Bartok, Ginastera, Copland:

Folk Music as Compositional Inspiration

Final Project for

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Studies in Latin American Music

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I. Thesis/Introduction

The native folk cultures of their respective native lands have had a unique and powerful effect on the compositional styles of many of the world's great composers. In particular, three twentieth-century composers – Bela Bartok, Alberto Ginastera and Aaron Copland – found profound and lasting inspiration in the musical and artistic folk idioms of their homelands. Each showed a unique response to the folk songs with which they came into contact, and utilized those influences to forge distinct styles which in turn spoke to, and for, the national identities from which they had emerged.

Standing chronologically between the other two, Ginastera absorbed and honored their musical contributions, while contributing significantly to the creation of an Argentine musical identity unique on the world stage. Not coincidentally, he felt a strong connection to the music of Bartok, and enjoyed an enduring personal and professional relationship with Copland.

Bela Bartok made it his life's mission to record, transcribe, analyze and catalogue thousands of Hungarian, Romanian and Slavik folk tunes. And, in their analysis, he uncovered notable harmonic relationships and melodic motives that inspired his compositional output on a number of levels.

Ginastera – following in the well-trodden path of fellow Argentine composers such as Williams, Aguirre, Castro, Paz and others – helped to achieve worldwide recognition of the Argentine culture, its people and its remarkable geography. As such, he was an essential part of the movement to "legitimize" Argentine music in particular and Latin American music more generally.

Aaron Copland, composing in an era of dramatically expanding U.S. pride at

home and influence in the world, sought to bring the folk music of America (as well as that of Cuba and Mexico) into the public consciousness, and to do so in a manner that achieved notable popular success, not only on the concert stage but also through films, television, radio and other media. Perhaps Copland's greatest historic relevance is his contribution to the creation of an "American classical music" that would proclaim and fortify the American spirit, both at home and abroad.

II. Ginastera – Biography, Musical Training and Compositional Evolution

Alberto Ginastera was born in 1916 in Buenos Aires, the child of parents of Catalan (Spanish) and Italian descent. As such, he was raised under their European influence, but in an era when Argentine artists and musicians were preparing to assert a nationalist identity distinct from the dominating European influence that had so profoundly shaped the Argentine culture for centuries.

Ginastera's musical training began at an early age (he excelled at music as a child), and he attended both the Williams Conservatory and the Argentine National Conservatory. His dramatic entrance onto the world's musical stage occurred when his Ballet *Panambi* (often cited as an early example of his use of Argentine folk influences in his composition) was conducted in 1937 by noted Argentine composer Juan Jose Castro, to a glowing reception by the musical community. Thus, at the age of 21, Ginastera was thrust into the limelight, and viewed as a significant Argentine composer and an emerging leader of his nation's growing presence on the world music scene (Schwartz-Kates 2001).

The next two decades saw Ginastera experience growing professional stature as a musician and music educator. Compositions such as *Estancia* (1941), *String Quartet*

No. 1 (1948) and *Variaciones Concertante* (1953), among others, expressed a unique gift for translating the Argentine spirit into critically and popularly accepted musical form – a reflection of the nation's magnificent geography (the pampas) and the gauchos who had for so long occupied it – and for allowing that musical form to powerfully represent Argentine heritage to the eyes and ears of the world.

During these years, Ginastera also taught at the National Conservatory and the San Martin National Military Academy (a post he was forced to leave in 1945 with the ascent of the Peron regime). In 1945, he began an eighteen-month visit to the United States, touring prestigious musical schools to attend performances of his own works, and in the process establishing pivotal relationships that would serve him well for the duration of his career. It was during this trip that first met Aaron Copland, "…absorbing his stylistic influence and forging a close personal relationship". (Schwartz-Kates 2001)

Ginastera experienced growing professional stature in the late 1950's and the 1960's, composing works that received wide critical acclaim, including the *Cantata Para America Magic* (1960) and the opera *Don Rodrigo* (1963-64).

In his final decade, the composer's prodigious output encompassed his most progressive, innovative works, including piano and cello concertos, the *Guitar Sonata* and the theatrical work *Turbae ad Passionem Gregorianam* (1974).

Ginastera's Stylistic Periods

Ginastera's evolution as a composer is generally described in terms of three "periods", which were first enunciated and described by the composer himself:

- "Objective Nationalism" (1934 - 47): During this period, Ginastera frequently quotes directly from the folk melodies and rhythms of Argentina in his works. It is here that the most obvious and traceable evidence of folk music is found.
- "Subjective Nationalism" (1947 - 57): Here, Ginastera's work still exhibits Argentine folk influences, but in ways that sublimate them into a richer and more expressive musical palette. It is during these years that Ginastera truly helps to define and amplify an authentic Argentine style of serious music.
- "Neo-Expressionism" (1958 - 83): The culminating era in Ginastera's compositional career, in which he more assertively utilizes twelve-tone and avant-garde techniques in his works. This is a lengthy "period" which really does not do justice to Ginastera's continuing growth and evolution as a composer. In fact, it has been suggested that the Neo-Expressionist period be subdivided, adding "…a fourth period, 'final synthesis', to account for (the) unique blending of tradition and innovation" that exemplified the final eight years of his life. (Schwartz-Kates, 2001)

Ginastera died in 1983, a renowned composer, highly regarded and amply rewarded for his prodigious output over a nearly five-decade career.

III. Bela Bartok – Ethnomusicologist/Composer/Folk Music Influences

The life and musical career of Bela Bartok are a testament to the power of the pursuit of ethnomusicological understanding (in addition to performance and composition), and the profound impact which that inquiry can have on a composer's musical output.

Born in 1881 in Nagyszentmiklos, Hungary, Bartok struggled through a difficult and at times traumatic childhood. Recurrent illness (including a persistent, disfiguring skin rash which caused his parents to keep him in near seclusion for long periods of time), the untimely death of his father, and the frequent moves necessitated by his mother's financial struggles – all these circumstances conspired to keep young Bela from experiencing anything resembling a "normal" upbringing.

But, through the curtain of difficulty and despair which shrouded his youth, a glimmering musical genius found its way to the surface, and at an astonishingly young age. Bela exhibited a remarkable proficiency on piano at the age of four, and was writing compositions by the age of ten – including a group of 34 piano pieces completed in the early 1890's. In 1899 he entered the Budapest Academy to begin serious musical training. Profoundly moved by a performance of Richard Strauss's *Also Sprach Zarathustra in 1902*, he launched into a passionate pursuit of compositional excellence, and the career for which he is most well known was well under way.

Between 1904 and 1906, Bartok unearthed another personal passion – the study of the folk melodies of his homeland. Writing to a friend, he revealed the enormity of his interest:

> I have now a new plan, to collect the finest examples of Hungarian folks songs and to raise them to the level of works of art with the best possible piano accompaniment… (Griffiths, 17)

The impact of his ethnomusicological research, in fact, began to appear in his compositions almost immediately, with the publication of *Piros Alma* (Red Apple), a piano treatment of a Transylvania folk song in 1905. (Schwartz-Kates 2001, 789)

And, his ethnomusicological efforts only intensified with the passage of time. In 1906, he entered into a research partnership with fellow Hungarian composer Zoltan Kodaly. Aided by the new sound recording technologies of the day, the two began an ambitious effort to record, document and catalogue folk melodies. Over time, Bartok's interests expanded to include Slovak, Romanian, Ruthenian, Serbia and Bulgarian folk music.

His pursuits in this direction were a source of enormous personal and professional gratification, as well as the recognition of fellow artists, as evidenced by his own words:

> The early researches…into the youngest of sciences, namely musical folklore, drew the attention of certain musicians to the genuine peasant music, and with astonishment they found that they had come upon a national treasure-store of unsurpassing abundance. (Antokoletz, 4)

The work of collecting, analyzing and cataloging folk music at times consumed him, and resulted in an eventual assemblage of material that can only be described as voluminous: "By 1918, he had collected…2700 Hungarian, 2500 Slovak and 3500 Romanian melodies". (Griffiths, 26)

Over time, further investigation led to further revelation:

> I have made a rather strange discovery while collecting folk songs. I have found examples of Szekely tunes which I thought were now lost. (Griffiths, 19)

The reason for Bartok's excitement? The unearthing of *pentatonic* tunes from the oldest of Hungarian folk music, a musical component previously unrecognized.

These and other revelations continued to inspire Bartok, opening additional

compositional doors for him. The rich, abundant resource of folk idioms provided sufficient inspiration for a lifetime of composing, and these folk influences are heard in dozens of his works. An example, from the middle and later years of his career, is *Mikrokosmos,* an enormous assemblage of piano works completed between 1926 and 1939. Included in its dozens of individual movements are those titled "In Yugoslav Style", "Hungarian Dance", "Hungarian Matchmaking Song", "Bulgarian Rhythm" and others, each weaving the threads of his years of folk melody research into the musical tapestry of this work. Countless other compositions also reveal the depth of his understanding of folk material.

In sum, how can we typify the folk music inquiries and resultant prodigious compositional output of Bela Bartok? As nothing less than a life-long ethnomusico-logical investigation – as comprehensive and exhausting as that of any researcher – into the artistic roots of his own and neighboring cultures, the thorough internalization of all that was learned, and the transformation of that material into music as highly regarded as that of any twentieth-century composer.

When we hear Bartok's works, we hear (even if unconsciously) the very folk melodies, rhythms and harmonies of the Eastern European peasant – a musical heritage now largely lost in its original historical form, but preserved for posterity by the consummate ethnomusicologist and composer. As Bartok himself put it, such work was nothing less than "…the mounting of a jewel". (Griffiths, p. 21)

IV. Ginastera: Composition with a lifetime of folk influences

As contrasted with Bela Bartok, Alberto Ginastera's absorption and reflection of the folk influences of his native land occurred out of a more generalized spirit of

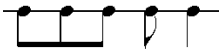
nationalism, rather than as the result of a consuming interest in the investigation and cataloging of such influences.

Lacking the voluminous firsthand research of Bartok, Ginastera instead responded both generally to the ubiquitous influence of the pampas and Argentina's gauchos, and more selectively to a number of other localized or regionalized traditions. Examples of each are noted by Gilbert Chase:

> The first compositions he now acknowledges date from 1937: They are three *Danza Argentinas* for Piano, and the ballet, or 'choreographic legend in one act, *Panambi*, based on a romantic and supernatural legend of the Guarany Indians of northern Argentina. (440)

Other works displaying native influence were part of Ginastera's output. Referring to *Estancia*, Chase notes that "It was no accident…that Ginastera's first really important work was a ballet inspired by scenes of Argentine rural life".

The specific folkloric tools with which Ginastera worked were noted as well. In *Overture for the Creole "Faust"*, Ginastera "…employs rhythmic and melodic elements of Argentine folklore…an Allegro vivace dominated by the rhythm of the zamba, a typical Argentine rural dance…" (Chase, 1957, p. 447) The rhythm is notated thusly:



Even in the midst of his career, critics had the perspective to recognize the composer's creative evolution, and the growing subtlety with which Argentine idioms influenced his compositional style:

> …from an initial flowering, of limited technical scope, characterized by rhythmic-melodic formulas derived from the Argentine folklore…we pass gradually to higher and more perfect realizations…

> the transfiguration of the original material related to a national expression and the total universally oriented products…a hopeful sign that indicates the attainment of musical maturity. (Vega, 100-101)

One notable quality observed consistently throughout much of Ginastera's career is the employment of the "universal tuning" of the guitar (or inventive modifications of it), played on open strings (E-A-D-G-B-E), at times combined with a representative native rhythm (here referring to *Pampanea No. 3*):

> …Intermezzo quasi trio…is based on a polytonal chord derived from an alteration of the 'natural' chord of the guitar…the strings, piano and harp repeat this chord in the typical 6/8 rhythm of an Argentine rural dance. (Chase 1957, 448)

The rhythm referred to here is notated as follows:

Referring to Ginastera's use of this "universal tuning", Chase states: "…from his earliest works to the most recent, this chord appears as a sort of 'signature'". (1957, 449) But, would Chase's pronouncement ring true in later years? It appears that this is the case:

> …the melodic series of the six-string guitar tuning assumed symbolic associations through repeated use and consistent melodic transformation in thirty works written over the thirty-year period that preceded the opera (Don Rodrigo). (Kuss, 177)

Kuss recognizes Ginastera's reliance on the "symbolic chord", even in the midst of his utilization of more contemporary compositional methods, noting that the chord "…appears integrated into the basic twelve-tone row that regulates most pitch relationships in the score, as the row's first four-note segment". (177)

To summarize: The persistent, evolving employment of native Argentine influences – the presence of the pampas and the storied gauchesco tradition, the inclusion

of rhythmic, harmonic and melodic elements drawn from the Argentine countryside and its people, the "transfiguration" of Argentine idioms and their ingenious incorporation into serially-based compositions – all these point to a composer who recognized the profound importance of his homeland's culture, and brought that culture to the world's musical stage with an all-surpassing expertise and creativity.

But, what of Ginastera's relationship to Bela Bartok. Is it significant? Do the two, by virtue of their shared love of native folk idioms, share a special bond? Ginastera himself tells us so, describing his exposure to Bartok's music while studying at Buenos Aires Conservatory as an adolescent:

> On one of those occasions I heard Bartok's *Allegro Barbaro* for the first time, played by (Arthur) Rubenstein. I felt then the impact of the discovery the bewilderment of a revelation. I was 15 years old at the time. (Panufnik, Ginastera, Xenakis, 3-4)

And, how remarkable the similarity to Bartok's life-changing response to the music of Strauss at a young age! But, Ginastera goes even further, stating that his experience of the *Allegro Barbaro*…"filled in all the gaps I felt in my conception of forging a national music..." (p. 4)

Indeed, Ginastera appears, at least to some degree, to have modeled his approach to forging a nationalist identity on the works of Bartok:

> When I composed my *Argentine Dances for Piano* in 1937, Bartok's influence was present. My "folklore imaginaire" begins there, with its polytonal harmonizations, its strong, marked rhythms – the Bartokian "feverish excitement" – all within a tonal pianism where the spirit of a national music is recreated. (p. 4)

Some years later, Ginastera attempted to initiate a personal relationship with Bartok, stating that "…one of my highest ambitions had been to approach Bartok and get to know his musical poetics closely". But, his efforts to know not only Bartok's work, but also the man, were frustrated. By the time this quest had begun in earnest, Bartok was in failing health and had passed on before the two could meet. Says Ginastera: "…we can find consolation in thinking that …a contemporary of some years of our own lives was one of the greatest creators of all time: Bela Bartok". (p. 4)

V. Aaron Copland: Simplicity and the Mass American Audience

If Bartok and Ginastera included folk elements in their compositions out of a passion for ethnomusicological inquiry and a deep sense of nationalistic pride, respectively, the motives behind the folk-oriented work of Aaron Copland were, perhaps, more mundane. For Copland the goals were, bluntly stated, simplicity and popularity. And if the sheer memorability and the enormous popular acceptance of his work are considered, he was eminently successful on both counts.

In 1935, as he was ramping up his compositional efforts, "…the way was opened for Copland to adopt a simpler, more direct musical style using quotation or simulation of folk tunes…". (Copland, Perlis, 230) Berger describes it as "…an aspect of his campaign to achieve a simple style and a content that would engage the interest of a wider audience". (57) It proved a worthy turn of events, for Copland the composer achieved a popular (as well as critical) renown that few American composers have equaled.

> Copland's style is now recognized as distinctly American…derived less directly from such American predecessors as John Alden Carpenter and Henry Gilbert than from the popular music with which he grew up… (Pollack, 401)

And, therein lies the key: Copland *grew up* in mid-twentieth century America, a land where popularity and its pursuit are art forms in and of themselves – not to mention the rapidly unfolding opportunities for popularization through the media of American radio and television, which outpaced those of the native lands of either Bartok or Ginastera.

It may well be argued that Copland's compositions which achieved the greatest success were those on which he relied most heavily on folk material. *Billy the Kid* alone quotes numerous folk tunes: "Great Grand-Dad", "The Old Chisolm Trail", "Git Along Little Dogies", and "Bury Me Not on the Old Prairie".

But, this is not to suggest that Copland's aim was the mere recitation of the simple or the familiar. He states: "I used musical ideas to tell the story, and rhythmic interest to lift the music above a mere collection of folk tunes". (Copland, Perlis, 284). William Schuman describes how Copland's *Rodeo* "…transformed American folk material into the most sophisticated art…". (Pollack, 191)

And, his gift for quoting folk melodies in inventive, appealing ways extended beyond American tunes alone:

> …quotation of folk tunes is a sure way for a composer to translate the flavor of a foreign people into musical terms…I decided to use a modified potpourri in which the Mexican themes or fragments thereof are sometimes inextricably intermixed. (Copland/Perlis, 246)

Copland also called on the music of Cuba and Spain, as well as his eastern European Jewish roots, to expand and amplify his musical palette – all the while striving for a high degree of both critical and popular acceptance.

And, perhaps it is this intentionally wider perspective – the willingness to look for inspiration beyond the borders and shorelines of his homeland – that caused Copland to connect so powerfully with his younger colleague in Argentina. A journal entry from his 1941 visit to South America speaks volumes about his admiration for Ginastera:

> There is a young composer here who is generally looked upon as the "white hope" of Argentine music…and will, no doubt, someday be an outstanding figure in Argentine music (Copland/ Perlis, 325)

Clearly, the admiration flowed both ways, as Ginastera enlarged his own nationalistic approach and harmonic method with inspiration from his America friend and mentor. Referring to the pastoral works of both Ginastera and Juan Jose Castro, Schwartz-Kates (2001) declares

> …their predilection for 4ths and 5ths resulted from the cross-cultural integration of musical characteristics…It also stemmed from the notable presence of Aaron Copland in Latin America and his use of such intervals to signify the "wide open spaces…"

And here, perhaps, the cycle is complete. For, it is widely recognized that *the interval of a fourth* is one of the most consistently utilized musical devices found in the works of the first of our trio of composers, Bela Bartok. While I can find no evidence specifically suggesting a link between Bartok's use of this device and Copland's (or, for that matter, Ginastera's), the coincidence is remarkable. Bartok, the consummate ethnomusicologist, looked deeply into the eloquent folk expressions of the peasantry, and used his discoveries as the inspiration for a lifetime of compositional achievement. It was his example that set the stage for others to come. In the end, Bartok, and Ginastera, and Copland shared a passion for the simple, the pure, the innocent. And, when they

went looking for it, they each found the same thing – the musical heart of a nation and its people.

VI. Ginastera's Cantata para America Magica – A partial examination and analysis

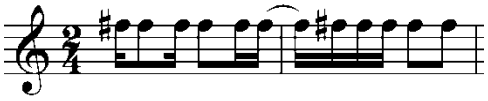
The *Cantata para America Magica*, composed in 1960, is a work of exceptional depth and complexity. It demands nothing less than virtuosic skills from its 13 percussionists (who perform on a total of nearly fifty different instruments), and equally from its soprano soloist.

The *Cantata* was composed during Ginastera's third widely-recognized period, Neo Expressionism; as such, it contains few of the obvious musical quotations of Argentine folk melodies that are heard in his earlier works. Rather, it is a part of his effort – a pursuit which occupied much of his remaining career – to bring Argentine music to a level of sophistication which the artistic world expected of it, and onto the world's performance stages with an artistic and dramatic intensity which would earn Ginastera and his homeland the respect they deserved. As part of this pursuit, the *Cantata* was uniquely and spectacularly successful, for it has become one of Ginastera's most respected pieces.

I can find very little written about the piece, other than the liner notes from a 1994-95 recording by the Lawrence University Percussion Ensemble, and a brief article by David Eyler which appeared in the November, 1978 issue of Percussive Notes (the journal of the Percussive Arts Society). My observations and analysis here are largely the result of my own listening (using the LUPE recording) and an examination of the score. In what follows, I will attempt to draw attention to just some of the musical qualities which stand out for me as a listener and performer.

The six-movement work is based on a series of five ancient poems from the Inca, Maya and Aztec Empires (one movement, the fourth, contains no vocals), and depicts the glory, the romance, the fierce battles, and the eventual downfall and destruction of these ancient civilizations. Utilizing a variety of twelve-tone and atonal techniques, the Cantata displays a level of brilliance that was Ginastera's at the height of his compositional prowess. What is remarkable is the sheer variety of musical effects created in the score and demanded, unremittingly, from the performers. Instrumental and vocal virtuosity is required in every measure of this work, but almost nowhere do the six movements demand the same technical or interpretive approach from the performers more than once.

Movement I displays a "primitivist rhythmic insistence" (Joyce) that is reminiscent of some of Bartok's most energetic work, as well as that of Stravinsky. Tritones are heard repeatedly throughout the movement, adding to the sense of unsettling urgency and unresolvedness. While the rhythmic material appears both highly complex and randomized, at one interesting juncture Ginastera places an interesting rhythmic figure in the vocalist's part:



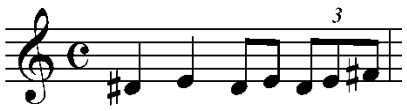
This figure includes a repeated phrase of three sixteenth notes, used in hemiola fashion and carried over the bar line. A closer examination of the phrase reveals, buried within it, a variation on the well known Latin American clave figure, heard in countless musical passages and the result of the blending of the African 12/8 "standard pattern" with the indigenous rhythmic material of the Americas. It is one of the few instances in

the entire composition where the composer uses traditional rhythmic material in an easily recognizable form (an attribute easily discerned in many of his earlier compositions).

Additionally Eyler points out that there are "…few times when the ensemble plays like rhythms"; this adds to the complexity of this movement, and the enormous challenges it presents to the instrumentalists.

Movement II draws the performer and listener to an opposite musical extreme from where he deposited us at the end of the preceding movement. Here, rather than the insistent meter heard previously, Ginastera creates a feel in which a clear sense of meter is nearly absent – or, at the very minimum, disguised ingeniously beneath the multi-layered instrumental effects of the movement.

Rhythmically, he seems to want to "rev us up", through the introduction of a passage, sung by the soprano in bar 19:



The phrase creates a palpable sense of growing tension, but then leaves us lying in wait for something to happen, but on the first beat of the measure that follows, we hear only the soprano, and must wait until late in the measure for the instrumentalists to arrive in force.

Throughout the movement, a 3-over-2 triplet figure is utilized, though never heard by more than one instrument simultaneously; rather, it drifts elusively from player to player, leaving the listener hoping for something onto which to grasp. At times, the figure is laid against a 7-over-4 figure, or against simultaneous quarter-, eighth- or sixteenth-

note figures. The cumulative effect serves to heighten the sense of metric evasiveness mentioned previously.

The composer relies on a variety of twelve-tone rows to establish melodic motives. The original row (bars 1 – 2, in the piano) is duplicated by the vocalist to conclude the movement, though at half the metric pace of its introduction.

Movement III, "Song for a Warrior's Departure", is an insistent battle between melodic and rhythmic elements that appears in twos and threes (both rhythmic figures and melodic intervals). There is an almost constant fluctuation between 2/4, 3/4 and 3/8 time signatures; only infrequently does the composer allow the performers to catch their breaths by providing consecutive measures of a time signature (either 2/4 or ¾).

However, whereas in the first two movements, Ginastera utilized time signature changes sparingly and seldom doubled rhythmic figures, in this movement he combines the nearly incessant meter changes with the utilization of parallel rhythmic figures between differing instruments. The musical effect is reminiscent of one heard in Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring.*

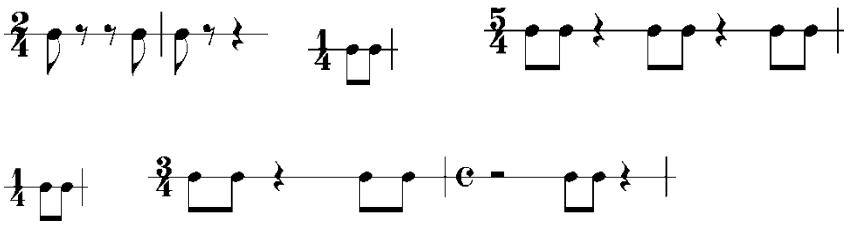
Movement IV, "Fantastic Interlude" is an instrumental movement quite unique in the piece. The movement is **palindromic** – that is to say, it unfolds in forward fashion, then after a climactic moment in bar 134, unfolds in approximately reverse fashion to leave us, in the concluding bar 266, where the movement began. In this way, it pays homage to a similar effect created by Bela Bartok (whom Ginastera admired and emulated) in the second movement of his *Concerto for Orchestra*.

In this movement of the Cantata, fleeting triplet figures are layered one upon the other or connected with one another head to tail; a complex melodic line passes skillfully

among the various instruments, a technique heard in Carlos Chavez' *Toccata for Percussion* and other pieces. The effect is much like hearing water flowing over rocks in the otherwise silent forest.

Movement V, "Song of Agony and Desolation" serves as an unsettling prelude to the end of the Cantata. Through musical fits and starts, we are denied the gratification of ever settling into a consistent meter; in fact, much of the soprano's part is written *senza tempo.*

Between the vocalists' passages, a series of notable timpani phrasings are heard, as follows:



These phrases are worthy of our attention, for they warn us of the dire conclusion that awaits us at the end of the final movement.

Near the end of Movement V, the soprano is asked to execute a remarkable leap of a 13th (bars 40 – 41); it is a singular event in an already remarkable composition.

The climactic **Movement VI** is an almost overwhelmingly powerful conclusion to the work. The movement as a whole is designed to depict the decay and disintegration of the indigenous cultures which are its subject.

It relies heavily on a 1/8 time signature; largely as a result, musical phrasings of any length (say, more than one or two eighth notes) are hard to discern. The effect is like sensing that there is a pulse, a meter, but never hearing a long enough motive – either rhythmic or melodic – to feel that pulse, much less to create any overarching sense of

musical phrasing. To add to the effect, Ginastera fluctuates between the driving 1/8 meter and others, as follows:

1/8 – 3/8 – 4/8
1/8 – 3/8 – 5/8
1/8 – 3/8 – 7/16 – 3/8 – 9/16 - 5/8
1/8 – 3/8 – 5/16
1/8 – 3/8 – 7/16
1/8 – 5/16 – 3/8 – 7/16 – 3/8 – 9/16 – 3/8

The cumulative effect of this rapid-fire series of meter changes is an incessant building of rhythmic tension, which corresponds with and reinforces the dramatic musical effect that is created and sustained as the movement progresses. At the end, both musicians and audience are exhausted, as the soprano intones her final ominous words:

Mute and dead grow the timbrals
Mute and dead grow the drums
Mute and dead…
Mute and dead…
Mute and dead!

It is a fitting conclusion to a powerful – but emotionally draining – musical and poetic statement.

But the closing movement and the Cantata as a whole deliver an impact that goes beyond either the musical or emotional sphere. *Cantata para America Magica* is a somber and sobering reflection on Latin American culture itself, on its music, and on its place in the world. Through it, Ginastera both celebrates and grieves the passing majesty of the Latin America that once was, but will never return. In doing so, he invokes a broader, more universal vision of the reborn culture that is and can be, and its new and growing stature on the world's cultural, economic and political stage.

VII. Suggestions for further research

This essay only begins to examine many of the extraordinary aspects of the careers of these three composers and the Ginastera *Cantata*. Other topics may be ripe for further investigation, including the following:

- the use of fourths as a compositional motif – melodically, harmonically (perhaps rhythmically?) in the work of Ginastera, Copland, and Bartok, as well as by other composers. Such an examination should address both the perfect fourth, its particularly "spacious" feel, and its use in nationalistic musics; additionally, the appearance of the augmented fourth (as in the *Cantata*) with its contrasting tension.
- the appearance of pentatonic scales in folk musics of many nations (a topic of special interest to Bartok early in his ethnomusicological research). What are the melodic motives, and the harmonic possibilities, available in the use of such scales? Which nations or ethnic groups appear to be most successful at incorporating these scales into the "serious" music of their cultures? How are the scales transfigured in the process?
- the composer as ethnomusicologist: What are the mechanisms by which the great composers of many lands become acquainted and conversant with the native folk idioms of their lands? How does the "intentionality" of this process affect a composer's ability to utilize such material as a creative springboard?

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