

OMAN

## Warm tango rhythms reverberate at Royal Opera House Muscat

BY

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Opera singer, bass-baritone Erwin Schrott has two loves: opera and tango, which he grew up listening to in his homeland Uruguay. Photo– Khalid Al Busaidi, ROHM

**Muscat:** Uruguayan opera singer Erwin Schrott and his Rojotango Ensemble filled the Royal Opera House Muscat with the warm rhythms of tango on Sunday evening. A classically trained and award-winning opera singer, bass-baritone Erwin Schrott has two loves: opera and tango, which he grew up listening to in his homeland Uruguay.

His Muscat debut focused on tango, with music from his 2011 album Rojotango and

his ensemble which includes Peruvian Claudio Constantini on bandoneon, Argentines Federico Lechner on piano, Alvaro Rovira Ruiz on guitar and Andrés Litwin on percussion, Finnish violinist Suvi Myöhänen, and Austrian Gina Schwarz on double bass.

Some of the loveliest moments came early in the concert with the ballad Oblivion, slow, soft song in which Schrott's voice was like a warm embrace.

An instrumental piece called Milonga del Angel was also beautiful, with music that was almost hypnotic.

Schrott described it as composer Astor Piazzolla's vision of an angel dancing if it heard the bandoneon.

Though most of the concert centred on tango, Schrott included a couple of Brazilian songs with bossa nova and samba rhythms, too. He said what he loves about this music is that even when the lyrics are sad, the music can still make you happy.

Schrott also had the audience singing along for a couple of songs, including the Brazilian Desde Que O Samba E Samba, and the Spanish favourite Quizas, Quizas, Quizas, during which he even tried to sing "Mumkin, mumkin, mumkin," adding some local flavour.

One of the pleasures of watching a small tango ensemble is having the chance to see how the musicians play. Pianist **Federico Lechner** impressed the audience with his nimble and sensitive playing. He has a jazzy approach that adds a freshness to the music.

Another one to watch in this concert was bandoneon player **Claudio Constantini**. He played with one knee up and his accordion-like instrument resting on his leg, stretching and pulling the bellows in full display.

The concert also featured one of Constantini's own compositions, Romanza Tanguera, which included a great bass solo by **Gina Schwarz**.

Tango, bossa nova and samba rhythms tend to be very popular in Muscat, and the music in Sunday's concert was lovely, but sometimes it felt as though Schrott's operatic voice didn't quite fit the genre.

Schrott is clearly gifted with a gorgeous voice, but the next time he visits the ROHL it should be in an opera so the audience can experience his full vocal potential.

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