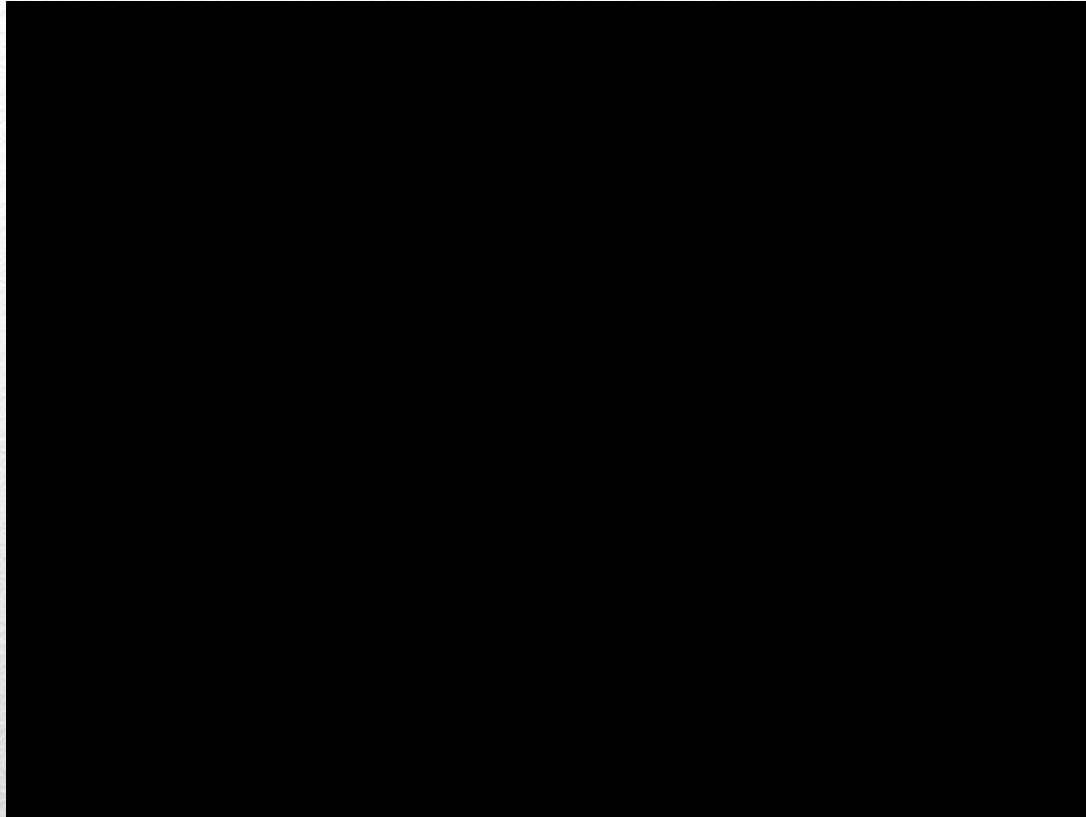
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- Originally Carlos Gardel was a folk singer
- In 1917 he sang “Mi Noche Triste,” a tango.
- By 1923, his recordings of tangos outnumbered everything else he did.
- A movie career followed.

# The vocal tango is born



# Clip from movie “Cuesta Abajo” (1934)

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- Great singing
- Range of feeling
- Great sense of rhythm
- Spanish with an Italian accent!
- Impeccable grooming
- 100 Megawatt smile

# The Gardel style

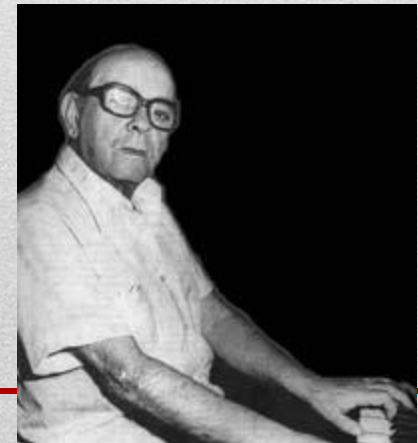
- Sang on the breath
- Legato through complex rhythms and intervals
- Acute sense of pitch and rhythm
- Loved the words he sang
- Light, friendly, and forward.
- All this he did with a bullet in his lung.

# Great singing



- As a young boy, he worked as a professional applauder in opera houses.
- Learned to sing arias and Argentine folkloric songs.
- Worked hard at singing.
- Took singing lessons with Eduardo Bonessi.

## How he did it



- “That man has a tear in his throat.” – American film director
- Acute sensitivity to the meanings of the songs he sang
- Lyricism, melancholy, cheeriness, unbridled glee, sarcasm, wistfulness, nostalgia, and ferocity

# Range of feeling



Letra: Alfredo Le Pera

MI BUENOS AIRES QUERIDO  
"My Beloved Buenos Aires"

Música: Carlos Gardel

original

The image shows a musical score for the tango 'Mi Buenos Aires Querido'. It consists of two staves. The top staff is the original melody in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. The bottom staff is a piano accompaniment labeled 'Fraseada (phrased)', which uses triplets and other rhythmic patterns to create a more complex feel than the original. The lyrics are written below the melody: 'Mi Buenos Aires querido Cuan-doyo te vuel-va a ver no habrá más pe - nas ni ol - vi - do'.

- In tango, a single melody is usually not played with the rhythm written
  - *Fraseo básica (basic phrasing)*
  - *Fraseo extendido (more rhythmic license)*

# Rhythm

- Tangos are sung in Spanish
- The rolled r.
- Use pure vowels
- “y” and “ll”, have an English “sh” sound
- *Lunfardo*—slang of Buenos Aires

“*Amores de estudiante*”  
(Loves of a student)



Paola

[unabuenaspanish.com](http://unabuenaspanish.com)

# Diction

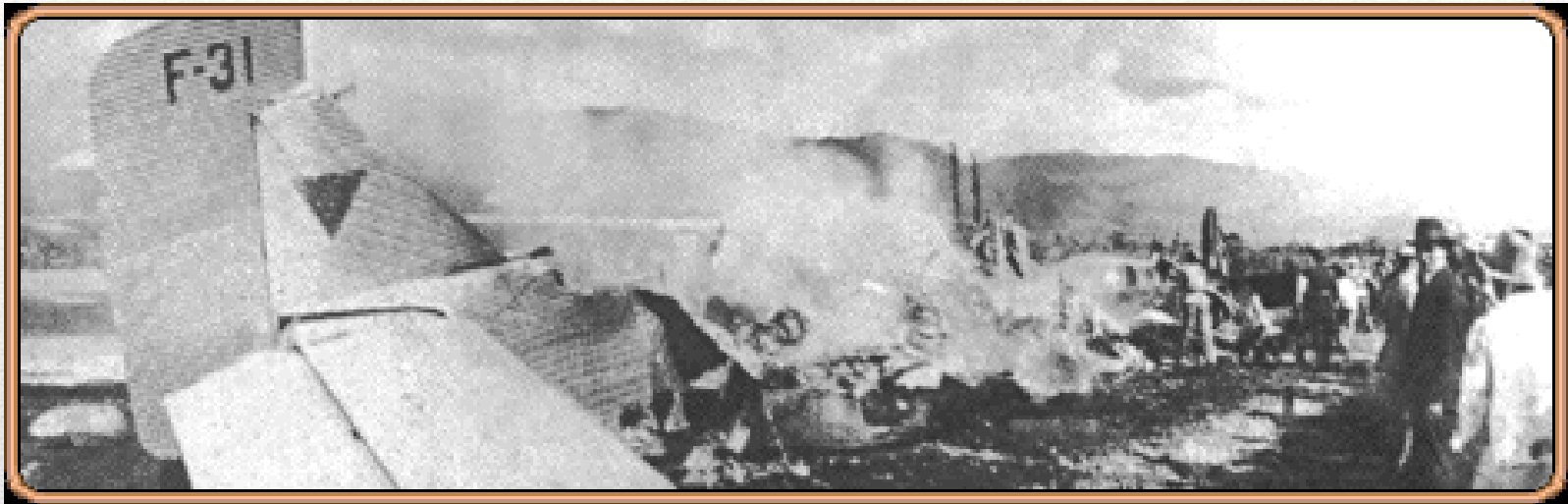




# Gardel plays a student in his 40s.

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A fiery plane crash ends Gardel's life, 24 June 1935.

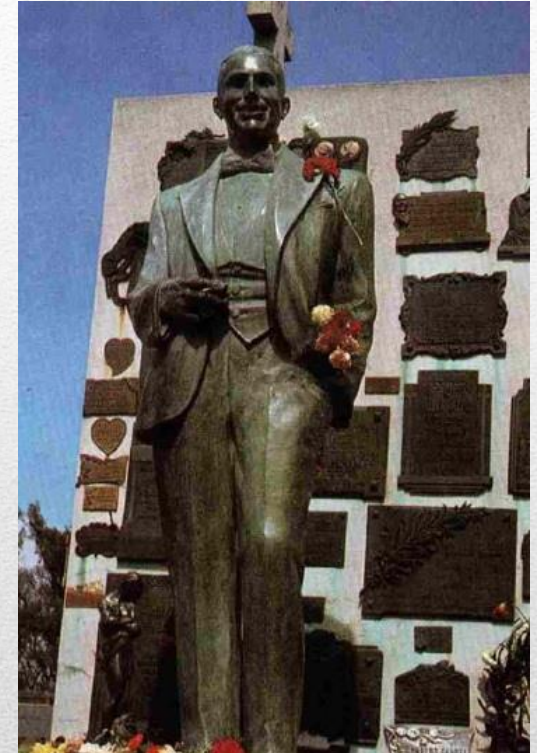
# Gardel's luck runs out

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- Fans demand that projectionists rewind Gardel's films so they could hear him sing again
- Cab drivers pull up to a statue of Gardel in Buenos Aires and place a lighted cigarette in his hand and a rose in his lapel.



# Gardel “sings better every day”

- Azucena Maizani
- Tito Merello
- Libertad Lamarque
- Mercedes Simone
- Sofía Bozán
- Ada Falcón



Ada Falcón

# Female Tango Singers



- Diction coach
- Learn to dance tango!
- Visit Buenos Aires
- Attend “Tango For Musicians” in Portland June 2018.
- Collier, Simon. 1986. *The Life, Music, and Times of Carlos Gardel*. University of Pittsburgh Press.



Eva Lucero & Patricio Touceda

# Suggestions

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# Acknowledgments

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