

María de Buenos Aires (Libretto by Horacio Ferrer) (translation: Maestro Jorge Parodi)

**PRIMERA PARTE (First Part)**

1 ALEVARE

**Duende:**

Now that it's time,  
and a rumor of nightshade  
has awoken in your silence,  
through a pore in the asphalt  
I shall evoke your voice.

Now that your love has folded,  
and with a strange arch over the eye,  
a wine cross burned you  
in the darkness of your forehead.

Now that in the sordid filibuster tension  
of a well-trumped harpsichord,  
the anxious hands of Cain and a hooker  
play tangos with your bones.

Now that you are from never more,  
María Child,  
I shall blend a handful of this tango voice  
that still scorches your throat with a bit of mine,

with dregs of memories, black sounds  
and the hoarse gray note of a low string.  
And so, from the suburban intimacy  
of a goodbye,

through the simple frontiers of death,  
I shall bring up your dark song.  
It will be God's age and have two old stigmata:  
Hate on the right; and on the left, Tenderness.

And at the hard and sweet ghostly sound of their echoes,  
the future Marías, walking up Santa Fe Avenue towards another dawn,  
will rush, trembling, not knowing why they hurry.

Now that it's time, gray smoke and nightshade,  
a plume of fungus, and your voice  
will come up with your memory,  
here, small, and one, now.

Now that it's your time:  
MARÍA OF BUENOS AIRES.

## 2 TEMA DE MARÍA

Instrumental

## 3 BALADA PARA UN ORGANITO LOCO

### **Payador:**

Sad piano that grinds stories:  
let's see if the lame man  
shows in the thread of his waltz  
the girl no one wants to see!

### **Duende:**

Let the Devil dip his lame leg in Garnacha wine.

### **Payador:**

Time shows the thread  
that nobody wants to see!

### **Duende:**

She came from that trans-borough dimension where hope is reached through a gate and a road;  
bells, three stars, an eye in the shaded balcony, a goal, the square...

The unhurried sun of a Mass with mornings, neighbors, and doves; some guys turned on by the  
rustle of skirts and a railway platform with another train to wait for. A prayer, a hooker, a store.

**Payador:**

The little girl was born on a day  
that God was drunk.

That's why three crooked nails  
hurt in her voice: she was born  
with a curse in her voice!

**Duende:**

Three black nails...  
One day that God was annoyed.

**Payador:**

Three black nails...  
One day that God was tinny.

**Duende:**

And two chubby guardian angels, two weird doves that trotted along the shallow shore, brought the child, crying, on their back. In the dark lime of the last wall, sorrowfully folding their dark tin wings, they engraved her name with dark bullets: María. They shaped her hard days of sand and cold.

And with her back to the river, there, where the river meets nothingness, with a question embroidered in her skirt, María the child grew up in seven days.

**Payador:**

Improvised against all odds,  
a milonga of fate and truth,  
a worthless refrain  
that didn't mourn nor love you,  
spoke in your loneliness.

**Duende:**

Little girl, such bad luck to know the whole truth!

**Payador:**

Death's impromptu plucked in her loneliness.

**Duende:**

Like this city, mournful and festive, stolen from witches on heat that pushes life forward, María was part of that crazy effort of each empty and suicidal card in a lost bet against loneliness. She was the whimsical, grudging verse at the front steps of the first failure, and the one-eyed rose of a lame clown. Goddess and tramp, she dealt equally with heaven and mafia. Her share of abyss and her share of bread went through the dawn, bounded by a hair.

**Payador:**

In her neighborhood,  
the old harpies in black hoods,  
as in a filthy Eucharist,  
pray for María  
in their crossed slang.

**Duende:**

María, in our neighborhood,  
your cross has been named!

**Payador:**

María from Omenland,  
two tangos will be your cross.

**Duende:**

But those men, the rude masters of my sadness, who know the silent effort that is in that name—coming back slowly and sternly from all our mysteries under a full dancing grief upon the air of the watering hole—those men call for her, barking to her memory the shadows of tangos that are no more and not yet.

**Payador:**

Sad María of Buenos Aires.

**Duende:**

Forgotten you are among all women.

### 3-a YO SOY MARÍA

#### **María**

I am María of Buenos Aires.

Don't you see who I am?

María tango, María slum,  
night, fatal passion,

María of love, from Buenos Aires I am.

If in this neighborhood anyone ask who I am,

the bitches will soon know it and envy me.

And every macho will fall in my trap like a mouse at my feet.

I am a witch singing and loving too.

If the bandoneon turns me on,

I bite it hard in the mouth,

with the blooming spasms that I've got in myself.

I always say to myself "Go ahead, María"

when a mystery climbs in my voice!

And I sing a tango nobody ever sang,

and I dream a dream nobody ever dreamt

because tomorrow is today,

and yesterday comes afterwards.

I am María, I am my city!

### 4 MILONGA CARRIEGUERA

#### **Payador:**

In the eyes of my child,

counterpoint of other tears,

there is a dark nostalgia

of things that haven't happened yet.

The street dealt her

marked hate cards:

her mother wove laziness,

and her father hauled failures.

A sad old tango bar  
of blues and jargons  
gives a certain something to my María  
and another thing to her cat's back.

Dark are her voice and her hips,  
her tresses and dark breasts.  
She feels in her back the blow  
of twenty mens' lust.

Late at night, when it rains,  
always in the same way,  
the subway entrances  
tell her fairytale tangos.

Seventy times the seven  
southern winds have lifted her.  
She folds her skin, her rose,  
and her years only to my voice.

### **María**

Sleepy Sparrow of Buenos Aires:  
you'll never reach me;  
I'm the rose of some "I love you".  
You'll never reach me.

### **Payador:**

You will go at night, María,  
from this Buenos Aires canton  
with your undone tresses  
and the unbuttoned dream.  
And the dusky drivers  
that unload frustrations at the market  
will make for you a bouquet of morons  
and a choir of knife wounds.

And over there, in the nighttime  
thereafter full of whisky,  
two hippies with awkward beards  
will insult her with miracles.

The blond mandrakes  
of a mulatto zodiac  
will leave thirteen bites  
on the lines of the palm.

And her kiss, which was  
half saffron and half apathy,  
will be posted on a full page,  
as if it were a hold-up!

Seventy times the seven wonders  
will be stolen.  
These three remain: mine,  
and the eyes of her cat.

**María**

Sleepy Sparrow of Buenos Aires:  
you'll never reach me.

**Payador:**

You'll always hear my voice  
in every voice.

5 FUGA Y MISTERIO

Instrumental

6 POEMA VALSEADO

**María**

A bandoneon, that has my sadness written on it,  
has mixed two tremors in my throat:  
the tremor of Milonguita tastes like South,  
but worse, the other one tastes like North,  
and nobody sings!

From the bandoneon,  
that smells like the shadow of pimps,  
I hear the archangel of brotheldom  
phrase his vile chord in seven voices  
that sound like seven but are always mine.

If I feel in heat, even in the grasp of death,  
and I tear a bit out in each encounter,  
will there be a mourning that will be mine no longer?  
Which dark trick may no longer be mine?

And I'll be the remains of tango ashes,  
and a demi love will wink at me from the end.  
And still I'll burn another life, for two cents,  
on the mad fold of the bra.

I'll be sadder, more discarded, more stolen  
than the cruel tango that has not been.  
And, dead and trotting towards nothing,  
I'll give God the spasmodic shake  
of a hundred Marías.

A new wind from the wind arose,  
removing the sound of a bandoneon in my refuge,  
and the bandoneon has a bullet in its breath  
to shout my death at the sound of a single shot.

7 TOCATA REA

**Duende (to the Bandoneon):**

An absorbed prestige of wisterias

dripped from the blisters of your bellows.  
And your folds were the echo of a rosary of tangos,  
saddling the reddish tenderness of a miracle. What a swindle were those thorns  
you sold to us, sobbing in the Calvary!

I know that, among your voices,  
the Devil whets your reeds,  
secret and arbitrary; and that your sounds are cries urged from a reckless painting  
that a miserable Goya painted  
with Judas' tears against a shroud.  
I've seen your gang of rogue bandoneons  
beat the dark wings and scorch the keyboards to the beat of the Macumba.  
And there in the aftermaths of Evil,  
I've seen the voice of María  
bleeding through the opaque ivory of the keys.

Where did you bury her? Damn it!  
She was the bit of mystery  
that a troubled God gave us,  
a poor urban God who loved on his own way,  
so that a question would keep haunting us,  
inside, forever; a question that you have killed!

Then, with a poem of clenched teeth,  
A verse of pickaxe, thirsty and forbidden,  
I'll slash you triumphantly, from side to side,  
so that you die sad, on your feet,  
wailing the loss in a sort of tango nausea.

8 MISERERE CANYENGUE-

**Payador:**

Today, when the poets, the pickpockets  
and the madwomen will again spew a white raven through the mouth. Today, through the deep  
fixed two of the dice, two small crazy eyes stare, from another world.

Today the tired leg of a neon sign  
will try to find its pair in many dreadful bars. Today a harlequin who saw the end of the rope sank

in the boring tango of an espresso, holding on to a sugar lump!

**Coro (Women)**

The old madams, opening the beds,  
we'll keep a leaf of tea between our breasts.

**Coro (Men)**

With a patent leather mask on our mug,  
we'll play the matins with two crowbars.

**Coro (All)**

Today the Girl arrives, and the good luck, the wine, and a really minor D will bloom.

**Payador:**

Because it was written in salt on the walls of this lonesome catacomb, and to the shout of seven lutes, we opened a mature seventh seal.

Because this day was written in tangos,  
and because outside is oblivion,  
and it's Friday the thirteenth,  
a blood-black cock will crow three times—  
the sexy Easter announcing María.

**Coro (Women)**

The Girl comes looking for her mulatto,  
on her way to the abyss, riding her cat.

**Payador:**

Her eyes are guilty candles of squatting light that move the floor tiles;  
they are small polar auroras  
of very old things that dwell in the sewers.

Night scorches her behind her forehead  
like wet dirt nuns that mend their sweet, quiet, hot bags under their eyes,  
chanting morbid milongas.

**Coro (Men)**

The Girl has arrived... the Girl is quiet:

Let's chant in key of no!

**Payador:**

From now and forever, I condemn your shadow,  
in pain and away from God's hand,  
to return to the asphalt, dramatic and lonely,  
and to drag your guilt, as a female and a shadow,  
bled by seven knives of sun.

**Coro (Women)**

María whiskey, María on the rocks,  
such aftertaste you'll have in your mouth!

**Coro (Men)**

María revolver, María Amen,  
you'll have a scarlet dot on your temple.

**Payador**

There goes María's Shadow to her other hell.  
Here remains only the pink sheath of her body.  
She has all the evil of the world, in bloom, complete and open to the end;  
and yet, the heart has refused to be bad!

**Coro (All)**

Old Thief: her heart ... is dead!

**SEGUNDA PARTE (Second Half)**

**9 CONTRAMILONGA A LA FUNERALA**

**Duende:**

María of Buenos Aires died for the first time.  
They buried her, it was late,  
with her funeral grimaces,  
a dagger and sleigh bells.

And the sunrise choked with a feeling of fake embolism when the Girl left, holding down the

gesture, towards a street with candles and magnolias wearing the cold and her dying things.

And in the corner where the mummies still knit with spleen, two Malenas—who had died many times—taught her to die.

Mystery there, Miserereing on the tightrope of an obscene jingle in holy loneliness, her dove hearse was saddled with the twelve Judases of a small temulent Christ.

In the factories, the girls  
that weave the night at a loom,  
put flowers on María:  
a polyamid geranium  
and a cotton orchid.

From her cleavage a mist rose,  
black and tied with the dirty and sad ribbon that a rare Beatle untied “in sourdine”  
from the mysterious mourning of its Twists.

The Girl died so much  
when she started dying  
that she was a tragic pregnancy  
which, heavy with little deaths,  
never stopped delivering!

How terrible! Our María  
died for the first time.  
She was buried by two beggars  
to the toll of tips  
in the dregs of an espresso.

But in her sole crypt dismay, awkward whim  
of a crazy superhuman mime, in counterpoint  
with two small explosions in her eyes,  
she shed two mascara tears on the tomb.

María of Buenos Aires  
cried for the first time.

10 TANGATA DEL ALBA

Instrumental

11 CARTA A LOS ARBOLES Y A LAS CHIMENEAS

**María:**

Buenos Aires, Autumn of All My Sadness:

Dear trees and beloved chimneys that give shade and cloud in my neighborhood.

My pain has invented the pain  
of another cross from the same root.

It all over, as you know, that I'm in mourning for my own memory. As I write to you, with  
tenderness on my shoulders and full of that one foul word that I can't pronounce, the Sun rises  
again to stone my fear with some crumbs from its sweet breakfast, like the man who throws three  
balls for twenty cents at the bloodstained face of infamy.

Already people have gone to live;  
there is heaven in a wage,  
rapturous in blue. God has light galore  
to knead birds and bread.  
If He, again, should shut me out of it,  
my eyes—tired of me—will turn three times and will go squinting towards a Punch-and-Judy show  
of gunpowder and alcohol.

Then they'll say, in the neighborhood:

"Her memory is very sick, again!"

Dear Trees, beloved Chimneys: just like the smoke and the leaf, already lost, you'll hear my  
name with the living-dead shadow the first and the last time a wind—asthma of the South, taste of  
Amen, exiled macho—starts digging his Yet Tango in Buenos Aires!

Nothing else. No goodbye; goodbye  
hurt us at the beginning and not at the end.

And on a balcony that smells of my voice, add two little signs of mourning in soot.

Signed: María's Shadow

## 12 ARIA DE LOS ANALISTAS

### **Duende:**

Come and see: gentlemen,  
things never seen before;  
we shall bring the psychoanalysts  
to this Buenos Aires circus show!

Come and see: juggling  
of a beautiful remorse  
that makes a tragic attempt  
with a seven odd Valium dose!

### **Payador:**

Buenos Aires, Buenos Aires,  
bring out your dreams to the sun,  
that the dreams have peaks,  
rataplin and rataplan.

### **Duende:**

Come and see that life  
became entangled in the tight grief,  
and an Ego, because it fancies it,  
brings inflamed agonies!

Here is the somersault  
of a remorse that, in sneakers,  
produces a boom of nightmares  
from behind the mask!

### **Payador:**

Buenos Aires, Buenos Aires,  
bring out your dreams to the sun,

that this dream is María's,  
rataplin and rataplan!

**Duende:**

Camera one: to the memory!

Camera two: to the conscience!

Set up background with a trapeze of fog, that the Girl will do her jump  
dressed in black memory.

And the First Psychoanalyst asks her  
four pirouettes.

**Payador:**

Close your eyes, María,  
that your eyes will hold a flat-nosed backyard  
and a song that will be heard in that yard.  
Is this your mother's weeping?

**María:**

I don't hear it. They say she had around her waist the sentimentality, like an empty chair, and that  
she scrubbed dirty stars for others, but that she never wept. So say those who knew about her. It  
was Friday, not Good Friday, and I can hardly remember.

**Payador:**

Open you dreams, María  
so in your dreams there will be  
a forge with two hands  
that make the bread in that forge.  
Are these the hands of your father?

**María:**

I don't know. But they remember that he used to play craps with two chisels loaded with hardened  
blood, and that he lost as many times as he wished. That's what the winners swore with their  
laughing sevens and elevens.  
It was on an Ash Wednesday, and I can hardly remember.

**Payador:**

Close your eyes, María

and you will see in two eyes  
a scream and an odd kiss  
that runs away in that kiss.  
Is that your first kiss?

**María:**

I wouldn't know. But they say that it could hold as much sadness as there was in that Jesus who couldn't afford the logs and painted a cross on his back. And that this kiss, some other day, had a small cherry abortion in each lip. This is what the people who know about the kiss, and still enjoy it, keep to themselves.

I was a rose then; and I can hardly remember.

**Payador:**

Open your dreams, María,  
so then they will hold a whiskey and two blond blows that will be heard from the bottom.  
Is that your heart calling?

**María:**

Hardly. My heart, cut out in quarters, is buried—they tell me---in the four pockets of a stolen pool table. The one on me now I bought from a heart-shop attendant who had a second-hand heart store in a whorish landscape; she sold little sad hearts of French cards and of rabbits, of tattoos of a lazy sailor, of a lullaby rhyme and of artichoke. She gave me one just for looks that doesn't hurt, cut out of a bandoneon player's apron; and with a little tin needle and some brown smoke thread, she embroidered it on my belly. She said that it was the right thing for someone who, like myself, is a shadow María., And for being a shadow, just a shadow, I'll be shadow and a virgin forever.

She said so while sewing, but I can hardly remember!

**Payador:**

Cover your bosom, María,  
with a handful of salt,  
that a zero is looking from the inside  
and the zero will mourn you!

**María:**

Of the countless grays of yore  
I can only remember that one cruel mystery

that cried, "Be born!"  
And when I started living, it smiled.  
And when finally it saw me like this,  
so terminal and so myself,  
it bit itself and cried, "Drop dead!"

### 13 ROMANZA DEL DUENDE

#### **Duende:**

Here, in this magical, talisman bar,  
almost all is known! It's told in gambling by  
the jacks and kings, rustic ventriloquists of things that Fate leavens between the decks.

Right here, sewed to the flat bottom of each glass we're watched by the quiet open eye of  
madness that some poets, who wanted to see the devil's footsteps, sewed with a fine thread of  
bitterness.

#### **Coro**

From this cup that the Goblin  
is gulping out of sadness,  
we, three drunken marionettes,  
check him out.

#### **Duende**

Here, where tomorrow tastes of long ago, looking for God I saw, in a shiver,  
that He was in what I love and what I miss, cut to measure, as the size of the grain gives the size  
of the summer.

Here in each bottle fits a river.  
And at the bottom of that river there's another tin joint; and drunk, in this tin, one of my verses,  
and in it, the sad silver of another river  
that made me a Goblin—made me... a thousand years ago!

#### **Coro:**

The Goblin, that was telling  
the story in the little opera,  
has lost a Shadow

and, drunk, keeps calling her.

All of us, Master Goblin,  
the guys of this drinker's gang,  
will go and bring to the Girl  
a miracle on your behalf.

**Duende:**

As soon as you're reborn, you'll know about the trap that has the maté in its pot, and the sky in that hole looking up from a shoe; the rain that does not arrive, and a sip of that rain, and time in the timekeeper.

And thus, María, for each "I want"  
the nine crazy moons—in heat with a heart attack of light—will make around you the sentimental winks of a dance awoken with laughs and births.

**Coro**

We are coming, María Shadow,  
with the December and the songs  
that the Goblin is kneading  
with the pollen of tin.

**Duende:**

And thus, through a quaver rest,  
your day will finally come: a chestnut Sunday, that will shape you with the ugliest leaves of a bay laurel tree—the rough, angelic beauty of its branches.

Your day will rise from a decrepit meridian  
of the doorstep where  
some backhanded poet bakes his Mass.  
Amen, my dear, from a Christian.  
Like this, yours and ours. So be it!

14 ALLEGRO CANTABILE (CUT)

Instrumental

## 15 MILONGA DE LA ANUNCIACIÓN

### María:

Three marionettes,  
bowlegged and mad,  
that yesterday thrust a violet into my mouth,  
with a knife in their teeth, along the back of  
my grayish hips, are sewing  
a big patch in bloom of fennel and sisal!

Skinny and broke, very pimpish,  
a Jesus is splashing poorly in my voice—  
a young and lazy dandy  
with a beat of cross-stitch;  
and a sweet muddy pigeon  
of Southern Cross  
that today has made me shiver.

And a little terracotta angel  
injured in the scream  
of the broken loneliness of a parapet—chewing a nonsense psalm—  
tied on my bra a milk sun and a jasmine:  
two spasms of light  
I keep beneath my skin!

Come on, María!  
If nine sobs  
were all the dark mystery we had to see,  
what a mad attempt at seed you will make,  
what a hard celestial branch you will crack!  
Come on, it's about to come!  
Come on, that it really hurts good!

I've got stuck  
so much tenderness  
that with just one tenderness  
I may deliver God!  
And if nobody wants to be born of me,

in the stolen shawl of some Charles Chaplin, I shall breast-feed a shoe in my arms!

#### 16 TANGUS DEI

##### **Payador:**

Today is Sunday, and the day  
is taken from the Sunday book,  
by a bride without Sunday  
and the penultimate drunkard.

##### **Duende**

Today is Sunday: laurel and milk.  
With a spoon as a pestle, a cappuccino rings three times. Behind the missals, the worn-out and  
joyous buttocks of matrons scatter motets: laurel and garlic.

##### **Payador:**

Today is Sunday, and the witches  
vanish because, out of the ragout,  
children and clowns throw suns at them.

##### **Duende:**

Today is Sunday: laurel and lazybones.  
Sunday-ly a yawn rolls by. And in the yawn the girls give the good news of the good-bad step  
burning in the tense and prodigal strand of their blue jeans: laurel and heat.

##### **Payador:**

Today is Sunday, and a choir  
of a thousand male Sundays  
from the offside recite an old ballad  
in four-two-four.

Today is Sunday  
and even the seventh tangos sleep;  
it will be, however,  
the day of the oldest trade.

Today is Sunday; and it is said

that even the rag dolls  
that hang in the buses  
come looking upwards.

**Duende:**

Today is Sunday: served laurel. What strange harvest gave this Sunday that up at the top of the thirtieth floor, alone in the lonely lime of a scaffold, midwife of nine wonders, boils a Shadow: laurel and female!

**Payador:**

Today is Sunday;  
and fighting tooth and nail  
that Shadow is washing  
her mourning from the inside.

**Coro (Women)**

The strap of a black knot  
plunges in her waist.

**Coro (Men)**

And the marks of her nails  
can be seen in the reinforced concrete.

**Duende:**

So many things, one by one,  
spring in her ovaries,  
ripe with a thousand pains,  
seduced by slaps.

It seems as if even the name  
were also pregnant!  
Such tremor shakes her entrails,  
as if delivering

seventy reincarnations  
of an unborn little Jesus.  
She torn out seventy nails

from the bones of her belly.

Two midwife angels  
hold her face down  
as they use iron forceps  
taken from a concrete manger.

How she shines inward!  
Such light sharpens the stalk!  
That clear wound—a mix of orgasm and death—

lights up her hips  
like a sway of stars!  
Go, María! Give birth!  
The birth that's born

delivers oblivion  
and pushes you into its hands  
and roots, in rage,  
and you are reborn into pieces,

through the tips of other tresses,  
through the cracks of some lips,  
though the gesture and the will  
of rebirth ad nauseam!

You had so many Christmases  
choked for years!  
What splendid harvest, María:  
harvest of childbirth, your childbirth.

**Coro (Women)**

A newborn child has no extra stuff and has no crib.

**Coro (Men)**

Her father, who is carpenter, will make one.

**Payador**

From on top of that Sunday,  
the Three Magi-Masons  
have left a pink wink  
in the sand of that crib.

**Coro (Men)**

Why is it that the little angels have gone crying to get drunk?

**Coro (Women)**

Because that child is not a boy. Jesus! It's a girl! A girl is born!

**Payador**

The girl had a girl  
who is herself and is not much.  
The beginning and the end  
want to be tears of the same sob.

**Coro (All)**

Goodness gracious: the spectators also wish to know if the lyrics of this tango have been or are about to be.

**Payador:**

In the eyes of that girl,  
time has been well stolen;  
for yesterday and for tomorrow  
she has been christened María.

**Duende:**

But those men, the rude masters of my sadness, who know of the mute disposition that befits that name, when there is a full brood over the spotted air of the joints, name it, hardly so, barking to her memory the shadows of tangos of yore that are no more and not yet.

**Payador:**

Our María of Buenos Aires:

**Duende:**

Forgotten you are among all women.

Omen you are among all women.

**Payador:**

María... María...