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New Book Argues Tango Legend Gardel Was Born in Uruguay

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“We keep insisting on this theory because, above all, we want future generations to be clear about Gardel’s history,” Carlos Arezo, director of cultural affairs in the northern province of Tacuarembó, said.

Tacuarembó is where, according to the Uruguayan theory, the iconic tango performer was born. For tango lovers in Uruguay, 2015 is not just another year to mark Gardel’s “entry into immortality” on June 24, 1935, in a plane crash near Medellín, Colombia, but the 100th anniversary of his debut in Montevideo, where a new monument will be inaugurated.

“It is urban in design,” Gonzalo Halty, director of cultural promotion in Montevideo, said.

Gardel signed a contract to build a house in the Uruguayan capital, but he did not live long enough to move into the property.

“It is not a monument high on a pedestal but rather one that shows the human Gardel in relation to the city,” Halty said.

A life-size statue of the master of a style known as “tango canción” (tango song) will be unveiled on June 24 on Montevideo’s 18 de Julio avenue next to Bar Facal, the business that promoted the monument.

The city’s Barrio Sur has had a Gardel bust for decades.

The Colombian Embassy in Montevideo will join the commemoration with a plaque next to the statue honoring the singer, whose voice was declared part of World Heritage by UNESCO in 2003.

During Gardel Week, celebrated each year in Montevideo and Tacuarembó, Argentine researcher Martina Iñíguez will attempt to land the deciding blow in the long dispute between her countrymen, who contend Gardel was born in Toulouse, France, and Uruguayans, who say the singer's cradle was in their country.

"They will talk about the collapse of the French Gardel theory," Arezo told Efe. "She is an Argentine who takes on 'Porteños' (Buenos Aires natives)."

Supporters of the Uruguayan birth theory say the man actually born in Toulouse was Charles Romuald Gardes, the son of Berta Gardes, a Frenchwoman that the French theory identifies as the biological mother of Gardel and the Uruguay theory identifies as his adoptive mother.

"We support (the theory of) the existence of two children. The story of Charles is different from the story of Carlos Gardel, and many ask themselves what happened to Charles," Arezo said after acknowledging that doubts persist on this issue.

"People speculate about whether he died, whether he returned to France and did his military service like all Frenchmen" in World War I, Arezo said.

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