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Alberto Ginastera's three Piano Sonatas: A reflection of the composer and his country

De Los Cobos, Sergio, D.M.A.

Rice University, 1991

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RICE UNIVERSITY

ALBERTO GINASTERA'S THREE PIANO SONATAS
A Reflection of the Composer and his Country

by

SERGIO DE LOS COBOS

A THESIS SUBMITTED
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DOCTOR OF MUSICAL ARTS
DEGREE

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ABSTRACT

The study of Ginastera's three Piano Sonatas can be viewed as an example of the composer's general development. The historical context in which Ginastera lived is an important departure point. His native country, Argentina, was originally the home of the Incas who practiced music, although at a primitive stage. The first foreign influence was the Spanish colonization in 1516. After Argentina's independence in 1816, the figure of the gaucho appeared; it was a legend of the pampas and a constant source of inspiration for the Argentine nationalistic culture. A new European immigration further reinforced western music in Argentina and inspired the country in its search for a cultural identity.

Ginastera's output is often catalogued in three periods: Objective Nationalism, Subjective Nationalism, and Neo-Expressionism. A parallel can be drawn between Ginastera's evolution as a composer and Argentina's development as a cultural entity. The first Sonata shows the influence of Bartók and Stravinsky as well as Argentine folk elements, among which we recognize the guitar symbolism. The second Sonata goes back to the pre-Columbian era, inspired by primitive Indian melodies and rhythms. To these Ginastera adds an advanced atonal language, including chromatic clusters and microtone effects, thus bringing the dissonance to an extreme level. The third Sonata mixes both sources of inspiration. As a synthesis of the previous two sonatas, it shows a tendency towards balance and greater economy. All three works show an evolution, but also reflect similarities: the importance of the third interval, the melodic exaltation, the strong rhythms, and the sense of magic.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude to the members of my thesis committee for their encouraging support. The scope of the present study often seemed an intimidating challenge and their work helped me immensely. My thanks go to Dr. Anne Schnoebelen, my thesis director, who untiringly read copy after copy, making me aware of the subtleties of the language, and looking for a constant improvement in the writing. Thanks also to Dr. Dean Shank, Dr. Samuel Jones, Dr. Marcia Citron, and Dr. Deborah Nelson, for their insight and careful suggestions, regarding technical matters as well as style.

Thanks to all my friends, for their words of encouragement. Particular thanks to Dr. Reynaldo Ochoa, who in the middle of his own thesis managed to find extra time to help and tutor me on a music publishing program.

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I come now to my family, who put up with all the delays and frustrations. Without their love and unconditional support I would not be where I am now. Finally, my deepest gratitude goes to my wife, HunJu. Her love, patience, support and understanding have been limitless.

April 26, 1991
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INTRODUCTION

My first encounter with Ginastera's music was a performance of his first Piano Sonata by a contestant at the International Competition in Geneva. The primitive character of the sonata's language in many ways evoked the Rite of Spring; the driving force of its rhythms seemed inherited from the Allegro Barbaro. His idiom, however, was rooted in Argentina's folklore with some Spanish influence. Later, attending a performance of his cello concerto, with his wife, Aurora Natola, as soloist, I further discovered the composer's coloristic approach in a broad variety of moods.

By coincidence I met Alberto Ginastera after attending a violin recital at the "Grand Théâtre" in Geneva in 1980. At the time, I was beginning the reading of his first piano sonata. After a brief conversation about this work, he kindly invited me to play it for him whenever I wanted. Unfortunately I was caught up in the preparation of other repertoire and today regret not having being able to take advantage of the invitation.

In 1992, the 500th anniversary of Christopher Columbus' discovery of America will be commemorated. This occasion will celebrate not only Spanish music, but also music from
North and South America. In this context, opportunities recently have arisen for me to perform more of Ginastera's music. As I have become involved with the study of his piano works, I realized very little had been written about Alberto Ginastera until the early seventies. Even today, no publication thoroughly discusses his second piano sonata, and the third sonata is not presented on any commercial recording. Moreover, no complete biography is currently available. Thus, it seemed logical at this point to propose a study of his music, and his sonatas in particular.

In Latin America, among various composers who strove toward an idiom which was original, yet still representative of their own culture, one can name Heitor Villa-Lobos of Brazil, Alberto Ginastera of Argentina, and more recently Carlos Chávez of Mexico. Argentina, in particular, has served as a crossroads for various cultures which successively — and sometimes simultaneously — flooded a land once governed by ancient Inca traditions. The "gaucho" symbolism and the pampas are also important manifestations of Argentina's culture. They have been a constant source of inspiration not only for musicians, but also writers and painters.

This paper will attempt to connect the cultural evolution of Argentina throughout the centuries with
Ginastera's biography and his growth as a composer. Ginastera's life can be described as a microcosmic reflection in time of the macrocosm of Argentina's cultural evolution. The study of Ginastera's three piano sonatas, however limiting it may be in relation to his complete output, can be viewed as an example of the composer's general development. These sonatas clearly represent his piano writing and often present a serious challenge for the performer.

The sources used in this paper include books, articles and doctoral documents. They have been consulted mainly for historical information and analysis of the first sonata. A valuable source has been Ginastera himself. He will be quoted often throughout this study, since his views on his country and his background are often strikingly perceptive when related to his own work and to the directions his compositions were taking.
I. ARGENTINA

To understand how Ginastera's work changed and evolved during his career, one must consider the historical and cultural context which influenced Ginastera's life. As he himself stated, the environment is as strong a factor as any other in shaping the creative mind. South America, and Argentina in particular, has a very distinct cultural background that has been often overlooked. What we know of it today in fact results from a long evolution and indeed sometimes confrontation between several disparate cultures from the pre-Columbian days to the present.

Originally Argentina was inhabited by Indian tribes, such as the Incas or Quechuas, who lived mostly in the northwestern areas of the country. A comparatively advanced society, they were primarily centered in the Peruvian Andes. As with many other primitive cultures, music played an integral part in their social and religious life. As an example of music's importance to this tribe, Robert Stevenson notes their inclination to spend great amounts of their wealth to obtain, for instance, "the large conches that they felt necessary for their war trumpets". ¹ Their favorite

¹ Robert Stevenson, Music in Aztec and Inca Territory (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1976), 272-273, quoted in
instruments were flutes, panpipes, drums, rattles, bells and gongs, and a one-stringed bow. Stevenson adds that there is evidence their music evolved through modifications of their instruments.

Unfortunately, no notation system has survived, and what is known today comes mainly from descriptions in Spanish chronicles of the sixteenth century and archaeological findings. Their music is thought to have been improvised, and was based on three-note and five-note scales. Stevenson, however, claims that recent close examination of extant instruments reveals that these tribes were in fact not restricted to pentatonic or diatonic scales. In any case, the music the Indians commonly practice today in the Andes is mostly pentatonic. A representative descending scale would be G-E-D-C-A. A common rhythmic feature is the use of duple meter with binary or ternary divisions. Some songs had syncopated melodies; others were nonmensural. The accompaniment was often a straightforward repetition of a simple figure. The song type "yaravi" is probably the most representative example of Inca tradition today. The "yaravi" is a lyrical and melancholic song performed in a slow tempo.


3 Stevenson, Music in Aztec and Inca Territory, 7.
Other songs also displaying use of Inca modes and hybrid scales are the "triste" and the "vidala" types. The hybrid scales result from the Inca modes combined with European scales.

In 1516 the first foreign influence touched Argentina. The Spanish explorers discovered the country's precious metals and in response rushed toward this new land. Jesuit missionary priests soon joined the colonization. Charged with converting the Indians to Catholicism, they began establishing church settlements, and recorded much of the information now available. They also actively participated in bringing European church music to the New World. By the mid-seventeenth century, masses and motets were sung by Indian congregations, sometimes with string and wind accompaniments. The priests exposed them to the great literature of the masters of polyphony, and it was said that some New World choirs rivaled any in Europe. Beyond singing, Indians were also trained in schools to read music and to play and even build instruments.

As was the case earlier in Western Europe, the church tried to suppress secular music, since it had connotations

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with earlier pagan traditions. There are accounts of
destruction of Indian musical instruments, as well as
punishments for secular music performances. However, those
drastic measures did not succeed in banishing secular and
popular music, whether or not it was imported from Europe.

The Spaniards brought the guitar and with it came all
the repertoire of folk music from the regions of their mother
country. Lively rhythms (with a clear predilection for
triple meter) filled the streets as well as the court events.
The aristocracy was prompt to patronize artistic and popular
performances. In 1767 Charles V expelled the Jesuits but
music remained centered in the church throughout the
eighteenth century.

Very little is written about the music brought to
Argentina by the Spaniards, which was influenced by the black
and Inca cultures. Intermarriage between native Incas and
Europeans resulted in the "criollos." The word criollo
(creole) comes from the Spanish verb "criar," meaning to
raise, to grow. The term criollo refers to an American-born
descendant of European immigrants. The criollos are an
important component in Argentine society for they represent
the blend of traditions and cultures. The other element,
Black African influence, is not well documented in Argentina.
Economic and social conditions made slavery unpopular and
quickly led to its abolition. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, blacks and mulattos formed about 10% of the population and had only a minor cultural influence.

As in almost any growing colony, the immigrant population eventually felt the need to affirm its own identity. In 1816, after six tumultuous years of revolt against the Spanish government, Argentina became independent. An unstable period of almost forty years followed, during which the country built an internal structure in order to function independently.

By that time, the blend of traditions started to shape a new cultural identity and gave birth to the "gaucho." On Argentinian wide plains, called pampas, the population lived on ranches or estancias. The presence of cattle called for local "cowboys" named "gauchos." Typically, the gaucho is mostly of Spanish descent, with some Indian blood. The very popular symbolism of the gaucho quickly grew into legend.

Next to the pampas rose Buenos Aires, the fast-growing capital. This geographical situation created a cultural phenomenon, qualified as a "rural-urban dichotomy" by numerous scholars. In such places, folk tradition, in this case the Ibero-Indian culture, was juxtaposed with
nineteenth-century tradition. This concept of dichotomy touches many levels. As Gilbert Chase states:

...through a combination of historical, geographical, economical factors, [this dichotomy] has acquired an acuteness and significance that has made itself strongly felt in every sphere, from the political to the artistic.5

One finds this awareness not only in music, but also in literature, poetry and theatre, where many works portray the contrast between the wilderness of the pampas and the cultured education of the cities.

These two opposites, as suggested by Chase, contributed to nurture the legend of the gaucho:

The urban-rural dichotomy of Argentina is aggravated by the tremendous centralization—of population, political power, economic control, and cultural activity—that exists in Buenos Aires. At the same time, the curious ambivalence in this relationship that is so characteristically Argentine is fostered by the proximity of the metropolis to the hinterland. It is as though New York was situated on the edge of the prairies.
The heart of the pampas is the Province of Buenos Aires. All city dwellers have easy access to it. Many of them have childhood associations with it, from summers spent on an "estancia" (ranch). The combined impact of household literary classics, such as Martin Fierro and Don Segundo Sombra, and the visual impressions and physical sensations received from actual contact with the pampa, have had their effect upon many a city-bred writer and painter. If music was the latest of the fine arts to reflect this influence, it has

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nonetheless, over the past century, contributed its full quota of works in the "gauchesco" tradition.\textsuperscript{6}

Much like Europe's troubadours and trouvères, Argentine payadores and cancioneros spread the gaucho legend everywhere. First singing love songs and other romantic themes, and then later concentrating on the gaucho's heroism, the payadores and cancioneros opened the door to writers and poets to further perpetuate the legend.

In his dissertation on Argentine folk elements, Roy Wylie lists some 130 songs and dances attributed to the gaucho.\textsuperscript{7} The "gaucho" style, if there is any, is probably defined by the lyrics or context of the composition, rather than by musical structure:

There is no set form for any of these numerous dances and songs. No definite demarcation line separates two similar dances. Most of them are characterized by a rhythm common to all Argentine folk music, namely a dual time signature of three-four and six eight, which is Hispanic in origin.\textsuperscript{8}

When the training of musicians became of particular importance, young talents were often sent to Europe to study

\textsuperscript{6} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{7} Roy Wylie, "Argentine Folk Elements in the Solo Piano Works of Alberto Ginastera." (Ph.D.diss., University of Texas at Austin, 1966), 16.
\textsuperscript{8} Nicolas Slonimsky, Music of Latin America (New York: Crowell, 1945), 74.
and absorb the traditions of Western culture. This resulted in numerous performances of European music. Thus, Argentinian art and music became more influenced by European standards.

This phenomenon continued to grow during the second half of the nineteenth century. Relaxed immigration laws allowed for a massive settlement of Italians, French, and Spaniards, who transformed Argentina into a "cosmopolitan land," a melting pot. According to Chase, 1,200,000 settlers came to stay permanently in Argentina between 1857 and 1900. These immigrants were primarily from Italy and secondarily from Spain and France. They also brought an increase in cultural activity. With an overwhelming majority of Italian immigrants, it is no surprise that opera—and Italian opera in particular—soared incredibly in popularity. Further, the style of opera composition in Argentina during that period was heavily influenced by the Italians and backed by a European musical tradition. La Gatta Bianca, by Francisco Hargreaves, was considered the first truly Argentine opera.

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9 Mary Ann Hanley, "The Compositions for Solo Piano by Alberto Ginastera" (Ph.D.diss., University of Cincinnati, 1986), 3
11 Francisco Hargreaves (1849-1900) was considered in Argentina as a pioneer of national music. Roy Wylie, "Argentine Folk Elements in the Solo Piano Works of Alberto Ginastera." (Ph.D.diss., University of Texas at Austin, 1986), 10.
It premiered in Italy in 1875. On this subject Ginastera comments:

...musicians of the generation born before [1880], many of whom studied in Europe, were influenced by composers of the second half of the past century, by the first splendors of French Impressionism and the Italian realism of Puccini.¹²

During the first half of this century, a principal figure among Argentine musicians was Alberto Williams (1862-1952). Williams was the country's first true professional composer and founded the Williams Conservatory in Buenos Aires, where Ginastera studied. A pupil of César Franck in Paris, he was strongly influenced by the French school. Upon his return to Argentina he worked toward a more nationalistic style of composition, and became an authority on the musical life of his country. Like Bartók, he visited many regions of his country to discover how music was represented and performed in its variety of styles. El Rancho Abandonado (1890) is his first known piano piece moving consciously toward a nationalistic style.

Another Argentine composer, Julián Aguirre (1868-1924), trained in Madrid, Spain, moved further than Williams in his search of a nationalistic style. One trademark of his style

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has been called criollismo, a blend of native American and European elements.

As in Europe, a nationalistic trend spread in Argentina during the 1880's. The compositions of those years were mainly in a romantic and later impressionistic style, upon which folksong elements were imposed. This process was a conscious device that over time tended to become more subconscious. Beginning with the twentieth century a broader evolution in music composition occurred. More international in character, this new wave also offered more variety in styles and techniques. Ginastera continues:

The generation born in the nineties presents a very different picture. Knowledge of the works of Debussy, Ravel, Schönberg, etc..., provoked an evolution in Argentine music, the most admirable result of which was the overcoming of the Romantic tradition. The rhythmic force of "Petrushka", or of "Le Sacre du Printemps", the novelty of "L'Histoire du Soldat" or of "Pulcinella", the simplicity and grandeur of "Le Roi David", the use of folkloristic material in Falla and Bartók and the originality of Hindemith and Milhaud were at that time the fountains which originated the new aesthetic movement in Argentina.\(^{13}\)

After World War II, technological advances made traveling and communication faster, and information much more readily available. This clearly led to a greater exchange of ideas at a faster pace. Thanks to a new economic revival,
music societies, orchestras and schools expanded in Argentina. This period has also seen a reversal of the late nineteenth century's nationalistic character of music composition. For composers, the creative process has come to depend not so much on the individual's cultural background as his or her specific and unique personality. Ginastera believed in a universal knowledge for any young composer:

The preoccupation which concerned the generation of the 80's and the 90's (technical skills, the acquisition of a modern language, the depiction of a national style, et al) are not those which move younger composers. We have found a musical culture more solid and advanced, which has permitted our activities to be worked out in a medium more apt than was possible thirty years ago. The problem, seen from a purely musical point of view, is digging at basic elements, with projection towards a universal art.  

This long process follows the six factors in the development of music in Argentina stated by Chase:

1. relatively recent population growth
2. absence of a strong native culture
3. scarcity of blacks
4. predominance of Italian immigrants after 1850
5. marked cultural influence of France
6. the rise of the cosmopolitan city of Buenos Aires

14 Ibid.
With all these factors in mind, one can now clearly recognize that the historical evolution of Argentina forecast the arrival of a composer such as Ginastera. From the biography that follows, the reader will be able to see parallels between the evolution of Argentina and Ginastera's growth as a composer, his support for a nationalistic movement, and his own development toward a more personal language.
II. BIOGRAPHY


Alberto Evaristo Ginastera was born in Buenos Aires on April 11, 1916 to second generation Argentines. His father, Alberto Ginastera, a wool trader, was of Catalan descent\(^1\) and his mother, Luisa Bossi, was of Italian origin (Lombardy). When he was six years old, the young Alberto received a toy flute as a Christmas present and taught himself to play the Argentine National Hymn (becoming upset when his instrument would not play b-flat) and other military marches.\(^2\) Showing precocious gifts, at the age of seven he began taking his first piano lessons privately with Torcuato Rodriguez Castro. At age 12 he entered the Williams Conservatory, where he studied solfege, theory with Rodriguez Castro, piano with Cayetano Argenziani, harmony with Celestino Piaggio, and composition with José Gil. He graduated in 1935 with a gold medal in composition. Besides his music studies, he pursued his secondary school education (1930-1935), attending a

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\(^1\) The word "Ginastera" in Catalan is the name of a flower symbolizing freedom. The composer pronounced his last name Hee-nah-stay-rah, the usual Spanish pronunciation. However, in Catalan, it is Gee-nah-stay-rah.

course of studies in commerce. At that time he was writing numerous small compositions, which he later destroyed.³

Upon graduation from the Williams Conservatory, Ginastera attended the National Conservatory from 1936 to 1938 where he studied harmony with Athos Palma, counterpoint and fugue with José Gil, and composition with José André. André, who was a former student of Alberto Williams, went to Paris to the Schola Cantorum and studied under D'Indy and Roussel. He probably transmitted many elements of French culture to Ginastera.⁴ Ginastera graduated from the National Conservatory with high honors in composition, submitting a setting of Psalm 150 for mixed chorus, boy's choir, and orchestra, a work which was later performed at the Teatro Colón in 1945.

2. Objective Nationalism (1937 to 1948)⁵

Panambi, Op. 1, is often considered to be the composer's first major work.⁶ It was performed in 1937 as a suite, with Juan José Castro conducting the Colón orchestra, and won a National Prize in 1940 when it was mounted in its original ballet form at the Colón (Castro conducting, in a

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⁴ Ibid.
choreography by Margarita Wallman). The success of Panamì led to a commission in 1941 from Lincoln Kirstein (impresario of the American Ballet Caravan) to write a ballet with an Argentine setting for his company. The project gave birth to Estancia, which presents a scenario based on Argentine country life. It was to be performed on a Latin American tour, but before the work could even go into production, the company was dissolved. It was performed at the Teatro Colón in 1943 as an orchestral suite, and again in 1952 in its original version. The work, which was choreographed by Michel Borovsky, was kept in repertory.

In 1941 Ginastera was appointed professor of harmony and music rudiments at the National Conservatory. He also obtained, by competition, the chair of music at the Liceo Militar General San Martin. On December 11 he married Mercedes de Toro, whom he met in 1937 while still at the National Conservatory, and on August 28, 1942, she gave birth to their son, Alex. In 1942, the Guggenheim Foundation awarded Ginastera a grant to continue his work, but because of World War II he postponed making use of it.

The performance of the concert version of Estancia at the Colón on May 12, 1943 strengthened Ginastera's reputation as a "highly effective musical interpreter of Argentine national culture and character." 7 By then he was considered a

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7 Gilbert Chase, "Ginastera, Alberto," 388.
leader of the National Movement in Argentine music, a movement formerly initiated by Alberto Williams in 1890.\(^8\)

In 1944 Ginastera was appointed Chairman of Composition at the Conservatorio Nacional de Música. His most extensive work during that year was *Sinfonia elegiaca*, which was dedicated "to the men who died for liberty." Also in 1944, the Ginasteras had another addition to the family with the birth of their daughter, Georgina, on November 3.

An outspoken liberal and independent thinker, Ginastera had a thorny relationship with the state that cost him his chair at the National Military Academy. In 1945, Juan Perón, then minister of war, dismissed Ginastera for having signed of a manifesto defending democratic principles and freedom. The situation worsened during Perón's tenure as president, resulting in Ginastera's removal from Directorship of the Conservatory of Music and Scenic Arts, Buenos Aires. He did, however, return to this position when Perón himself was ousted. At that time Ginastera decided to use his Guggenheim fellowship and took his family to the United States, where they remained until March 1947. These early years in the United States proved to be important as the beginning of close and durable ties with the country.

In the U.S., Ginastera lived mostly in New York and visited many centers of music education, among them Columbia,
Yale, and Boston University. He attended Copland's course in composition at Tanglewood and was a visitor at the Music Educators National Conference in Cleveland, Ohio. He also attended concerts of his music given by the League of Composers in New York and the Pan American Union in Washington, D.C. Erich Kleiber conducted the NBC Symphony Orchestra in a performance of the Panambi suite, and some of Ginastera's early chamber music received a hearing as well.

Ginastera's first period of output has been labeled by scholars as "Objective Nationalism". During this period he was clearly under the influence of Argentine folk elements. They are evident in the ballet Estancia, the String Quartet No. 1, the tone poem Ollantay, and piano and vocal music dating from the late 1930s and 1940s. After 1948, this influence gradually gave way to a more international and personal idiom.

3. Subjective Nationalism (1948 to 1958)\(^9\)

Teaching and promoting contemporary music were also among Ginastera's activities. Back in Buenos Aires in 1948, he took the initiative in forming a league of composers that became the Argentine section of the ISCM (International Society for Contemporary Music). He founded the Conservatory of the Province of Buenos Aires in La Plata, and held its

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directorship while maintaining his position at the National Conservatory. He also became the founder of the Faculty of Musical Arts and Sciences of the Catholic University of Argentina.

Ginastera's journeys abroad grew more frequent, and in 1950 he was invited to Chile for the first performance of his Sinfonía elegiaca in Santiago, under the baton of Erich Kleiber. While there, he was elected honorary member of the Facultad de Artes y Ciencias Musicales de la Universidad de Chile, and corresponding member of the Chilean Society of Composers.

His First String Quartet, Op. 20, is often considered to have opened the door to his second period of music nationalism. By Ginastera's own terms, this work is more "subjective" than previous works. Premiered by the Budapest String Quartet, opus 20 won the prize of the Asociación Wagneriana of Buenos Aires and drew Ginastera's first major success in Europe in 1951. The performance was at the twenty-fifth festival of the International Society for Contemporary Music (ISCM) in Frankfurt, and was given upon the invitation of the Hessischen Rundfunk. This was the first European performance of his work.

Under growing demand, in 1951 he participated in the sessions of the International Music Council of UNESCO in Paris, and was a juror in the composers' contest of the Conservatoire de Paris. He attended performances of his
music at ISCM festivals in Oslo (1953), Stockholm (1956) and Rome (1959). In 1956 Ginastera visited the Royal Academy of Music and the BBC in London, and in 1957 he was among the jury for the Latin American Prize in Composition at Caracas, Venezuela.

In the meantime, the year 1952 started a period of difficulties back home for the Ginasteras. Juan Perón was re-elected President of Argentina and gradually transformed the democracy into a dictatorship. Ginastera was dismissed from his position as Director of the Conservatory. Fourteen other professors had to resign as well.

In the same year, the Carnegie Institution and the Pennsylvania College for Women commissioned a sonata for piano which was first performed by Johanna Harris at the Pittsburgh Festival of Contemporary Music, and bears the opus number 22.

When the Perón regime removed Ginastera from the post as head of the Conservatorio de La Provincia de Buenos Aires, it caused a blow to the family's financial position. To supplement his income, Ginastera began composing music for films. He continued this until 1955, when the Peronists were overthrown and Ginastera was reinstated at the Conservatory.

Despite the conditions of Ginastera's life during the Perón oppression, in 1953 and 1954 he received commissions for new works. He composed Variaciones concertantes, one of his more popular works, in 1953, and Pampeana No. 3 in 1954.
Pampeana No. 3 was featured at the ISCM Festival in Stockholm 1956. In 1957 it became a highlight at the Caracas Festival, and that year Ginastera was honored with membership in the National Academy of Fine Arts of Argentina.


In 1958, upon being appointed Dean of the Faculty of Musical Arts and Sciences at the Argentine Catholic University, Ginastera resigned from the Conservatorio de la Provincia de Buenos Aires. His main responsibility as Dean of Faculty was to organize the music curriculum. After completing that task, he was appointed teacher of composition.

Like many years of Ginastera's life, 1958 proved to be one of pivotal events: his mother and father died, he was appointed to a professorship at the University of La Plata, and, upon invitation by the United States Department of State, he visited the USA, attending the first Inter-American Music Festival in Washington, D.C. There, his Second Quartet, Op. 26, commissioned by the Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge Foundation, was premiered by the Juilliard Quartet (April 9, 1958 at the Coolidge Auditorium of the Library of Congress), who kept the work in their repertoire. The critical acclaim provoked by this work marked a turning point.

10 Ibid.
in Ginastera's career, granting him full international recognition. The Second Quartet is considered the first work of his third, so-called neo-expressionistic, period.

In 1959, a second trip to Europe took him to Italy, where his Second String Quartet was performed at the ISCM Festival in Rome. He then traveled to France, where he lectured and wrote on music. Meanwhile, Argentina featured his works in festivals and broadcast programs. The year 1961 saw the premiere of two impressive works that he heard performed at the Second Inter-American Music Festival in April: the *Cantata para América Mágica, Op. 27*, (called by the composer "a kind of primitive rite, a pre-Columbian ceremony") commissioned by the Fromm Foundation, and the *Piano Concerto No. 1, Op. 28*, a piece requested by the Koussevitzky Foundation, that uses free serialism. Many important commissions followed, mostly from the United States.

During that time he did not neglect teaching, however. He founded the Latin American Center for Advanced Musical Studies in the Instituto Torcuato di Tella (1962-1970), which was established with a grant by the Rockefeller Foundation and dedicated to the specialization of Latin American composers. Appointed director of the center, his duties led him to resign from all his other teaching positions. Through this position, he became a decisive influence on the younger generation of composers in Latin America. The students
received two-year resident scholarships to study with Ginastera and several eminent musicians whom he invited as visiting professors.

In 1962 the municipality of Buenos Aires commissioned Ginastera to write his first opera. Premiered at the Teatro Colón on 24 July 1964, Don Rodrigo, an immensely theatrical work, "spectacularly launched Ginastera's career as a composer of grand opera."¹¹

In 1963 Ginastera completed Piano Quintet, Op. 29, commissioned by the Mozarteum Argentino and performed by the Quinteto Chigiano at the Venice Festival on April 13, 1963. The Violin Concerto, Op. 30, which was dedicated to the New York Philharmonic, boasts brilliant instrumental effects. Ginastera finished the concerto in September, and Leonard Bernstein, who commissioned the work, conducted the premier performance of Ruggiero Ricci and the New York Philharmonic. In 1964, another cantata, Romarzo, was a highlight of the thirteenth Coolidge Festival in the Library of Congress, Washington. It differs significantly from the opera of the same name (composed later), but is derived from the same literary source. Both works also have the same librettist. The New York City Opera began its permanent residence in the New York State Theater of Lincoln Center with Don Rodrigo in 1966, and the company retained the work as part of its repertory. The first performance of the opera Romarzo was by

¹¹ Ibid.
the Opera Society of Washington, which commissioned it in 1966. It was performed in the United States on May 19, 1967, in the Liriodendron Auditorium of Washington, D.C., under the direction of Julius Rudel.\textsuperscript{12} It was scheduled for production in Buenos Aires in August 1967, but was banned by the mayor because of the overt sexuality depicted in the libretto. Ginastera reacted energetically: he forbade any performance of his other works by state-supported companies. \textit{Romarzo} was then performed by the New York City Opera.

Ginastera spent the first half of 1968 in the United States. During the summer he was in residence at Dartmouth College, New Hampshire. He composed the first cello concerto. The same year he was awarded a membership in the American Academy of Arts and Letters, and Yale University awarded him an honorary doctorate. In 1969 he separated from his wife, and in 1970 moved to Europe. He married the Argentine cellist Aurora Natola in 1971 and they settled in Geneva, at which time he received the National Grand Prize for the Arts from the Argentine Ministry of Culture and Education. On September 10, 1971 his third opera, \textit{Beatrix Cenci}, Op. 32, also commissioned by the Opera Society of Washington, was performed under Julius Rudel for the opening of the Kennedy Center. Again, sex and violence—specifically, incest and murder—were present. On April 29, 1972 the ban on \textit{Romarzo} was finally lifted and the opera triumphed at the

\textsuperscript{12} Julius Rudel introduced all of Ginastera's works to North America.
Colón, with the composer present as the guest of his native city. His output continued with a Second Piano Concerto in 1972, a Third String Quartet with Soprano in 1973, the *Sonata para guitarra* in 1976, the Cello Sonata in 1979 and in 1981, a Second Cello Concerto, Op. 50.

In spite of two piano concertos and numerous works including a piano part, Ginastera did not write any large-scale work for piano solo for almost thirty years. Then came the *Sonata No. 2, Op. 53*, written between the summer and fall of 1981, and premiered October 1981 in Ann Arbor, Michigan. The *Sonata No. 3, Op. 55*, was written during the summer of 1982 in Formentor (Baleares) and Geneva. It was commissioned by the University of Michigan and dedicated to Barbara Nissman, who premiered the work on November 17, 1982 in New York. Already ill, Ginastera was also working on a religious opera, *Barrabas*, and had been commissioned by the St. Louis Symphony to produce a work for mezzo-soprano and orchestra, a work that he never wrote.

Ginastera died after a long illness, on June 23, 1983 in Geneva at age 67.
III. SONATA NO. 1, OP. 22

The commission of the first sonata by the Carnegie Institute and the Pennsylvania College for Women for the 1952 International Contemporary Music Festival not only gave Ginastera the economic help he needed at a time when he was struggling with the Perón government, but also gave him important moral support. Dedicated to Roy and Johana Harris, it was first performed by Johana Harris herself, in Carnegie Music Hall, Pittsburgh, on November 29, 1952. In 1953 the ISCM chose the work to be performed at their XXVIIth Festival in Oslo.

From the very opening measures of the first sonata and throughout its four movements various influences are clearly traceable. Ginastera reveals:

First, it was the French impressionists... But the great influences for me are Stravinsky, Bartók, and also de Falla. And several years later, it was Berg.

The tempo indications of the first movement (Allegro marcato) and the fourth (Ruvido ed ostinato) suggest Bartók's Allegro Barbaro.

On one of these occasions I heard Bartók's Allegro Barbaro for the first time, played by Rubinstein. I felt then the impact of the discovery, the bewilderment of a revelation. I was 15 years old at the time.²

Bartók placed percussion instruments at a new level of importance in music. In Ginastera's first sonata, the percussive effect of the octave answering the opening motive evokes the timpani, or a percussion instrument.

Bartók's obvious concern with structure also influenced Ginastera:

... the construction of melody from cells and repetition of parts of those cells; ... Later on, when I was able to analyze Bartók's work, I found in it the answer to another concern I had felt since my youth: the problem of form and style. ... Bartók always finds the musical structure which originates and develops from the basis of the work itself.³

In the following example, the trumpet-like opening motive, based on an ascending minor third, is doubled harmonically at a major third. At the same time, another double third, an octave lower, moves down a minor third. This motion in opposite directions, perfectly symmetrical, creates a diverging effect which inevitably brings tension through a new dissonant chord. It is as if some material was being

stretched or pulled in opposite directions, to the point of rupture, which is symbolized by the resulting dissonance. The cell is ambiguous (A minor – C Major), and the chord in m. 2 suggests polytonality, but remains ambiguous as well.

Example No. 1: Sonata No. 1; First movement, m. 1

This type of construction, used by Bartók and Schoenberg, where a simple cell determines the structure of the composition, had already set its basic roots much earlier in history with Haydn and Beethoven.

From this point of view, the development of this composition is rather traditional. For this reason, one could apply traditional analytical concepts to define a musical structure, even though traditional harmonic rules do not apply.

The first movement (Allegro marcato) is based on the sonata form concept, and uses a first theme in the Aeolian
mode, which will suggest a tonal center in A minor. The "timpani" answer in the bass will itself develop into a group of instruments in a different register, sometimes overlapping, and the whole generates an antiphonal effect.

Example No. 2: Sonata No. 1; First movement, m. 1

Example No. 3: Sonata No. 1; First movement, m. 23

As the opening cell develops, we find logically an abundant use of its parallel thirds, also frequently used in
other works such as the Danzas Argentinas and probably linked to Argentine folk music.\footnote{Mary Ann Hanley, "The Solo Piano Music of Alberto Ginastera II," \textit{American Music Teacher} XXV:1 (Sept-Oct.1975): 7.}

The melodic treatment often reveals a folklike character, obvious in the second theme (m. 52), but Ginastera brought the nationalistic movement of Stravinsky and Bartók to a level of "subjective sublimation," as Chase reports:

\begin{quote}
About the Sonata for Piano he said: "The Sonata is written with polytonal and twelve tone procedures. The composer does not employ any folkloric material, but instead introduces in the thematic texture rhythmic and melodic motives whose expressive tension has a pronounced Argentine accent."\footnote{Gilbert Chase, "Alberto Ginastera: Argentine Composer," \textit{Musical Quarterly} XLIII:4 (October 1957): 451.}
\end{quote}

Built on a pentatonic scale (B-D-E-F\#-A), this pastoral melody is reminiscent of Inca music.

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{music_notes.png}
\caption{Example No. 4: \textit{Sonata No. 1; First movement}, mm. 52-55}
\end{figure}
Although contrasting in character with the first theme, this melodic idea is already stated in the first theme at m. 7-8.

Example No. 5: Sonata No. 1: First movement, mm. 7-8

Ginastera has clearly established in this movement a thematic unity, within the duplicity of the themes.

The composer then exploits both groups of thematic material for his development (m. 80), using quartal harmonies and polychords. The superimposition of minor thirds had already resulted in tritone relationships early in the exposition (m. 5). One effective polytonal passage has a particular Stravinskian accent:
Example No. 6: Sonata No. 1; First movement,

m. 101

In the recapitulation (m. 138) the first theme is reinforced by two double octaves on the first beat (sff and accented), and an additional doubling voice starting on the note G:

Example No. 7: Sonata No. 1; First movement,

m. 138

The second theme is also emphasized through doubling at the fifth and the octave, played ff and with gaiety (gaito):
Example No. 8: Sonata No. 1; First movement,
mn. 184-187

The movement ends in a coda with a whirlwind of double octaves, poco stringendo, which cover the entire keyboard to reach a final clash, marked sfff.

Frequent meter changes are the rule for this movement. For most of it, the unity is achieved through common eighth note value. However, the listener can feel several levels of pulse going from dotted quarter to eighth-note. An interesting rhythmic feature is the unsymmetrical division of the 8/8 pattern into 3-3-2. On a larger level, the repetition of motives, or the pairing of ideas, can be seen from the very beginning. These devices follow the path traced by Bartók, and before him, Liszt.⁶

The opening statement gives the listener a sample of Ginastera's orchestral vision: extremely broad and colorful (two staves are not enough!), passionate, with use of violent

⁶ Liszt's thematic material is often built on repetition.
dynamic indications that will appear in both outer movements: *sempre forte* or *sempre ff* (m. 30, 47, 101, 122, 167) *fortissimo* (m. 23, 30, 131), *fff* (m. 203), *energico* (m. 30, 167), *agitato* (m. 37, 174), *violento* (m. 101, 132), *molto marcato* (m. 84), *sff* and *sfff* (m. 138, 204). In the midst of this explosive battle appears one carefully notated contrast, the second theme: *piano dolce e pastorale* (m. 52), a recurrent indication in Ginastera's compositions. Clearly of Argentine character, it symbolizes in his music the tradition of the pampas and the legend of the gaucho. #

The second movement (*Presto misterioso*) is described by Hanley as a "fantastic scherzo" with "magical and unreal qualities". The general structure of this movement could be described as ABACABA (sonata-rondo), with folk influence again apparent in the B section (m. 48). The movement opens with a twelve-tone row. It is the first appearance of twelve-tone material in Ginastera's piano music.

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Example No. 9: *Sonata No. 1: Second movement*,

mm. 1-2

It is only a melodic starting point for this movement and has no structural implications. As the movement develops the recurrence of some pitches shows clearly that Ginastera uses dodecaphonism as an inspiration, rather than as a strict technique of composition. However, this element will be the connecting link between all the various parts of the movement, as a hypnotic and haunting ostinato. Obviously in the beginning, it moves to a more discrete level of accompaniment, as new elements arrive on the scene. A "static" hallucinating effect is created in the C section (m. 78) by the constant opposition between the three chromatic pitches A-B-flat-B: the left hand brings an obsessive, simple motive (A-B), while the right hand plays a dislocated formula of B-flat and its chromatic upper and lower tones.
Example No. 10: Sonata No. 1; Second movement,
mm. 7-8

The impressionistic wind effect (pp, leggero [sic] and lasciar vibrare) of the right hand in the C section (m. 78) evokes the vast open spaces of the pampas.

Suddenly one hears a guitar play its six open strings:

Example No. 11: Sonata No. 1; Second movement,
m. 109

Named the "Symbolic Chord" by Hanley and others, this is a Ginastera trademark. It will appear in other places under other forms. Chase has commented on the peculiar impression caused by this "diatonic simplicity" in the midst of the "restless chromatic motion".\footnote{Gilbert Chase, "Alberto Ginastera: Argentine Composer," Musical Quarterly XLIII:4 (October 1957): 452.} A sense of rhythmic stability
is achieved through the repetition of two-measure groups leading to even-length phrases. This "fantastic" aspect of Ginastera's scherzo movements can also be found in his first piano concerto and the *String Quartet No. 1*. It is also associated with the element of "magic" found in his operas.

The third movement is given the indication "Adagio molto appassionato." As an antipode of the outer movements, it represents the introversion of the same force. The first notes opening the movement should not only create a resonant texture, but they should also create great intensity, the weight of silence, inspired by the immensity of the pampas. Here again, the movement seems to unfold out of the first measure, an example of "Ginastera's ability to develop a sonority into a whole movement—an ability he uses repeatedly in slow movements."\(^{10}\)

In addition to many tempo indications, the score reveals further interpretive intentions of the composer: *pp*, *sonoro*, and *lasciar vibrare col ped.* at the opening, *intenso* (m. 14), *lirico* (m. 23), *agitato* (m. 30), *con passione* (m. 34), *sonoro ma lontanissimo* (m. 68). These indications are important for the performer, since they clearly state the composer's intention, and will prevent the pianist from falling into the

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trap of a diluted impressionistic improvisation, as the opening might falsely suggest.

The general structure of this movement is ABACBCA. Hanley mentions that it opens with the symbolic guitar chord, a few pitches being altered. Wallace goes further and underlines the concept of unity:

The resemblance of the arpeggio to the guitar chord just heard at the conclusion of the previous movement is surely intentional.\footnote{Ibid.}

The guitar chord near the end of the second movement appears in the left hand, as shown in Ex. 12:

\begin{center}
\textbf{Example No. 12: Sonata No. 1; Second movement, mm. 185-186}
\end{center}

The third movement opens with the following arpeggio:
Example No. 13: *Sonata No. 1: Third movement,*

mm. 1-2

The opening is in 5/4 meter, with the six "guitar" notes being gradually transformed into cadenza-like passages, the most important leading into a new melody (B, at m. 13). The repeated note that initiates this melody has a psalmodic character, which will turn into a passionate incantation *ff* (*agitato*) when the same idea comes back at m. 34, enhanced with octave doublings, pedal points, and longer arpeggios. Another element (C) comes at m. 23, in 2/2 meter after a shortened reiteration of the opening. It is interesting to observe that the span between the bass and top note of the guitar chord can be reduced to a minor third (B to D) (see Example 14). Similarly, the shortened reiteration mentioned above (m. 18) is transposed a minor third, from D to F. This interval is seminal to the work for it is the minor third that opens the first movement of the sonata. It is also found extensively in a transitional passage (m. 48-56) that ends with four notes with a similar contour to the bass line of part C (m. 23-25). The movement closes with an arpeggio
using all twelve tones (unrelated to its use in the second movement) and ending on D, the tonal center of the movement.

Example No. 14: Sonata No. 1; Third movement,
m. 34

As the following reductive diagram shows, the gestures of both parts A and B are opposed. In addition to this observation it is important to note that both ideas are related since they are both moving almost consistently by means of chromaticism:
Example No. 15: Sonata No. 1; Third movement, m. 12
Further reduction of the ascending chromatic line reveals the importance of the third relationship. Centered around F, the scale reaches a structural point on D-flat at m. 26 and another one on A at m. 30. Moreover, the entire line aims at the B in m. 34. The tritone F-B is the result of two added minor thirds, a further indication of the importance of the third in this work.
The last movement follows the pattern of ABCABAB, labeled "modified rondo" by Hanley.\textsuperscript{12} By grouping AB together into a new larger A, it could be seen as a larger structure \textit{A-B-A-A}, or \textit{A-B-A-Coda}. The composer's indication is "\textit{Ruvido}"\textsuperscript{13} \textit{ed ostinato}". Ginastera reveals his inspiration when he quotes Bartók:

\begin{quote}
..."the feverish excitement produced by the repeated primitive themes", in Bartók's words...\textsuperscript{14}
\end{quote}

These words perfectly illustrate this last movement. Here Ginastera uses the ostinato rhythms of the \textit{malambo}, an Argentine dance based on alternating ternary/binary rhythms, pointing to the nationalistic inspiration of the piece. The meter is in this case is 3/8-6/16. Again, one finds ambiguity of tonality (C and A minor) due to the minor third relationship in the melody.

Obviously, the repetition of patterns and motives is of importance in creating the exultation effect of the ostinato. But there is also a continuous buildup throughout the movement that a performer should carefully pace to achieve

\textsuperscript{13} Ruvido means "rough."
the irresistible excitement of the last page. A good control of dynamic levels is essential. Progressive growth is achieved throughout the movement by adding quartal harmonies (B theme, m. 27) and octave doublings, sometimes enhanced by pedal points and more antiphonal effects that required three-stave writing (m. 100). The C section (m. 62) is in the Dorian mode and contrasts with the general Aeolian mode of the movement. The right hand figurations are pianistically inherited from Liszt's and Ravel's arpeggio writing.

Ginastera varies often the return of previous material: part B comes back in canon at m. 94 and part A has a last appearance in chordal writing (m. 138) The last statement of B reaches a climactic level: \textit{fff possibile}, with a pedal point on A and a six-tone cluster supporting the theme in octaves.

The coda, marked \textit{tutta la forza, feroce}, literally sweeps over the entire keyboard, and jumps to end on a low octave, A.
SONATA NO. 2, OP. 53

Almost thirty years separate the second from the first piano sonata. Ginastera seems to have taken time off from his piano compositions. During this period, he wrote two piano concertos, but his only solo piano pieces are the short Pequeña Danza\(^1\) (from Estancia)\(^2\) and the Toccata (written after the Toccata per organo by Domenico Zipoli (1716)). The reason for this large gap between the completion of the first two piano sonatas is revealed by the composer himself during an interview:

L.T.: "Do you ever suffer from creative block?"
A.G.: "No. Well, yes, once. That was caused by the success of my first piano sonata ..."\(^3\)

This mental block may have prevented the composer from presenting another substantial composition for solo piano in the immediate future. However, it does not mean that Ginastera ruled out the piano as a medium for his compositions during all those years. In 1981 he revealed:

I always have an idea. For example, I've just completed my second sonata for piano. I've

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1 Little dance.
2 Ballet and orchestral suite composed in 1942.
had the idea in my head for thirty years—ever since my first sonata.⁴

Commissioned by and dedicated to his friends Dorothy and Mario di Bonaventura, the second sonata was first performed by Anthony di Bonaventura (Mario's brother), at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, Rackham Auditorium, on January 29, 1982. Ginastera gives substantial information about this work in a program note:

...the second Sonata...suggests the music of the northern part of my country, of Aymará and Kechua origin (non-European music) with its pentatonic scales, its sad melodies or its joyful rhythms, its khenas and Indian drums, as well as its melismatic microtonal ornaments.⁵

The first movement (Allegramente) opens with a drum roll effect. The overall structure is looser than in the first sonata, and its organization is different. The main subject constitutes an introduction and a conclusion, framing the middle part, which is based on a succession of songs and dances. Simplified, it could suggest ABA, a structure also used earlier in Spanish music, for example, in the typical dance-song-dance type of composition. The dissonance is already present from the very first notes, where the drum

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⁴ Ibid.
roll is presented by the right and the left hands moving in a parallel motion, a major seventh apart:

Example No. 17: Sonata No. 2: First movement,
m. 1

There is a clear prominence of double thirds. In addition, Ginastera combines them with a melodic motion of a minor third in both hands, diverging outwards.

Example No. 18: Sonata No. 2: First movement,
m. 1

This is reminiscent of the opening of the first sonata:
Example No. 19: Sonata No. 1; First movement,

mm. 1-2

The introduction develops out of the initial cell (the double third), by successive additions and varied combinations of the same cell. Often, gradual additions modify the measure length and necessitate frequent meter changes, some of them more complex, such as 10/8 (mm. 44, 109, 169) and 11/8 (mm. 135-138) The rhythmic flow is interrupted by occasional syncopated sforzandi (mm. 34, 36, 37, 38). The atonal context is underlined by the chromatic clashes between intervals and the obsessive repetition of certain pitches. Ginastera's organization, in that respect, is graphically clear. He uses four staves better to separate the melodic contours from the clusters of sound:
Example No. 20: Sonata No. 2; First movement, m. 29

It is a challenge for the performer to establish the necessary variety of touch (within the forte dynamic context) that will enable the listener to hear the four parts and be able to distinguish them, as if they were groups of instruments in an orchestra. The score is very dense and combines quartal harmonies with whole tone and chromatic clusters:

Example No. 21: Sonata No. 2; First movement, m. 147
Extreme dissonance is achieved in passages such as m. 149, where up to ten chromatic pitches are played together:

Example No. 22: Sonata No. 2; First movement, m. 149

There is also frequent use of the tritone, and the minor second (or its transposed minor ninth).

The middle section of this movement (m. 63) is based on various dances and songs. Except for the last one, these melodies carry soft dynamic indications, from p to ppp. They are accompanied with various instrumental suggestions such as come una cassa india (like an indian drum) (m. 65), or come kenas 6 (like khenas) (m. 71). Other suggestions are added for expression, emphasizing the contrast with the outer parts of the movement: p cantando (piano singing) (m. 65), lontano e suave [sic] (far and suave) (m. 70), and dolce (softly) (m. 102). The melodic contour suggests music of a primitive accent, with its narrow range and pentatonic scales apparent at the end of each phrase:

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6 A wind instrument, similar to a flute.
Example No. 23: Sonata No. 2; First movement, 
mm. 73-74

Example No. 24: Sonata No. 2; First movement, 
mm. 104-105

The melodies are mostly supported by quartal harmonies. They are often doubled a fourth below or at the ninth, creating an out-of-tune effect. Ginastera sometimes writes in two different key signatures (one for each hand) in his polymodal sections (m. 70-74, mm. 86-91, and mm. 92-97). One melody (mm. 64-68) is ornamented in such a way that the result resembles a succession of microtones. This same melody has a syncopated context reminiscent of certain passages in Bartók's *Sonata for Two Pianos and Percussion*:
Example No. 25: Ginastera, *Sonata No. 2: First movement*, m. 65

Example No. 26: Bartók, *Sonata for Two Pianos and Percussion: First movement*, m. 200

The last dance is inspired from the *Palapala*, a dance in ternary rhythm. Ginastera uses it to build a bombastic transition based on cluster sonorities, which leads to the return of the A material:
Example No. 27: Sonata No. 2; First movement,

m. 135

The concluding A material, based on the same material as the introduction, seems to build a gradual crescendo to the end. Notated sempre fortissimo (m. 151), as opposed to forte in the introduction, it carries now more dynamic indications, all in augmentation: ancora cresc. (m. 164), tutta forza! (m. 167), molto sforzato (m. 171), and sforzatissimo (m. 174).

The Argentine symbolism found in his earlier piano works is now less apparent. The "guitar chord" found in the first sonata seems to have gone through extensive transformation at m. 17:

Example No. 28: Sonata No. 2; First movement,

m. 17
This is its only appearance in the entire sonata, indicating its reduced importance.

In the Second Movement, one cannot avoid relating the opening to the beginning of Bartók's *Night Music*:

![Example No. 29: Ginastera, Sonata No. 2; Second movement, m. 1](image)

Example No. 30: Bartók, *Out of Doors; Night's Music*, m. 1

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7 From Suite *Out of Doors*. 
This element of night-music is present throughout the entire movement, and the similarity of inspiration is confirmed by Ginastera himself:

From my childhood, I remember the night sounds: the crickets, the birds and the frogs. There was the atmosphere of the great plains of the Pampas and the huge expanse of night sky full of stars. I remember certain light effects—moonlight on the banana trees or on the Parana River and the fireflies—they become a part of one's soul, and they all reappear in my compositions.\(^8\)

The overall construction of the movement is ABA with the following indications: *Adagio sereno* — *Scorrevoile* — *Ripresa del Adagio*. The *Adagio* sections contain a *yaravi*, a type of pre-Columbian melancholic love song of the Andean regions. Originally from Cuzco, it is also called *harawi* in the Quechua idiom. Its tempo is slow, its melodies often pentatonic and bimodal, and its rhythm ternary. Its vocal inflections are suggested here by frequent ornamentations of the melody, based mostly on the pentatonic scale in this particular case. Successive melodic parts are organized like stanzas of a song, and interrupted by long chords with fermata indications:

---

\(^8\) Lillian Tan, "An interview with Alberto Ginastera," 6.
Example No. 31: \textit{Sonata No. 2: Second movement},

mm. 3-4

The movement has no meter, and the composer uses only dotted barlines within each section. This type of notation gives the performer more rhythmic and interpretive freedom, and suggests an improvisatory character. The commas at each stanza also suggest time for breathing, which clearly points to a vocal feature.

The middle part carries the indication \textit{il più pianissimo possibile e volante, come un soffio} (as soft as possible and flying, like a breath of air). To be performed at a much faster tempo, this section evokes the murmurs of the night and the sound of the wind. Notated in 7/8, it is a constant succession of eighth notes that generate a vibration effect, starting from a chromatic oscillation between A-G against G#-A#, and gradually moving away to create broader sweeps. No melody is heard but a succession of colors is present. The performer will benefit from using flutter pedal in this section, to add the halo effect that a carefully controlled
resonance can create. A very light touch and perfect evenness of sound are mandatory for a successful rendition of this passage.

The tonal center of the movement is D, moving to B just before the middle part (Scorrevole), and coming back to D at the Ripresa del Adagio. The reprise itself is shortened and ends as if dissolving into the silence of the night. Ginastera's indications are: ppp estatico, and lasciar vibrare. Some clusters contain all twelve tones, as in this one, which is built on two whole-tone hexachords placed half a step away from each other:

Example No. 32: Sonata No. 2; Second movement,

m. 8

The last movement does not have any tempo indication in the current Boosey and Hawkes edition. However, Ginastera in his program note gives it the indication of Ostinato aymará, which may indicate an accidental omission on the part of the
editor. The Aymará is a region of northern Argentina. Ginastera finds his inspiration in the removed areas of the north, away from the Pampas and the civilization of Buenos Aires, where the ancient customs are more likely to have retained their originality. The movement has the form of a toccata, and its main rhythmic idea is based on a lively dance called karnavalito:

Example No. 33: Sonata No. 2: Third movement, mm. 1-4

The first section of the movement has a repeat sign, which the composer annotated "Mandatory repeat." If taken, the repeat intensifies the ostinato character of the karnavalito rhythm. Though less prominent in the middle part (starting at m. 44) because of the addition of new elements, the rhythm is however present, as shown in the following excerpt:
Example No. 34: Sonata No. 2; Third movement,  

m. 52-54

The middle part adds more finger-oriented passages by means of fast runs displaying great virtuosity, whereas the outer parts seem to concentrate more on crashing chords and cluster effects. Impressive virtuosity is achieved through sweeping scales, and combined glissandi on white and black keys. The octave writing is "clusterized":

Example No. 35: Sonata No. 2; Third movement,  

m. 25

The dynamics of this third movement reach a level of saturation. The movement starts with the indication $f$ feroce at m. 1 to reach $ff$ at m. 6, and culminate in a sempre $fff$ e
violento at m. 105. Other interpretive indications are molto accentuato (m. 35), con fuoco (m. 67) tutta forza (m. 114), sforzatissimo (m. 117). The movement closes on another drum roll, in contrary motion to the opening of the sonata:

Example No. 36: Sonata No. 2: Third movement,

mm. 121-122

This type of writing presents difficulties for the performer. Though preserving the physical stamina necessary to sustain such a high dynamic level throughout the movement is a major concern, the real difficulty lies in keeping the interest of the listener, who is most likely to be crushed by this instrumental explosion. A careful pacing of dynamics will be helpful, but a good rhythmic projection is essential, as is the case in all the ostinato-type movements. The performer will also benefit from giving the best possible rendition of passages such as the following one, where Ginastera builds a crescendo out of the gradual addition of notes:
This sonata represents a move from polytonality to atonality, from a music of European inspiration to that of a more primitive culture. Yet, the composer was able to give it his own personal touch, keeping the essence of primitive America within a modern context, and achieving a synthesis between tradition and innovation. Ginastera's following statement confirms very well the direction his music has taken:

... at the moment I am evolving... This change is taking the form of a kind of reversion, a going back to the primitive America of the Mayas, the Aztecs and the Incas. This influence in my music I feel as not folkloric, but—how to say it?—as a kind of metaphysical inspiration. In a way, what I have done is a reconstitution of the transcendental aspect of the ancient pre-Columbian world.⁹

⁹ Ibid., 7.
SONATA NO. 3, OP. 54 [55]

The third sonata (Op. 55 in this Boosey and Hawkes edition) was written during the summer of 1982 in Formentor (Mallorca) and Geneva (Switzerland). A single-movement sonata, it was commissioned by the University of Michigan, and dedicated to Barbara Nissman, who premiered the work on November 17, 1982 in Alice Tully Hall, New York.

The assignment of its opus number constitutes an editorial problem. Already ill, Ginastera had been commissioned to compose a work for mezzo-soprano and orchestra by the St. Louis Symphony. Originally labeled Op. 54, this work was never written and the editor later changed the opus number of the third sonata to Op. 54. His publisher, W. Stuart Pope, is sure that Ginastera would have added a third movement to this sonata, had he lived longer.1 This statement supposes that the composer had a three-movement work in mind before he completed it. It also supposes that a second movement has been written. The question left open is whether the current published form of this work was intended from the beginning, or a change of

1 Roy Wylie, "Argentine Folk Elements in the Solo Piano Works of Alberto Ginastera" (Ph.D.diss., University of Texas at Austin, 1986), 36.
concept occurred during the composition of this work, and if so, why?

In any event, the sonata as we know it is composed in one single movement. Ginastera states in his program note:

In contrast to my Sonatas Nos. 1 and 2 for piano, both written in three [sic] separate movements, Sonata No. 3, Op. 55, is composed in a single movement, utilizing a binary form that consists of two main sections and a Coda.

The tempo indication, "Impetuosamente", sets the pace of the entire work, whose rhythmic textures are based on American Indian and colonial dances of Latin America.²

The overall form is ||: A :||: B :|| Coda. The A section uses two main elements, one that will be treated in a contrapuntal way, the other in a homophonic way. The first element is a descending minor third, followed by two repetitions of the lower pitch.

![Example No. 38: Sonata No. 3, m. 1](image)

This motive is doubled a minor sixth below. Transposing the lower pitch one octave higher, one gets a double major third,

a harmonic interval that has been significant in the compositions of the first and second sonata. The motive is answered in the left hand by its transposed inversion. The timing of the answer creates an overlapping rhythm:

Example No. 39: *Sonata No. 3*, m. 1

By means of successive transposed repetitions of the motive and its answer, the composition unfolds like a free canon: first a group of three, then four, then five, all separated successively by a group of five, then seven, then nine octaves. This process of gradual elaboration or variation, is a technique that also becomes more apparent throughout the three consecutive sonatas.

The second group consists of repeated notes followed by three notes descending stepwise:
Example No. 40: *Sonata No. 3*, mm. 11-12

This motive is doubled at the fifth and the octave, and is also subject to similar manipulations.

The B section is based on the same main elements, but they are arranged differently. Now, the descending motive appears sometimes in the left hand instead of the right hand:

Example No. 41: *Sonata No. 3*, m. 42

It is followed by the contrapuntal section seen in the opening of part A, but there, too, some modifications have occurred. The section starts with the left hand this time, and is answered by the right hand. The general motion of the
phrase in every future appearance is downwards instead of upwards:

Example No. 42: *Sonata No. 3*, mm. 44-46

The *glissandi* were written in double octaves in part A and come back in part B in double thirds. The *glissando* concluding part A is in both hands, in contrary motion and converging inward:

Example No. 43: *Sonata No. 3*, m. 35

In part B, on the other hand, the motion is diverging outward:
Example No. 44: Sonata No. 3, m. 72

The ending of part B introduces a new rhythmic idea and the "guitar" chord, with Ginastera's indication *come chitarra* (*un poco lirico*):

Example No. 45: Sonata No. 3, m. 75

The Coda starts with a cadenza-like passage, a feature that Ginastera used already in his first sonata (third movement). It presents the guitar element as well as the descending figure found before. This figure is now harmonized by thick clusters as pedal points:
Example No. 46: *Sonata No. 3*, m. 90

Melodic repetitions successively carry different cluster pedal points. The movement ends with growing tremolos, repeated guitar chords notated *sforzatissimo, glissandi*, octaves and crashing chords.

One can find in this sonata numerous ties to either the first or second sonata. Again the dynamics are extreme, exclusively *fortissimo*, with a short exception of three measures marked *mp*. A tonal center *E* is presented in the bass at the opening, and the ending centers around *C*, creating a third relationship. There is a predominance of quartal harmonies. Clusters are not as frequent here as they are in the second sonata, and they seem to be much less chromatic. Instead, they are based on whole-tone and pentatonic modes. Melodic passages are limited to melismas based on the minor third interval, as well as the four-note motive descending whole tones. As in the other two sonatas, meter changes are frequent. There is a strong sense of ternary rhythm, due to the structure of the original motives which are ternary themselves. The indication *ff deciso* at m.
1 asks for a solid, impetuous rhythmic drive, and the tempo marking (quarter note = 138) asks for a fast tempo, difficult to sustain. A motoric element frequent in toccatas and other pieces of the same vein, composed during the twentieth century, is the obsessive reiteration of the same rhythmic value, in this case the eighth note. Both hands play almost exclusively note against note throughout the entire piece, emphasizing an implacable martellato effect. Hemiolas appear in m. 65 and in m. 106, and a most interesting one at m. 54, where the performer should play sf every four notes while maintaining a pulse of triplets:

![Example No. 47: Sonata No. 3, m. 54](image)

A polyrhythmic effect is found at m. 25:

![Example No. 48: Sonata No. 3, m. 25](image)
The guitar symbolism, absent in the second sonata, is again apparent in both parts A (mm. 75-78) and B with transpositions (mm. 86-89), as well as in the Coda at m. 106. A general virtuosic or bravura style emanates from this composition. Numerous pianistic features include large sweeps, abundance of octaves, cadenza-like passages, and glissandi of all kinds.

Beyond the general modification from a multi-movement to a single-movement structure, there is a more subtle evolution in the form. There is less thematic material used in this sonata, but its motivic aspects are exploited to a greater extent than in his other two sonatas. This treatment could result from the influence of twelve-tone music and row manipulation, which seem to have occupied Ginastera in his late works. All these observations linked to the importance of the original cell reveal the strong influence of the Second Viennese School during this period of Ginastera's life. This concept of structure could be qualified as Schoenbergian for it connects both composers to the Neo-expressionistic style.
CONCLUSION

The three piano sonatas comprise an important portion of Ginastera's piano music. More than just the dimension of these works, it is their content that is valuable. Ginastera absorbed the essence of Argentina's culture, from the primitive Inca tradition to the twentieth century, and re-created it within a modern context. As he evolved, his experiences with various techniques helped him translate his impressions and eventually create and define his own language. Very much aware of his own development, he stated in 1962:

I think I achieved what I wanted to back in 1944. My ballet Estancia and some pieces for piano, violin, and cello as well as the song cycles, are the expression of an objective Argentine feeling. In my own development this problem has acquired another outlook. I am not so much interested in finding an intrinsically Argentine language any more because I know that if I achieve a personal musical idiom, this will also be the inevitable expression of my own surroundings. So I am no longer searching for a national style, but a personal style.¹

The three sonatas exemplify his evolution. The first is mainly oriented towards polytonality, with a slight introduction to dodecaphony. This work is inspired by the

gaucho tradition. The second sonata moves towards atonality, with very thick dissonance, chromaticism, and microtonal environment. Closer in style to Schoenberg's expressionism, its poetic source lies in the ancient traditions of the pre-Columbian world. The third sonata represents a synthesis of the former two works. There is an economy of thematic material, a clear influence of the Viennese school. The form, reduced to one movement—Ginastera's final idea—is more compact and departs from the traditional concept of the sonata.²

Within this evolution, however, four fundamental and constant characteristics appear in his compositions. They represent the artistic message of the composer, and are crucial for the performer to understand. First, the motivic organization of all three sonatas is based on the third, both major and minor. Second, there is a strong lyrical exaltation in his melodies. Third, Ginastera creates an irresistible rhythmic drive, often based on strong rhythms of masculine dances.³ And fourth, there is present a sense of magic, of mystery, and of the esoteric, in most scherzo-like passages as well as slow movements.

² See p. 65
The artistic identity that Ginastera searched for throughout his life is a manifestation of his goal as a human being: authenticity. As he himself expresses, such a goal is a foremost necessity:

Things must come from the spirit, the soul. There are young composers who are caught up in the external form of things and forget the content. But one must not forget that fashion and style are transient and impermanent. It is the person that endures. That is the reason I always say to my students, "You must know technique. Then you must look deep within yourself. After that, you must act, you must work." If music doesn't have an authentic person behind it, in several years it is dead....And the first and foremost requirement is that an artist be true to his real self.⁴

**APPENDIX: LIST OF WORKS FOR PIANO SOLO**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>First performance</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1937</td>
<td><strong>Danzas Argentinas</strong></td>
<td>Oct. 27, 1937</td>
<td>Durand &amp; Cie.</td>
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<td><strong>Piezas Infantiles</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Malambo</strong></td>
<td>Sept. 11, 1940</td>
<td>Ricordi</td>
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<td>1940</td>
<td><strong>Tres Piezas</strong></td>
<td>Oct. 16, 1940</td>
<td>Ricordi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1944</td>
<td><strong>Twelve American Preludes</strong></td>
<td>Aug. 7, 1944</td>
<td>Carl Fischer, Inc.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1946</td>
<td><strong>Suite de Danzas Criollas</strong></td>
<td>July 26, 1947</td>
<td>Barry &amp; Co.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td><strong>Rondo on Argentine Children's Folk Tunes</strong></td>
<td>May 3, 1949</td>
<td>Barry &amp; Co.</td>
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<td><strong>Sonata No.1, Op.22</strong></td>
<td>Nov. 29, 1953</td>
<td>Barry &amp; Co.</td>
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<td><strong>Toccata</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Sonata No.3, Op.55</strong></td>
<td>Nov. 17, 1982</td>
<td>Boosey &amp; Hawkes</td>
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Note: The compositions published by Barry & Co. are available in the U.S. through Boosey & Hawkes.
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