

Friday noontime concerts

Redefining the Latin-American Music for Guitar through the Works of Guastavino and Santórsola

Nicolás Emilfork (University of Texas at Austin), classical guitar

Program

Sonata no. 1 para Guitarra (1967)

Allegro deciso e molto ritmico

Andante

Allegro spiritoso

Carlos Guastavino

(1912 – 2000, Argentina)

Sonata 4 “Italiana” (1977)

Allegro Energico

Reverie

Alla Tarantella

Guido Santórsola

(1904–1994, Brazil-Uruguay)

Carlos Guastavino composed his first Sonata for guitar (*Sonata para Guitarra No 1*) in 1967, and Guido Santórsola composed *Sonata 4 “Italiana”* in 1977. While both composers may be seen and analyzed as musicians from different aesthetic trends, both works share a common aspect that helps re-think the concept of Latin-American music for guitar; from a perspective of continuous change, comprehension, and the combination of different elements and influences. This aspect contrasts with approaches that concentrate the understanding of Latin-American music regarding the short dance form that is usually employed in the classical guitar literature. In this regard, both sonatas are characterized by their exceptional music quality regarding overall music structure, harmonic characteristics, different tonal areas, compositional devices, and technical demands, despite the fact that both works do not often appear in concert programs, competitions, or festivals.

The compositional process of these two Latin-American composers during the twentieth century was characterized by the comprehension of elements from different traditions and schools of western music culture, where musicians can re-interpret them using their cultural music background in order to create a musical work entirely innovative in aesthetic and technical features. In this case, these works include post-romantic, tonal, folk, and twelve-tone elements.

Carlos Guastavino’s first sonata for guitar was composed in 1967. The first movement includes surprising modulations to different and far tonal areas, where traditional Argentinean elements are employed as well. The second movement is slow and lyrical, presented in three clear cut sections, in slow motion but with tempo changes. The third movement is a dance in 6/8 defined out as *moderato*, where the presence of chords is predominant, and the subdivision of the eight notes is not employed.

This element implies that the virtuosic in this particular movement is not developed because of the inexistence of sixteen notes, or the presence of very fast arpeggios or scales. Also, the whole sonata shows many features that also confirm the connection with the song mastery style that characterizes Guastavino's style.

Guido Santórsola's Sonata is more eclectic because each movement presents its own style and compositional devices, where each of them may be treated as a different entity. The first movement employs a twelve-tone technique in row and series that develop the whole material through the piece, using chromaticism as well. The second movement is a *reverie*, tonal, with melodies in counterpoint that remind the harpsichord or certain seventeenth-century elements in its composition process. Simultaneously, it includes chord passages that reinforce the counterpoint character through the dialogue of voices in different ranges. The third movement is a Tarantella, a traditional Italian dance, an element that strengthens the combinatory nature of the whole sonata, where Santórsola used extended techniques, dissonances, four tone chords that provide instability and tension in the first section of the movement that is solved after the entrance of the Tarantella itself.

After analyzing these sonatas, taking in consideration other similar works for composers that are not guitarist, a new concept has emerged, where non-guitarist composers create and elaborate a language that shares transversal elements in its conception and structure. When the creator takes distance from the instrument, the amount of different elements that compound the work increases. All the aspects described above reinforce the definition of a genre that we can call "Latin American" sonatas, that has a powerful difference with the standard definition that tends to be related to this idea. If most of the Latin-American composers for guitar were tempted to use brief music forms, this idea refuses that statement. The Sonata, for extension, movements, techniques, tempo changes and character, offers that possibility to show diversity, styles, clear aesthetic options, and biographical elements. It allows Latin-American composers to use a variety of different compositional devices, styles, and traditional elements of their region in the same piece, creating a new concept that distinguished these works from others. So, the rethinking process of Latin-American music through these sonatas reinforces the uniqueness of our composers' work, connected with their musical training, personal history, and aesthetic options.