

## EIGHT FROM THE ARGENTINE

ALBERTO GINASTERA

IT is necessary to return to the composers born in the nineties, to discover the origins of the modern musical movement in Argentina. They were the first to reveal the tendencies that have been reflected in our music since the opening decade of this century. The previous generation, many of whom studied in Europe, were influenced by the initial splendors of Debussy's impressionism and the Italian realism of Puccini. They had, and still have, a special predilection for the large romantic forms – operas and symphonic poems – into which they have introduced folk elements, elaborated in the European manner. For their chamber works the models were Franck and Fauré.

Familiarity with more advanced works brought the overthrow of the romantic tradition as it was understood in South American countries at the beginning of the twentieth century. Preoccupation with form and with harmonic and instrumental elaboration came to replace "decadent inspiration." Themes of a national character, common in music of earlier periods, but in most cases only a screen to cover defects or unclear intentions, have been brought into much sharper relief by several of our modern composers. Works like the *Sinfonía Argentina* by Juan José Castro and the poems, *Turay-Turay* and *El Tarco en Flor* by Luis Gianneo, are real pillars of our musical art.

But as yet there is no authentic national school in Argentina. To form such a group requires slow and lengthy development. The labor of purifying different materials – some concrete, others spiritual – and the assimilation of every kind of technical procedure must precede the creation of works which are individual but have a common bond. It was Julian Aguirre (1869-1924) who first created a style different from European models; the evolutionary process has been under way less than fifty years.

José María Castro (1892) shows a strongly neo-classic bent by trying to achieve true purity of material, to strip music of every element not needed for a true expression. In his *Piano Sonata* (1931), written almost entirely in two voices, the themes are neat and well designed, the rhythms precise, the harmony rich and varied. Since this work, he has tried for

greater richness, without sacrificing compact and elegant architecture or clarity and refinement in expression. Each later work shows a larger definition of personality: the *Concerto Grosso*, the *Overture for a Comic Opera*, the ballet, *Geogia*, the *Sonata de Primavera* for piano and the *Sonata* for two cellos, one of his most perfect and original works. Within a diatonic frame Castro generally makes use of polytonal means. He prefers strict forms, handles the variation form with special mastery.

The *Quartet in C* (1943), the *Concerto for Orchestra* (1945) and the *Concerto* for cello and seventeen instruments show his individuality in its purest state. Here is an example from the last work.

*Variación VII - Andante*

The musical score for *Variación VII - Andante* features two staves. The top staff is for the *Vcllo solista* (Solo Violin), marked *p* (piano). The bottom staff is for the *Orchestra*, with a *3 Vclli. div.* (3 Violins divided) and *2 c.a. div.* (2 cellos divided) section. The orchestral part includes a *1. Clarinet* part marked *p*. The score is in 4/4 time and shows a melodic line in the violin and a complex, polytonal accompaniment in the orchestra.

In the music of Juan José Castro (1895), a brother of José María, three different points of view have succeeded one another: a universal outlook was followed by nationalism, and then by Spanish influence. His earliest scores show him assimilating contemporary European techniques. In the process of writing a number of symphonic poems and orchestral suites, Castro gradually evolved the personal style we know in the *Allegro, Lento and Vivace* for orchestra (1930), the *Symphony* (1931) and the *Sinfonia Biblica* (1932) for chorus and orchestra. This last has sections of great expressive force, some attained by simple means, some by complex polytonal procedures. The following quotation from the *Alleluia* produces an effect of severe archaism, which Castro creates with the most restricted resources.

*Meno mosso, quasi Andante*

The musical score for *Meno mosso, quasi Andante* features vocal and orchestral parts. The vocal parts include *Soprani* (Soprano), *Contralti* (Contralto), *CORO* (Chorus), *Tenori* (Tenor), and *Bass* (Bass). The lyrics are "Al - le - lu - ia". The *Orchestra* part is at the bottom. The score is in 4/4 time and shows a melodic line in the vocal parts and a complex, polytonal accompaniment in the orchestra.

With the *Sinfonía Argentina* (1936) Castro began his elaborate use of folksong elements. The *Canciones Cordobesas*, the *Canciones Negras*, the *Tangos* for piano and the *String Quartet* are characteristic; the high point of this period is *Martin Fierro*, a cantata for baritone, chorus and orchestra with this legendary figure of our pampas as subject.

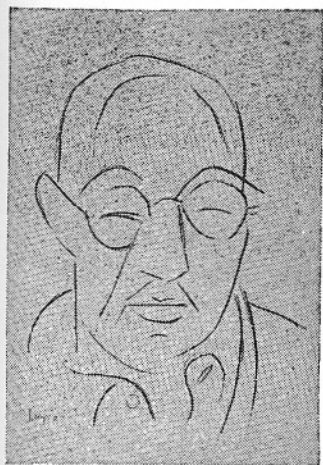
Castro's remembered Spanish origin and his intimate knowledge of the work of Garcia Lorca then brought a new focal point for his creative endeavors. This period begins with the incidental music for the tragedy, *Bodas de Sangre*. The poems of the *Cancionero Gitano* offered the composer an opportunity for music of varied character, at times passionate and tragic, at others fresh and popular. The farce, *La zapatera prodigiosa*, gave Castro the inspiration for his first opera which, with his ballets, *Mekhano* and *Offenbachiana*, make up his output for the theatre.

Jacobo Ficher (1896) has written a large number of works. Since his arrival in Argentina – he was born in Russia – he has been one of the leaders of the modern musical movement. His first style, in which he composed some forty pieces, including three symphonies and many chamber works, is based on a dense counterpoint, with aggressive harmonies and energetic rhythms. In some of these scores he experimented with the twelve-tone system. However, with the *Sonata* for oboe and piano (1940), the ballet with chorus, *Melchor* (1940) and the *Violin Concerto* (1942), there is a new tendency in Ficher's music. Though he continues using the most extensive contrapuntal forms, a simplification of the elements is apparent. These measures from the *Oboe Sonata* are characteristic.

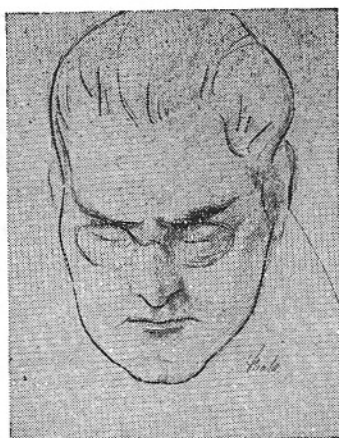
### *Alliegretto*

The musical score is for an Oboe and Piano duo, titled "Alliegretto". It is written in 6/8 time. The first system shows the Oboe part (top staff) and the Piano part (bottom staff). The Oboe part begins with a whole rest, then enters with a melodic line marked "p" (piano) and "cresc." (crescendo). The Piano part has a rhythmic accompaniment marked "p" and "cresc.". The second system continues the Oboe and Piano parts, with the Oboe marked "mf" (mezzo-forte) and "cresc. f" (crescendo fortissimo), and the Piano marked "mf".

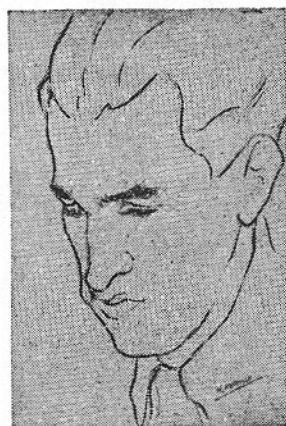
In his most recent works, a *Cello Sonata* (1943), the *Third String Quartet* (1943), a *Piano Concerto* (1945) and a *Prelude, Chorale and Fugue* (1945), themes that are almost classical appear, in order to assure



ROBERTO GARCIA MORILLO  
by SERGIO DE CASTRO

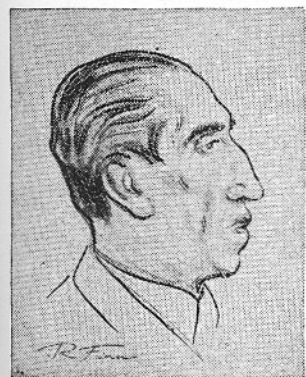


JUAN JOSE CASTRO  
by MATA AGUIRRE

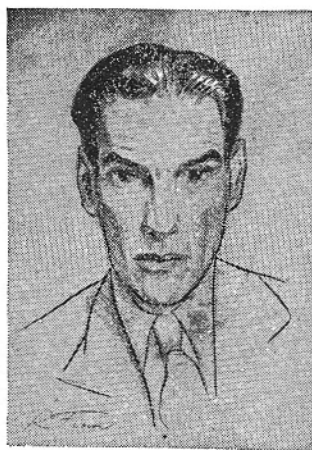


WASHINGTON CASTRO  
by N. FEDULLO

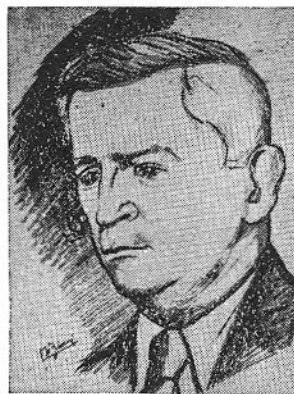
COMPOSERS OF  
THE ARGENTINE



LUIS GIANNEO  
by R. FINN



JOSE MARIA CASTRO  
by R. FINN



JACOBO FICHER  
by M. BINCI

purity in form and style; the polyphony is most transparent.

A considerable use of Argentine folk material and a love for native subject matter distinguish the music of Luis Gianneo (1897). He treats popular themes in two ways. First, he may elaborate the original melody rhythmically, producing a musical idea in which the melodic inflections remain alive. A theme thus varied has great vitality and supports its modifications in development without losing its individual characteristics, as in this example which occurs after the opening of his *Second Trio*.

*Andante*

The image shows a musical score for three instruments: Violin, Viola, and Piano. The tempo is marked 'Andante'. The Violin and Viola parts are written in treble and bass clefs respectively, both in 3/4 time. The Piano part is written in grand staff (treble and bass clefs) in 3/4 time. The score consists of three measures. The first measure is marked 'f energico' and features a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes. The second measure is marked 'f energico' and features a similar rhythmic pattern. The third measure is marked 'f espress' and features a more melodic line with a slur and an accent. The Piano part has a complex harmonic structure with many chords and a melodic line in the right hand.

The second treatment consists of recreating a melody of the folk type by elaborating, over the rhythms of popular dances and songs, melodic turns which recall the traditional folk piece, enhancing these turns with modern harmony in the style of the work.

The symphonic poems, *Turay-Turay* and *El Tarco en Flor*, the *Concerto Aymara* for violin and orchestra, the *Overture for a Children's Comedy*, two trios and various pieces for piano and for voice are good examples of Gianneo's nationalist style. Other works, like the ballet, *Snow White*, and the *Symphony*, reflect a more universal conception of music, for Gianneo is now trying to overcome the limitations of nationalism by reconciling a broader technique and sense of form with the characteristic elements of his own language.

Juan Carlos Paz (1897) has been most drawn of all Argentine composers to successive European fashions; up to the present, his music shows a disconcerting eclecticism. First he was influenced by the idiom of Stravinsky's Russian period, later he allied himself with the neo-classic movement and finally adopted the twelve-tone system. This last technique creates a real problem for Argentinians, since our people have such a slight bond with Central Europe, where the system was born and where it is justified by historical logic. Central and South Americans, with their primarily Latin culture, can assimilate this technique, but it is with difficulty that they adopt its esthetic implications which are in such contradiction to their own traditions. Paz has imitated only the most rudimentary aspects of the

style. His works of this period lack vitality and seem static. Most interesting of his scores are the *Canto de Navidad* for orchestra, incidental music for Ibsen's *Julian the Emperor*, *Three Jazz Movements* for piano and the *Sonatina* for flute and clarinet, all from the polytonal period that preceded his conversion to the twelve-tone system.

A clue to the personality of Carlos Suffern (1905) lies in his avoidance of traditional forms and instrumental combinations. He seeks others more in harmony with his literary subject matter. In such vocal works as the *Three Ballads of Lilencrou* and the *Three Poems of Gide* (with harp accompaniment) the harmonic schemes are rather impressionistic; the melodic motives, always well adapted to the text and most discreet, contribute to the clarity of the writing. The last measures of the second movement of the piano suite, *Cuentos de niños* (1932), quoted below, are characteristic of the composer's style.



*Los juegos rusticos*, a suite of fourteen pieces for soloists, chorus and a small instrumental group, inspired by old Spanish ballads, and a symphonic poem, *La noche*, are his most important works.

Washington Castro (1909) is oriented in the style of the latest works of his brother, José María. A constant preoccupation with form and with the elaboration of sonorous material distinguishes him as a serious and talented artist. Although some of his music is joyful and graceful, his most personal quality is a profound dramatic feeling. But the starting point for this expressiveness is the music itself – Castro believes in music for music's sake – not in subjects of an extra-musical inspiration. Some measures from his *Tragic Overture* (1945) show the spiritual content of his music and the force of his temperament.



His *String Quartet* is one of the most important any Argentine has written. Recent works are a *Divertimento* for seven instruments, the symphonic suite, *El concierto campestre*, and the *Variations* for orchestra.

An extraordinary process of simplification can be traced in the develop-

ment of Roberto García Morillo (1911), a process which reflects restlessness in the face of the diversity of contemporary music. In his very first work, *Berseker*, a symphonic movement inspired by a Scandinavian legend, a preference for the sombre tints of the orchestra, for harsh harmonies, for lively and persistent rhythms, was evident. Up to the symphonic suite, *Usher*, Opus 8, and the ballet, *Harrild*, Opus 9, García Morillo was in the throes of expressionism, attracted to far-off mythologies and strange stories of anguish. However, the subject matter was not fundamental to García Morillo's conceptions, for in the formal works of this period he did not alter his typical procedure: short phrases with sharp rhythmic motives are developed cyclically. A symphonic tendency is apparent in all piano and chamber works, such as the early *Cortejo barbaro*, from which this excerpt is taken.

*Animato*

The musical score is for a piano piece, likely from the 'Cortejo barbaro'. It is marked 'Animato' and consists of four measures. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The first measure is marked with a forte (ff) dynamic and a fermata. The second measure is marked with a piano (p) dynamic and a 'cresc. molto' instruction. The third and fourth measures are marked with a forte (ff) dynamic. The score includes a treble clef, a bass clef, and various musical notations such as notes, rests, and ornaments.

With the *Variations 1942*, Opus 10, García Morillo entered a period of transition, marked by short works in unencumbered, linear language. The polytonal method of his first compositions was simplified; the dense groupings of sonorities were replaced by harmonies built up of fourths and by widely separated melodic lines. The *Piano Sonata*, Opus 14, and the *First Symphony*, Opus 15, indicate the beginning of a real second style.

Returning from his trip to South America, Aaron Copland wrote in *MODERN MUSIC*, "As a whole, composers of the Argentine are more cultivated and more professionally prepared than any similar group to be found in Latin America." Technical mastery is of course indispensable to evolution in the esthetic field. But the Argentine composer still has to solve the problem of giving a completely personal stamp to his music. Yet the efforts which have been made in this direction have already produced valuable works. Our music has advanced. It needs only that natural development which comes in the course of time, to become as significant expressively as it now is technically.