

AMERICAN FOLK TRADITIONS IN PIANO CONCERT MUSIC

A Dissertation
Submitted to the Graduate Faculty
Of the
North Dakota State University
Of Agricultural and Applied Science

By

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In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of
DOCTOR OF MUSICAL ARTS

Major Department:
Music

May 2013

Fargo, North Dakota

North Dakota State University
Graduate School

Title

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North Dakota State University's regulations and meets the accepted standards
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF ARTS

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ABSTRACT

This paper describes concert music for the piano that is heavily influenced by or entirely based on folk music traditions from the Americas. First, the term *folk music* and problems arising from its use are explained. The three main groups of people from which most of the folk music of the Americas originated are also briefly described. The main music covered will be by the composers Samuel Barber (United States), Juan Morel Campos (Puerto Rico), Heitor Villa-Lobos (Brazil), and Louis Moreau Gottschalk (United States). Each composer is represented by one or two pieces. Each piece is analyzed in terms of form and the folk tradition that influenced it. The histories and characteristics of blues, boogie-woogie, cowboy ballads, *plena*, and banjo music are all considered and related to the pieces discussed.

PREFACE

I have considered myself a primary source for this work. Growing up in a Puerto Rican family that valued traditional music, I know by heart the Caribbean folk songs and describe the very music that influenced the composers this paper will touch upon. I have also played most of the pieces discussed in the paper, and have felt free to give pertinent opinions. Further, I have been interested in the “elevation” of folk music for some time, particularly since encountering some of the works by Gottschalk and Barber. The melodies of folk music can be ornamented and harmonies can be embellished with new, more complex chord progressions, but at what point would this transform a folk tune into art music? Merely notating previously untranscribed music is one such “elevation,” but the eventual burden falls on the collective acceptance of music students, music teachers, and music lovers. “Folk” music can be equally as rewarding as “classical” music. If someone truly loves reading, they will find something worth reading in spite of a poorly supplied bookshop, to paraphrase C.S. Lewis. I think this lesson is especially useful for those of us who have spent many hours of study in our disciplines. We study music in order to more fully appreciate and understand the work of other musicians. Whether a symphony or a one-minute harmonica solo, we can find joy through the music of others. In this light, I couldn’t agree more with Louis Armstrong when he said that “all music is folk music.”

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This study focuses on piano music inspired by some of the folk music traditions of the Western Hemisphere. I have chosen these few selected pieces because they exemplify their own folk traditions while still maintaining a high artistic standard. I have also played most of these pieces. While the Louis Moreau Gottschalk works quote folk music outright, Juan Morel Campos uses his own melodies, but with rhythms and in a genre that is folk derived. Heitor Villa-Lobos is more difficult to categorize, as he considered himself a composer of “brand new” folk music. Nevertheless, the spirit of childrens ballads and his use of typical folk rhythms clearly identify these pieces with folk music. The last piece considered is by Samuel Barber, in which the folk influence is clearly evident.

In this introduction, I examine how the term *folk music* has been used both politically and culturally. Cultural attitudes towards folk music from different regions around the world are briefly considered before focusing on the main ethnic influences on the Americas.

The American jazz musician Louis Armstrong said that “All music is folk music. I ain’t never heard no horse sing a song.”¹ While this statement rings true, we also know that there are real distinctions between what is referred to as folk music and classical or high art music, particularly in the West. In 1947, the International Folk Music Council defined folk music as “the product of a musical tradition that has been evolved through the process of oral transmission.”² In 1981 this organization changed its name to the International Council for Traditional Music. The name change reflected a concern with the term *folk*, and the challenges

¹ Matthew Teacher, *The Musician’s Notebook* (Running Press, Philadelphia. 1998), 2.

² Carole Pegg. "Folk music." *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*. Oxford University Press, accessed March 13, 2013.

that this term brings to the study of music. To whom exactly the term refers is chief among them. Apart from the tendency of every culture to romanticize its past, urbanization and ethnic mixing create additional areas of complication. Who is to determine exactly who the “folk” are? Establishing a group necessarily means the exclusion of others.

Sometimes political considerations influenced the use of the term *folk music*. Music, being an art that can arouse deep passions, has inevitably been used by national purists, political regimes, and politicians themselves to their advantage. Bartok, who is among the earliest ethnomusicologists in the 20th century, studied Hungarian peasant music primarily to distinguish his national music from the gypsy music that had become associated with it—an attempt at “purifying” his own national music, as it were.³ Similarly the new Turkish Republic of 1923 made a sharp division between its art and folk music as a way to distance itself from its Ottoman past. Marxist regimes both in the Soviet Union and China used and re-defined “folk” to include not only rural peasants, but also union laborers and families below certain income levels. In China, folk instruments were re-tuned in order to play them with choirs and orchestras, and *folksong* was redefined in the Soviet Union to mean any song sung in praise of a happy, modern life. In a similar way, the Nazis also used propagandist manipulations of German folk music.⁴

There were several folklore societies founded in the USA that recorded race and hillbilly music in the early 20th century. By the 1960’s, the term came to be associated with singer-songwriters such as Bob Dylan, and a distinction was drawn between contemporary folk music and traditional folk music.⁵ Further complications and blendings occur with folk-rock music and other ways that popular or “pop” music might interact with more traditional folk music. In a European and Western context, folk music has long been distinguished from high art (or

³ Ibid.

⁴ Carole Pegg. "Folk music." *Grove Music Online*.

⁵ Ibid.

“classical”) music and also from pop music, the latter being generally equated with mass dissemination and marketing.

In the Middle East, the term is used to distinguish between indigenous and urban traditions, even though the concept is recent. Contrastingly, in the Pacific and Sub-Saharan African regions, distinctions between high art and folk musics are rarely made.⁶

In the Americas, the history of folk music is complex due to an acculturation process involving, most importantly, European, African, and Native American traditions. To be sure, East Asian cultures, as well as others from around the world have certainly influenced music making in the Americas, especially in more recent times of rapid travel and increased globalization. However, due to historical immigration patterns of the past, the largest number of people in the Western Hemisphere identify with one of the three ethnicities mentioned above: European, Native American, and African. Tragically the Native American population was driven to near extinction in the Caribbean islands. Nevertheless, from Canada to the tip of Chile, the history of the Americas is influenced by these three main cultures.

Regional differences of course exist due to complicated social, religious, and political factors. North American folk styles differ partially because of the wide expanses of land that allowed for separation between the influences, each with distinct strands of folk music. On the other hand, the islands and coastal areas of the Caribbean became highly mixed within a few generations. The Caribbean countries received the largest influx of African slaves, and sometimes the slave population on the islands outnumbered the European population as much as 74 to 1.⁷ Europeans made such a contribution to the culture of Argentina that even the spoken

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Eric Williams, *From Columbus to Castro: The History of the Caribbean* (Andre Deutsch Limited, London), 1970.

Spanish language reflects the influence of Italian settlers. Against this broad background of the many cultural influences of the Americas.

CHAPTER 2: FOLK MUSIC OF THE AMERICAS

In this chapter, I will focus more narrowly on folk music from the United States and Latin America. The musical traditions from the U.S. briefly considered are the blues, Appalachian fiddle tunes, banjo-derived music, and cowboy ballads. In considering Latin American music, I mainly deal with music of the African slaves in the Caribbean islands and Brazil, and briefly consider the difficulties of classifying indigenous music in Brazil.

Arguably, the most important folk music tradition developed in the Americas has been *Blues*. The term refers to both a musical form and a state of mind. After the 1900s, the term referred to a state of mind related to the black population. A singer of this style would sing in order to get rid of *the blues*. The form itself had crystallized by the 1890's after the civil war during the reconstruction era. The twelve-bar blues structure consists of four bars in the tonic followed by two in the subdominant and a return to the tonic for two bars; after two bars in the dominant, the form ends with two bars in the tonic with a "turn around" or introduction to the next chorus. The form could be portrayed as follows, where T=Tonic, S=Subdominant, and D=Dominant:

TTTT
SSTT
DDTT

Two inflected notes form the basis of the blues scale: the lowered third and lowered seventh scale degrees. Also important in the blues scale is the lowered fifth scale degree. Lyrically, a blues singer would repeat a line twice, perhaps in order to have time to improvise a third. The

subject matter typically expressed pent-up frustration about personal tragedy. The style also dealt with subject matter such as crime, incarceration, prostitution, drinking, and sexual topics.⁸

I'm troubled in mind, baby, feelin' blue and sad.
I'm troubled in mind, baby, feelin' blue and sad.
The blues ain't nothin' but a good man feelin' bad.

Fiddle music from Appalachia drew from British, Scottish, and Irish folk tunes.

Although the instrument is the violin, it is used quite differently than in high art music. The instrument can be held against the chest or the chin, bowing is very short, tunings can vary, little vibrato is used, and the performer concentrates on the first position. The fiddler was invaluable to dances, political rallies, house raisings, county fairs, and cultural events. In 1916, the folklorist Cecil Sharp began his collection of 1,612 tunes from the Appalachians, and he found that many of them related back to British folk music. However, in the New World more emphasis was placed on instrumental improvisation, and the vocal tone of the singers often imitated the fiddle.⁹ Starting in the 1840s, with the growing popularity of the black-face genre, minstrel groups incorporated the banjo, making a typical ensemble of fiddle, banjo, and percussion instruments.¹⁰

The earliest known depiction of the precursor of the banjo appears in a 1688 publication showing "strum-strums." They featured long wooden necks with skin-covered gourds strung with catgut. In the French colonies, this instrument was known as a *banza*, but in the British colonies it was called a *banjer* or *banjar*. The British pronunciations are still common in the American South. The original strum-strum was almost certainly first derived from a Northwest

⁸ Paul Oliver, "Blues," *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*. Oxford University Press, accessed November 6, 2012.

⁹ Peggy Langrall, "Appalachian Folk Music: From Foothills to Footlights," *Music Educators Journal* Vol. 72, No. 7 (March 1986): 37-39.

¹⁰ Richard Crawford, et al. "United States of America." *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*. Oxford University Press, accessed November 6, 2012.

African instrument, although there are several types that could have been models for the slaves who developed it. These instruments include the *xalam*, the *nkoni* of the Mandingo peoples, and the *tidinit* of Mauritania.¹¹

Joel Walker Sweeney (1810-1860) was the first known, popular white banjoist. He replaced the gourd with a wooden frame in order to give it more commercial appeal. The instrument was commercially available during the 1840s, and by the end of the Civil War the instrument had also become popular among white players and fiddle ensembles of what is now called “old time” music. The highly rhythmic style in banjo playing was a very important precursor to ragtime music on the piano, the first recordings of ragtime music in fact having been made by banjo virtuosos.¹² The black tradition in banjo playing remained fairly strong in the south until the 1930s, but by the 1990s, there were very few black banjo players left. In the 1940s the instrument was superceded in popularity by the electric guitar, and five-string banjo playing had all but disappeared.

Cowboy ballads were seen as a distinct genre as early as the first decade of the 20th century. The first significant collections of cowboy ballads were published in 1908 and 1910, and the first commercial recordings appeared in 1924.¹³ While depictions of cowboy life have been greatly romanticized, their songs often portrayed life as hard, loveless, and dangerous. Unlike modern depictions as mere ruffians, these early cowboys were portrayed as having fervent religious beliefs similar to that of Native Americans, where God is seen in nature.¹⁴ Songs about death are common, commonly from stampedes of herds of by “lead poisoning,” that

¹¹ Odell, Jay Scott and Robert B. Winans. "Banjo." *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online.* Oxford University Press, accessed November 14, 2012.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Bill C Malone. "Cowboy song." *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online.* Oxford University Press, accessed November 14, 2012.

¹⁴ Joseph J. Cadlo, “Cowboy Life as Reflected in Cowboy Songs,” *Western Folklore* Vol. 6, No. 4 (Oct., 1947): 340.

is, being shot. Often these songs had a moral, the young cowboy realizing that he had done wrong, passing on moralistic advice, and coming to terms with death. An excellent example of this type of death ballad is "The Streets of Laredo."¹⁵ By the 1920s this particular tune (along with hundreds of others) was already considered to be an old part of folklore. Bands such as the Oklahoma Cowboy Band made names for themselves playing these old, nostalgic ballads.¹⁶

"Streets of Laredo" (excerpt)

As I walked out on the streets of Laredo,
As I walked out on Laredo one day,
I spied a poor cowboy wrapped in white linen,
Wrapped in white linen as cold as the clay.

"I can see by your outfit that you are a cowboy."
These words he did say as I boldly walked by.
"Come an' sit down beside me an' hear my sad story.
I'm shot in the breast an' I know I must die."

"It was once in the saddle, I used to go dashing.
Once in the saddle, I used to go gay.
First to the card-house and then down to Rose's.
But I'm shot in the breast and I'm dying today."

.....
"Then go write a letter to my grey-haired mother,
An' tell her the cowboy that she loved has gone.
But please not one word of the man who had killed me.
Don't mention his name and his name will pass on."

When thus he had spoken, the hot sun was setting.
The streets of Laredo grew cold as the clay.
We took the young cowboy down to the green valley,
And there stands his marker, we made, to this day.

In considering Latin American folk music I will focus on the Caribbean islands and Brazil.

Neo-African music typically developed for recreational and religious purposes. Most of the diversity will be found in the Greater Antilles of Cuba, Hispaniola, and Puerto Rico, as these

¹⁵ Ibid, 337.

¹⁶ Carla Chlouber, *Images of America: The Oklahoma Cowboy Band* (Arcadia Publishing, 2008), 6.

three islands comprise 60% of the population of the Caribbean.¹⁷ All of the neo-African religious and recreational music originated in the Spanish Caribbean where slaves were imported as late as 1873. In the British colonies, most slave traffic stopped by the early 1800s. Spanish manumission laws were more liberal than British, and many freed slaves were able to live peacefully and develop their own communities in these islands. The majority of slaves brought to these regions were from Bantu and Yoruba-speaking West African regions, giving the slaves a common base to consolidate differing religious and musical traditions once in the new land. The religious practice of *Santeria* (or *Voodoo* in Haiti and *Candomble* in Brazil) uses the *bata* hourglass drums in most of the differing traditions that developed in the different Caribbean islands.¹⁸

Folk music of the Caribbean is comprised of numerous and diverse genres that are primarily products of syncretized African and European music, which stem from the collision of these religious, musical, and ethnic cultures. The primary Afro-Caribbean dance music of Puerto Rico has been known as *bomba* since the early 1800s, and the Cuban *rumba columbi* is also very common. *Gwo ka* from Guadalupe, and *tambu* from Curacao are also examples of neo-African music. In the English speaking Caribbean, only Trinidad experienced a re-emergence of African religious music with an importation of Yoruba workers in the 1850s. The British settlements lacked Creole cultures that considered themselves separate from the mother country. This tended to retard syncretic experimentation so that most of the non-slaves saw the slave population as totally separate and needing to be “Christianized.”¹⁹

¹⁷ Peter Manuel. "Afro-Caribbean Music." *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online.* Oxford University Press, accessed November 15, 2012.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Peter Manuel. "Afro-Caribbean Music.", accessed November 15, 2012.

Before the Colonial period, which ended around 1820, there is little record of music in Brazil other than compositions for the church. The first piano piece was written in 1819 by the music tutor of the prince Pedro during King Joao VI's residency in Rio de Janeiro. In the last three decades of the 19th century, opera houses and music clubs were created in Rio, where traveling musicians like the pianist Sigismond Thalberg (who had a friendly rivalry with Liszt) and Gottschalk performed. The first nationalist, high-art compositions were written in the 1890s with titles such as *Tango* and *Samba*. In high-art music, the most important figure after 1920 was Heitor Villa-Lobos.²⁰

Field collections of Brazilian folk music were first made during the 1930s, and most work in the country has been done during the last decades of the 20th century.²¹ Because of a lack of earlier documentation, it is difficult to determine even the origin of certain instruments, even though indigenous, European, and African instruments and musical influences abound. It is generally accepted that the indigenous populations did not employ chordophones (instruments that use strings as the primary means of generating sound) before colonization. A single-stringed percussion instrument of African descent—called *berimbau* in the north and *urucungo* in the south of Brazil—is still used today in *capoeira*, a Brazilian style of martial art. A great number of percussion instruments and scraped idiophones are attributed to indigenous and African influences, such as the *xequere*, *agogo*, *tambu*, and *pandeiro*. While there are many indigenous wind instruments, they generally play a lesser role than percussion and stringed instruments.²²

There are as many as eleven different indigenous areas with distinct indigenous people groups in the Amazon that have stayed away from Western influences. It becomes difficult,

²⁰ Gerard Béhague. "Brazil." *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*. Oxford University Press, accessed November 15, 2012.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² Gerard Béhague. "Brazil," accessed November 15, 2012.

therefore, to distinguish the folk music from popular music near the urban areas—a musicological problem throughout Latin America—and sometimes these two categories overlap. Given the many strains of indigenous, Afro-Brazilian, and European strands of music that have developed simultaneously in the largest country of South America, it is practically impossible to point out specific origins for most of the folk music, especially considering that Brazilian slaves might have retained songs and dances that have already disappeared in Africa.²³ For example, the rural *samba* used to be performed as a dance between two dancers with a handkerchief. It had many regional variations, but it has been all but completely replaced with the urban *samba* of carnival festivities.²⁴ There are also numerous Afro-Brazilian folk dances from different regions, such as the *coco*, the *jongo*, and the *maracatu* dances. Once again, it is virtually impossible to ascribe an origin to each, other than the over-arching Afro-Brazilian designation.²⁵

The blending of folk and art music traditions in the Americas has resulted in interesting and, in many ways, important musical works. The rest of this document will examine a number of these works from the aforementioned composers. The following chapters will explore the biographies of composers born in the Americas along with representative works drawing influence from the specific folk styles already mentioned. The selected works were chosen from the program offered in a lecture recital at North Dakota State University on December 6th, 2012.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

CHAPTER 3: LOUIS MOREAU GOTTSCHALK

(b New Orleans, 1829; d Tijuca, Brazil, 1869)

Gottschalk's unusual life was one full of adventures. At five years of age he began to study the organ at the New Orleans Cathedral, and in 1841 his father sent him to Paris to study music. In 1845 Chopin warmly acknowledged the young man's talent at a recital, and in 1849 Gottschalk gave his professional debut, which included a set of his Creole compositions.²⁶ He toured Europe successfully, where he was celebrated for his incorporating American music into his compositions. In 1853 he gave his first concert in the Americas in New York, but success in the United States did not come as easily as it came in Europe or Latin America, and he had to tailor his music to contemporary popular tastes with genre pieces such as *The Banjo*. From 1862-1865 Gottschalk performed close to 1100 recitals requiring nearly 95,000 travel miles. He spent the next five years traveling between Puerto Rico, Guadeloupe, Martinique and Cuba.²⁷ He toured South America, including Peru, Chile, Uruguay, and Argentina, becoming the first pan-American cultural figure. Throughout his career he had always encouraged the merging of popular and classical music, and this undoubtedly led to his popularity in the Caribbean and South America. He contracted malaria in Rio de Janeiro where he died, probably from an overdose of quinine, ironically the attempted cure.²⁸

For over ten years, starting in 1857, Gottschalk kept a journal during his travels, covering contemporary politics, religion, culture, and music. It is interesting to note that, in addition to bemoaning how uncultured some towns were during his concerts, he himself frequently wrestled with the contrasts of high art music and folk music. On April 23rd, 1862 he wrote, "Let us never

²⁶ Irving Lowens and S. Frederick Starr. "Gottschalk, Louis Moreau." *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*. Oxford University Press, accessed March 13, 2013.

²⁷ Irving Lowens and S. Frederick Starr. "Gottschalk, Louis Moreau." *Grove Music Online*.

²⁸ *Ibid*.

listen to the public,” complaining about how most of the public considered his music “too learned,” sometimes not being able to recognize a folk melody if he dressed it with minimal ornamentation or an accompaniment they were not used to.²⁹ On the other hand, after encountering an amateur who kept his eyes on the score he brought from home during a performance of a Beethoven Sonata, Gottschalk wrote:

I have a horror of musical Puritans... They never judge until they are assured that it is proper, like those tasters who do not esteem a wine until they have seen the seal, and who can be made to drink execrable wine imperturbably, which they will pronounce excellent if it is served to them in a bottle powdered with age... He admires only when he is perfectly sure.³⁰

Often he described his great annoyances while playing, such as people whistling tunes, talking, arriving late and stomping their feet as they arrived. At one point, a man asked him what that “big accordion was” that he was playing, and some women in the front row kept remarking on his feet moving, as they did not know about the use of the pedals. On another occasion some people complained that he didn’t play classics and only played his own music. Others complained that he did not play enough Chopin, and still others complained about the entrance fee.³¹ His greatest annoyance seemed to be the amateur who would not stop criticizing.

Let us suppose that Mr. X, who has never been able to play the music of others, or his own, for the double reason that the latter is still in a projected state (never to be realized) and beyond his powers—let us suppose that he falls with all his might upon some unfortunate pianist—upon myself, for example—do you think he would show himself moderate? Not at all. *Derniere Esperance*. How as to that? Good for little girls! *Banjo*. A melody for the Negroes! Pooh! Lacks execution, without taking into account the old tricks!... The more merciless they are in their judgments, the more talent is conceded to them.³²

The lifestyle that his traveling and concertizing afforded Gottschalk took its toll, with periods of exhaustion and loneliness from never having wed. In one of his entries where he records his

²⁹ Louis Moreau Gottschalk, *Notes of a Pianist* (Princeton University Press, 2006): 60.

³⁰ *Ibid*, 75.

³¹ *Ibid*, 99, 173, 193, and 155.

³² *Ibid*, 211-213.

arduous travel schedule, he concluded a passage in 1863 with, “The devil take the poets who dare to sing the pleasures of an artist’s life.”³³

Two of Gottschalk’s Piano Works

The *Banjo* has been called the “most complete document we have of the nineteenth-century African-American banjo tradition.”³⁴ Composed in 1855, two years after his return from France, the piece demonstrates down stroking, finger picking, and held-note techniques of the banjo which link them directly to West African string techniques. These techniques differ from those used by singing minstrels of the time and were gradually replaced by European, guitar playing techniques.³⁵ Interestingly, the piece uses Stephen Foster’s famous melody *Camptown Races* (Example 1) both at the beginning (in slight variation) and to end the piece, where the melody is quoted once again in variation.

The image displays two systems of musical notation for Stephen Foster's 'Camptown Races'. The first system, starting at measure 10, features a treble clef and a 4/4 time signature. The melody is written in the treble clef, and the bass line is in the bass clef. The lyrics are: 'Camp-town la - dies sing this song, Doo - da, Doo - da,'. The second system continues the melody with the lyrics: 'Camp - town race - track's five miles long, Oh, de - doo - da day.' The notation includes various rhythmic values such as quarter notes, eighth notes, and rests, along with dynamic markings like 'mf'.

Example 1. Stephen Foster, *Camptown Races*, m.1-8

The beginning two systems are a series of syncopated rhythms in the lower register. These same two systems are repeated before a finger-picking-like sextuplet is added to the

³³ Louis Moreau Gottschalk, *Notes of a Pianist*, 143.

³⁴ Paul Ely Smith, “Gottschalk’s The Banjo Op. 15, and the Banjo in the Nineteenth Century,” (*Current Musicology*: 47-61).

³⁵ *Ibid.*

rhythm. The entirety of the first thirteen systems (or 52 measures) is basically a subdued, rhythmic pulse, as if someone were strumming a banjo with occasional finger picking of different motives (Example 2).



Example 2. Louis Moreau Gottschalk, *The Banjo*, m.9-12.

The piece uses four motives: the first with no ornamentation (above); the second with a rapid, arpeggiated chord; the third with a descending octave motive; and the last with a repeated F sharp in the left hand. In measure 53 the register changes completely, and a melody high on the register is heard over a steady, rag-time style bass line (Example 3). Large skips that begin in measure 63 make playing this section quite difficult, especially if tempo is to be maintained. Low octaves marked *Tutta la forza* lead to an almost exact repetition of these two sections.



Example 3. L.M. Gottschalk, *The Banjo*, m.57-60

Just as we begin to feel that perhaps it has become too repetitive, a third hearing of the opening rhythms leads to a surprising and tranquil setting of the *Camptown Races* melody. In the example below, the melodic line begins on the right-hand octave on the down beat of the fourth measure (Example 4). The melody is repeated twice more, each time building speed, volume, and chord density. The harmonization is kept simple, with tonic, dominant, and once, the subdominant. The piece ends with triple-forte chords on F sharp major, an exciting ending to this crowd pleaser.



Example 4. L.M. Gottschalk, *The Banjo*, m. 149-157

Gottschalk's tours of Latin America and the Caribbean were arguably more popular than his North American ones, as they brought him instant audience acclaim. A possible explanation is that he was seen as a foreigner complimenting the host country by adapting local melodies, traditions, or rhythms. An example is his *Souvenir de Porto Rico (Marche des Gibaros)*, composed circa 1860. It is based on the Puerto Rican folk song *Si me dan pasteles, demenlos*

calientes—“If you give me *pastele*³⁶ make sure they’re hot”—a song typically sung for traditional Christmas parties that is heard still to this day.³⁷

The original folk song, as sung today, is a *plena*—a popular song form that features accents on the first and last eighth notes of a 2/4 measure. Its verses are lyrically improvised and treat a diverse variety of subjects. It is doubtful that what Gottschalk heard was exactly the same rhythm as today, but at the very least, the music itself shows the rhythmic pre-cursors of what would become *plena*. In Puerto Rico, the genre of *plena* is a coastal, Afro-Caribbean rhythm that is very typical of Christmas time.

There is an ongoing rivalry between my home town of Mayaguez (in the west coast of the island) and the second biggest town, Ponce, which is located in the south.³⁸ This is also the case for where the best *plena* singers come from. While documentation for early *plena* is lacking, the term likely originated around the Spanish-American war and turn of the 20th century.³⁹ Due to the economic devastation that lasted in the island until the 1950s and 60s, there was virtually no musical research or documentation, leading to many speculative stories as to how this music originated.

There are three main stories about how *plena* originated.⁴⁰ The first begins with a couple from St. Kitts or Barbados immigrating to the island and settling in Ponce. They made their

³⁶ A type of Puerto Rican Christmas food made with crushed bananas and meat boiled inside a banana leaf.

³⁷ I grew up with this song and have memories of family and friends crammed into a relative’s house singing it along with many other Christmas songs. Imagine my surprise when I first learned about this piece by Gottschalk.

³⁸ The entire island jokes about people from Ponce, as they think that they are the harbingers of culture for the entire island. In return, people from Ponce have a saying: “Ponce is Ponce, the rest is parking.”

³⁹ William Gradante. “Plena.” *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*. Oxford University Press, accessed February 5, 2013.

⁴⁰ *Raices*, directed by Paloma Suau and Angel “Cucco” Pena. (2001; San Juan, Puerto Rico; Banco Popular, Inc., 2001), DVD.

living by singing songs in the street. The husband would often yell out “play Ana” to his wife, so “plena” is considered a corruption of the English “play Ana.” The second story is concerned with *when* the music was played. Since the music originated from descendants of slaves and the very poor, they mainly played it at night when work was done, most often during a full moon, or “plena luna” in Spanish. The third story is derived from the music and lyrics. Early *plenas* were almost always a narrative story of what was happening in the neighborhood or in other towns.⁴¹ To a mostly illiterate population, *plenas* became an effective way of passing on important news. Early *plenas* include stories about factory power struggles, foreign lawyers oppressing local businesses, and local crimes. The word in Spanish for the leading story of the newspaper is the “plena.” Since the songs contained stories that most of the poor population could not read, it is reasonable to surmise that the phrase “sing the story” (*canta la plena*) led to the origin of the term. While these are the main three stories as to how the term *plena* originated, nobody knows exactly how *plena* originated.⁴² Both lyrical and musical aspects of the genre were already in place by the 1850s, as the Gottschalk piece shows.

While originating in Ponce, Mayaguez also fostered the tradition of *plena*—where it has enjoyed popularity to this day. The music itself is performed with three hand drums, together forming a polyrhythm that is contagious and accents the downbeat and the last eighth note in a 2/4 measure. Each drum player is also a singer, so participants in the party look to them to know when to sing the chorus, which is usually sung by everybody. The chorus of one of the above-mentioned songs is as follows:

⁴¹ William Gradante. "Plena." *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*. Oxford University Press, accessed February 5, 2013.

⁴² *Raices*, directed by Paloma Suau and Angel “Cucco” Pena. (2001; San Juan, Puerto Rico; Banco Popular, Inc., 2001), DVD.

Tintorera del mar
Tintorera del mar
Tintorera del mar
Que se ha comido el abogado de la Guanica Central.

(Shark of the sea...
That has eaten the lawyer of the Guanica Central factory)

Between choruses, the lead singer adds a touch of humor by improvising verses related to people's everyday lives. The Christmas parties where people sing these songs are called "parrandas" and they are all-night events. The party usually stops at sunrise. Besides the lead singer, daring members of the group can go into the middle of the circle and attempt vocal improvisations as well. These are usually men, even though there is no such social restriction. I can personally attest that these moments can become rites of passage in a way, as young boys who were previously afraid to speak up in front of family and friends seize the occasion to make their opinions known concerning social issues. It certainly was that for me. The first time I dared to express myself in this way was when I turned 16. I was nervous, but was already forming opinions. I was very proud of myself when I spoke up, and very surprised when the lead drum player allowed me to play the hand drum for a song.

This is the *plena* tradition from which Gottschalk draws, although it probably had not been as codified musically at that time. The form of his *Souvenir de Porto Rico* might be best understood as a truncated arch form. There are five variations of the two themes before a climax, and only two variations return before the coda. The piece begins in the lower register of the piano, the same way the main rhythm is presented in *The Banjo*. A marching rhythm is used in both the introduction and coda, as if a marching band is getting closer and, after passing, slowly marches away. The first theme is in e minor and appears in the third system in simple thirds in the right hand (Example 5).

Example 5. L.M. Gottschalk, *Souvenir de Porto Rico*, m. 32-38

The second theme begins in the middle of the eighth system and is marked *legato melinconico* (melancholy), where the music briefly shifts to the relative major for one measure, as if suddenly recalling some happiness, before quickly cadencing in e minor (Example 6).

These two themes are repeated in succession four more times, each time with greater technical complexity. The second, beginning in measure 59, uses a syncopated rhythm reminiscent of the rhythmic accents of *plena*. Recall that in 2/4 meter, *plena* accents the first and last eighth notes in the measure, exactly what is achieved in this variation with the syncopations.

Example 6. L.M. Gottschalk, *Souvenir de Porto Rico*, m. 45-58

The climax of the piece is a shift in measure 174 to F sharp major with the Habanera rhythm made so famous by tango music (Example 7). It is a carnival-like melody that is repeated an octave higher before a transitional section in measure 201 that brings us back to the original key for a recapitulation of previous variations.



Example 7. L.M. Gottschalk, *Souvenir de Porto Rico*, m. 181-185

The expansion of this simple, folkloric Christmas tune into such a virtuosic piece for the concert stage is a wonderful example of how folk music can be transformed into solo piano music of the first caliber. Gottschalk excelled in using folk material as the basis for his piano pieces, and he drew on the wonderful traditions of banjo playing from the United States and *plena* from Puerto Rico as his *Banjo* and *Souvenir de Porto Rico* exemplify.

CHAPTER 4: JUAN MOREL CAMPOS

(b Ponce, PR, 1857; d Ponce, 1896)

Rather than music for the piano, Campos was best known as a band leader and baritone horn player. He studied harmony, counterpoint, composition, and piano as a child and teenager. After playing baritone for a band in San Juan, he returned to his hometown of Ponce in southern Puerto Rico to form his own band. He was also organist in his local church and founded another musical group, *La Lira Ponceña* (Ponce's Lyre), a small orchestra. He wrote nearly 300 *danzas* (dances) that have become deep patriotic symbols for Puerto Ricans. Though some of his *danzas* for piano have virtuoso passages, most are simple and popular in nature, alluding to popular dance. Apart from his *danzas*, he composed 60 sacred and symphonic works, which are still performed often in Latin America.⁴³ It is estimated that Campos composed over 700 works, although only 549 manuscripts remain. Seventy-five of his *danzas* were specifically composed for the piano and are considered some of the finest ever produced in this genre.⁴⁴ His teacher, Manuel Gregorio Tavarez, studied at the Paris Conservatory of Music before settling in Ponce to teach and compose. He was the first to develop the pianistic *danza* as salon music, with about 40 compositions in that genre.

Most musicologists believe that the origins of the *danza* begin with the Spanish *contradanza* which was influenced by either the Cuban *habanera* or the Venezuelan *danzon*. By the 1800s the *contradanza* had already acquired local character in the form of Creole and Afro-Caribbean syncopations known as the "habanera" or "tango" rhythms.⁴⁵ It had become a very

⁴³ Gustavo Batista. "Morel Campos, Juan." *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*. Oxford University Press, accessed March 13, 2013.

⁴⁴ Miguel López Ortiz, "Juan Morel Campos: un Beethoven Boricua que Antecedió a la Salsa," (*Fundación Nacional para la Cultura Popular*, May, 2007) accessed Feb. 2013.

⁴⁵ Peter Manuel. "Afro-Caribbean Music." *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*. Oxford University Press, accessed November 15, 2012.

popular, aristocratic figure dance in Puerto Rico that required a *bastonero* (carrier of a “baston,” or stick to pound the down beats on the floor) directing the movements, flow, and even pairings of the dancers. Some dances would even end in violent duels, as the dancers were required to follow the leader precisely, leading to many heated disagreements and physical combat. By the late 1830s and early 1840s, new styles of dancing from Cuba and Venezuela were being imported into the island. An especially popular dance was the Cuban *habanera*, which was seen as freer, not needing a *bastonero*, and couples could dance much more closely. To the horror of the older generation, the dancers were so close that they could speak with each other in a low voice. The scandal was such that in 1849 the governor of the island banned the new dance altogether. This action of course led to exactly the opposite of its intent, causing even more widespread dissemination due to the added notoriety.⁴⁶

The first native *danzas* composed had folkloric titles, focusing on the rhythm overlaid with local, folkloric melodies. During the 1850s, the ensembles of strings and some brass instruments added the *guiro* (a scraped gourd) plus other percussion instruments such as the snare drum. While the genre had previously only referred to chamber and brass ensembles, Campos’ teacher Tavarez applied it to solo piano pieces. By the 1870s, he had taken this partner dance and added romantic melody lines along with a more advanced harmonic vocabulary. His student and the composer under discussion, Morel Campos, developed the genre even further and his examples are considered the standard to which modern composers look to in composing *danzas*.

After a change in government in 1898 during the Spanish-American War, economic, social, and cultural depression prevailed to such an extent that recovery did not begin until the

⁴⁶ Luciano Quinones, *La Danza Puertorriquena*, <http://www.ladanza.com/danza.htm>, accessed November 14th, 2012.

1950s. The depression brought the collapse of musical patronage and educational agencies, and musical composition, including *danza* composition, suffered greatly. A new generation of composers has emerged, and owes much to the influence of Morel Campos.⁴⁷ Interestingly, the *habanera* rhythm that is so prevalent in the *Danza* is also the main rhythm in the Puerto Rican *reggaeton* and Trinidadian *soca*.⁴⁸

Morel Campos established the standard five-part *danza* form. Before him, some were composed in ternary form (such as his teacher's famous *danza* "Margarita") and some in four or more sections. Morel Campo's form, which he used almost exclusively in all of his *danzas*, became the standard used to this day. The genre is very similar to ragtime music from the Americas in both form and spirit, as the *danza* is sometimes referred to as "semi-classical" music in an acknowledgement of its elevated status as not "just" dance music.

Danzas are motivically and melodically driven, with some sections employing as few as one or two motives before making a transition. They begin with an introduction ending in a V7 chord and a pause. This is important, as this chord lets dancers know when they should embrace to start the dance. The introduction, also known as the *paseo* ("stroll"), allowed time for the dancers to find a place on the dance floor, acknowledge other dancers and onlookers, and during the V7-chord pause, bow and curtsy to each other before embracing. The main theme always follows, which is usually the most dramatic melody. The second section is typically in a closely related key and presents a new melody. The third section presents yet another melody which generally changes mode or modulates to a distant key. The fourth section is a transition back to the main theme. The length of this section can vary from quite long and equal in length to the

⁴⁷ Donald Thompson. "Puerto Rico." *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*. Oxford University Press, accessed November 15, 2012.

⁴⁸ Peter Manuel. "Afro-Caribbean Music." *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*. Oxford University Press, accessed November 15, 2012.

other sections, to being quite short and spanning as few as four or five measures in the shorter *danzas*. The fifth section is a return to the main melody of the piece.

Two of Morel Campos' Piano Works

The *danzas* “Tormento” and “Di que me Amas” (“Tell me you Love me”) are typical of the form established by Morel Campos. “Di que me Amas” is in e minor and begins with triplet 16th notes that are divided between the hands (Example 8).



Example 8. Juan Morel Campos, *Di que me Amas*, m.1-4

After this introduction, the main theme begins with an ascending triplet figure. The first four measures are an e minor harmony (Example 9).



Example 9. J. Morel Campos, *Di que me Amas*, m.10-15

Four bars of a minor are followed by two of D major, two of G major, two of B major, and back to e minor to complete the section. The second section is clearly in C major. Although marked with a repeat, the first ending is a full seven measures long. Almost half of the entire

section is not repeated with the second ending, which makes an abrupt transition to B major in the fourth system of the second page (Example 10).



Example 10. J. Morel Campos, *Di que me Amas*, m. 48-50

This chord is used as a V7 for the third section in E major. In what at first appears to be the consequent phrase, a secondary dominant leads to the ii chord in the third measure of the last system, thus extending the phrase with this simple harmonic surprise (Example 11).



Example 11. J. Morel Campos, *Di que me Amas*, m.51-54

The fourth section is quite long in this *danza*. The first eight measures lead to a minor in the third system of the third page. An F-sharp diminished sonority leads to B major dominant 7 chords in *fortissimo* that conclude the section before a return of the main theme (Example 12).

The last measure is typical of *danza* writing in that the melody is simply cut off on the tonic after a crescendo (Example 13).



Example 12. J. Morel Campos, *Di que me Amas*, m. 74-80



Example 13. J. Morel Campos, *Di que me Amas*, m.94-96

The conclusion might seem abrupt to someone unaccustomed to the traditions of the genre, but it is expected and, indeed, I know of no examples without the sudden ending, no matter how subdued, beautiful, or romantic the melody might be.

The second piece, “Tormento,” is more concise. It begins in F major, with both the introduction and main theme in F. The sixth measure of the introduction has a brief shift to the Neapolitan, but other than that, there are no harmonic surprises for these first two segments (Example 14).

The second section is in C major and is harmonically simple. It features only tonic and dominant chords until the last three measures of the section, where a B flat chord shifts the tonality back to F major. The third section moves to the relative minor of D minor for the first eight measures, and uses an F minor chord as a transition to C where the section cadences. The fourth, or transition section which begins *pianissimo*, is extremely small, comprised of four

measures. As expected, the fifth section is a repeat of the main theme and finishes with *fortissimo* full chords (Example 15).

Example 14. J. Morel Campos, *Tormento*, m. 1-6

Example 15. J. Morel Campos, *Tormento*, m. 59-73

Besides the five-section form, these *danzas* demonstrate another aspect that is common to the genre. A common figure found in *danzas* is the triplet accompaniment in the left hand with a dotted eighth and sixteenth on the right. This three-against-four rhythm can be tricky to play and is often followed by another duple against triplet. These rhythmic idiosyncrasies are the most distinguishing aspects of the *danza*, which is expected from a genre that arose from dance. There are varying degrees of freedom that performers will take with *danza*. Some keep strict time

while others “swing” the three-against-four. Since Morel Campos used both the dotted rhythm as well as written out, “swung” rhythms using triplets, I prefer to keep strict time.

In spite of his short life, Morel Campos was very prolific. He composed beloved musical pieces, some considered patriotic gems by many from Puerto Rico. In large part due to his influence, the *danza* became such a patriotic symbol, that the national anthem of the island is in this genre.

CHAPTER 5: HEITOR VILLA-LOBOS

(b Rio de Janeiro, 1887; d Rio de Janeiro, 1959)

While in Brazil, the Austrian composer Sigismund Neukomm published his *O amor Brasileiro* in 1809, a capriccio for piano solo, and the first known art music using a Brazilian folk theme.⁴⁹ Brazil is the first country, then, to experience this melding of the rigorous discipline of art music with the folk music of America. It is fitting, therefore, that the Brazilian Heitor Villa-Lobos became such an international luminary of the nationalist movement in Latin America. He is best known for his nine *Bachianas Brasileiras* and about 15 *Choros* (or “Laments”). The aria from his *Bachianas Brasileiras no. 5* is one of the most recorded pieces of the 20th century.⁵⁰

Villa-Lobos is the most significant Brazilian composer of the 20th century. His father was an amateur musician who imposed a severe education on his son. Young Heitor was taken to concerts and operas during which his father would quiz him and, in his own words, “watch out, when I didn’t get it right.”⁵¹ He learned clarinet and cello from his father, but, to his father’s chagrin, he was also captivated by popular idioms to the point where he learned to play the guitar. After his father’s death in 1899, Villa-Lobos immersed himself in street music playing guitar.⁵² As a teenager, he had very little interest in school, so his attendance was uneven and he frequently escaped from home in order to play with *choroes*, or small groups of musicians who played *choros* (laments) accompanied by guitar and folk instruments such as a flute and perhaps small percussion instruments.

⁴⁹ Tello, Aurelio. "Aires nacionales en la música de América Latina como respuesta a la búsqueda de identidad," *Hueso húmero* 44 (2004): 212-239.

⁵⁰ Appleby, David P. *Heitor Villa-Lobos: A life*. (The Scarecrow Press, Inc. 2002): 130, 179.

⁵¹ Gerard Béhague. "Brazil." *Grove Music Online*. *Oxford Music Online*. Oxford University Press, accessed November 15, 2012.

⁵² *Ibid.*

From 1905 to 1911 Villa-Lobos organized many concerts in rural, sparsely populated areas where he would hear indigenous music. His trips into the jungle were highly exaggerated by him later, partly out of fun. One example of his sense of humor was his claim to New York reporters that he had knowledge of melodies that were so ancient the current generation of Indians had forgotten them. When asked where he gained this knowledge, he replied, “From parrots. Brazilian parrots heard these melodies many years ago and do not forget them.... I listened to the parrots and took down the melodies.”⁵³ When asked to identify the sources on other occasions he would simply say, “I am folklore. The melodies I compose are as truly folklore as the ones I collect.”⁵⁴ He was encouraged by his friends to apply to the National Institute of Music, but failed the entrance exams on counterpoint and harmony. Once he realized his deficiencies, he decided to study the subjects on his own, and by the end of 1914, he had composed between 80 and 100 musical works, including two one-act operas and over twenty works for piano.

In 1915 Villa-Lobos, his wife, and a well-known flute player in the area decided to give their first professional concert near Rio de Janeiro, which would include both classics and new works of their own. This was the start of an international career that would take Villa-Lobos to Europe, the United States, and throughout Latin America. Eventually he was appointed head of music education for the Brazilian Ministry of Education, a surprising position for someone without a music degree. While leaving for his first trip to Europe, he told reporters “I do not go to France to study. I go to show them what I have done.”⁵⁵ In Paris during his first trip to Europe, he built his reputation as the *sauvage Brezilien* (exotic or wild Brazilian), a reputation many of

⁵³ David P. Appleby, *Heitor Villa-Lobos: A life*. (The Scarecrow Press, Inc. 2002): 25.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 62.

his countrymen resented.⁵⁶ As the head of music education for all of Brazil, he used the system of movable-do solfege and hand signals, and he revolutionized music education in Brazil by bringing choral singing to the masses and impoverished areas. His ministry appointment occurred in 1931, which was the first time in his life he received a dependable salary.⁵⁷

His compositions are criticized at times for lacking erudition, while at the same time praised for creativity. He was not fond of following classical forms in his larger scale works, and some of his harshest critics pointed out that much of his music was all fire and exoticism without underlying, disciplined content. In 1951 he replied to these criticisms. “Never in my life did I seek culture, erudition, knowledge or even wisdom in books... because my book is Brazil... Music that is as free as nature, as free as the land of Brazil.”⁵⁸

The lack of rigorous formal training, together with his background in folk and street music, allowed for greater flexibility in musical form and content. It also led him to utilize unique combinations of instruments, harmonies, and folk melodies in imitation of local, folkloric sounds.

Two of Villa-Lobos’ Piano Works

In his smaller scale works, Villa-Lobos followed classical forms, such as ternary form. A typical ternary form has a contrasting middle section that separates two similar sections. It is typically diagrammed as **ABA**. His *As Tres Marias*, written late in his career and published the year of his death, is a useful example. This is a charming set of three small movements based on the three stars in Orion’s belt: Alnitah, Alnilam, and Mintika. These three stars have different names around the world. In Puerto Rico they are known as the “Three Kings” from the Old

⁵⁶ Ibid, 138.

⁵⁷ David P. Appleby, *Heitor Villa-Lobos: A life*. (The Scarecrow Press, Inc. 2002): 101.

⁵⁸ Ibid, 178-179.

Testament story from where they descend every year on January 6th (Epiphany) to leave presents for little children under their beds. In many parts of the world they are known as the “Three Marys” of the New Testament. In Brazil, these “Three Maries” have become part of children’s folklore. As Villa-Lobos put it:

Once there were three little girls, “The Three Maries of Earth,” who romped and played in the countryside of Brazil. They were always gay and the best of friends. Smilingly they traveled all the paths of life together. That this trinity might serve as a perpetual symbol of the union of humanity, Destiny has preserved them as eternal stars in the heavens to illuminate the path for the other children of Earth.⁵⁹

This small set of three pieces takes less than five minutes to perform. They are set entirely in the upper register of the piano, representing both the simplicity of childhood and the stars that the three young girls became. The melodies are simple with antecedent and consequent phrases, although the modern harmonies (particularly in the third piece) give them an other-worldly, modern appeal.

The first piece is straightforward; it is a ternary form, as are all three. The rapid 16th note patterns would feel more like a finger endurance exercise to the pianist if it were not for the uneven melodies that trade between the hands in the B section (Example 16).

The image displays two systems of musical notation for a piano piece. Each system consists of a grand staff with a treble clef on the upper staff and a bass clef on the lower staff. The first system begins with a treble staff containing a series of sixteenth-note patterns. The bass staff contains a melody with notes G4, A4, B4, C5, and D5, with fingerings 5 and 3 indicated below. A dynamic marking of *p* (piano) is placed above the second measure. The second system continues the piece, with a treble staff showing more sixteenth-note patterns and a bass staff with notes G4, A4, B4, C5, and D5, with fingerings 5, 1, 2, 1, 2, 1 indicated below. A dynamic marking of *f* (forte) is placed above the first measure of the second system. The piece concludes with a final measure in the bass staff.

Example 16. Heitor Villa-Lobos, *As Tres Marias: Alnitah*, m. 29-38

⁵⁹ Heitor Villa-Lobos, *The Three Maries: Alnitah, Alnilam, Mintika*, Master’s of Our Day Educational Series. Carl Fischer, New York. 1941.

While the chromatic notes in the melodies add color, the movement is clearly in C major. The piece calls for precise *staccato* execution and a quick, light touch with clear *sforzandi*. The irregular phrasing adds to the rhythmic interest. The first A section is nearly 14 measures long, followed by a nine-measure melody in the right hand, a five-measure melody in the left hand played twice, and ending with the nine-measure melody (previously heard) in the right hand.

The second movement is a charming lullaby. The note G becomes a pedal point for the entire piece. In fact, the only measure in the entire piece where a G is not heard is measure 23 under ‘A’ in the example below. The B section contrasts with the tender, undulating lullaby of the first and last sections by its agitated ornaments and disjunct melody. This right hand melody corresponds with the harmonic changes suggested by the grace notes. For example, the dominant chord is outlined in the 23rd measure under “A” right before we return to a G major sonority in both ending measures. Note how the diatonic, accompanimental thirds in the left hand become chromatic major thirds for added color four measures before the end (Example 17).



Example 17. H. Villa-Lobos, *As Tres Marias: Anilam*, m. 33-35

The third movement is the most challenging to play. It has a 16th-note accompaniment in the right hand that can be quite tricky to memorize for several reasons. Apart from the speed of execution, the overall rising and falling pattern follows the contour of the melody for most of the piece, but sometimes does not. Also, the pattern switches between using B naturals and B

sharps. This right-hand line runs through the entire movement except for the last three measures. It is a pattern of two black keys followed by two white (Example 18).



Example 18. H. Villa-Lobos, *As Tres Marias: Mintika*, m. 1-4

The movement is in g sharp minor and the form is ABA (ternary) with coda. The melody lines are simple, an antecedent followed by a consequent phrase played twice. The melodies are reminiscent of folk music in that they are simple and limited in range. The combination of a totally diatonic melody in the left hand with the insistent chromatic alterations in the right creates a harmonic combination that is fresh but also somewhat eerie, especially the trance-like accompaniment with so many quickly-played dissonances. The last three measures are fitting (Example 19). The third measure from the end begins in a D major chord, a tritone away from the tonic of g sharp minor. This chord alternates once with the dominant V, which is repeated again one beat before the tonic chord, but with a flat fifth in the sonority; just enough dissonance to recall the eerie dissonances before the last tonic chord.



Example 19. H. Villa-Lobos, *As Tres Marias: Mintika*, m. 51-53

It is generally thought that Villa-Lobos's most important piano pieces are his *Suite Infantil*, nos. 1 and 2 (1912, 1913), *A Prole do Bebe*, nos. 1 and 2 (1918, 1921), *Rudepoema* (1921-26) dedicated to Arthur Rubinstein, and his *Saudages das Selvas Brasileiras* (1927).⁶⁰

Arthur Rubinstein gave the first performance of his *A Prole do Bebe no. 1* in 1922, although the composition itself was finished in 1918. This his first work to be favorably received by local critics.⁶¹ As with his previous *As Tres Marias*, *A prole do Bebe no. 1* features a theme of childhood as its inspiration. The title, "The baby's family" or "the baby's descendants" refers to the doll collection of a little child. There are eight pieces in the set, each referring to an aspect or action of the doll. The set is unified by programmatic and rhythmic material, but in my opinion the most accessible unifying factor in the set is the use of melodic variation.

The first piece is titled *Branquinha*, ("Little White Girl"). It may also be translated "Porcelain Doll." The piece is through-composed with brief introduction that ends with *glissandi* before the main melody (Example 20). This simple melody will recur throughout the entire work, sometimes in its entirety, sometimes only rhythmically. Added tone chords are used for the entire piece, including whole-tone sonorities that accompany pentatonic melody. The melody is enhanced towards the end of the piece with ornamentation reminiscent of oriental chimes or gongs.

Moreninha is translated as "The Paper Doll" but also means "Little Brown-Skinned girl." An ostinato of tremolando thirds accompany the melody throughout the piece (example 21). This melody is a variant of the main melody of the first piece, this time first heard in the right hand, changed in the left hand, and then heard once again in fourths in the right. The rhythmic

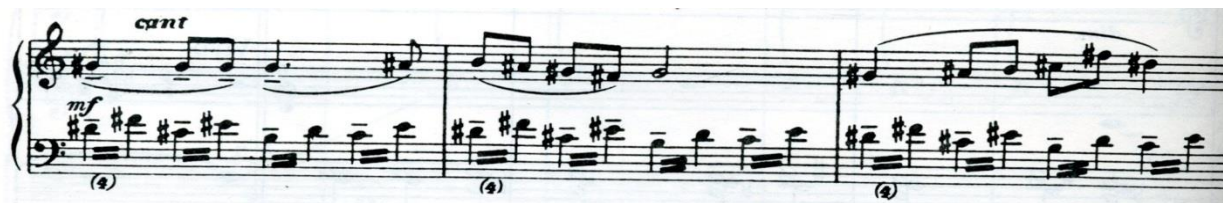
⁶⁰ "Villa-Lobos, Heitor." *The Oxford Dictionary of Music*, 2nd ed. rev.. *Oxford Music Online*. Oxford University Press, accessed March 10, 2013.

⁶¹ Lisa M. Peppercorn, *Villa-Lobos: The Music; An analysis of his style*, (Translated by Stefan de Hann. Kahn & Averill, London. 1991): 6-7.

difficulties in this piece are worth noting, as sextuplets are heard against triplets and, before the coda, against groups of sixteenth notes.



Example 20. Heitor Villa-Lobos, *A Prole do Bebe: Branquinha*, m. 16-21



Example 21. H. Villa-Lobos, *A Prole do Bebe: Moreninha*, m. 3-5

The third piece is titled *Caboblinha*, or “The Clay Doll,” which could also be translated at “Little Mestizo Girl.” The main concern in playing this piece is its use of the habanera rhythm. Villa-Lobos accomplishes this by dividing the eight sixteenth notes of a 2/4 measure into two groups of three and one group of two. From the opening measure, there is not a moment in this piece where that rhythm is not heard. The melody has to be modified almost to the point of being unrecognizable as the theme, although the contour is still present. The change in melody creates a quite sophisticated sound after the initial child-like melodies, almost reminiscent of a singer with a bossa nova band in a nightclub (Example 22).

Mulatinha, or “Little Mulatto Girl,” is the fourth piece in the set, sometimes translated as “The Rubber Doll.” Villa-Lobos returns to the Eastern colors of the first piece, but this time with a much simpler variation of the melody that begins in the left hand (Example 23).

The image shows a musical score for a vocal piece. The top staff is the vocal line, starting with the tempo marking 'a tempo'. The bottom staff is the guitar accompaniment, with a fingering chart on the left side showing the first five fingers. The performance instruction 'ben cantando' is written below the guitar staff. The score is divided into two systems of staves.

Example 22. H. Villa-Lobos, *A Prole do Bebe: Caboblinha*, m. 8-10

The image shows a musical score for a piano piece. The top staff is the right hand, and the bottom staff is the left hand. The tempo marking is 'mf' and the performance instruction is 'cantabile'. The score consists of two systems of staves.

Example 23. H. Villa-Lobos, *A Prole do Bebe: Mulatinha*, m. 1-3

After two statements of the melodic material, a *presto* section utilizes the end of the phrase as a motive to be developed. The piece ends in an unresolved and perhaps unsatisfying manner, with ambiguous tonality and rhythms. The last three measures seem like a transition, with neither the melody nor motivic material present to give the piece closure.

Negrinha, just like in *Caboclinha* before, is more rhythmic in effect than melodic. Translated as “The Wooden Doll” or “The Black Doll,” it is a fast, technically impressive piece that uses only five pentatonic, whole tone, and chromatic melodic fragments. The rest of the musical material consists of ostinato, sixteenth-note patterns that use a descending, motivic line (Example 24). The pattern is enhanced by octaves near the end of this quite exciting piece.



Example 24. H. Villa-Lobos, *A Prole do Bebe: Negrinha*, m. 59-62

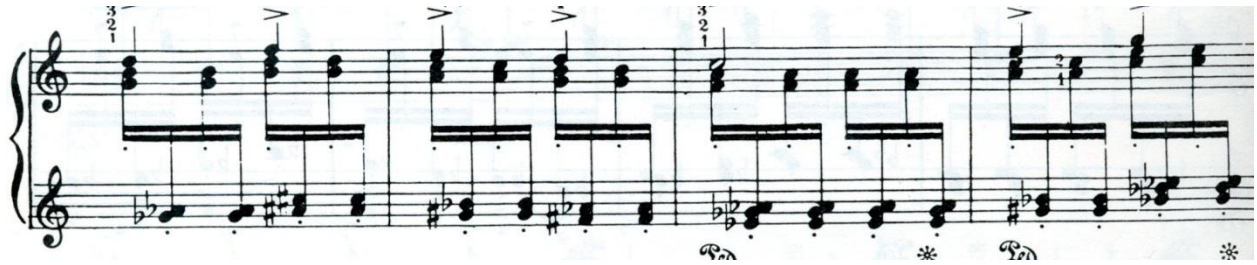
The sixth piece is titled *A Pobresinha*. Literally, meaning “Poor Little Girl” but also translated as “The Rag Doll.” It is the shortest of the pieces and employs an ostinato for the entirety of the piece: a rising line followed by a descending line reminiscent of the main melody. The chords in this two-measure cell are comprised of augmented seconds (minor thirds) and major seconds, creating a melancholy mood (Example 25). The melody takes only its opening three notes from the main melody of the set.



Example 25. H. Villa-Lobos, *A Prole do Bebe: A Pobresinha*, m. 5-8

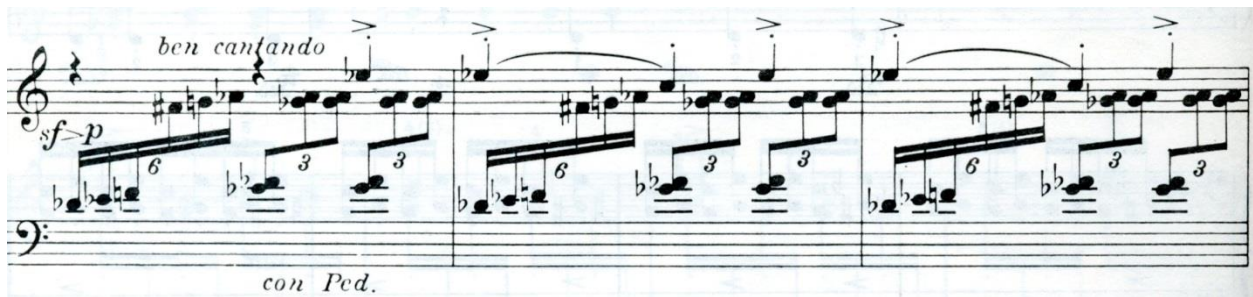
O Polichinelo is translated as “Punch.” Just like the previous two pieces that exhibit fast ostinato patterns (*Moreninha* and *Negrinha*), this one is breathtaking in its speed. The repeated notes go by so fast that they form a belt of sound, a unified block that forms a background for motives to break through (Example 26).

The most clearly heard motive that emerges through this barrage of sound is a three-note pattern that could be seen once again as a motive derived from the opening “long, short/short, long” pattern of the main melody.



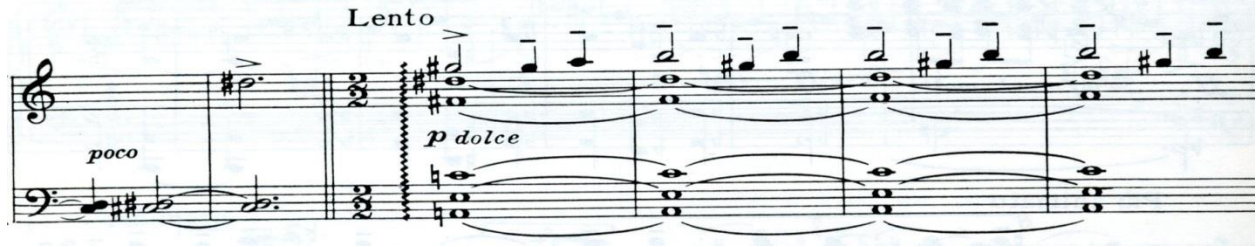
Example 26. H. Villa-Lobos, *A Prole do Bebe: O Polichinelo*, m. 34-37

Bruxa means “witch,” referring to the “Witch Doll.” It has a new, full melody, with antecedent and consequent phrases. This new melody begins with “teasing thirds,” an interval that many children around the world use to tease each other (Example 27).



Example 27. H. Villa-Lobos, *A Prole do Bebe: Bruxa*, m. 4-6

Whole tone sonorities are present throughout the piece creating an eerie, menacing sound. Fast arpeggios lead to a section of broken chords followed by rests, creating uncertainty in the rhythm and what might follow. What follows is an intense melody in octaves accompanied by those “teasing thirds,” a kind of mocking gesture that seems quite unlike the intensity of the melody. Right before the coda, once again the opening melodic line of the main melody is heard before it turns into the “teasing” minor thirds of the witch before the piece ends with two *staccato* notes low in the bass (Example 28).



Example 28. H. Villa-Lobos, *A Prole do Bebe: Bruxa*, m. 93-98

In my opinion, as previously alluded to, *Mulatinha* is not as convincing as the rest of the pieces in this work. *A Prole do Bebe* is still a virtuosic work worth studying, however. It is another example of how folk music can be used, changed, and expanded upon for use on the concert stage.

Towards the end of his life when speaking about high art music, Villa-Lobos said, “Art is not of the people...The artist, thus, is forced to become an intellectual. This does not mean that I despise the masses, because it is from the masses that I receive the inspiration for my creations. I greatly appreciate jazz. If I have a choice between listening to a ‘jam session’ or a Beethoven symphony, I will choose the ‘jam session’ every time.”⁶²

⁶² David P. Appleby, *Heitor Villa-Lobos: A life*, (The Scarecrow Press, Inc. 2002): 170.

CHAPTER 6: SAMUEL BARBER

(b. West Chester, Penn. 1910; d. NY, 1981)

By the age of seven, Samuel Barber already showed talent for composition, and at age 14 he began piano studies at the Curtis Institute of Music. In 1934 at 24 years of age, he studied conducting and singing in Vienna and in 1935 won a contract for a series of songs offered on a weekly basis to be performed on the National Broadcasting Company. After Toscanini and the NBC Orchestra performed Barber's *Essay no. 1* and his now famous *Adagio for Strings*, nearly all his works were composed on commission, likely as a result of his growing fame. He taught at the Curtis Institute until 1942, but did not accept any positions after that, in order to concentrate fully on composition. His home was a gathering place for artists and intellectuals, and from 1966 on he dedicated much of his time to travelling between Italy and New York. He suffered from depression, alcoholism, and creative blocks, but in spite of these difficulties, Barber's music has become a staple in concert halls and he is one of the most well-known American composers of the 20th century.⁶³

A Piano Work by Barber

One of Barber's rare ventures into explicit quoting or imitating of folk music is in his *Excursions, op. 20*, of 1948. It was played in its entirety that year by the pianist Jeanne Behrend at New York's Town Hall. Three years earlier, all but the third movement had been completed when Vladimir Horowitz debuted three movements of the piece to mixed reviews, some critics finding the pieces "a bit obvious," referring to the folk music imitation and inspiration.⁶⁴ Each

⁶³ Barbara B. Heyman. "Barber, Samuel." *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*. Oxford University Press, accessed March 10, 2013.

⁶⁴ Barbara B. Hayman, *Samuel Barber: The Composer and His Music*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992): 233.

movement of the piece draws upon a different style of American folk music. The first movement is influenced by boogie-woogie, a style that emerged before the depression, peaked during the late 1930s, and become a standard component of the blues repertoire. The defining characteristic of boogie-woogie is a repetitive, left-hand pattern over which a percussive, chordal improvisation is played. While the popularity of this style was brief, it was widespread, and elements were assimilated into swing, rock and roll, and blues. In the *Excursions*, Barber departs from standard boogie-woogie bass lines but keeps the repetitive nature of the accompaniment. This clever piece of program music depicts a train ride as the repetitive sounds of the wheels turning are punctuated by the train's whistle and bell.

The entire first movement follows the harmonic outline of the blues, previously diagrammed in chapter 2. The reader will recall that there are four measures of tonic, two measures of the subdominant, followed by two of the tonic. This is followed by two measures of the dominant, and ends in two measures of the tonic.

I	I	I	I
IV	IV	I	I
V	V	I	I

The first 36 bars of the first movement vacillate between C major and minor, as the raised third in C minor is used for emphasis throughout. The flat third is a major part of the musical material of the main theme, and a flat fifth highlights the transition beginning in measure 29 toward the IV chord in measure 38 (Example 29).



Example 29. Samuel Barber, *Excursions Op. 20*, mvt. I, m. 29-32

The section in F major lasts for 15 measures, vacillating between major and minor, and once again the flat fifth scale degree serves as the pivot to a new key. After the familiar “train whistle” octave calls, the piece returns to C and the main musical material, but this only lasts nine measures after which the key of G major is established. This is the most harmonically complex section with bitonal harmonic meanderings in f minor against the G major ostinato. Of course, this improvisational right hand is expected in a boogie-woogie. The dissonance is understood to be part of the whistles of the train, and five measures of trilling in the right hand lead us back to the C major section where the train slowly fades from view.

The second movement is marked “In Slow Blues tempo” and it is the most improvisatory and free in spirit of the four. Barber cycles through a 12-bar blues four times during this movement, each complying with the expectations of a 12-bar blues and only varying it slightly. While at first glance it seems like it could be in C due to the key signature and the ending interval of an open fifth in C, soon it is evident that it is in G. It is apparent that the tonal freedom from the open key signature allows for altered, blues chords, and for the dominant 7th in G to be the default tonic. The descending-thirds motive unifies the entire movement (Example 30). Each twelve-bar repetition starts with it or a variation.

In slow blues tempo ♩ = 60

p

mp espr.

Example 30. S. Barber, *Excursions Op. 20*, mvt. II, m. 1-3

The accompanying motive marked *senza ped.* in the third system also serves to unify the piece (Example 31). This motive contains the lowered third scale degree (a blue note) enharmonically spelled as an A sharp. As expected, the first four measures are in G, the following two in C (the subdominant), followed by four in G.



Example 31. S. Barber, *Excursions Op. 20*, mvt. II, m. 7-9

Barber modifies blues form in two ways. Instead of staying in the dominant for two measures, this first run-through ends with a V- IV- I, which is a much weaker cadence in the classical sense, but one that is often found in the blues. He does this on the first and third twelve-bar phrases, but not on the second and fourth, giving them stronger cadences. Also, the first phrase has a repeated cadential measure, expanding it to thirteen measures instead of twelve. He does the same for the last phrase (Example 32), giving unity to the entire piece. Interestingly, the movement ends in a perfect fifth of C and G, which in effect emphasizes the subdominant.



Example 32. S. Barber, *Excursions Op. 20*, mvt. II, m. 49-51

The third movement is a theme and variations and the most challenging for pianists. It is in the key of G flat major and quotes the ballad “Streets of Laredo” verbatim during the consequent phrase of the main theme. The entire theme takes place in the first eight measures, with the first variation starting in the ninth. The whole movement is set against a harmonic backdrop of I, vi, ii, V, creating, once again, an improvisatory atmosphere for the movement. There are seven variations to these first eight measures, and the piece ends with eight measures of the antecedent phrase that began the piece.

The rhythmic complexity of this movement creates one of the main difficulties for pianists in the entire work. The theme is set in a seven-against-eight rhythm where the only place the notes line up is on the down beat (Example 33). While hands-alone practice can certainly help, there are passages that demand a total abandon by the pianist to mechanical memory of the hands, a proposition that can be quite unnerving during performance, and a type of memory not typically employed throughout in pieces of relatively slow tempo.

Allegretto ♩ = 60

p legato

con pedale

Example 33. S. Barber, *Excursions Op. 20*, mvt. III, m. 1-4

This creates a feeling of rhythmic instability and floating that adds to the nostalgic character of the piece. In addition, with the exception of the G flat, the roots of the chords are not reached on the strong beats, adding to the overall free character of the piece. The first variation begins with the antecedent phrase intact, but the consequent phrase disguises the

melody in blocked chords (the melody being the highest note of the cluster) against quintuplets in the left hand. The second variation is similar, but an octave higher and with more complex rhythms in the blocked chord playing of the right hand. The third variation is the first that does not feature the antecedent phrase. It begins with improvisatory sounding triplets and rhythms in the right hand against groups of five in the left, repeated by the same consequent phrase an octave higher and in even more complex rhythmic arrangements against the quintuplets. The variation ends with a pentatonic-like scale from groupings of the black keys of the keyboard ascending to the highest B flat (Example 34).



Example 34. S. Barber, *Excursions Op. 20*, mvt. III, m. 31-32

Variation 4 brings back the antecedent phrase and moves the melody for the first time to the left hand in octaves and sixths and simple rhythms for the consequent phrase. The fifth variation keeps the melody in the left hand but played within a tricky rhythmic, 16th-note pattern in the left hand and also against a tricky accompanimental, 16th-note figure on the right. The result is the effect of three simultaneous lines, rather than the two actually present. Variation 6 is the shortest and most abstract, only taking four measures. Note clusters rush through the first two measures, and the consequent phrase is the only recognizable melodic movement. The last variation is done in homorhythmic, block chords set seven to the measure. The seven-against-eight is brought back in the penultimate measure. After an eight bar transition in which the

“Streets of Laredo” melody appears, the movement closes with a slight variation of the antecedent phrase in *pianissimo*.

The fourth and final movement is a “fiddling” barn dance in arch form. In imitation of the simple harmonic vocabulary used by improvising musicians, the harmony is largely limited to F major and B-flat major chords sometimes embellished with added tones and clusters. Interestingly, both hands are notated in treble clef through the entirety of the movement, reminiscent of the ranges of a violin and perhaps a harmonica. The two principal motives appear in the first four measures (Example 35). The first motive is a series of seven chords alternating between F and B flat major. The second motive begins in the third measure with a 16th-note pattern outlining the F major triad.

Allegro molto ♩ = 138

Example 35. S. Barber, *Excursions Op. 20*, mvt. IV, m. 1-3

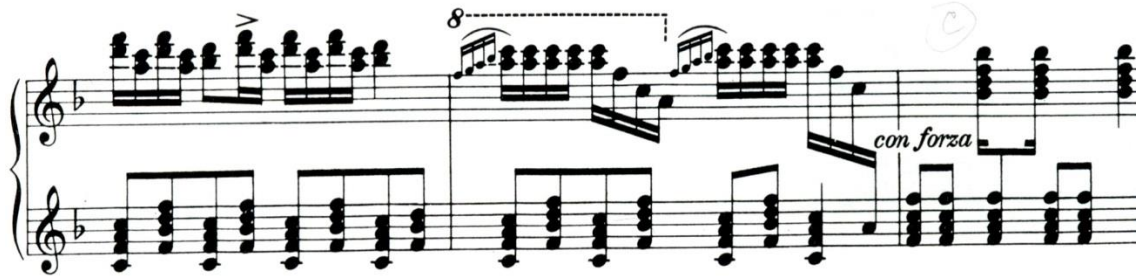
After four measures of transition, the B section begins in measure 14 with a motivic melody in the left hand (Example 36).

p stacc.

mf marc.

Example 36. S. Barber, *Excursions Op. 20*, mvt. IV, m. 14-16

Variations on this motive continue until measure 28 where the brief middle, or C section, begins. This is the densest part of the piece. Every accompanying chord is a full, four-note chord, and the melody is in fortissimo (Example 37).



Example 37. S. Barber, *Excursions Op. 20, mvt. IV*, m. 32-34

There is a five-measure transition where the note E flat is prominently heard along with rhythmically exciting clusters. This could perhaps be seen as a “blue” note in F (Example 38).



Example 38. S. Barber, *Excursions Op. 20, mvt. IV*, m. 38-39

The B section returns in a truncated manner before an eight-measure transition back to A. The A section returns almost verbatim. The last five measures are in F major and it ends in *pianissimo, leggerissimo* arpeggiated dominant seventh F major chord.

Barber uses three distinct American folk idioms as the inspiration for the four movements of his *Excursions*. The first two movements are blues derivatives, the third directly quotes a cowboy ballad, and the last movement is a barn dance. Every single movement uses a different folk music as the main musical material. It is a delightful work well worth studying.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

As the previously discussed works by Gottschalk, Morel Campos, and Villa-Lobos, Barber's *Excursions* provides an excellent example of folk-inspired art music that provides fresh and inspiring additions to the pianist's repertoire. Such pieces are often appealing and can contribute to greater appreciation for composers, musical styles, and cultural traditions with which audiences may not have been previously familiar. The rich, extra-musical subject matter is just another way in which an audience can connect and relate with the music being performed.

Folk-inspired music can also enrich student performers, who can feel both the accomplishment of learning new pieces and the satisfaction of learning about a culture, whether their own or a different one. In a very real way, the student is relating to political, social, and historical aspects of the culture represented by the piece. Whether students are conscientious people who will investigate the cultural aspects of the piece in depth, or whether they will only be aware of them through the passing remarks of the instructor, in each case a growing awareness, if even slight, must follow given the hours of study with the musical material. Performers often feel that a piece becomes "part" of one's self in the process of learning and memorizing

Like an actor, a performer must become, if even for a moment, part of what a piece communicates. With all of the other mental and physical benefits of music study, this aspect of musical performance should certainly not be undervalued. Performers not only retell a composer's musical composition; they must become part of it. This opportunity—to relate and actively identify with cultures that might otherwise be seen as totally separate—is one that can make music study all the more exciting, relevant, and beneficial.

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