

# **GINASTERA**

## **Piano Concertos Nos. 1 and 2**

**Dora De Marinis, piano**

**Slovak Radio Symphony Orchestra • Julio Malaval**



## Alberto Ginastera (1916-1983)

### Piano Concertos Nos. 1 and 2, Opp.28 and 39

Alberto Ginastera was born in Buenos Aires on 11th April 1916 and died on 25th June 1983 in Geneva. Several of the 55 works he composed stand as landmarks of Latin-American artistic creation and have earned him a place, together with the Mexican Carlos Chávez and the Brazilian Heitor Villa-Lobos, among the greatest composers of the twentieth century. As well as two piano concertos, one for violin, two for cello and one for harp, he wrote two operas, ballet music, orchestral music, chamber music and a dozen works for solo piano. Ginastera himself divided his production into three stylistic periods: *objective nationalism*, *subjective nationalism* and *Neo-expressionism*. His most frequently performed works, including the *Three Argentinian Dances*, *Op.2*, the ballet *Estancia* and the *Malambo*, *Op.7*, belong to the first period (1937-48) in which he made direct use of elements whose origins lay in the traditions of Argentinian folk-music. Ginastera moved away from these during the second period, *subjective nationalism*, although, for example, he still saw the rôle of melody as very significant, and rhythmic contrasts, emotionally charged atmospheres, and strong oppositions between mounting and subsiding tension were still present, if less overtly, as symbols identifying his language (in works such as *Pampeana No.3* for orchestra and *Piano Sonata No.1*, *Op.22*). Both the *First Piano Concerto*, *Op.28*, first performed in Washington in April 1962, and the *Second*, belong to the third period: *Neo-expressionism*. This began with the *Second String Quartet*, *Op.26*, of 1958 and continued with some of his most important works, such as the *Cantata para América mágica*, *Op.27* (1960). By this time he was no longer using melodic or rhythmic motifs from folk-music, nor any symbolic elements, and yet Argentinian traits remain: strong, obsessive rhythms, meditative adagios evoking the tranquillity of

the pampas, and magical, mysterious sonorities which recall his country's impenetrable nature.

#### Piano Concerto No.1, Op.28

*The Piano Concerto*, *Op.28*, was commissioned by the Koussevitzky Foundation and is dedicated to the memory of Serge and Natalie Koussevitzky. In its four movements traditional forms and instrumentations are freshly elaborated from the most rigorous Classical-Romantic structures, structures which Ginastera was keen never to abandon.

The first movement, *Cadenza e varianti*, as its title suggests, begins with a cadenza in which the soloist displays virtuosity in a cascade of descending octaves which contain the twelve-note series on which the movement is based, already heard in the opening chords from the orchestra. The cadenza gradually fades away, a succession of ever softer trills and descending scales, sustained by a long orchestral chord, leading into the ten variations. The first of these is for solo piano, the others for different instrumental groupings, thus creating different atmospheres: peaceful expressivity and deep introspection in nos. I and II, delicate virtuosity in III and IV, magical fantasy in VI and VII, or, as in V, IX and X, violent, dazzling virtuosity for the solo instrument supported by a strong rhythm recalling the composer's South-American origins. The final coda, in the manner of a recapitulation, contains the thematic elements of the initial cadenza, as we hear the piano's impressive display of octaves once more, now crowned by a brilliant rhythmic succession of chords for full orchestra.

The second movement, whose evocative title, *Scherzo allucinante*, prepares us for the magical, unreal world in which it unfolds, is divided into five sections. The first, an extensive orchestral tutti of 94 bars,

contains a myriad of tones and colours which shine through a rich and meticulous orchestration enabling the listener to appreciate Ginastera's mastery of a polished compositional technique. The piano adds to this delicate tonal explosion with successive displays of descending and ascending arpeggios, trills, chromatic scales in thirds, and Ginastera's characteristic melodic motifs, whose range never exceeds a fifth. The dynamic throughout the entire movement is soft (*p-pp*), delicate and magical, reminding us of all that is unreal, magical, supernatural, fantastic and wondrous about South America.

The third movement, *Adagissimo*, very slow, intense and flexible, has three sections, the first containing a spine-chilling 12-bar viola solo which culminates in a passionate commentary from the whole orchestra. At bar 20, the piano begins a heartrending two-part melody, full of dramatic leaps; these lead to an increasingly passionate and sorrowful development, still with the orchestral commentary, in a climate of dense lyricism, until the final bars are reached, in which the strings, *pppp*, draw out the chromatic intervals of the twelve-note series, a few short notes from the piano emphasising a feeling of distance, of remoteness.

The fourth movement, *Toccata concertata*, is a true bravura piece, written in rondo form. It is made up of seven sections in which Ginastera returns once again to the traditional Argentinian dance used in earlier works: the *malambo*, a virile dance with a violent, sustained rhythm, in which the gauchos flaunt their skills in an energetic and perpetual stamping of feet — *zapateo*. The rough-hewn, violent, ostinato nature of the original *malambo* provides the perfect base for Ginastera's challenging, stunningly virtuosic piano writing. The solo piano and the orchestra with all its percussive arsenal both intervene with equal authority in this vigorous *zapateo*.

### Piano Concerto No.2, Op.39

The *Second Piano Concerto*, Op.39, was written in 1972, a year after Ginastera's marriage to the Argentinian cellist Aurora Natola, and a year before the première of his third and final opera, *Beatriz Cenci*. (The other two, *Don Rodrigo* of 1963 and *Bomazo* of 1966, both first given to great acclaim in the USA and Argentina, had increased the renown of the composer to an incredible level, to the point that he was now considered one of the greatest exponents of Latin-American musical art.) Ginastera's ideal of strict construction, combined with a strong sense of introspective subjectivity, is evident in the Concerto. In common with the other works composed during this third period, it is characterized by the use, although never rigorous, of serialism, polytonality, quarter-tones and aleatory procedures. Magic, the supernatural, the fantastic here take on special neo-expressionistic connotations.

Ginastera himself said of the concerto, "I wrote the *Second Piano Concerto* during 1972 as a commission for the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra and the pianist Hilde Somer, to whom the work is dedicated.

"The Concerto is written in four movements; they underline my desire to create new forms related to the musical requirements of our time. The first movement, *32 variazioni sopra un accordo di Beethoven*, is based on the chord from bar 208 of the fourth movement of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony (F-A-D-C#-E-G-Bb). I constructed another chord from the remaining notes (C-Eb-Gb-Ab-B), and the harmonic and melodic material of the movement is derived from the juxtaposition of the two. Each of the variations has its own characteristics, technical for the piano, tonal for the orchestra. They are divided into five sections, of which the first (Variations 1-8), third (13-20) and fifth (25-32) are dynamic (rapid or increasing in speed), while the second (9-12) and fourth (21-24) are slow. The theme, Beethoven's chord

*fortissimo*, followed by the secondary chord *pianissimo*, appears at the end of the movement as a coda.

"The second movement, *Scherzo per la mano sinistra* (Scherzo for the left hand), is elaborated on a series of contrasts between light and shade which form a rapid and kaleidoscopic succession of opposing colours, microtones and timbres, in a continuous interchange between piano and orchestra.

"The third movement *Quasi una fantasia*, opens with a poetic exposition from the orchestra; then we hear a second exposition from the piano, which is combined with the central development (theme), now accompanied by the orchestra. At the climax the initial orchestral *adagio* returns and comes to the fore with the piano which later develops variations on its own theme.

"The fourth movement, *Cadenza e finale*

*prestissimo*, begins with an introduction (cadenza) from the piano, accompanied by the orchestra in a dramatic duet. The nature of this piece is that of a splendid fanfare which is resolved in the *prestissimo* finale. This section, played at speed and *sotto voce* by the piano, emphasizes its surrealistic character. There are five sections within the movement: first, transition, third or intermediate section, recapitulation and coda. An eleven-note theme, taken from the end of Chopin's *B flat minor Sonata (Funeral March)*, appears in the intermediate section, symbolizing the tragic and fantastic nature of the Concerto..."

Dora De Marinis

Translated by: Susanna Howe

## Dora De Marinis



Dora De Marinis was born in Mendoza, Argentina. She studied the piano with Ada Senzacqua and Roberto Caamaño in Argentina and with Walter Blankenheim in Germany, where she obtained a Master's degree in piano performance. Her extensive career as a performer includes recitals as a solo pianist, and in chamber music and concerto settings. She has performed in several countries throughout the world, including the USA, Canada, Mexico, Germany, England, Italy and Norway, in cities such as New York, London, Rome, Montreal, Oslo, Mexico City and Stuttgart. Dora De Marinis is a gifted teacher, and has produced many successful and recognized pianists. Her ongoing interest in developing a personal musical identity in harmony with the musical heritage of her country has impelled her to include in her wide classical repertoire many works by Argentinian composers such as Alberto Ginastera, Julio Perceval, Luis Gianneo, Carlos Guastavino and Juan José Castro, championing music in recordings and recitals in Argentina and abroad. Awards include the Argentine Gran Premio Los Andes for the best artistic recording production of 1994, the Outstanding Woman Award in Mendoza in 1994, and the A.C.E. award for the best classical music recording in 1995 for the recording of Alberto Ginastera's complete works for piano. Dora De Marinis is Professor of Piano at Cuyo University in Mendoza.

## Julio Malaval



Julio Malaval was born in Buenos Aires and since 1985 has been a German citizen. He studied as a conductor at the Vienna Musikhochschule on an Austrian Government scholarship and from 1969 until 1978 served as assistant to Ferdinand Leitner at the Zurich Opera. From 1978 until 1982 he was musical director at the Theater Hof in Bavaria. He has a continuing commitment as guest conductor at the Teatro Colón in Buenos Aires and has directed performances in opera-houses in Munich, Mannheim, Stuttgart, Düsseldorf and Barcelona. His career in the concert-hall has brought engagements with the Vienna Symphony Orchestra, the National Symphony in Washington and the Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, in addition to appearances with distinguished orchestras in Bologna, Siena, Sofia, Madrid, Valencia and throughout South America. He has appeared at festivals in Lausanne, Washington D.C. and San Sebastian, among other places, and has been equally active in the recording studio.

## Slovak Radio Symphony Orchestra

The Slovak Radio Symphony Orchestra was founded in 1929 as the first professional music ensemble to meet broadcasting needs in Slovakia. The orchestra was first conducted by the Prague conductor František Dyk and in the course of the past seventy years of its existence has worked under the direction of several prominent Czech and Slovak conductors. Ondrej Lenárd was appointed its principal conductor in 1977 and a number of the orchestra's successful performances abroad are connected with his name. When Robert Stankovsky took over the orchestra in 1993, regular concert performances followed, at home and abroad, with important recordings for the radio and for foreign companies. The major recording partner of the orchestra remains HNH International Ltd, the parent company of Naxos and Marco Polo, for which the orchestra has so far recorded over 140 CDs. The orchestra has undertaken a number of successful tours in Europe as well as in Japan, Korea and Hong Kong.



**Alberto Ginastera**

The Argentinian Alberto Ginastera, together with the Mexican Carlos Chavez and the Brazilian Heitor Villa-Lobos, ranks among the greatest Latin-American composers of the twentieth century. Ginastera's most frequently performed works include the ballets *Estancia* and *Panambi*, which make direct use of Argentinian folk music. The two Piano Concertos, dating respectively from 1962 and 1972, belong to his neo-expressionist period. Although Ginastera was by then no longer using elements of folk music, Argentinian traits remain: strong, obsessive rhythms, meditative adagios evoking the tranquility of the pampas, as well as magical, mysterious sonorities.



Ostinato

Alberto  
**GINASTERA**  
(1916-1983)

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|---|--------------|
| <b>Piano Concerto No. 1, Op. 28</b>           | <b>28:22</b> |
| ① Cadenza e varianti                          | 9:14         |
| ② Scherzo allucinante                         | 6:52         |
| ③ Adagissimo                                  | 6:16         |
| ④ Toccata concertata                          | 6:01         |
| <b>Piano Concerto No. 2, Op. 39</b>           | <b>37:48</b> |
| ⑤ 32 variazioni sopra un accordo di Beethoven | 14:58        |
| ⑥ Scherzo per la mano sinistra                | 5:56         |
| ⑦ Quasi una fantasia                          | 9:35         |
| ⑧ Cadenza                                     | 3:07         |
| ⑨ Finale prestissimo                          | 4:12         |

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Julio Malaval

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66:10



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