

My very first composition was a sonata for solo violin, written when I was nine. I knew very little music then, and had just had my first violin and music lessons, so it remains a mystery to me how I was able to write it. The piece was recently recorded as part of a London Philharmonic CD (on Reference Recordings and on Naxos). A few years later I wrote a sonata for solo viola, and just recently a suite for solo cello.

*Aires de Tango*, my most recent work for solo string instrument, was commissioned by Rachel Barton Pine for inclusion in her recording of short works for solo violin for Cedille Records. Having just recorded with her and the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra (also for Cedille) the Beethoven concerto and the world premiere recording of the Franz Clement concerto, the idea was most appealing. I was delighted to accept the invitation, and I am equally delighted to dedicate the work to her.

My two previous tango-inspired pieces, *Tango in Blue* and *Almost a Tango*, and finishing/orchestrating Satie's *Tango Perpétuel*, had prepared me for this new assignment. Here was an opportunity to do a virtuoso essay with the spirit of the tango as the inspiration: not an obvious tango, but a work that evokes the perfume of the genre, the feel and color of the tango, its nostalgia, sadness, bitterness.

– José Serebrier

José Serebrier established himself as a significant composer very early in his career. He was just 17 when Leopold Stokowski gave the world premiere of his *Symphony No. 1*, and soon after started to gain notoriety also as a conductor. His dual career has been honored with 36 Grammy Award nominations, and the Latin Grammy award for Best Classical Recording as conductor.

Born in Montevideo, Uruguay of Russian and Polish parents, Serebrier was awarded a Koussevitzky Foundation Award at Tanglewood and a BMI Young Composers Award for his *Symphony No. 1* and *Saxophone Quartet*. He received a U.S. State Department Fellowship to study composition at the Curtis Institute of Music with Vittorio Giannini and with Aaron Copland at Tanglewood. Awarded two consecutive Guggenheim Fellowships at 19 and 20, he remains the youngest to have ever obtained these awards in any field. Following graduation from Curtis, Serebrier studied at the University of Minnesota, where he received his M.A. in composition. He was awarded two Dorati Fellowships, a Pan American Union Publication Award (for *Elegy for Strings*), and the Ford Foundation American Conductors Project Award. Subsequent awards for his compositions include a Rockefeller Foundation award (for an extended residency with the Cleveland Orchestra); a Harvard Musical Association Commission Award (for *Fantasia* for string quartet); and a National Endowment for the Arts Commission (*Orpheus x Light*, a ballet for the Joffrey Ballet).

Serebrier was 22 years old when Leopold Stokowski named him Associate Conductor of the newly formed American Symphony Orchestra in New York, a post he held for four years. Stokowski conducted the first New York performance of Serebrier's *Elegy for Strings* at Carnegie Hall, and he opened the American Symphony Orchestra season at Carnegie Hall with the premiere of Serebrier's *Poema Elegiaco*, the second movement of *Symphony No. 2: Partita*. For two consecutive seasons, George Szell named José Serebrier Composer-in-Residence of the Cleveland Orchestra. While in that position, he brought new elements to his compositions. His harp concerto *Colores Magicos* for the Inter-American Music Festival in Washington D.C. and *Nueve*, a concerto for double bass and orchestra commissioned for the double bass virtuoso Gary Karr, both incorporated imaginative staging. Serebrier has conducted Karr in performances of *Nueve* all over the world. Also from this period is the dramatic *Symphony for Percussion*, which was recorded by John Eliot Gardiner.

Serebrier's *Violin Concerto: Winter* was premiered by Michael Guttman in New York in 1995 and recorded on ASV. His *Symphony No. 3* for string orchestra and soprano vocalise, nominated for a Grammy in 2004 as Best Composition of the Year, has been released on Naxos along with a number of his other works for strings. More recently, he has revisited his Uruguayan youth by writing *Tango in Blue* and *Almost a Tango* for orchestra (both recorded on BIS) – lighter works using rhythms and melodic turns of Latin American popular music. *Tango in Blue*, in fact, comes full circle: its first four notes quote the last four from his early *Partita*.