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TOCCATA
CLASSICS

Luis Carlos **FIGUEROA**

**Suite for Orchestra
Flute Concertino
Piano Concerto
String Quartet**



**Wilson Casallas, piano
Bryan Muñoz, flute
Orquesta Sinfónica
del Conservatorio Nacional
de Colombia
Guerassim Voronkov, conductor
Cuarteto Q-Arte**

INCLUDES FIRST RECORDING

LUIS CARLOS FIGUEROA AND HIS MUSIC

by Mac McClure

Luis Carlos Figueroa Sierra was born in city of Cali, in the Valle del Cauca in western Colombia, on 12 October 1923. By the time he was four years old he was playing the piano by ear; at age seven he began to study music and in 1933, through a competition, he won a scholarship to study at the newly founded Conservatorio y Escuela de Bellas Artes in Cali, directed by the Colombian composer Antonio María Valencia.¹ In 1950, with a grant from the Colombian government, he travelled to Paris to perform and continue his studies in piano, theory and composition. There he studied at the Conservatoire National, the École César Franck and the École Normale de Musique, where he was accepted into the piano classes of Alfred Cortot and Magda Tagliaferro. In 1952 he began to teach sight-reading and transposition in the École César Franck, and for the next four summers (1952–56) he studied in the Accademia Musicale Chigiana in Siena, taking courses in composition with Vito Frazzi² and film-scoring with Francesco Lavagnino.³

¹ Valencia (1902–52) was also a native of Cali. He took piano lessons from Honorio Alarcón in Bogotá before winning a scholarship which allowed him to study piano and composition in Paris (1923–26); his teachers there were Paul Braud and Vincent d'Indy. Back in Colombia he taught at the conservatoire of the National University in Bogotá (1929–31), until his frequent clashes with its Director, Guillermo Uribe Holguín, led him to found the Conservatorio y Escuela de Bellas Artes in Cali in 1933, remaining its director (apart from eighteen months spent as director of the conservatoire in Bogotá in 1937–38) until his death almost two decades later. His music adopted a national idiom, clothing folk rhythms and melodies in Impressionist harmonies, as in the *Ritmos y cantos suramericanos* for piano (1927) or the choral *Cinco canciones indígenas* (1935). Most of his works are small-scale and many of them embrace a salon style, but some of his choral output is more ambitious, not least the *Misa breve de Santa Cecilia* (1937) and the *Misa de requiem* (1943).

² Frazzi (1888–1975) studied in Parma before teaching piano (from 1912), and then counterpoint and harmony (from 1924) at the conservatoire in Florence, holding a chair in composition from 1926 to 1958, simultaneously (1932–63) giving composition courses at the Accademia Musicale Chigiana. His best-known student is Luigi Dallapiccola. His music, initially influenced by that of Pizzetti, includes a number of operas (not least *Re Lear* of 1922–28 and *Don Chisciotte* from 1940–50), a handful of orchestral, chamber, chamber and instrumental works and a number of highly individual songs.

³ Lavagnino (1909–87) was a student of Frazzi, among others, at the Milan Conservatoire and director of the Liceo Musicale in Genoa (1929–38); he also gave film-music courses at the Accademia Musicale Chigiana (1949–62). He wrote a number of concert works in the earlier part of his career (including a string quartet in 1938, a violin concerto in 1941, a piano quintet in 1942 and a symphony in 1949) but devoted himself to film work from 1950, scoring around 250 films, the best known of which is Orson Welles' *Othello* (1952).

quartet – Diego García and Liz García, violins, Sandra Arango, viola, and Juan Higueta, cello – are all professors of the Music Conservatoire at the University who, having completed their studies in Europe and the United States, have focussed on exploring and disseminating music for string quartet by composers from different Latin American countries, primarily contemporary Colombians, and examining new sounds and approaches to performance, playing in a wide range of unusual venues. In 2008 the quartet recorded its first album, *Resonancias*, with works for string quartet and other instruments by composers from Argentina (Gustavo Leone), Bolivia (Sebastián Zuleta), Colombia (Blas Emilio Atehortúa and Gustavo Parra), Ecuador (Diego Luzuriaga) and Mexico (Silvestre Revueltas). Another album, with works of the Chicago-based Argentine composer Gustavo Leone, is in preparation. Future projects include recordings of works by Fabio González Zuleta and Emilio Atehortúa Blas.

The Cuarteto Q-Arte has premiered a number of works, including the *Quarteto senza tempi*, Op. 18b, by Johann Hasler and *Nerúfen Gorsóbico* No. 3 of Gustavo Parra, both of them Colombians. They have given the national premieres of works like *Aroma foliado* by Gabriela Ortiz (Mexico), the String Quartet of Roberto Valera (Cuba), the *Habanera sensual y contradanza caprichosa* by Guido Lopez-Gavilan (Cuba) and *Retrato V* by Eddie Mora (Costa Rica). *Scenes para cuarteto de cuerdas*, written by Gustavo Leone and based on Eugene Ionescu's *The Leader*, was dedicated to the quartet in 2011.



concertos by Grieg, Mozart, Rachmaninov and Tchaikovsky, Beethoven sonatas and Rachmaninov Preludes, his performance of which was broadcast on Russian television. His first appearance as a solo violinist came when he was sixteen, playing Prokofiev's First Concerto in Gorky (Nizhny Novgorod).

At the Tchaikovsky Conservatoire in Moscow he studied violin with Igor Bezrodny and conducting with Yuri Simonov and, indeed, instrumental performance was soon to give ground to his principal passions: conducting and composing. A member of the first violins of the Bolshoi Theatre Orchestra from 1981 to 1990, he founded the Chamber Orchestra of the Bolshoi in 1988 and conducted in many concerts in the Russian capital. In 1989 he was appointed conductor of the Symphonic Orchestra of the Tchaikovsky Conservatory College and performed and recorded in Russia, Austria and France; invitations also began to arrive from other orchestras in the former Soviet Union, among them the Philharmonic Orchestra of Moscow and the Siberian Symphonic Orchestra in Omsk.

In 1991 he moved to Barcelona and since then has worked as conductor, promoter and manager in Spain. In 1993 he founded the Camerata Mediterranea which, during its seven years of existence, performed and recorded widely, both for CD and radio. Since 1998 he has been head of the Simfònica del Conservatori Superior of the Liceu in Barcelona and, since 2004, the conductor of the Simfònica de l'Acadèmia of the Gran Teatre del Liceu and, in various roles, has taken part in more than fifty productions of operas by Berg, Janáček, Puccini, Shostakovich, Strauss, Tchaikovsky and Wagner, among others. He is now an associate professor at National University of Colombia. Guest-conducting appointments have taken him around the world, to places as far apart as Hanover, Kiev, Lebanon, Mallorca and Medellín, and in 2012 he and the Nuevo Mundo Chamber Orchestra accompanied Rolando Villazón's *Treasures of Belcanto* tour.

Guerassim Voronkov's compositions include a *Prelude on a Theme of Bach* (2001) and *Paganiniana* (2001), both for string orchestra, and a soundtrack to the 1927 Buster Keaton film *The General* (2008); he has also prepared a suite from the opera *El Gato con botas* ('Puss-in-Boots') of Xavier Montsalvatge (2006) and composed a new ending to Musorgsky's unfinished opera *Khovanshchina*, premiered in the Gran Teatre del Liceu in Barcelona in 2007. As a recording artist he has appeared as a violinist with the Glinka Quartet, a pianist with the Voronkov Duo and, of course, as a conductor, with the first recording of the Symphony in D major by Ruperto Chapí among his achievements. His background and training have combined to give him especial strength in the Russian symphonic and Spanish zarzuela repertoire, with a fondness for such composers as Falla, Mompou, Montsalvatge, Toldrà, Turina, Musorgsky, Schnittke, Shostakovich and Tchaikovsky.

The **Cuarteto Q-Arte**, formerly known as the Cuarteto Arte Latinoamericano, began its life six years ago as part of a research-and-performance project in Latin-American chamber music, part of the Instituto Taller de Creación of the Faculty of Arts of the National University of Colombia. The four musicians of the

In 1960 Figueroa returned to Cali and a year later was named director of the Conservatorio de Música Antonio María Valencia. For the next fifteen years – until he left in 1975 to spend five years as professor of piano at the Conservatorio de Música of the Universidad del Cauca in Popayán in south-west Colombia – he worked to improve the choral and orchestra programmes there as well as teaching piano and theory. In the 1960s and '70s he divided his time between teaching and composition. Besides a few works of chamber music (among them *Ronda* for oboe and piano (1974) and *Danza, Reminiscencias y Barcarola* for flute and guitar (1973)) and the *Añoranzas y Scherzo* ('Yearnings and Scherzo') for flute and string orchestra (1967), most of the works from this time were for piano or chorus, with various ensembles. It was during this time that he wrote the 'Cantata Profana' *Boga, boga bogando* (the title invokes an Indian deity; 1964) premiered by the folk-singer Leonor González Mina, the Orquesta Sinfónica del Valle and the Coral Palestrina with the composer conducting. Figueroa's Mass in C for soprano, choir and organ (1967), the first few of what is now a series of fourteen *Colombianas* for piano or piano and violin and a *Suite breve* for piano (1975) all date from this period, when he was also active as a pianist and conductor.

The Suite for Orchestra was written in 1980, at the beginning of a productive decade which gave rise to such works as the *Salve Regina* for female choir and organ (1981), many songs for voice and piano, a sonatina for cello and piano (1981) as well as many new works for piano. Only Figueroa's second purely orchestral work,⁴ the Suite was first performed in Cali on 9 June 1980 with the Orquesta Sinfónica del Valle under the direction of Gustavo Yépez. For Figueroa it represented a trip down memory lane, back to his years in Paris: the influence of French Impressionism points to the omnipresence of Debussy and Ravel in French musical life during the time he spent there. The first movement, *Pastoral* [1], begins with a solo flute in a very simple, almost naïve melody, where it is soon joined by the oboe; their dialogue is then picked up by the strings, though the peaceful atmosphere is briefly interrupted by a martial rhythm on timpani and horns. The second movement, *Nocturne* [2], is introduced by pastel colours in the strings, followed by a luminous quartet of flutes and oboes, before murmuring clarinets begin a slow *crescendo*, slowly building up the splendour of a starry night. Another quartet of woodwinds – this time flute, oboe, clarinet and bassoon – bring a change of atmosphere, serving as a bridge to the recapitulation of the main theme, which comes to rest on a placid final chord. The third movement is an undulating *Valse* [3] that slowly takes on a more hymn-like character; and the brilliant and virtuosic *Allegro moderato* finale [4], a good-natured *perpetuum mobile*, allows the string section and various soloists, not least clarinet and trumpet, to show off.

The Piano Concerto in A minor was written in 1986 to celebrate the 450th anniversary of the founding of Cali, and the first performance took place in the Teatro Municipal on 25 July 1986, with the composer at the keyboard and the Orquesta Sinfónica del Valle conducted by Agustín Cullel. All three movements are in ternary form and play with the different variants of two against three and four; the hemiola (three beats against two) is

⁴ It was preceded by the *Preludio y Danza Colombiana* of 1963, a work premiered only in 1977.

always present. The first movement, *Allegro* [5], follows a strict sonata-allegro form; the second, *Moderato* [6], is a romance and the third, *Allegro scherzando* [7], a lively rondo. The rhythmic roots of the work can be traced to Colombian popular music of the Caribbean coast and the Andes. Full of energy and passion, it is – hardly surprisingly – one of his best-known works.

The Concertino for Flute, Strings and Timpani was written in 1968 but not premiered until 1972, when it was played in the Teatro Municipal in Cali by the flautist Jorge Humberto Valencia (who is also the dedicatee) and the Orquesta de Bellas Artes under the direction of the composer. The work bubbles along with subtle reminiscences of the Andean flute music so popular in Colombia. In the first movement, an *Allegro* in G major [8], Figueroa introduces a very individual sound-world, with the strings moving from elegant accompaniment to archaic-sounding passages with surprising ease. A brief *Moderato* episode, where the violins offer a counter-melody to the long flute line, precedes the recapitulation of the main theme, which ends with a virtuoso coda. The central movement is a leisurely and quiet *Andante* in D major [9], its lazy *barcarola* nature animated by piquant harmonies. In the final *Allegro* [10], in the home key of G major, the timbre of the timpani brings a more exotic, almost wild character to the work, which ends with an impressive *accelerando*.

The String Quartet in C major was finished in 1956 and premiered on 21 August in the Accademia Chigiana during Figueroa's last summer in Italy as a student; the performance was led by Salvatore Accardo and featured three other players from the Accademia, the violinist Lina Pettinelli, violist David Schickele⁵ and cellist Pablo Salvi. The work was a huge success and was repeated a few days later. A Paris premiere, in Figueroa's *alma mater*, the École Normale de Musique, followed on 29 October 1959. The first movement, *Allegro moderato* [11], is characterised by the use of lyrical melodic lines, flexible rhythms between one voice and another, and rich harmonies, often using chords of sevenths and ninths. The next movement, a scherzo [12], is written in the rhythm of 6/8. The rhythmic theme is developed in classical imitation, passing through the four instruments, beginning with the viola, and continuing with the second violin, first violin and finally the cello. Its character is enhanced by the continued opposition of binary and ternary rhythms. The third movement, *Lento* [13], begins with a rich chromatic theme in the viola over a pedal in the cello and is then developed by the other instruments. The last movement, *Animé* [14], also quite rhythmical, plays with a humorous theme that goes through changes and registers in the first violin, and then is developed by the other instruments.

Mac McClure is a concert pianist specialising in Spanish and Latin American repertoire. He studied in Barcelona for nine years with Alicia de Larrocha and since 2009 has been co-ordinator of the masters programme in piano at the National University of Colombia. Since August 2010 he has been Director of the National Conservatory of Colombia in Bogotá.

⁵ David Schickele (1937–99), who later became a prominent film-maker and an adept composer, was the brother of the better-known Peter Schickele (b. 1935), who is responsible for the compositions of the spurious P. D. Q. Bach.

Wilson Casallas, born in 1994, began to study piano at the age of twelve and at fourteen was admitted to the National Conservatoire in Bogotá where he worked with Luz Angela Posada. In 2009 he began to study with Mac McClure at the Conservatoire. He won first prize in the Third Luis Carlos Figueroa Competition in Cali in 2012. He has given recitals in various venues in Bogotá. In August 2012 he performed the Figueroa Piano Concerto by under the direction of Guerassim Voronkov as part of an all-Figueroa concert in the Conservatoire of the National University.



Bryan Muñoz, born in Pasto, Nariño, southern Colombia, in 1988, began to learn the flute at the Fundación Nacional Batuta Bogotá at the age of seven years of age; at the Music Conservatoire at the National University of Colombia he was a student first of Fabio Londoño and, now, Felipe García.

His recitals have included concerts in the León de Greiff and Olav Roots auditoria and at the Pontificia Universidad Javeriana.

He won the second place in the First University Competition in Bogotá in 2006 and the same year won the Young Soloists' Competition Conservatory of the National University of Colombia. He has been a member of the National Symphony Orchestra of Colombia, is a member of the Fundación Orquesta Sinfónica de Bogotá and this year has been summoned to join the Youth Philharmonic Orchestra of Colombia. In 2010 he was winner of the 'Young Talents' music festival of the Bogotá Philharmonic in 2010 and gave a solo recital under their auspices in 2011.



Guerassim Voronkov, born in Moscow in 1960, is an all-round musician: conductor, violinist, pianist and composer. His musical training began when he was six years old and before long he was attracting attention as both pianist and violinist. By that age he was also an actor in historical and action films, even taking the part of the young Tchaikovsky in a Soviet film-biography of the composer. The young Guerassim also learned ballet and horsemanship, but the main focus of his studies was music, and he gave his debut as a pianist before his tenth birthday. By the time he was fifteen, his repertoire included



Guerassim Voronkov with Luis Carlos Figueroa