

JULY 20—NOTABLE ENCOUNTER AT SALISBURY VINEYARDS

Monday, July 20, 2009, 5:30-6:30 PM

Salisbury Fine Art Gallery and Winery Tasting Room, Avila Beach

Last Round (1996)

Oswaldo GOLIJOV (b. 1960)

Few people can think of Argentine music without hearing the tango—and thoughts of the tango bring to mind the great Astor Piazzolla. When Oswaldo Golijov was still a child, he saw Piazzolla perform at a local hotel café in La Plata, Argentina. Golijov was transfixed: “I had never heard a living composer play his own music.” This “defining moment” contributed to his decision to pursue a career in composition.

Golijov was shaken when he heard that Piazzolla had suffered a stroke in 1991, and he started sketching a slow movement for a string quartet. When another stroke carried Piazzolla off in 1992, Golijov began working in earnest, with the encouragement of string-playing friends. He added a first movement, much faster and intense in character, and he increased the ensemble to a nonet of two string quartets plus a string bass (and he later expanded the group even further to encompass a full string orchestra). One instrument that does not figure in either instrumental grouping is the bandoneón, the small accordion-like instrument that Piazzolla helped make famous—yet it is present in an over-arching way, for Golijov uses the strings to create the inward and outward “breathing” of the instrument’s bellows.

The title of *Last Round* comes from a boxing story, for Golijov was trying to give Piazzolla’s feisty spirit one more moment in the ring. Moreover, the plaintive second movement is crafted as a fantasy on the tango melody *Mi Buenos Aires Querido* (*My Beloved Buenos Aires*), composed by another celebrated Argentine, Carlos Gardel.

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