

FROM FOLK CULTURE TO PIANO PERFORMANCE

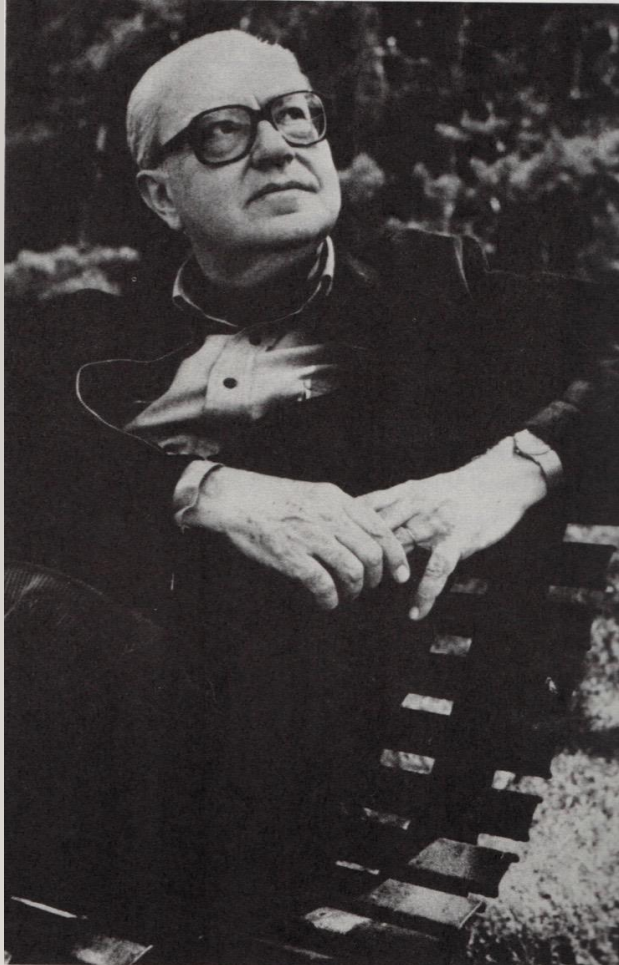
**A PERFORMANCE-ORIENTED ANALYSIS OF THE INFLUENCE OF ARGENTINIAN FOLK
DANCES ON ALBERTO GINASTERA'S *SUITE DE DANZAS CRIOLLAS*, OP. 15 (1946-1956)**

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Alberto Ginastera
(1916-1983)



Argentinian Folk Dances
(the *zamba*, the *gato* and the *malambo*)



→ *Suite de danzas criollas*, Op. 15

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY ADOPTED

- Analysis of the score → How do rhythmic elements from three Argentinian folk dances (the *zamba*, the *gato* and the *malambo*) constitute a recurrent and integral part of the work?



- Initiation into the choreographies of traditional dances *zamba*, *gato* and *malambo* as well as their rhythmic patterns on the *bombo legüero*



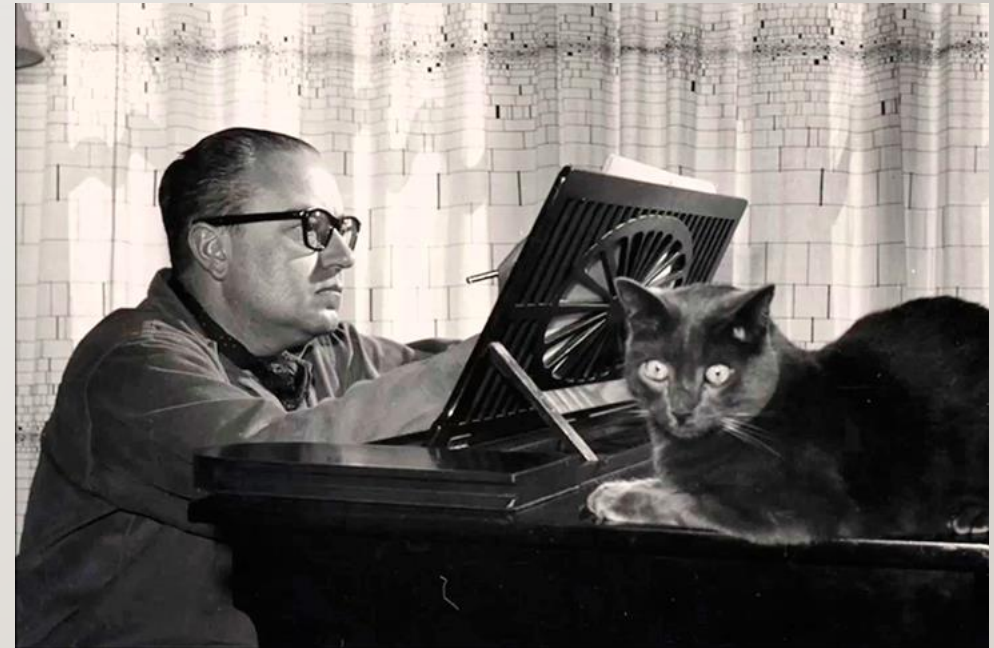
- How can practical knowledge of rhythmic patterns in folk dances inform the interpretation of Ginastera's *Suite*?

ALBERTO GINASTERA (1916-1983)

His musical output is traditionally divided into three distinct periods, according to the 1967 definition by the composer himself:

(See Pola Suárez Urtubey, *Alberto Ginastera*, Buenos Aires: Ediciones Culturales Argentinas, 1967)

- Objective nationalism (1937-1947)
Reworking of Argentinian folk-music elements, dances and songs within a rather tonal language
- Subjective nationalism (1948-1957)
The allusion to folk-inspired material becomes increasingly indirect, symbolic and subjective
- Neo-expressionism (1958-1983)
Use of dodecaphonic techniques and a more limited presence of the folk element



THE ALLUSION TO THE ARGENTINIAN FOLKLORE IN GINASTERA'S OUTPUT: A BRIEF INSIGHT

- Recurrent use of Argentinian dance patterns
- Influence of the *gauchesco* tradition.
Symbolic value of using sounds that recall the open strings of a guitar (E-A-d-g-b-e¹), one of the preferred instruments in Argentinian folk music. Gilbert Chase defines it as a “symbolic chord”.

(See Gilbert Chase, « Alberto Ginastera: Argentine Composer », *The Musical Quarterly*, 1957, 43, pp. 439-60)

These elements are also identifiable in the *Suite de danzas criollas*. It was composed in 1946 and revised in 1956, between the Objective and Subjective nationalism: the references to or reworking of Argentinian folk-music elements are either clearly recognisable or more indirect and symbolic



F. Molina Campos – *Gaucha riding, with guitar*

SUITE DE DANZAS CRIOLLAS, OP. 15

PIANO SUITE IN FIVE MOVEMENTS

- I. *Adagietto pianissimo*
- II. *Allegro rustico*
- III. *Allegretto cantabile*
- IV. *Calmo e poetico*
- V. *Scherzando – Coda: Presto ed energico*

The first, second and fourth movements are strongly evocative of three Argentinian folk dances: the *zamba*, the *gato* and the *malambo*.

The reworking of *zamba* can be observed in I. *Adagietto pianissimo* and IV. *Calmo e poetico*.

The influence of *gato* and *malambo* can be observed in II. *Allegro rustico*.

Excerpts from the edition:

Alberto Ginastera, *The Piano Collection*, London: Boosey & Hawkes, 2006.



THE ZAMBA

- From the *norteña* region (the northern part of Argentina), according to ethnomusicologist Isabel Aretz's classification of Argentinian folk dances and songs

(See Isabel Aretz, *El folklore musical argentino*, Buenos Aires: Ricordi Americana, 1952)

- Slow dance for couples symbolysing a seduction game
- Spiral motion
- Twirling a handkerchief in the air



Learning the basic dance moves of the *zamba*



Initiation into the *bombo legüero*

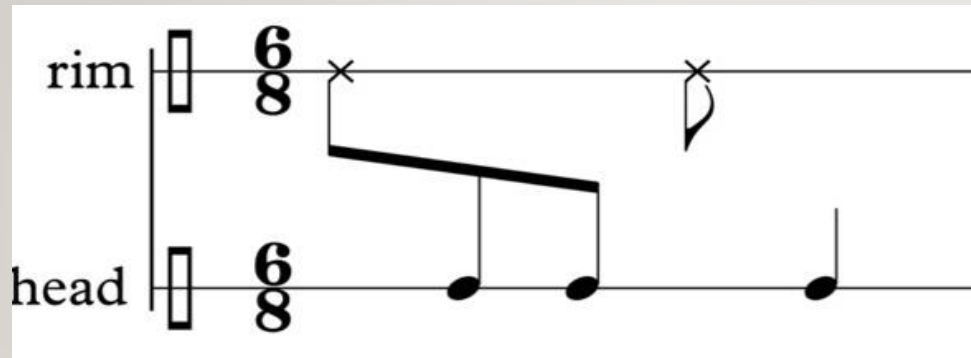


THE *BOMBO LEGÜERO*

- Directly-struck membranophone
- Most commonly played either with drumsticks or with a drumstick and a mallet
- It often constitutes the basis for the accompaniment of folk dances, including the *zamba*

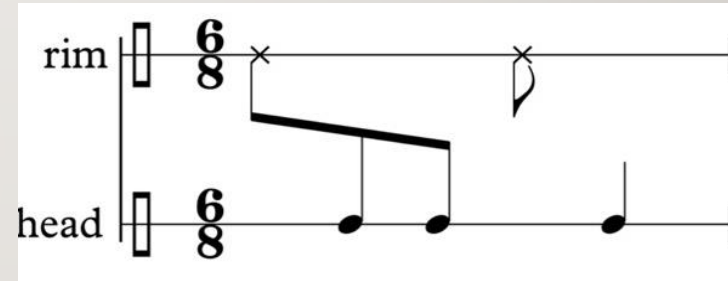


THE ZAMBA STANDARD RHYTHMIC PATTERN PLAYED ON THE *BOMBO LEGÜERO*



I. ADAGIETTO PIANISSIMO: BARS 1-4. ALLUSION TO THE RHYTHMIC TRAITS OF THE ZAMBA

See FIGURE N. 1



The sheer mass of the chord set on the fifth quaver spontaneously imposes itself on the rest of the bar

More intensity at the end of the bar → Allusion to the *zamba* accents

AN INTERPRETATION OF BARS 1-4 OF I. *ADAGIETTO PIANISSIMO*

See VIDEO N. 1

https://youtu.be/_T2_kiJjwL4

IV. CALMO E POETICO: BAR 4

- Bar 4 acts as a cyclical element
- Frequent allusion to the *zamba* pattern
- Strong formal balance which recalls the recurring patterns typical of popular dances, helping the dancers to quickly become familiar with their structure

See FIGURE N. 2



THE ZAMBA PATTERN IN BAR 4 OF IV. *CALMO E POETICO*

- In piano performance, this writing would require the same choice as mentioned for the excerpt from *Adagietto pianissimo*: accenting the fifth-quaver chord at the end of each grouping

See FIGURE N. 3



AN INTERPRETATION OF BARS 1-4 OF IV. *CALMO E POETICO*

See VIDEO N. 2

<https://youtu.be/hCbKlxl4CnY>

IV. CALMO E POETICO: BAR 4 A DOUBLE EMBLEMATIC VALUE

- Rhythmic pattern of the *zamba* and reference of sounds corresponding to the open strings of the guitar (the “symbolic chord”, according to Chase’s definition)
- Evocation of the guitar’s plucked strings: a *pizzicato* effect in piano playing

See FIGURE N. 4



METRICAL AMBIGUITY BETWEEN 6/8 AND 3/4 IN II. *ALLEGRO RUSTICO*

- The adjective *rustico* refers to rural environments, where musical traditions are often preserved and passed on to future generations
- Combination of rhythmic elements attributable both to the stylisation of the *malambo* and *gato* folk dances

See FIGURE N. 5



THE MALAMBO

- From the provinces in the Centre and in the West of Argentina (The *mediterránea* region, according to Aretz's classification)



- Instrumental dance, generally accompanied by the guitar
- Danced either individually or by two men who challenge each other
- Tricky *zapateos*: the rhythmic action of foot stamping performed in different figures



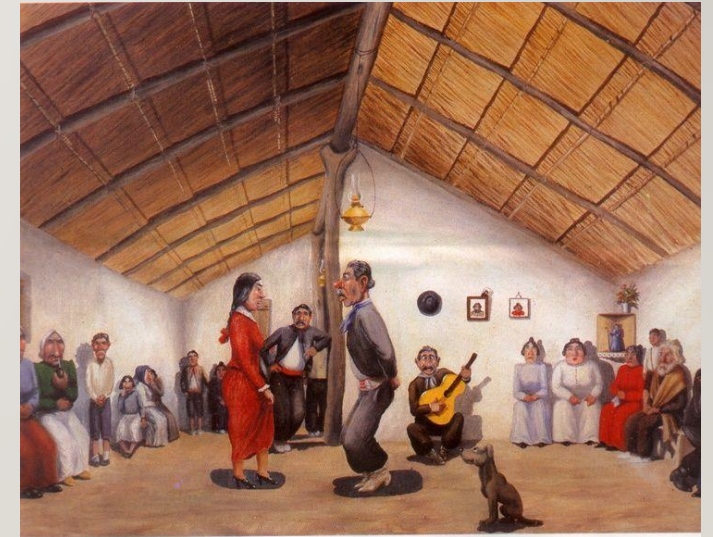
F. Molina Campos – *El Malambo*

THE GATO

- Animated and lively dance from the north of Argentina (The *norteña* region, according to Aretz's classification)



- The man performs a *zapateo*, while the woman performs a *zarandeo*
- Generally accompanied by the guitar and the *bombo legüero*
- Just as the malambo, the rhythmic accompaniment of the gato is marked by a coexistence between 6/8 and 3/4 in the same bar.



F. Molina Campos – *El Gato en el rancho*

ISSUES OF ACCENTS IN II. *ALLEGRO RUSTICO*: BARS 31-34

- Simultaneity of binary and ternary subdivisions, frequent in the *malambo* and *gato*
- Allusion to the *zapateo* dance steps through a rapid 6/8 meter and continuous eight-note motion
(See Deborah Schwartz-Kates, *Alberto Ginastera. A Research and Information Guide*, New York and London: Routledge, 2010, p. 25)

See FIGURE N. 6

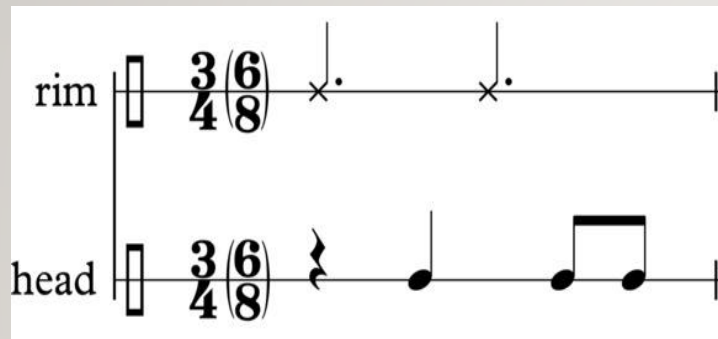


MY INITIATION INTO THE ZAPATEO

- A trait that is common to the *gato* and *malambo*
- Practice of the basic steps of the *zapateo*
- Performance of its basic rhythmic pattern on the *bombo legüero*



TRANSCRIPTION OF THE RHYTHMIC PATTERN OF THE BASIC ZAPATEO AS PERFORMED ON THE *BOMBO LEGÜERO*



- Coexistence of 6/8 and 3/4 measures within the same bar
- When the *zapateo* is performed, the binary and ternary feet could be spontaneously perceived as simultaneous in the bar

- This simultaneity also characterises bars 31-34 of *Allegro rustico*
- Interpolation of a 3/4 rhythm in a 6/8 measure

See FIGURE N. 7

- In the piano performance, I opt for an interpretation that relates this metrical ambiguity to the polyrhythm that I experienced during my practice of the basic *zapateo*
- Accentuation of the first, third and fifth quavers, corresponding to the three crochets of a 3/4 measure



AN INTERPRETATION OF BARS 31-34 OF II. *ALLEGRO RUSTICO*

See VIDEO N. 3

https://youtu.be/AYfxXu37_9s

CONCLUSIONS

- The study of the impact of the traditional Argentinian dances in the *Suite de danzas criollas* can provide useful information for the interpretation of the work
- Nevertheless, the importance of folk dances in this composition constitutes but one of several possible lines of investigation
- Another possible approach: study of its Modernist stylistic elements and its implications for piano interpretation

SUITE DE DANZAS CRIOLLAS: BETWEEN TRADITIONAL ARGENTINIAN DANCES AND ART MUSIC

- Aspects derived from traditional Argentinian dances, stylised in line with piano performance practice
- This contribution does not want to impose an interpretation of the *Suite*. Rather, it seeks one strategy for making a reasoned interpretation in which the folk dimension of the *Suite* is emphasised
- My reflections aspire to open up a range of interpretative possibilities



LIST OF REFERENCE WORKS

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THANKS FOR YOUR ATTENTION!

