

The backdrop of the material garnered in this film was a serendipitous musical moment in a private residence in Afghanistan, Mürer supplemented the limited material with present-day interviews of both subjects. He switches throughout the film from the present day back to the past, given the theme of this film with hints of war and upheaval omnipresent, and makes this technique effective. Switching between past and present allows the viewer to enjoy the performance more because its fleeting quality makes it even more captivating. Given the socio-political context in which we currently find ourselves living, this documentary stood out as something both historical and of the moment. This feeling of confinement as articulated by the filmmaker, reverberating through the film like a recent memory, has been felt by individuals all over the world, making the viewing experience more powerful.

George Mürer's oeuvre has been dedicated to meticulously sharing the stories of individuals whose voice traditionally is not heard through the medium of music. This has resulted in the documentation of important cultural practices throughout the world, yet picking up on themes that feel so close to home. After watching this latest project, one is left to wonder what Mürer's next project will focus on.

## Reference

Baily, John. 1985. *Amir: An Afghan Refugee Musician's Life in Peshawar, Pakistan*. Directed by John Baily. Watertown, MA: Documentary Educational Resources.

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doi:10.1017/ytm.2024.13

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*Domingo en Plaza Almagro (Sunday in Plaza Almagro)*. 2014. Directed by Jennie Gubner, 11 minutes. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rfBtK6XcnBA>.

How can you evoke locality, neighbourhoodness, sentimental activism, and musical intimacy “that make them not just abstract ideas but about real people and their real relationships to and through sound?” Filmmaker Jennie Gubner (2022) in her short film *Domingo en Plaza Almagro (Sunday in Plaza Almagro)* proposes this ontological question about the vocabularies of cinema in evoking critical understandings of music as culture. Filmmaking, in this vignette, is applied to integrate both visual and sensory means to invite audiences to *experience* the sentiments in tango culture – a nodal point of the intersection of

locality, neighbourhoodness, and urban activism in the contemporary communities of Buenos Aires.

This film, together with three other short films, consists as part of Gubner's doctoral dissertation about neighbourhood tango culture in Buenos Aires. Situated in the movement of reclaiming and re-localising tango in reaction to the "for-export" tango, which appeals to the colonial gaze and the hypersexualised stereotypicalities of tourists' imaginations, the series of four explores various local sites ranging from a local bar to an independently organised tango club to show the relationship between tango culture and neighbourhoodness.

*Domingo en Plaza Almagro* shows a grassroots tango festival of Almagro that took place in a symbolic location where many contemporary tango histories begin – the neighbourhood plaza. The festival is independently organised by a group of young musicians and the film focuses on the final day of the event: a Sunday afternoon of tango in a local communal open space.

The film opens with a scene which corresponds to a relatively stereotypical image of tango – couples are dancing with the music; however, the atmosphere is completely different from the "for-export" tango: it is the everyday and mundane. Moving forward, this turns out to be the only dancing scene in the entire film. With the peaceful tango music, the musicians arrive in a van, painted just as the outside of Almagro's most legendary tango bar *Roberto's bar*. It is located at a corner of this plaza and is the protagonist of Gubner's other film in the series – *A Common Place* (2010). With the music intensified, the camera introduces the musicians. We see some familiar faces – they are the group of young people who opened the Almagro Tango Club later in *Los Locos de Almagro* (*The Crazies of Almagro*, 2013). They are all wearing the same top, organised and spirited. The host announces: "Welcome to the Almagro neighbourhood and to this independently organised tango festival, created by the talent and hard work of great musicians who love this neighbourhood." Thus, together with references to other films in the series of Almagro, a message has been sent, subtly but firmly, that this event is not just about music, but also about tango's role in building an urban community.


With song flowing in the background, the film unfolds with still shots depicting life in the neighbourhood on this sunny afternoon at the plaza. Instead of applying the conventional film language of long shot in observational cinema to bring the audiences into the temporality of a moment, Gubner chopped up her footage of the afternoon into short still shots and reordered them to construct the sentiments she experienced that afternoon. Contrary to the stereotypical imaginations around tango, we see the ordinary life scenes: a musician playing with his child while preparing to play, children playing football in the park, men eating ice cream and joyfully chatting, and the musician who was playing with his child is now fully immersed in the music he is playing. All these moments are edited with clean cuts hitting musical cues. The film follows the camera's step and pace, playfully bringing the audiences to *experience* rather than observe tango's intimate role in the neighbourhood of Almagro on that Sunday afternoon.

Then the playfulness builds to an apex when Gubner's role switches to a performing violinist playing alongside local tango legend Osvaldo Peredo. She is not only a filmmaker or an observer of this community, but also a participant in the event, living in the neighbourhood, together with the audiences of the film.

Night is falling and the festival is coming to an end. The musicians / tango activists are cleaning up the plaza. Although situated in the background of the re-localising tango movement, the film does not intentionally discuss the recent politics of Argentina which contributed greatly to the taking place of the festival, nor does it focus on criticising "for-export" tango. Instead, it scatters the dots of activism here and there and blends them together with tango's role in evoking human connections that reverberate with music. The result is an alternative scene of how tango is lived – an integral part of the everyday life of the neighbourhood.

### References

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doi:10.1017/ytm.2024.11

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