

PROGRAM NOTES

E. LECUONA (1896–1963): “Malagueña” from *Suite Andaluía*

Born in Havana, Cuba, at the end of the twentieth century, **Ernesto Lecuona** earned a reputation as an esteemed composer and pianist over the course of his career. Brother of composer Ernestina Lecuona, he began piano lessons with her at age five and wrote his first song at eleven, proving himself to be a child prodigy and going on to graduate from the National Conservatory of Havana when he was just fifteen. Lecuona toured around the world as a pianist, contributing to Cuban music’s popularity in other countries during the second quarter of the twentieth century. His compositional output includes orchestral suites, songs, and music for film and theatrical works, which, taken together, showcase his skill at incorporating Cuban and Spanish forms and rhythms into the concert hall. “*Malagueña*” (1933) is a representative example of Lecuona’s style. Part of his instrumental *Suite Andaluía*, “Malagueña,” to which Lecuona later added lyrics, has become a popular song outside of its original context, circulating as a jazz, pop, and marching band standard to this day. Originating in Málaga in the Andalusia region of Spain, the malagueña is a style of flamenco music with dramatic, lyrical, and virtuosic qualities. Although the malagueña came from the tradition of the fandango, a fast triple-meter folk dance, it acquired a more flexible, improvisatory sound that divorced it from its dance roots and transformed it into the *cante libre* idiom. Lecuona’s “Malagueña” follows this trajectory, including slow ornamental passages interspersed with lively bursts of activity that heighten the song’s intensity. Typical of malagueñas, Lecuona’s has haunting Phrygian modal inflections, giving it a distinctive Spanish flair that continues to appeal to listeners today.

E. LECUONA (1896–1963): “María la O” from *María la O*

Ernesto Lecuona’s “María la O” (1930) is a sentimental song from his *zarzuela* of the same name, with a libretto by Gustavo Sanchez Galarraga. Set in Cuba during its colonial period in the nineteenth century, the opera’s story tells the tale of María, a mulata woman whose lover leaves her for a white woman. As such, it offers commentary on race relations, and it also addresses socioeconomic disparities through María’s interactions with her array of suitors from different classes. Taking these serious subjects, Lecuona transforms them into a lively, appealing musical work, combining Afro-Cuban beats with lush harmonies and big band orchestrations in a way that made many refer to him as “the Cuban Gershwin.”

The “María la O” aria contained within the *zarzuela* is an encapsulation of the opera’s musical and dramatic content. Its soaring melody and lilting accompaniment mask the darker tone of its lyrics, which describe María’s predicament. The text mourns María’s lost love, expressing remorse at the betrayal and even explicitly calling attention to her mixed race as a factor in it. Yet María seems to sing these sentiments with a mixture of nostalgic reflection, resignation, and hope, adding musical layers to an otherwise straightforward lament.

C. GUASTAVINO (1912–2000): No. 7 “Rosita Iglesias” from *Las Presencias*

Earning himself the colloquial title “the Schubert of the Pampas,” **Carlos Guastavino** was a twentieth century Argentine composer known for his works for piano and voice in a Romantic idiom. Guastavino’s influences were not as eclectic as those of his Argentine contemporaries, including Ginastera and Piazzolla. Rather, he drew from nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century European and Argentine nationalist composers, opting for the lush tonal sonorities that mark the turn of the century. Although he distanced himself from his fellow countrymen by embracing a Romantic instead of modernist aesthetic, Guastavino did find his own way of furthering Argentine nationalism through the lyrical messages of his songs and occasional borrowing of folk music. A master of musical depiction, Guastavino composed his *Las Presencias* (“Appearances”) (1960-5) as short instrumental portraits of imaginary people, which was a precursor to the set *Mis Amigos* based on his friends. According to Guastavino himself, “the names in these works [*Las Presencias*] are fictional. Any similarity with that of a known person is pure coincidence.” However, today’s selection, **No. 7 “Rosita Iglesias”** (1965) for violin and piano did have a real-life connection to a violin teacher with the same name whose revisions and fingerings were included in the work’s first publication. Guastavino makes the violin sing, writing expressive, legato lines over active, full piano accompaniment with Romantic harmonic gestures. Partway through, the violin picks up the piano’s energy, blooming into a virtuosic rhapsody before eventually winding down for a touchingly delicate finish. Who is the fictional Rosita Iglesias, and what was her story? Guastavino leaves that up to us to decide.

M. GREVER (1885–1951): *Despedida*

María Grever was a prolific songwriter who rose to fame in the first half of the twentieth century as the first Mexican woman composer to achieve international success. Although she was born in Mexico and lived much of her young adult life here, she also spent time in Spain and France, where she studied with Claude Debussy, and eventually settled in New York City around age thirty. In her own words, it was Grever's "wish and yearning to present the native rhythms and tunes [of Mexico] from a real perspective, but with the necessary flexibility to appeal to the universal audience." Grever did this primarily through her songs, of which she wrote over one thousand between her first song at age four to the end of her career. Many of these were boleros, a genre of sophisticated love song that originated in Cuba. Grever was responsible for helping bring the bolero and other Latin American styles to mainstream audiences, and her songs, including the one you will hear today, *Despedida*, became popular around the world through films and covers by well-known performers such as the Andrews Sisters.

F. BARBIERI (1823–1894): "Canción de Paloma" from *El barberillo de Lavapiés*

Nineteenth-century Spaniard **Francisco Barbieri** was an important composer of the *zarzuela*, a Spanish opera form similar to the German *Singspiel* that alternates between spoken and sung scenes. In addition to championing this genre, Barbieri was also committed to institutional support for Spanish music and founded La España Musical, a society that developed Spanish operetta, and the Society for Orchestral Music. His compositions feature Spanish musical and cultural themes and address topics of love, class, and politics, often with a comedic and even satirical edge. *El barberillo de Lavapiés* (1874) is one such work. The libretto by Luis Mariano de Larra is loosely based on historical events in Madrid in 1766 and tells the story of dentist-barber Lamparilla and Paloma, the woman he admires, who become involved with co-conspirators La Marquesita de Bierzo and Don Juan de Peralta in their plot to overthrow Grimaldi, the prime minister. Antics—complete with disguises, escapes, and chases—ensue, and once all is said and done, the conspiracy is successful, and Lamparilla and Paloma are finally able to be together. Today's selection, the "Canción de Paloma," is Paloma's entrance aria that introduces us to her sweet, playful character. Consisting of two strophes in a bright A major, this aria has a series of short, repeating rhythmic figures and contained, stepwise motion doubled by the accompaniment. The flighty, trill-like embellishments bring out Paloma's flirtatious nature and make her just as attractive to the audience as she is to Lamparilla.

H. VILLA-LOBOS (1887–1959): "Aria" from *Bachianas Brasileiras*

Wearing multiple hats as composer, classical guitarist, cellist, and conductor, **Heitor Villa-Lobos** is one of the most recognizable names in Latin American classical music. Born in Rio de Janeiro near the end of the nineteenth century, Villa-Lobos had unconventional musical training that exposed him to a variety of Brazilian musical traditions. Rather than growing up in conservatory culture, he learned informally from watching his musician father, joining orchestras for theater and film, and playing in Brazilian street-music bands. Although European styles were still an influence on him, Brazilian indigenous musics were the main inspiration for his compositions. As his career developed, Villa-Lobos also pursued overtly patriotic and educational projects, extending his influence to reach wider audiences while further embracing his Brazilian identity.

Villa-Lobos's *Bachianas Brasileiras*, a set of nine suites he composed between 1930 and 1945, are emblematic of his compositional approach. Each suite contains a number of short pieces with two titles—one "Bachian" (similar to those found in J. S. Bach's and other Baroque composers' suites) and one Brazilian (from popular and traditional styles)—representing Villa-Lobos's commitment to bringing Brazilian idioms into the concert hall without leaning too heavily on European classical music. While he incorporates elements of Bach's harmonic and contrapuntal language, he uses them to highlight the expressive sounds of Brazilian folk music. Today's selection, "Aria" (*O canto da nossa terra*), comes from the second suite of 1930 and was originally scored for a large orchestra. As the Brazilian-inspired title suggests, this expansive, lyrical movement calls to mind images of Brazilian landscapes with a nostalgic tone, one akin in spirit to the arias of Bach's day. Even when the movement takes on a more rhythmically propulsive quality, suggesting horseback travel through the landscape, Villa-Lobos maintains the songlike quality throughout. He paints a moving representation of Brazil's land and culture in an accessible musical language—just one example of many that showcases his dedication to his native country.

R. GNATTALI (1906–1988) / A. Poxon, arr.: *Concerto a Brasileira*

Born into a musical family at the beginning of the twentieth century, **Radamés Gnattali** was an acclaimed composer, conductor, and orchestrator who worked in both the classical and popular spheres. He learned to play a number of instruments, including the piano, violin, guitar, and cavaquinho (a Portuguese guitar-like instrument) at a young age, and he carried that versatility into his career. Not only did he work in settings ranging from professional orchestras to silent film theaters to radio stations and record companies, but he also taught himself how to compose classical music with roots in Brazilian folk idioms. Freely incorporating Brazilian and pop instruments into classical concert music while also creating more lush, jazzy arrangements of samba pieces, he leaned at some points in his career more heavily toward jazz and at other times toward Brazilian traditional music. Because of this fusion approach, Gnattali sometimes struggled with critiques from different groups of genre purists. His guitar works, including today's ***Concerto No. 4 "Concerto a Brasileira"*** (1967), are some of his best-known pieces. Dedicated to famous Brazilian guitarist Laurindo Almeida, this selection features the guitar as a soloist in dialogue with a string orchestra (arranged here for string quartet and bass) and showcases a variety of colors and moods over its short duration. The guitar has a certain personality of its own, traipsing around the harmonic landscape at times with vibrancy and at others with ease, projecting an array of expressive modes astutely complemented by its string interlocutors.

A. PIAZZOLLA (1921–1992): "Buenos Aires Spring" from *The Four Seasons of Buenos Aires*

Argentine composer **Ástor Piazzolla** established his reputation as the pioneer of the *nuevo tango* style. He was born to Italian immigrant parents in 1921 in Mar del Plata, Argentina, but his family soon relocated to New York City in 1925. Growing up in the city, Piazzolla listened to a variety of musical genres ranging from Bach to contemporary jazz and started playing the bandoneon, an instrument similar to the accordion, at ten years old. Having already composed a tango on his own, he met influential tango figure Carlos Gardel in 1934 and then found inspiration in Elvino Vardaro's tango innovations after returning to Mar del Plata in 1936. Piazzolla moved to Buenos Aires in 1938, where he performed with, arranged for, and studied with a number of important musical figures, including Alberto Ginastera. With a performance of his *Sinfonia Buenos Aires* (1951) for a composition competition in 1953, he earned a French grant to study with Nadia Boulanger. As these experiences attest, Piazzolla absorbed many influences from different parts of the world, and he blended these into his own idiom, *nuevo tango*.

Nuevo tango builds on the rhythms and harmonies of tango, an Argentinian and Uruguayan folkdance style that fused elements of African, Cuban, and European traditions as they were practiced by those communities living along the Río de la Plata in South America. Tango arose in lower-class neighborhoods but became internationally popular around the turn of twentieth century. Piazzolla's *nuevo tango* mixes improvisatory jazz elements and the counterpoint and harmonic patterns of learned European counterpoint with this existing tradition. ***The Four Seasons of Buenos Aires*** (1965-9), originally for violin/viola, piano, electric guitar, double bass, and bandoneon (the accordion-like instrument that Piazzolla was famous for playing), showcases this idiom. In this set of compositions, Piazzolla did not follow genre forms, include programmatic poetry, or even write the four pieces to consciously form one larger work, but he did intend for the movements to give a general aural impression of Buenos Aires's seasonal changes. The movement you will hear today, **"Buenos Aires Spring" (*Primavera Porteña*)**, has the markers of *nuevo tango*, incorporating the pulsing tango rhythmic accents in the jazzy, contrapuntal fast opening and closing sections as well as the expressive, lyrical slow middle section. Through his unique idiom, Piazzolla gives a fresh take on both the vivacity and delicacy of springtime.

A. GINASTERA (1916–1983): *Danzas Argentinas Op. 2*

Alberto Ginastera, born in 1916, is a Latin American composer and teacher from Buenos Aires, Argentina. He achieved early success as a composer, graduating from the Conservatorio Williams in 1935 with a gold medal in composition, earning acclaim with conductor Juan José Castro's premiere of Ginastera's *Panambí* suite in 1937, and graduating from the Conservatorio Nacional in 1938. Soon after, he began teaching in Argentina while he continued to compose, until traveling to the United States with a Guggenheim grant from December 1945 to March 1947. There, Ginastera notably connected with Aaron Copland, who influenced his compositional approach and even encouraged him to write music for film. Despite personal political struggles in the years after his return to Argentina, Ginastera continued to magnify his local reputation as a teacher and his international reputation as a composer. He categorized his own music into three compositional periods based on the way he engaged with Argentinian national music: "objective nationalism" (1934-47), "subjective nationalism" (1947-57), and "neo-Expressionism" (1958-83).

Danza de la moza donosa, Op. 2, No. 2, one of three dances in Ginastera's *Danzas Argentinas* (1937), falls into his first stylistic compositional category. Spanish for "Dance of the Graceful Girl," this piece sounds like what its title suggests. Over a softly arpeggiated left hand that keeps a consistent rhythmic pulse, the right hand traipses across keyboard with a refined lilt in its step. Although the melody is lyrical in rhythm and general contour, it is not particularly intuitive, with accidentals giving it an almost uncanny modal inflection. After the melody's first iteration, the right hand becomes more complex, adding a contrapuntal voice that often sounds in parallel fourths or fifths with the melody. Ginastera continues to make the dance more complex, using dense chordal textures and chromaticism in combination with parallel fifths in the left hand and louder dynamic levels to work up to a peak in intensity. It is as if, gradually, the titular graceful girl reveals her power and strength as she dances, before winding back down to her humble beginnings in the piece's final moments.

L. GIANNEO (1897–1968): *Five Pieces for Violin and Piano*

Born in Argentina at the end of the nineteenth century, **Luis Gianneo** was a composer, teacher, conductor, and pianist, making his mark on Argentinian music in multiple arenas. After years of study and leadership roles, he joined the Grupo Renovación in 1931 and dedicated time to the Grupo's project of bringing Argentine music back to life by merging traditional styles with contemporary idioms. During this time, Gianneo shifted from writing music inspired by Argentina's landscapes and traditions to composing in a neoclassical style that suited the Grupo's mission. In 1960, a trip to Europe inspired him to explore atonal techniques in the last phase of his career before his death in 1968. Gianneo composed close to one hundred works in every major genre except opera over the course of his life, and many consider him a central figure of Argentine classical music from the early- to mid-twentieth century. Part of his output from his time with the Grupo, Gianneo's *Five Pieces for Violin and Piano* (1942) is a set of five movements based on folk music from Argentina's Andean region. Gianneo extends his early interest in traditional styles here in the simple harmonic transparency of neoclassicism, making those folk songs and dances accessible to a wider audience.

M. PONCE (1882–1948): *A la orilla de un palmar*

Like many of the other composers on today's program, Mexican composer and educator **Manuel Ponce** dedicated his career to merging traditional musical forms with classical concert music. A young piano prodigy, Ponce eventually entered the National Conservatory of Music at age nineteen, first as a student and later as a piano and music history teacher. His work as a teacher and composer championed Mexican popular music and earned him the title "Creator of the Modern Mexican Song," although he composed more than just solo vocal music. In addition to popular songs, Ponce wrote chamber music, works for both solo guitar and solo piano, and orchestral pieces, as well as arrangements of folk songs and classical works. *A la orilla de un palmar* (1913) is a prime example of his style. Describing an imaginative, poetic encounter with an orphan girl living alone at the edge of a palm grove, this song has a plaintive, longing quality befitting its lyrics. Its strophic style and melodic simplicity calls to mind Ponce's native folk idioms. The accompaniment nuances the melody with subtle shades of dissonance, softly undulating like the waves beside the grove and deepening the song's expressive dimension.

W. JAEGERHUBER (1900–1953) / Hare, arr.: *Dialogue d'Amour*

Although his name might suggest otherwise at first glance, **Werner Jaegerhuber** was an important twentieth-century Haitian composer who blended Haitian folk musics with European idioms. Born to a German-American father and mulatto Haitian mother, Jaegerhuber's music reflects his mixed heritage. Moving to Germany at age fifteen to study, he remained there for twenty-two years before finally returning to Haiti, where he eventually wrote classical concert music and operas while also maintaining his interest in traditional Haitian forms. Jaegerhuber was particularly fascinated by music from Vodou ceremonies, which he famously incorporated into works like his *Suite Folklorique* and *Messe Folklorique Haïtienne*. Today's selection, "*Dialogue d'Amour*," comes from his *Trois chansons d'après textes d'Ida Faubert* (1951) for voice, flute, viola, and cello, based, as the title suggests, on poetry by Haitian writer Ida Faubert. Unlike many of his other works, the *Trois chansons* (including "Amour") are more emblematic of Jaegerhuber's Western art music training than his Haitian folk influences. He wrote the three short, slow movements in the style of the twentieth-century French *chanson*, complete with nostalgic themes and musical gestures. Set in G minor with an unexpected hopeful turn to G major on the last chord, "*Dialogue d'Amour*" expresses a dark, cryptic image of love and fate that is better captured by the alternate title "Quand le destin" found in different published collections.

P. D’RIVERA (b. 1948): *Three Pieces for Clarinet and Piano*

One of the few living composers on today’s program, **Paquito D’Rivera** is a Cuban composer, saxophonist, and clarinetist who continues to make an impact as a bandleader in the United States. D’Rivera grew up listening to the jazz and big band music of Duke Ellington and Benny Goodman, which inspired his early interests in saxophone, clarinet, and popular music. While in Cuba, he studied at the Havana Conservatory of Music, played with the Cuban National Symphony Orchestra, and co-founded the Orchestra Cubana de Música Moderna and the Irakere group with Cuban bandleader Chucho Valdés. In part because of the Cuban communist government’s disdain for jazz and rock, styles that were central to Irakere’s music that merged those popular genres with classical and Cuban music, D’Rivera left the country in 1980. He settled in the United States, where he established himself as an award-winning artist, performing as front man with his Paquito D’Rivera Quintet and sideman with over fifty other artists and groups. His ***Three Pieces for Clarinet and Piano*** (1991-4) are representative of his fusion style, combining jazz, classical, and Latin American idioms into his own unique sound that features one of his principal instruments. With each piece in the set—the *Contradanza*, *Habanera*, and *Vals Venezolano*—D’Rivera pays homage to composers Ernesto Lecuona, Maurice Ravel, and Antonio Lauro, respectively. The pieces also showcase his range, offering examples of his playful, lively music in the *Contradanza*, expressive and harmonically experimental writing in the *Habanera*, and virtuosity in the *Vals Venezolano*. Together, they encapsulate D’Rivera’s well-roundedness as a composer, performer, and bandleader that comes from his years of professional experience.

A. MÁRQUEZ (b. 1950) / B. Phelps, arr.: *Danzón No. 2*

Arturo Márquez, another of today’s living composers, is one of the most esteemed Mexican composers of the last fifty years and brings Mexican traditional musics into his classical orchestral works. Born in 1950 to a mariachi musician father, who was himself the son of a folk musician, Márquez was around Mexican salon music and other native idioms from a young age. He studied piano and music theory at the Mexican Music Conservatory in his early twenties before training as a composer with a number of private teachers in his late twenties. He even continued his education in the United States, earning a Fulbright and completing his MFA in composition at the California Institute of the Arts. His works continue to gain recognition in Mexico, in Latin America, and around the world, helping bring Mexican musical styles beyond their border.

Márquez’s ***Danzón No. 2*** (1994) is one of his most famous compositions. One of eight *Danzónes* based on the music of the state of Veracruz in Mexico, *Danzón No. 2* draws its inspiration from a visit by Márquez to a ballroom in Veracruz. The National Autonomous University of Mexico commissioned the work, and the Orchestra Filarmonica de la UNAM premiered in in 1994. It was not until 2007 that the piece earned international recognition as part of the European and American tour of Gustavo Dudamel’s Simón Bolívar Youth Orchestra of Venezuela. Since then, it has become one of the most popular Mexican contemporary classical works among orchestras and concert bands. Its title calls to mind the Cuban danzón, a slow partner dance characterized by syncopation a virtuosic instrumental line that is also a staple in Veracruz. Márquez incorporates steadily syncopated pulses, over which he layers melodies and countermelodies in different instruments. Rather than keeping the same underlying beat the entire time, however, he creates rhythmic interest by dividing the *Danzón* into multiple different sections built on different patterns. Márquez repeats the cycle of the rhythmic variation, but he does so with new textures and instrumentations to keep the material fresh. The result is a dancing whirlwind of timbres, rhythms, and energies that works itself up to a rousing finish. It is no surprise that *Danzón No. 2* is now a staple in orchestral and band repertoires around the world.

World Premiere
Visions of a Tetrahedral Tapestry

Program note from the composer:

I find ancient tapestry traditions around the world fascinating. Their euphoric patterns and concentration of symbolism have always captivated me. Like music, they embody the "volumetric plane." We observe tapestries like we observe paintings, that is as a two-dimensional canvas with figures. Tapestries, however, are actually a three-dimensional structure of strings dancing above and below each other. Like counterpoint in a frozen choreography, the strings submerge and resurface again and again to reveal the figures that we can only see from above.

If melodies are 'lines' (like strings in tapestries), *Visions of a Tetrahedral Tapestry* explores how melodies weave together to create harmonic shapes, which can themselves be woven into multi-dimensional structures allowing us to perceive volume – both sonic and topological (geometric) volume. Like tapestries, the melodies in this piece are made of repeating and slightly altered patterns that cycle in geometric harmonic progressions building the space for your own personal experience through this unfolded tapestry.

Visions of a Tetrahedral Tapestry was generously commissioned by M.U.S.i.C. – Stars in the Classics. Special thanks go to Jodi Kanter, Maude Cloutier, and Matias Cuevas for making this possible.

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