

PHCD

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Alberto Ginastera

Sonata for Piano (1952)

- 1 *Allegro Marcato* 4:24
- 2 *Presto Misterioso* 2:32
- 3 *Adagio Molto Appassionato* 5:26
- 4 *Ruvido Ed Ostinato* 2:51

Concerto for Piano & Orchestra (1961)

- 5 *Cadenza E Varianti* 8:58
- 6 *Scherzo Allucinante* 5:14
- 7 *Adagissimo* 5:54
- 8 *Toccata Concertata* 6:27

Vienna Philharmonia Orchestra
 Conducted by *Ernst Maerzendorfer*
 Hilde Somer, pianist

Total Timing 42:08

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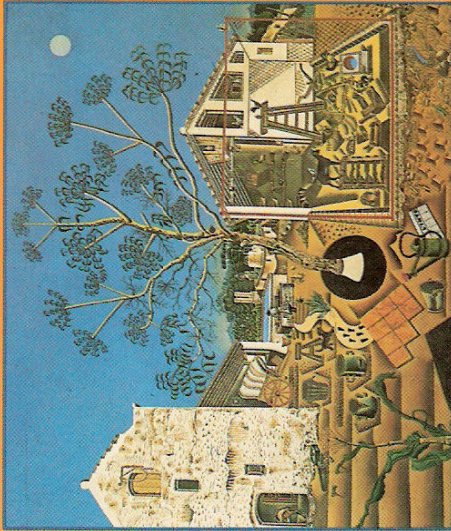
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Alberto Ginastera

Concerto for Piano & Orchestra (1961)
 Sonata for Piano (1952)



Vienna Philharmonia Orchestra
 Conducted by *Ernst Maerzendorfer*
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Alberto Ginastera (1913-1983)

Born in Buenos Aires, Ginastera studied at the National Conservatory there, and was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1941, of which he was unable to take advantage until the end of World War II. Two of his works in vividly nationalist Argentine style were already becoming known in this country at the time of Ginastera's stay here: the *Estancia* ballet composed in 1941 for Lincoln Kirstein's Ballet Caravan and a ballet Suite, *Panamá*, dating from his 20th year, which was performed during the 1945-46 season by the NBC Symphony Orchestra under the late Erich Kleiber. The *Variaciones Concertantes* for orchestra (1953) has also enjoyed considerable popularity in U.S. concert halls. All three of the above-mentioned works have been recorded, as well as the Overture to the Creole Faust (1943), the Quartet No. 1 (1948), Pampeana No. 3 (1954), the *Lamentations* of Jeremiah for a cappella choir (1946) and the *Cantata para América Magica* (1960). The perceptive listener will discover for himself Ginastera's gradual transition from a strongly regional musical language toward a national style, which has done for Latin American art-music what Bartok did for the art-music of Hungary — namely, fused it with the main stream of world musical tradition without depriving it of the vitality that stems from the composer's own personality and roots in his native cultural tradition.

When Alberto Ginastera's Piano Concerto had its world premier during the Second International Music Festival at Washington, D.C. on April 22, 1961 (together with his *Cantata para América Magica* for soprano and 53 percussion instruments), Irving Lowen wrote glowingly of the Argentine and his work in the usually austere scholarly journal, *The Musical Quarterly*: "Good as the Festival was, there was one figure who towered head and shoulders above his colleagues — Alberto Ginastera.

There is no one who can seriously challenge his preeminent position among Latin American composers, and from the extraordinary character of both the Piano Concerto and the *Cantata para América Magica*, it would be difficult to deny him the right to stand among the greatest contemporary composers of the entire Western world.

Despite his eminence as a leading figure in his country's musical life, as composer, teacher, and organizer, Ginastera's creative work has continued unabated, as evidenced by the extraordinary difficult and brilliant Violin Concerto (1963) performed by Ruggiero Ricci and the New York Philharmonic as part of the series of works commissioned for the opening of Philharmonic Hall at the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts. Aside from his creative work, Señor Ginastera was Director of the Latin-American Center for Advanced Musical Studies at the Instituto Torcuato di Tella, an organization which under Rockefeller Foundation sponsorship provides post-graduate training for Latin-American composers. Ginastera's *Concerto for Piano and Orchestra* was written in early 1961 on commission from the Koussevitzky Music Foundation and is dedicated to the memory of Serge and Natalie Koussevitzky.

Alberto Ginastera's *Sonata for Piano* was composed in 1952 for the Pittsburgh Contemporary Music Festival on commission from the Carnegie Institute and the Pennsylvania College for Women. Johanna Harris, pianist-wife of the eminent American composer Roy Harris, premiered the Ginastera Sonata at the Pittsburgh Festival on November 29, 1952. The Sonata was subsequently chosen for performance at Oslo during the 1953 Festival of the International Society for Contemporary Music.

Wrote Señor Ginastera of the music:

"The Piano Sonata is divided into four movements. The first one, *Allegro marcato*, corresponds to the plan of the sonata-form with two main themes: the first one is built upon complex rhythmic cells while the second has a melodic character. The second movement has the structure of a scherzo in three parts whose main theme arises from a row. The whole movement is played *pianissimo* and has strange sonorities. The third movement, *Adagio molto appassionato*, corresponds to the form of a three-part Lied (song). The theme in the first and third parts appears as a lyric improvisation, the second being of a passionate character. The fourth movement, *Ruvido ed ostinato*, is built in the form of a rondo in five parts with the style and technique of a toccata. This movement is built on a rhythmic line which changes constantly within a fixed structure."

The composer without using folkloric material, introduces in his thematic language rhythmic and melodic cells whose expressive tension has a marked Argentine accent.

Concerning the music of his Piano Concerto, Señor Ginastera tells us: "Although the Concerto is divided in the four traditional movements, however, I have renewed the structure of each movement. The first one, *Cadenza e varianti*, begins with the presentation of a serial chord. Then the piano begins the cadenza, giving a melodic transposition of the same row. On these basic elements is based the whole movement. In the cadenza, piano and orchestra alternate with violent contrasts. The "varianti" are 10 microstructures in different moods. The first movement ends with a coda which is a kind of amplified variation recalling the cadenza."

"The second movement, *Scherzo allucinate*, is very fast and it is played throughout with the dynamics *pianissimo*. I have used a pointillist instrumentation and the arch form in five sections: three central symmetrical sections framed by an introduction and a coda."

"The third movement, *Adagissimo*, is an intense lyrical interlude formed by three sections recalling the ternary form and reaching in the central part a very passionate climax. This movement ends with a dodecaphonic chord played by the whole sub-divided string section until it vanishes. Some notes on the piano emphasize the feeling of distance."

"The fourth and last movement, *Toccato concertata*, with strong rhythms is a real "bravura" piece in which there is a dialogue between piano and orchestra. The form recalls the rondo form on seven sections preceded by an introduction and finishing with a coda."

A Commentary by Señor Ginastera

"Although I am always a little reluctant to write commentaries on my own compositions, I have decided to do it this time in order to say why I feel it is not essential to explain a work of art. I think that such a work must produce a feeling of comprehension, a flow of attraction between public and artist, independent of its structural implications. If this perceptible feeling of understanding and sympathy is not established, then no explanation will help the average public to fathom the inner meaning of the work."

"I remember an occasion on which the great painter, Joaquín Torres García, at an exhibition of his pictures in Buenos Aires, tried to explain one of his paintings to a very stubborn character who wished to understand it. In spite of the explanations of the painter, who patiently gave all details and answered all questions, the man failed to understand the picture in question. Finally, Torres García lost his temper and said, "Look, Sir, if these pictures do not appeal to you in any way, it means that there is nothing in common between you and me", whereupon he turned his back on his interlocutor. A group of us — young artists, painters, writers, and musicians — followed the great master with devotion, learning from his enlightened thought as well as from his wonderful pictures. His words on that occasion were considered by us all as the best lesson he had given us on the aesthetic significance of a work of art. A creator produces his work to be felt and understood by hundreds of people who are attracted by it. That is why I do not agree with Oscar Wilde when he says that "All art is quite useless". Art is a necessity and for many people of sensibility it is like a spiritual nourishment. Thus art is first perceived by our senses, it then affects our sentiments and in the end awakens our intelligence. Today too much is written and spoken on the subject of modern art and that is possibly because a great part of this art fails to impress the feelings of the public, since some intellectual fashions have disturbed the real sense of art. I mean works which do not have a severe formal organization."

"A work which speaks only to the intelligence of man will never reach his heart. Of course, the feelings of the 20th Century man are not impressed in the same way as the feelings of a man of the romantic era, because neither art nor life are the same as they were. But we must not forget people's sentiments which are as eternal as mankind itself. Erich Kleiber told me once during a winter evening while we were walking the streets of Buenos Aires after his rehearsal at Teatro Colón, that a musical composition must come from the artist's heart and then pass through his head. I think this is true, because without sensibility the work of art is only a cold mathematical study, and without intelligence or technique it is only chaos. Thus the perfect formula would be sensitive beauty plus technical skill."

Hilde Somer

Hilde Somer has been featured as soloist with most of the major symphony orchestras of America and Europe.

It was at the age of ten that she made her concert debut in Vienna, the city of her birth, with the Vienna Symphony Orchestra. This was followed by appearances with the orchestras of Prague, Zagreb, Budapest, Milan, and Rome. At the age of twelve, Hilde Somer came to the United States, making her New York debut playing four concerti with the New York Philharmonic. An enthusiastic champion for the contemporary music of all countries, Miss Somer has given premieres of the works of Prokofiev, Ravel, and Poulenc with the New York Philharmonic, Philadelphia and other major American orchestras. On the occasion of one of her return trips to Vienna, she gave the Viennese premiere of Aaron Copland's Piano Concerto.

Ernst Maerzendorfer

Ernst Maerzendorfer is no stranger to American record connoisseurs, thanks to his recordings with the Berlin Philharmonic, Berlin Radio, and Salzburg Mozarteum orchestra.

A pupil of the late and great Clemens Krauss, Maerzendorfer's first major conductorial appointment was as chief conductor of the Graz opera in 1945. In 1951 he became chief instructor for the conducting classes at the Salzburg Mozarteum. During 1951-53, he conducted at the Teatro Colón in Buenos Aires, where he experienced contact at first hand with the music of Alberto Ginastera. It was in 1956 that Maerzendorfer came to America for the first time, on tour with the Salzburg Mozarteum Orchestra. Since then, he has been in constant demand for both operatic and symphonic engagements, conducting in West Berlin, the Vienna State Opera where he is a permanent member of the conducting staff, Rome, and the Copenhagen Royal Opera.