

Compositores Latino-Americanos and New Paradigms of the 20th Century Classical Music

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Abstract: This article discusses the direction taken by some Latin American composers in light of the new tendencies aimed to challenge paradigms of traditional Western classical music during the 20th century. Latin American composers were influenced by these tendencies to a greater or lesser degree depending on the place and time they lived. They worked with different styles and techniques while attempting to maintain a dialogue with the production of other contemporary artists without losing their identity. Some of these practices are shown in this paper. The examples were taken from a set of 54 pieces for piano recorded by Beatriz Balzi, an Argentinian-Brazilian pianist, contained in her album entitled *Compositores Latino-americanos* [Latin American Composers]. Exemplifying 13 Latin American countries, this repertoire was analyzed by the authors in order to define the most common practices adopted and/or created by the composers chosen by Balzi. These practices were then catalogued into six topics and organized in chronological order of events and styles to which they relate. To describe the main tendencies mentioned in this paper the authors adopted Stefan Kostka's *Materials and Techniques of Twentieth Century Music* for his clear, objective writing. This work helped to contextualize Balzi's repertoire, comparing the Latin American compositional process to some of the most respected musicians of the Western world.

Keywords: Latin American Music. Beatriz Balzi. Latin American Composers. Musical analysis.

Título: *Compositores Latino-americanos e os novos paradigmas da música erudita do século XX*

Resumo: Este artigo vem apresentar e discutir a postura de alguns compositores latino-americanos frente às tendências criadas durante o século XX, com objetivo de mudar os paradigmas da tradicional Música Erudita Ocidental. Na América Latina, estes recursos foram absorvidos em maior ou menor grau pelos compositores de acordo com a localização e a época em que viveram. Os mesmos trabalharam com diferentes técnicas e estilos, sempre tentando dialogar com a produção de outros artistas contemporâneos sem perder a identidade. Algumas destas práticas são mostradas neste artigo. Tais exemplos emergiram de um conjunto de 54 peças para piano gravadas pela pianista argentino-brasileira Beatriz Balzi, em sua série de CDs intitulada *Compositores Latino-americanos*. Ilustrando 13 países do continente, este repertório foi analisado pelos autores deste artigo com o objetivo de observar os procedimentos mais usados, e/ou, criados pelos compositores por ela escolhidos. Os procedimentos encontrados foram aqui organizados e catalogados em seis tópicos, em ordem cronológica de eventos e estilos aos quais estão relacionados. O livro *Materials and Techniques of Twentieth Century Music*, de Stefan Kostka, foi adotado para descrever as principais tendências citadas neste trabalho. Com sua linguagem clara e direta, este livro ajudou a contextualizar o repertório de Balzi, possibilitando a comparação entre os processos composicionais dos latino-americanos com os dos mais reconhecidos mestres da música ocidental.

Palavras-chave: Música latino-americana. Beatriz Balzi. Compositores latino-americanos. Análise musical.

This article discusses the different approaches and methods used by Latin American composers to address new tendencies and paradigms that transformed traditional European classical music of the 20th century. These practices were identified from an analysis by the authors of 54 piano pieces chosen and recorded by the Argentinian-Brazilian pianist Beatriz Balzi in her album *Compositores Latino-americanos*. During the years 1984 to 2000, Balzi recorded pieces representing 13 Latin American countries composed between 1898 and 1997. This collection of CDs provides the examples hereby presented.

Among the tendencies and practices observed, some were selected to be presented in this paper and were catalogued into six topics aiming to understand the way Latin American composers dialoged with the new vocabulary created in the 20th century. Influenced by two world wars that transformed social, economic and cultural ideas, Western classical music went through a period of important change that affected not only the music's very conception, but also its writing and listening, and even the employ of acoustic instruments¹.

Latin American composers took part in this process. However, even as issues concerning identity were present until the end of the 1900s², they worked in a way to create a musical heritage that applied the most advanced techniques of Western music without losing the characteristic rhythm, harmony and melody of their continent. Since the end of colonial times in the 19th century, the majority of Latin American composers seriously strived to not accept any foreign model without first discussing and adapting the material³. Because of this, they were sometimes criticized for lacking a method, being attributed a sort of wild, tropical temper⁴.

¹ Stefan Kostka (1999: 1) explains that "by around 1900, the tonal system had been so strained by chromaticism and by the desire for originality that further development of the system seemed impossible". Since then, new manners of melodic, harmonic, rhythmic and metrical organization has been proposed by the composers of the Occident.

² David Craven (2006: 1) relates some Latin American artistic manifestations to three important revolutions occurred in the continent in the 20th century: the Mexican (1910-1940), the Cuban (1959-1989) and the Nicaraguan Revolution (1979-1990).

³ The so-called continent of Latin America comprehends from Mexico (included) to Uruguay. The term Latin America was created by the French Empire's ambassador Maximilian from Habsburg between 1864 and 1867 when, sent to the continent by Napoleon 3rd, he tried to form a coalition government among the Latin speakers' countries. Most of the continent's countries had been colonized by Portugal and Spain, from the Iberian Peninsula, since the 15th and 16th centuries and up to the 19th one.

⁴ For further reflection on this subject, see Monteiro da Silva and Zani Netto (2012).

The pieces recorded by Beatriz Balzi in her album *Compositores Latino-americanos* exemplify the two main movements that divided the century in terms of Latin American art music: nationalism and experimentalism (BETHELL: 1999). These two movements gave birth to a vast range of new styles and languages and are evident in many of the pieces analyzed from Balzi's collection.

Although the amount of research on Latin American art music has increased over the last few decades—especially Ibaceta (2010), Béhague (2006), Soares (2006), Gerling et al. (2005), Turino (2003) and Antokoletz (1991), among others—critical analyses of the region's production as a whole are infrequently found in academic texts⁵. The article intends to contribute to this field by expanding Balzi's research published in her series *Compositores Latino-americanos*.

The musical terms used to describe the tendencies and compositional procedures presented in Beatriz Balzi's repertoire were taken from Stefan Kostka's *Materials and Techniques of Twentieth Century Music*.

Compositores Latino-americanos

Pianist, Beatriz Balzi, performer and producer of *Compositores Latino-americanos*, was born in Buenos Aires, Argentina in 1936. In 1960 she moved with her family to São Paulo (Brazil) where she built a beautiful career as a professor and pianist⁶. As an immigrant, she performed Argentine music in her concerts in Brazil, and Brazilian music when visiting Argentina. Perceiving the interest of her public and colleagues, she realized that few performers specialized in this repertoire and began to expand into music of other countries of the continent. She even contacted Latin American performers and composers in search of recordings and piano scores. Calimério Soares (2001) remembers:

It was the beginning of 1964 [...] when they announced the Argentinian pianist Beatriz Balzi's concert in the city of Ribeirão Preto. On that occasion, I was a piano student there and went to that unforgettable recital where the repertoire was completely

⁵ However, individually, Latin American countries like Brazil have been object of studies and publications, mainly in the Popular Music field. See, for example, Borém (2013).

⁶ Beatriz Balzi worked in various musical institutions in São Paulo, besides having private pupils. In 1976 she was invited by the Julio Mesquita Filho University (UNESP) to become a member of the music faculty where she stayed until her retirement in 1997. She acquired Brazilian citizenship in 1982.

new to me! Until then I had never heard the work of Alberto Ginastera and Julian Aguirre or any other Latin American composers' music. They were so beautifully performed by that nice and competent pianist!

In 1984, Balzi initiated the recordings of a series of CDs entitled *Compositores Latino-americanos*. At that time, initiatives to promote art music were motivated by events focused on contemporary music⁷. The high quality of Balzi's performances combined with her interest in promoting new compositions attracted the attention of composers from many regions of Latin America. Some composers sent her their music scores for its premier performance.

A Latin American Sound Catalog

Compositores Latino-americanos exemplifies the art music produced in thirteen countries composed from 1898 to 1997. These countries are Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Cuba, Guatemala, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela. In addition to the sound recordings of this repertoire, Balzi included written information on the compositional process of the piano pieces, as well as the biographies of the composers, highlighting their most relevant works. Most of the information was acquired by written correspondence between Balzi and the composers. The information was printed in Portuguese, English and Spanish with permission by the composers.

Some of the main tendencies of Western art music can be found among Balzi's recordings. In Gérard Béhague's opinion, Nationalism and Experimentalism, the two main movements of the 20th century, are represented with their various ramifications.

Among the nationalist pieces (i.e., compositions based on autochthon material), there are a number where the original dance or song is kept almost untouched (objective nationalism), others where the original material has been transformed through chromatic harmony and changing meters (subjective nationalism), and still others that adopt neoclassical forms.

⁷ Encouraged by this context, initiatives were made by some Latin American artists to improve the recognition of the region's music in their countries and abroad. International festivals, courses and laboratories for electronic music focusing on contemporary music exemplify this position. To name a few are the *Cursos Latinoamericanos de Música Contemporánea* and the independent publisher and record label *Tacubé*, both in Uruguay, and the *Festival de Música Nova* and publisher *Tacape* in Brazil.

Among the experimentalist works, a genre developed in Western Europe and the USA after the World War II to innovate classical music by challenging patterns of melody and harmony of earlier periods--then associated to nationalism and Nazism--one observes the influence of non-serial atonality, twelve-tone music, minimalism, prepared piano and open forms, among others. Such variety reflects Balzi's objective to illustrate Latin America's diversified musical scene.

"Compositores Latino-Americanos"			
Period	Tendencies and Styles	Countries	Composers
1890 to 1930	Objective and Subjective Nationalism	Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Cuba, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru, Venezuela, Uruguay	J. Aguirre, E. Fabini, G. Uribe Holguín, E. Lecuona, C. S. Málaga, E. Caba, A. Lasala, A. Ginastera, M. Ponce, J. C. M. González, Cacilda B. Barbosa, M. Camargo Guarnieri, P. Moncayo, J. Lamarque-Pons
1930 to 1950	Neoclassical Nationalism	Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, Venezuela	C. Guastavino, S. Revueltas, R. Cordero, E. Krieger, J. B. Plaza
1950 to 1997	Non-Serial Atonality and Twelve-Tone Music	Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Guatemala, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Uruguay, Venezuela	M. Lavista, G. Mendes, Coriún Aharonián, E. Escalante, Luis Campodónico, N. Pérez González, Sergio Vasconcellos Corrêa, O. Lacerda, Graciela Paraskevaídís, Cergio Prudêncio, R. Coelho de Souza, R. Castillo, Eunice Katunda, M. Câmara, A. Cotapos, E. Villâni-Côrtés, A. Rugeles,
	New Forms of Notation	Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Cuba, Uruguay	L. Mucillo, E. Bértola, Héctor Tosar, Armando Rodríguez, Edson Zamprónha, C. Soares, E. Mahle, E. Cáceres, J. J. Iturribery
	Choice and Improvisation	Brazil, Mexico	Aylton Escobar, Manuel Enríquez
	Return to Consonance	Argentina, Brazil	G. Gandini, A. Vieira, M. Resende, N. Lombardi

Tab. I: Composers whose pieces were recorded by Beatriz Balzi according to period, style and nationality.

The practices adopted by the composers chosen by Balzi are presented here in chronological order and are accompanied by musical examples copied from the Balzi's piano scores⁸. The objective is to easily demonstrate how the Latin American composers dialogued with these new movements, while introducing elements of their cultural heritage in well-elaborated pieces. A table containing all the countries and composers provides a complete overview of the album *Compositores Latino-americanos* from which the following examples were taken (Tab. 1).⁹

The Early 20th Century: From Objective to Subjective Nationalism

The establishment of republican governments almost a hundred years after gaining independence inspired a flourish of ideas on cultural identity in many Latin American countries. Projects were institutionalized in several nations to motivate intellectuals, artists and composers to rediscover their African and indigenous origins by applying their vernacular themes and rhythms in new compositions and works. The Mexican Revolution, which began in 1910, set the tone for the Southern continent.

At the same time, various Latin American composers had the opportunity to study abroad in the U.S., France, Italy and Germany. Upon returning, most composers tried to apply the techniques learned abroad in their countries. Strongly influenced by the French Impressionist style and by Italian Futurist ideas, they began to substitute the concept of developing variation¹⁰ used by Beethoven and Brahms for the a-discursive principle of collage¹¹ inspired by Stravinsky's works for ballet. These artists also discovered new sonorities and rhythmic patterns to enrich their production.

The interest in folk traditions, together with the rejection of academicism in favor of primitivism and experimentalism, supported the modernist movement in some Latin American countries. It differed from earlier nationalistic manifestations occurring in the 18th and 19th centuries in that these new tendencies used folk material in a more abstract and subjective manner, replacing the earlier objective compositional style. In classical piano

⁸ Swan Yuki Hamasaki approves all the musical examples.

⁹ Balzi recorded 54 pieces of 51 composers. Alberto Ginastera, Carlos Guastavino and Graciela Paraskevaïdis participate with two compositions each.

¹⁰ Schoenberg (1991: 56) defines "developing variation" as the succession of motive-forms produced through variation of a basic motive, in which growth can be felt.

¹¹ The principle of collage juxtaposes different and sometimes disconnected material in order to edify a non-directional language in a composition.

music, folk songs and dances are deconstructed and rebuilt by means of a collage, colored by chromatic passages, non-functional chord successions, parallel voice leading, pentatonic scales and syncopated rhythm. Procedures like these complete what Stefan Kostka (1999: 3) calls tonal chromatic harmony, and were absorbed with more or less intensity in various Latin America countries during the first half of the 20th century.

Colombian composer Guillermo Uribe Holguín for example, used folk songs and the dance *Bambuco* as compositional material to create his *Dos Trozos en el Sentimiento Popular* Op. 22¹². Eliana Duque (1980: 2) points out that *Bambuco* is characterized by “a syncopated melody in 6/8 with silence on the first or any accentuated time”. Although using tonal chromatic harmony, Holguín kept regular and symmetric meters (6/8), tonal cadences and a small **ABA** ternary form in these pieces.



Fig. 1: *Dos Trozos en el Sentimiento Popular* Op. 22, n. 1. In measures 1-2, the absent first note in Holguín's melody and the 6/8 metrics are characteristic of Colombian song and dance *Bambuco*.

Contrasting to Holguín, the Argentinian composer Alberto Ginastera utilized popular songs of the Pampas in a more subjective way. In his *Tres Piezas para Piano* Op. 6¹³, he adopts bimodal scales formed by the superposition of Lydian and Dorian modes to recall Andean instruments like *queñas* and *zamponhas* (indigenous flutes). The composer also creates slow ostinatos basses, like those played on *cajas* (drums). The pentatonic melody presented here is reminiscent of the melancholic climate of the mountains.



Other pieces exemplifying subjective nationalism in Balzi's album include: *Yanahuara*, composed by Carlos Sanchez Málaga (Peru), *Impresiones de mi Tierra*, by Angel E. Lasala (Argentina), *Milonga*, by Jaurès Lamarque-Pons (Uruguay) and *Leyenda Quechua*, by Eduardo Caba (Bolivia).

1930 to 1950: Nationalism with Neoclassical Influences

European composers revived some classical forms after World War I in order to rebuild the shattered outlook through artistic initiatives that used traditional cultural icons. In Latin American, this tendency took place later during World War II.

In the modernist years, autochthon material was revived by Latin American composers and musicologists. After 1930, research in this area already collected a fair amount of recordings and writings on folk songs and dances. Nevertheless, composers no longer wanted to resume their work of elaborating pre-existent songs or dances. Some also rejected the dictatorship of nationalism, utilizing earlier forms of musical organization like *sonatas*, *sonatinas*, *theme and variation* and *rondos*. These types of forms were revived due to their abstract character¹⁴.

Sometimes, elements of folk dances and songs served as material to produce recognizable sounds, producing works of less elitist character. Also, many piano pieces were composed for didactical purposes. Composers who studied abroad occupied leading positions in conservatories, universities and cultural centers of their native countries, sharing their experience with colleagues and students.

Carlos Guastavino's *Sonata para Piano* in C# minor¹⁵ composed in 1947 is an example of the use of folk material to give a popular character to an eclectic musical form. It allies the classical sonata form to romantic procedures such as developing variation, tonal chromatic harmony and use of nationalistic character. Two main themes are based on motives inspired by a popular song from La Rioja, a region in Argentina. These motives are varied throughout the sonata's four movements.

¹⁴ According to Kostka (1999: 146), "sonata form was the most important musical form of the Classical and Romantic periods. [...] Movements in sonata form are frequently encountered in twentieth-century music".

¹⁵ Beatriz Balzi recorded the Argentinian Carlos Guastavino's *Sonata para Piano* in the 2nd CD of her album *Compositores Latino-americanos 1,2,3*.

NO 4º movimento, na Fuga, utiliza uma melodia popular da província de La

Rioja:

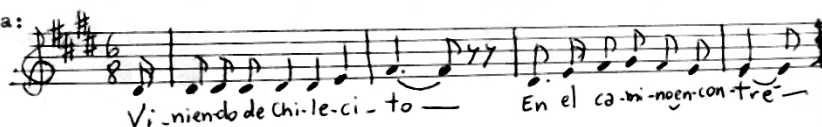


Fig. 3: Beatriz Balzi's personal note, presented under her family's permission. Lyrics and score of the Argentinian popular song: "Viniendo de Chilecito En el camino encontré".

In the next examples, Carlos Guastavino will use the popular song of La Rioja as compositional material:



Fig. 4: Guastavino, *Sonata para Piano*, 4th movement, measures 1 and 2. The repeated notes of the Argentinian popular melody will give birth to the 1st motive of the piece.



Fig. 5: Guastavino, *Sonata para Piano*, 1st movement, mm. 17 and 18: rhythmic and melodic motive 1.



Fig. 6: Guastavino, *Sonata para Piano*, 4th movement, mm. 3 and 4. The ascending and descending diatonic melody gives material to the 2nd motive of the piece.



Fig. 7: Guastavino, *Sonata para Piano*, 1st movement, mm. 2 and 3: rhythmic and melodic motive 2.

The first motive is varied in the 2nd and in the 3rd movements, as can be attested in the next figures:

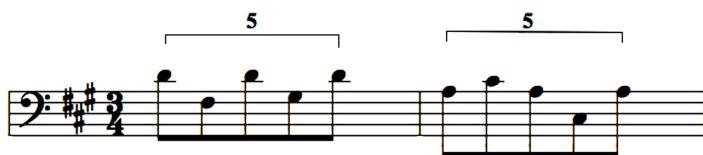


Fig. 8: Guastavino, *Sonata para Piano*. Repeated notes and triplet crochets from the 1st motive varied in the 2nd movement, m. 1.



Fig. 9: Guastavino, *Sonata para Piano*. Repeated notes and triplet crochets varied in the 3rd movement, m. 21.

Since 1950: Atonal Music and Twelve-Tone Music invade Latin America

Although more prevalent after World War II, non-serial (or free) atonal music and twelve-tone music began to emerge in some Latin American compositions as early as 1930-1940 and even earlier. However, the conservative taste of the public (where a minority attended classical music concerts) hindered the diffusion of atonal music in general.

Non-serial atonal music was more exemplified in Balzi's collection than was twelve-tone music. In fact, the latter achieved fewer adept composers due to its technical difficulty and to their sense of urgency of reflecting other ideas.

Non-serial music has been greatly absorbed by the region's composers since 1950. Balzi's album contains 28 pieces among the 54 recorded that uses this language (more than 50% of the repertoire). The expressionist style found in Viennese pieces of Schoenberg, Webern and Berg also inspired Latin American authors who used extreme dynamics and opposing piano registers in their works.

The piece *Cinco Lineas para mi Hermana Clara*¹⁶ composed by the Uruguayan composer Luís Campodónico in 1957, brings to light some of the procedures mentioned above. To reinforce the non-discursive conception of the piece, Campodónico used symmetrical scales like hexatonic and octatonic scales¹⁷. In *Lontano*, the first movement of this piece, the octatonic scale is presented in various transpositions in three voices of polyphonic texture.

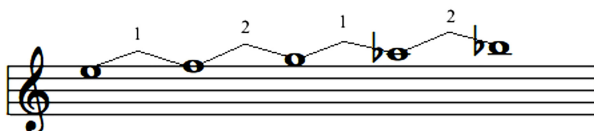


Fig. 10: Superior voice.

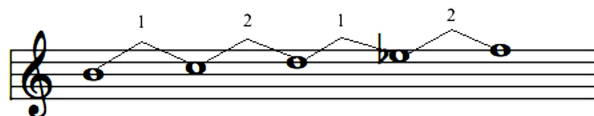


Fig. 11: Central voice.

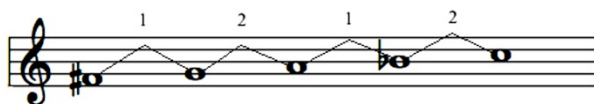


Fig. 12: Lower voice.

Luís Campodónico also worked with non-ordered pitch set classes in this piece, like the 3-9 [0 2 7] formed by the superposition of intervallic fourth chords and the symmetrical 3-1 [0 1 2] and 4-9 [0 1 6 7]. Some examples follow below:

¹⁶ The piece *Cinco Lineas para mi hermana Clara*, composed by the Uruguayan Luís Campodónico, is presented in the 4th volume of Balzi's album.

¹⁷ The hexatonic scale (or mode) is formed by a sequence of whole tones, while the octatonic scale has a sequence made up of whole tones and half tones, respectively (KOSTKA: 1999: 25 and 31).



Fig. 13: Set class 3-9 [0 2 7]. *Cinco Lineas para mi Hermana Clara*, 1st movement, *Lontano*. Measure 1.



Fig. 14: Set class 3-1 [0 1 2]. *Cinco Lineas para mi Hermana Clara*, 2nd movement, *Piu vicino - andante*. Measure 34.



Fig. 15: Set class 4-9 [0 1 6 7]. *Cinco Lineas para mi Hermana Clara*, 4th movement, *Lentamente assurdo*. Measure 1.

The expressionist style inspired the third movement of Campodónico's *Cinco Lineas para mi Hermana Clara*. Allied to extreme dynamics, the composer used ostinatos and clusters to recall the African influence in the Uruguayan region of Rio de la Plata.

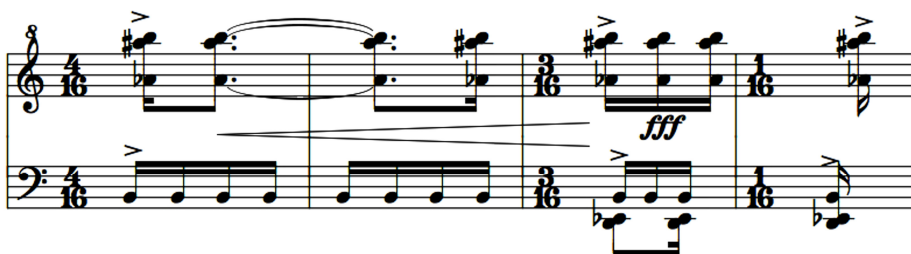


Fig. 16: Campodónico's *Cinco Lineas para mi Hermana Clara*. 3rd movement, mm. 67 to 70.

Although the recordings of twelve-tone music were fewer in number in Balzi's album, they inspired followers in Latin America. According to Graciela Paraskevaïdis (1985), the first composers who introduced twelve-tone music in the region were the Argentine Juan Carlos Paz (1897-1972) in 1934 and the German born Hans-Joachim Koellreutter (1915-2005) in 1937 in Brazil. Other countries adopted the technique much later, mainly in the sixties.

In Balzi's collection, the Venezuelan Alfredo Rugeles' *Tanguitis*¹⁸ exemplifies how Latin American composers adapted the twelve-tone technique to their own creative needs. *Tanguitis* is a play on Latin American's fascination for the *Tango*, using its rhythm in the piece.

A B

P-0: {D, G#, C#, C, B, F, Ab, C, F#, A, Eb, E, Bb}

Fig. 17: Alfredo Rugeles *Tanguitis*, mm 1 to 5. The original series P-O₍₂₎ {D, G#, C#, C, B, F, **Ab**, G, F#, A, Eb, E, Bb} is formed by two symmetrical hexachords separated by a *A b* added by the composer. Hexachord A: 6-42 [0 3 4 5 6 9]. Hexachord B: 6-13 [0 1 3 4 6 7].

¹⁸ The piece *Tanguitis*, of Venezuelan Alfredo Rugeles, is part of the 6th volume of Balzi's collection.

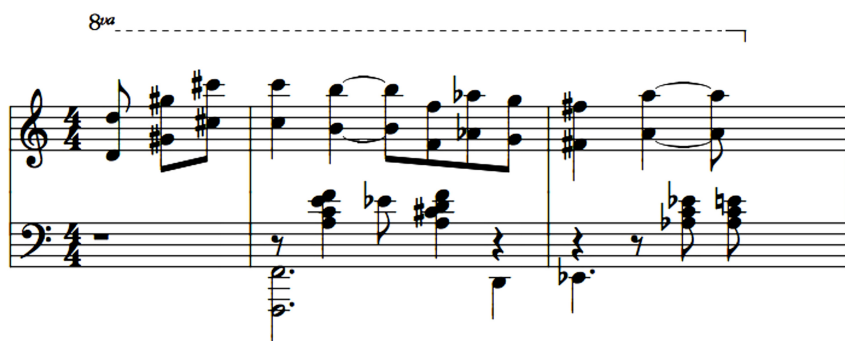


Fig. 18: The Tango rhythm gives the Latin American atmosphere to Venezuelan *Tanguitis*. Measures 15-16.

Rugeles cites Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde* polemical chords in the last measures. Along with the passion for the tango, the composer might have wanted to cite the musicians' passion for this crucial harmonic passage.



Fig. 19: Richard Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde* inspires the last chords of Rugeles' piece in measures 71 and 72.

New Ways of Seeing Old Things Give Birth to New Forms of Notation in Latin America

After using what Kostka calls raw pitch material and rhythms disconnected from their former functions and forms, the time came when musical instruments could be treated as mere objects to be explored. Influenced by John Cage's experiments, Latin

American composers searched for novel ways to use traditional acoustic instruments¹⁹. In piano compositions, for example, sound could be produced by playing the strings directly, hitting the piano case, or playing the keys with the palm of the hand or forearm (clusters).

New approaches to timbre gave birth to new forms of notation, providing instructions through drawings and captions with numbered references. Balzi noted both procedures in her album.

German-Brazilian Ernst Mahle used numbered notations to indicate the corresponding captions in his *Sonata 1971*²⁰, as can be seen in the following example.



Fig. 20: Ernst Mahle *Sonata 1971*, 3rd movement. In measures 1 and 2 the number 7 followed by a star leads to the corresponding caption providing instructions to the pianist indicating that a sheet of paper must be placed over the piano strings.

Beatriz Balzi also recorded pieces playing directly on the piano strings and hitting the piano case as in *Dois Momentos Nordestinos*²¹ by Calimerio Soares of Brazil.

The following examples demonstrate the use of drawings made by the composer.

¹⁹ Latin American composers, such as Willy Correa de Oliveira of Brazil, went to Darmstadt in 1963. For more information on this subject, see De Bonis: 2012.

²⁰ German-Brazilian Ernst Mahle's *Sonata 1971* has been recorded in the 6th volume of *Compositores Latino-americanos*.

²¹ Brazilian Calimério Soares' *Dois Momentos Nordestinos* was published in the 4th volume of *CLA*.

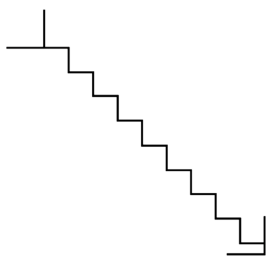


Fig. 21: Calimerio Soares *Momento Nordestino* n. 1, *Preludio*, m. 1. Sliding on the piano strings.

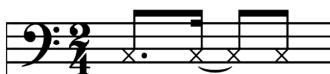


Fig. 22: Calimerio Soares *Momento Nordestino* n. 2, *Dança*, m. 1. Tapping on the piano.

Choice and Improvisation in Latin American Compositions

The new approaches of piano playing used to achieve a unique timbre and sound encouraged performers to be part of the decision making process and to take part in the creation of compositions. Western composers expanded this concept writing parts specifically for performers to improvise at some moments of the piece or to choose a sequence of musical events based on fragments offered by the author²².

In a time when many Latin American countries were under military dictatorship, this type of open form experimented in the Northern Hemisphere was adopted by some Latin American composers to express their dissatisfaction with the reality they were living through a type of “happening” (CALIRMAN: 2012: 3). Even though classical music had not been as censured as the popular music in Latin American countries, many artists lost their jobs and were persecuted, if not for direct political engagement, for their capacity of influencing students and young people²³.

²² In Kostka's words, "this new responsibility can range from making an insignificant decision to shaping all aspects of the piece" (KOSTKA: 1999: 280).

²³ The Uruguayan composer Héctor Tosar was dismissed from Universidad de la Republica in Montevideo in 1975, having his music prohibited in Uruguay until 1985 due to political reasons

The *Mini Suite das Três Máquinas*²⁴ by Aylton Escobar of Brazil and *Hoy de Ayer*²⁵ by the Mexican Manuel Enríquez are pieces that present improvisation and choice, respectively.



Fig. 23: Aylton Escobar *Mini Suite das Três Máquinas* no. 1, mm. 23 and 24.



Fig. 24: Manuel Enríquez *Hoy de Ayer*, page 4²⁶. One of the five fragments of the piece.

(PARASKEVAÍDIS: 2013). In Brazil, Uruguayan-Brazilian composer Conrado Silva lost his job at the Universidade Federal de Brasília in the 1970s, and was refunded twenty years later for this by the federal government. Brazilian composer Aylton Escobar had his house invaded by the police and was not permitted to receive a prize for his piece *Poemas do Cárcere* in 1968 (MONTEIRO DA SILVA; ZANI NETTO: 2012).

²⁴ *Mini Suite das Três Máquinas* by Aylton Escobar of Brazil is part of *C.L.A.* 5.

²⁵ *Hoy de Ayer* by Manuel Enríquez of Mexico is included in the disc 2 of *C.L.A.* 1,2,3.

²⁶ In some 20th century pieces, measures were not delimited. In these cases, the page where the procedure appeared in the composition will be used as a reference to the example.

Balzi's recordings also bring other procedures created to increase the participation of the performer in the composition. One of them is the indicative notation used in the *Tres Piezas para Piano* ²⁷ by Héctor Tosar of Uruguay.



Fig. 25: Tres Piezas para Piano n. 1. by Héctor Tosar

Beyond the Eighties...

Latin American composers after 1980 attempted other techniques and procedures. Production of dissonance and non-serial atonal music continued, but the use of consonant intervals resumed without involving traditional tonal functions. Serialism still oriented some compositions²⁸.

The final example of this article refers to a composition that illustrates the return of consonant procedures to Latin American classical music. In his piece *Eusebius*, the Argentinian composer Gerardo Gandini works with musical quotation in a particular way, deconstructing Robert Schumann's *Dauidsbündlertänze* n. 14 to compose four Nocturnes.

To create each part of *Eusebius*²⁹, Gandini selected notes from Schumann's composition. After performing the last movement, the composer asks that four performers play all four Nocturnes simultaneously, so that Schumann's *Dauidsbündlertänze* is heard.

²⁷ *Tres Piezas para Piano* by Héctor Tosar can be heard on disc 5 of Balzi's collection.

²⁸ Kostka (1999: 296) affirms that tonal practices began to reappear in the early 1960s in Europe in Minimalist and Neoromantic compositions.

²⁹ Gerardo Gandini's *Eusebius* is contained in the 6th volume of *Compositores Latino-americanos*.

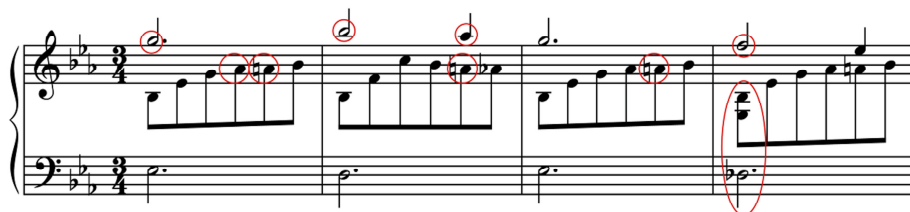


Fig. 26: Robert Schumann's *Davidsbündlertänze* no. 14, mm. 1 to 4. Gandini chose the marked notes to the first *Nocturne* of his *Eusebius*.

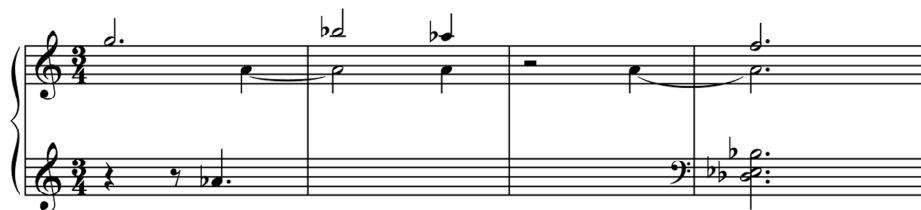


Fig. 27: Gerardo Gandini's first *Nocturne* of *Eusebius*, mm. 1 to 4.

Final Considerations

All musical examples presented in this article help to illustrate how select Latin American composers dealt with techniques and procedures used in 20th century Western classical music.

The correlation between procedures adopted by Latin American composers recorded by Beatriz Balzi and those generally found in Western classical composition demonstrates that Latin American authors are part of a broader artistic scene. On the other hand, the hybrid character of their piano music, full of indigenous, European and African elements, reflects their need to preserve the ambience and memory of their people.

The multiple possibilities provided by the Argentinian-Brazilian pianist Beatriz Balzi through her album *Compositores Latino-americanos* cannot be totally explored in a single paper. This article invites other scholars to visit this wonderful material in new ways.

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