



Jorge Federico Osorio

CONCIERTOS ROMÁNTICOS

Manuel M Ponce
Ricardo Castro

Orquesta Sinfónica de Minería
Carlos Miguel Prieto

CEDILLE



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RICARDO CASTRO (1864–1907)
Piano Concerto in A minor, Op. 22 (23:54)

- 1** I. Allegro moderato (7:58)
- 2** II. Andante (8:33)
- 3** III. Polonaise: Allegro (7:21)
- 4** Berceuse Op. 36, No. 1 (3:42)
- 5** Canto de amor (6:27)
- 6** Plainte Op. 38, No. 2 (3:06)

MANUEL MARÍA PONCE (1882–1948)
Piano Concerto No. 1 "Romántico" (22:48)

- 7** Allegro Appassionato — (6:45)
- 8** Andantino amoroso — (11:14)
- 9** Finale: Allegro (4:47)
- 10** Arrulladora mexicana (3:35)
- 11** Gavota (4:11)
- 12** Romanza de amor (3:31)
- 13** Intermezzo No. 1 (2:36)

TT: (74:31)

THE TWILIGHT OF MEXICAN ROMANTICISM

by José-María Álvarez

This recording of the piano concertos by Ricardo Castro and Manuel M. Ponce, along with some of their solo piano pieces, shows us the highest point of the romantic musical language in vogue in Mexico toward the end of the 19th century, which, over time, became the musical Nationalist movement brought on by the Mexican Revolution.

In his book, *Panorama de la música Mexicana*, musicologist Otto-Mayer Serra stated the following, referring to the Mexican piano school of the 19th century:

The oppression and exploitation suffered by the Mexican people since time immemorial had such a profound impact on their musical culture that during the 19th century the substances of their own culture were found distilled and rarefied to such a degree that they barely transcended into a perceptible reality. The musical works written during this historical period are of purely European inspiration and worked, in slavish imitation, on the Italian molds, and later, French and German. Apart from a short flowering of Italian operas, due to Mexican authors, its main field was piano

production. Although it did not lead to the creation of a piano style of its own, the piano school was nonetheless of great importance for future historical evolution, since it represented the only element of musical tradition in the 19th century, which leads, in a straight line, from Felipe Larios, Tomás León, Melesio Morales and Julio Ituarte, to Ricardo Castro, with a very important ramification in Felipe Villanueva and Ernesto Elorduy, the cultivators of the “dance” for piano; related to the latter, both spiritually and stylistically, is the first great figure of modern musical nationalism, a pianist like the others: Manuel M. Ponce.

Born in the Municipality of Nazas, in the Mexican State of Durango, on February 7, 1864, Ricardo Rafael de la Santísima Trinidad Castro Herrera (as he was baptized) began his piano studies at the age of six in private lessons with Pedro H. Cenicerros. Ricardo's fascinating advances were evident soon enough in miniature salon pieces that he composed at that age, and which enjoyed enormous acceptance in the most prominent circles of the Durango community.



Ricardo Castro

In 1877, Vicente Castro (Ricardo's father) was appointed Federal Deputy in the Union Congress in Mexico City. His son took advantage of the change of residence to enroll in the National Conservatory, where he studied piano with Juan Pablo Salvatierra and composition with Melesio Morales, and with the greatest Mexican pianist of that time: Julio Ituarte. His impeccable technique and great imagination as a composer brought Castro the invitation to participate as a Mexican representative in the Universal Exhibition in New Orleans in 1885; his undeniable success led him to play solo concerts in Philadelphia, New York, Washington, and other cities in the United States.

Upon his triumphant return to Mexico, he devoted fully to composition and produced innumerable salon pieces that were popular within Mexican high society in the twilight of the 19th century. On the first centenary of the birth of Simón Bolívar, various pieces by Castro were sent to Venezuela to contribute to the festivities. Among them were his Mazurka *Enriqueta*, a capriccio for piano called *Aires Nacionales Mexicanos*, and the Fantasies on themes from the operas *Norma* (Bellini) and *Rigoletto* (Verdi). Castro achieved his greatest success in 1891 by composing the work that has placed him in immortality: the *Caprice-Valse Op. 1*, dedicated to Madame Josefina Gallardo de Tornel.

Castro's growing aesthetic maturity can be understood in the words of Yolanda Moreno Rivas:

It was Ricardo Castro who, rising above the stylistic limitations imposed by a successful career as a composer of salon music, took the definitive step towards acquiring a technique of greater scope that would facilitate access to the major forms of romanticism such as the symphony, the concerto, opera and the string quartet.

In 1900, Castro was called to teach at the National Conservatory of Mexico.

His work was so respected that he was promoted to become director of the institution. This did not happen until 1907, however, and he held the position for only a few months due to his sudden death in November of that year.

His opera, *Atzimba* was premiered with great success at the Teatro Arceu in Mexico City in January 1900. A few months later he received an award from the newspaper *El Imparcial* with which he was able to afford his residence in Paris for a considerable period. This was also possible due to his popularity with Mexican President Porfirio Díaz's regime, which granted him a monthly income of 500 francs for his stay in Paris and per diems of 700 Mexican pesos (a real fortune in those days!), with the sole purpose of mastering his technique and to "promote good Mexican music."

Following his arrival in the French capital in January 1903, he became friends with Teresa Carreño and Eugène d'Albert, with whom he continued his piano development. He also made the acquaintance of Cécile Chaminade and Camille Saint-Saëns, who offered him support for his various Parisian recitals. From his first days in Paris, Castro devoted himself to promoting his works. This is how he met cellist Marix Loevensohn, who offered to premiere his *Cello Concerto*.

That professional relationship gained Castro access to Belgium's musical world, where he conquered *la crème de la crème* of society.

Castro's debut as a composer in that country occurred on December 28, 1904, in the Antwerp Zoological Garden's Concert Hall under the direction of Edward Keurvels. In that concert, devoted to Castro's music, were introduced his *Minuetto*, the *Romanza for violin*, the *Intermezzo*, the *March* and the final scene of the opera *Atzimba*, as well as his Cello Concerto and the world premiere of his *Piano Concerto* with Castro as soloist.

The *Piano Concerto*, probably written between 1885 and 1887, hailed by European critics as "intrepid and lucid . . . end[ing] in a delirious Polonaise," shares (with other Castro scores such as his *Cello Concerto*) a language nestled in the sound procedures of 19th-century romanticism, with lavish and spectacular orchestral lines, while its solo material finds antecedents in Franz Liszt. It is not idle to define this score as worthy of an aesthetic modernism that Castro cultivated thanks to his cosmopolitan ambitions and the transition he fostered from simple salon pieces to an elaborate language in which harmony and rhythm found new horizons. Thus, the greatness of this *Concerto* finds certain roots in

the music of Edvard Grieg, as well as in Frédéric Chopin and Xaver Scharwenka. Furthermore, its cyclical structure is connected to works such as César Franck's *Symphony* and *Sonata for violin and piano*, Saint-Saëns' *Third Symphony*, and Liszt's *Piano Sonata*.

After the premiere of Castro's *Piano Concerto*, *La Gazet van Antwerpen* commented that "the composer-performer charmed everyone with his dignity and his perfect conception of nuances. His *Polonaise* especially was fervently acclaimed and provided a well-deserved return to more applause."

This *Concerto* constitutes the first concertante piece for piano that any Mexican — or Latin American — composer had written up to that time. Castro's path was later followed by the *Concierto romántico* of Manuel María Ponce and the *Concerto* by José Rolón, among other works. Castro was also the first Mexican composer to write symphonies (in 1883 and 1887) and an orchestral tone poem (*Oithona*, in 1885).

Glory covered Castro upon his return to Mexico on October 8, 1906, disembarking like a true conqueror of the Old World, in addition to having ensured publishing for some of his works: the *Piano Concerto* was released by Hofmeister in Leipzig,

which was also in charge of editing the libretto for his opera *La légende de Rudel*, after which Castro produced two more operas: *Satán vencido* and *El beso de la Roussalka* (both missing).

In November of that year, Mexican President Porfirio Díaz and his wife Carmen Romero Rubio celebrated their silver wedding anniversary. To commemorate this important occasion, Castro was invited to play his *Piano Concerto* at the Teatro del Conservatorio. Journalist Enrique Olavarría y Ferrari chronicled the presentation, calling it a "great concerto":

This composition is one of the most unequivocal proofs — among the many that have already been given — of how hard he has worked and what admirable progress its author has made, and has highlighted the following qualities that Ricardo Castro brings, refined to the quintessence: exquisite temperament, formidable technique and ductile correct style, extremely elegant.

The score of Castro's *Piano Concerto* bears a dedication to composer Carl Reinecke.

To round off the audition of Castro's *Concerto*, Jorge Federico Osorio offers three short pieces for solo piano by this author. The *Berceuse Op. 36, No. 1*, written

in 1906 to be included in the Musical Album of the newspaper *El Mundo Ilustrado*, is a tender and evocative lullaby that contains the best of Castro's romantic thought. Written in 1896 and dedicated to Felipe Pedrell, *Canto de amor* was first heard as "Chant d'amour" at the opening of the concert hall owned by publishers Wagner & Levien in Mexico City. In 1902, the newspaper *El Imparcial* commented:

The Chant d'amour honors the composer for his courage and inspiration; recalls Wagner's erotic manner and Liszt's passionate outbursts; the "Canto de amor," a tender and vehement phrase, develops with great amplitude, grows in interest, does not wane for a moment, on the contrary, it stands out insistent, pleading or impetuous, with dramatic inflections against a richly harmonized background.

And *Plainte Op. 38, No. 2*, conceived as a sort of song without words in the last year of Castro's life is, as Rogelio Álvarez Meneses stated, "one of Castro's best-achieved miniatures, in which he shows off his refined compositional craft by creating an exquisite piece with great economy of means."

Manuel María Ponce (born December 8, 1882, in Fresnillo, Zacatecas) was a

unique personality in the field of musical culture in Mexico, developing many activities in favor of music promotion and artistic enrichment. Ponce combined his brilliant career as a composer with those of pianist, conductor, educator, musicologist, researcher on Mexican musical folklore (resulting in a considerable number of writings), and music critic, among other activities. Likewise, the title of initiator of the musical Nationalist movement fell to Ponce after the consummation of the Mexican Revolution.

Otto Mayer-Serra comments:

In 1912 — a few years after returning from his first trip to Europe — Manuel M. Ponce presented himself to the Mexican public with his memorable concert at the Teatro Arbeu, whose program was dedicated exclusively to his own compositions; among them was a whole series of piano pieces, based on popular melodies. This artistic event meant the inauguration of a new phase in Mexican music. His initiative meant, for Mexico, a decisive step toward the recovery of his own musical personality. Within the general evolution of music, Ponce thereby created a new ramification of the "folklorist" stream that had led, in various countries, to the formation of national schools.

In the same way that Ponce is recognized with all the aforementioned attributes, an important sector of the public has not been able to enjoy fully his concert music and, on occasions, he is remembered only for some of his songs that have been heard all over the globe (e.g., *Estrellita*, *A la orilla de un palmar*).

To understand Ponce's musical output, it is essential to understand that his work is divided into two creative periods, one romantic and the other modern, each divided into two. His romantic era spans from 1891 to 1904, before his first trip to Europe, and from 1905 to 1924, upon his return from his first European experience. The modern one started between 1925 and 1932, when — during his stay in Paris — he became familiar with impressionism, and continued from 1933 to 1948, upon his return from the French capital. This period has been called “the most nationalist” in his production and, according to music critic Adolfo Salazar:

...this is the last, decisive stage of Ponce's career. In it, the advances of modern art will unite, harmoniously and without stridency, with the sap of the earth. It is the moment of his fullness... Ponce's renovation was sincere, and he expressed himself as naturally in his second manner as in his first...

Ponce found enough strength and determination to turn around Mexican musical life thanks to his experiences abroad. A student of the National Conservatory of Mexico since 1901 and a disciple of Vicente Mañas and Eduardo Gabrielli, Ponce decided that the musical milieu of his country did not satisfy him at that moment to continue his artistic progress. Thus, he made his first trip to Europe around 1904, arriving first in Italy and later in Germany — countries where he was under the tutelage of Cesare Dall'Olio, Luigi Torchi, and Martin Krause, the latter a disciple of Franz Liszt and professor of the legendary Claudio Arrau.

Thus, upon his return to Mexico, Ponce created some of his most famous scores, such as his *Piano Concerto No. 1*, *Estampas nocturnas* for string orchestra, *Trío romántico* for violin, cello and piano (all written between 1911 and 1912), and *Balada Mexicana* (1916).

With regard to his *Piano Concerto No. 1*, Ponce played its premiere as soloist on July 7, 1912, at the Teatro Arbeau in Mexico City with an orchestra called “Beethoven” conducted by Julián Carrillo. The work is in a purely European language but, unlike Ricardo Castro's *Concerto*, Ponce's is closer to the German tradition than to French music, wisely decanted by Ponce's pen to show at various times the feelings of Mexico and its society at the

beginning of the 20th century. Structured in three sections (*Allegro appassionato*, *Andantino amoroso*, and *Allegro*), played without interruption, this Piano Concerto is imbued with the teachings he received from Krause as a direct antecedent of Liszt's idiomatics. At times, however, it is clearly perfumed by the spirit of Chopin, notably in the work's solemn beginning. While there are no nationalist overtones in this *Concerto*, the second movement seems to evoke a tender Mexican love song, especially in the dialogue between English horn and piano.

For obvious reasons, this *Concerto* has been known for a long time as "romantic" (*Concierto romántico* in Spanish), and in it superbly coexist themes of great brilliance for the soloist, lyricism, introspection, virtuosity, and great beauty. Pablo Castellanos, musicologist, pianist, and eminent scholar of Ponce, has commented:

In the piano literature of the entire American Continent and the Iberian Peninsula, from the period corresponding to romanticism, there is no more representative nationalist concerto (such as the Concerto for piano No. 1 of Ponce).

As a complement to the Ponce *Concerto*, Jorge Federico Osorio gives us four short solo piano pieces: first, *Arrulladora Mexicana* (1909), based on the popular

song *La rancherita*; next, one of Ponce's universally known pieces: his *Gavota*, from 1901, whose main theme seems to encapsulate the romantic nostalgia of Mexican society before the Revolution. We also hear *Romanza de amor* written for his wife Clema, which dates from 1914. Its unique appeal is (in the words of Paolo Mello) in its sensitive harmonic changes. The album concludes with *Intermezzo No. 1*, which belongs to Ponce's second creative period, although its exact date of composition is unknown. This is considered one of the "great little jewels" not only of Ponce's repertoire but of international pianism. Although brief, the *Intermezzo* is structured in sonata form, with an introduction, two subsequent themes, an exposition that leads to a cadenza, the reexposition, and the fantastic short final coda.

José-María Álvarez has served as program annotator for orchestras including the National Symphony of Mexico, Mexico City Philharmonic, Jalisco Philharmonic and, currently, the State of Mexico Symphony Orchestra.

EL CREPÚSCULAR ROMANTICISMO MEXICANO

por José-María Álvarez

Esta grabación de los *Conciertos para piano* de Ricardo Castro y Manuel M. Ponce, además de varias de sus piezas para piano solo, nos muestra el punto más alto del lenguaje musical romántico de moda en México hacia fines del siglo XIX y que con el tiempo se transformó en el movimiento Nacionalista musical como consecuencia de la Revolución mexicana.

El musicólogo Otto-Mayer Serra consignó lo siguiente en su libro *Panorama de la música mexicana* al referirse a la escuela pianística mexicana del siglo XIX:

La opresión y explotación que sufrió el pueblo mexicano desde tiempo inmemorial, repercutieron tan hondamente en su cultura musical, que durante el siglo XIX, las substancias de una cultura propia se hallaron destiladas y enrarecidas hasta tal grado, que apenas trascendieron a una realidad perceptible. Las obras musicales escritas durante este período histórico son de inspiración netamente europea y trabajadas, en una imitación esclava, sobre los moldes italianos, y posteriormente, franceses y alemanes. Aparte una corta floración de óperas italianas, debidas

a autores mexicanos, su campo principal fue la producción para piano. Aunque no se llegó a la creación de un estilo de piano de rasgos propios, la escuela pianística tuvo, no obstante, una gran importancia para la futura evolución histórica, puesto que significó el único elemento de tradición musical en el siglo XIX, que conduce, en línea recta, de Felipe Larios, Tomás León, Melesio Morales y Julio Ituarte, a Ricardo Castro, con una ramificación muy importante en Felipe Villanueva y Ernesto Elorduy, los cultivadores de la “danza” para piano; con estos últimos está relacionado, tanto espiritual como estilísticamente, la primera gran figura del moderno nacionalismo musical, pianista como los anteriores: Manuel M. Ponce.

Nacido en el Municipio de Nazas, Durango, el 7 de febrero de 1864, Ricardo Rafael de la Santísima Trinidad Castro Herrera (como fue bautizado) empezó a estudiar piano a la edad de seis años en clases privadas con Pedro H. Ceniceros. Muy pronto los avances fascinantes de Ricardo fueron evidentes en diminutas piezas de salón que compuso a esa edad

y que gozaron de enorme aceptación en los círculos más destacados de la sociedad duranguense.

En 1877 Vicente Castro (el padre de Ricardo) fue designado diputado federal en el Congreso de la Unión en la ciudad de México, por lo que su hijo aprovechó para inscribirse en el Conservatorio Nacional donde estudió piano con Juan Pablo Salvatierra y composición con Melesio Morales, además de perfeccionarse con el máximo pianista mexicano de esos tiempos: Julio Ituarte. Su impecable técnica y gran imaginación como compositor le trajo a Castro la invitación para participar como representante mexicano en la Exposición Universal de Nueva Orleans en 1885; ese fue el trampolín que lo llevó a ofrecer conciertos en Filadelfia, Nueva York, Washington y otras ciudades de la Unión Americana.

A su regreso triunfal a México después de esa gira, se dedicó de lleno a la composición y produjo innumerables piezas de salón que estaban de moda en la sociedad mexicana en el ocaso del siglo XIX. Con motivo del primer centenario del nacimiento de Simón Bolívar fueron enviadas diversas piezas de Castro a Venezuela para contribuir a los festejos. Entre ellas se encontraban su *Mazurka Enriqueta*, un capricho

para piano llamado *Aires Nacionales Mexicanos* y las Fantasías sobre temas de las óperas *Norma* de Bellini y *Rigoletto* de Verdi. Castro logró el más grande de los éxitos al componer, en 1891, *el Vals capricho Op. 1*, dedicado a Josefina Gallardo de Tornel, la obra que lo ha colocado en la inmortalidad.

La creciente madurez estética de Castro puede ser entendida en palabras de Yolanda Moreno Rivas:

Fue Ricardo Castro quien, elevándose por encima de las limitaciones estilísticas impuestas por una exitosa carrera como compositor de música de salón, dio el paso definitivo hacia la adquisición de una técnica de mayor envergadura que le facilitaría el acceso a las formas mayores del romanticismo como la sinfonía, el concierto, la ópera y el cuarteto de cuerdas.

En 1900 fue llamado a impartir cátedra en el Conservatorio de México y su trabajo era tan respetado que se le promovió para convertirse en director de la institución, pero no ocurrió sino hasta 1907 y sólo desempeñó el cargo pocos meses debido a su inesperada muerte en noviembre de ese año.

Su ópera *Atzimba* fue estrenada con gran éxito en el Teatro Arbeau de la ciudad de México en enero de 1900 y algunos meses

después recibió un premio del periódico *El Imparcial* con el que pudo sufragar su residencia en París durante un período considerable. Eso también fue posible gracias a su popularidad con el régimen del presidente de México Porfirio Díaz, que le otorgó una renta mensual de 500 francos para su estancia en París y viáticos por 700 pesos, con el único propósito de que perfeccionara su técnica y difundiera “la buena música mexicana.”

Desde su llegada a la capital francesa en enero de 1903 hizo amistad con Teresa Carreño y con Eugène d'Albert, con quienes continuó su perfeccionamiento pianístico. También se relacionó con Cécile Chaminade y con Camille Saint-Saëns, quien le ofreció apoyo para sus diversos recitales parisinos. Desde sus primeros días en París Castro se dedicó a promover sus obras; así fue como conoció al violoncellista Marix Loevensohn quien se ofreció a estrenar su *Concierto para violoncello* y gracias a esa relación profesional y afectiva Castro pudo acceder al mundo musical de Bélgica donde conquistó a la *crème de la crème* de la sociedad.

El debut como compositor de Castro en aquel país ocurrió el 28 de diciembre de 1904 en la Sala del Jardín Zoológico de Amberes bajo la dirección de Edward

Keurvels. En ese concierto pudieron escucharse, entre otras obras del propio Castro, el *Minuetto*, la *Romanza* para violín, el *Intermezzo*, la *Marcha* y la Escena final de la ópera *Atzimba*, así como su Concierto para violoncello y el estreno mundial de su *Concierto para piano* con el propio autor en la parte solista.

El *Concierto para piano*, probablemente escrito entre 1885 y 1887, definido por la crítica europea como “intrépido y lúcido, que se resuelve en una delirante Polonesa” comparte con otras partituras de Castro (como es el caso de su *Concierto para violoncello*) un lenguaje enclavado en los procedimientos sonoros del romanticismo del siglo XIX, con trazos orquestales fastuosos y espectaculares, y su materia sonora solista encuentra antecedentes en Franz Liszt. No es ocioso definir a esta partitura como digna de un modernismo estético que Castro dejó acuñado gracias a sus ambiciones cosmopolitas y la transición que propició de las sencillas piezas de salón hasta un lenguaje elaborado en el que armonía y ritmo encuentran nuevos horizontes. Así pues, lo grandioso de este *Concierto* encuentra ciertas raíces en la música de Edvard Grieg, pero también en Frédéric Chopin y en Xaver Scharwenka. Y más

aún: su estructura cíclica está apegada a obras como la *Sinfonía* y la *Sonata para violín y piano* de César Franck, la *Tercera sinfonía* de Saint-Saëns o la *Sonata para piano* de Liszt.

Posterior al estreno del *Concierto de piano*, *La Gazet van Antwerpen* comentó que “el compositor-intérprete encantó a todos con su dignidad y su perfecta concepción de matices. Especialmente su *Polonaise* fue aclamada fervorosamente y le proporcionó un merecido retorno a recibir más aplausos.”

Así pues, este *Concierto para piano* constituye la primera pieza concertante para el instrumento que algún compositor mexicano — y latinoamericano — haya escrito hasta ese momento, y que más tarde siguieron su senda obras como el *Concierto romántico* de Manuel María Ponce y el *Concierto* de José Rolón. Y, en ese sentido, Castro también fue el primer compositor mexicano en escribir sinfonías (una en 1883 y la segunda en 1887) y un poema sinfónico (*Oithona*, en 1885).

La gloria cubrió a Castro a su regreso a México el 8 de octubre de 1906, desembarcando como todo un conquistador del Viejo Mundo, además de haber asegurado la publicación de varias de sus partituras: el *Concierto*

para piano fue editado por la casa Hofmeister de Leipzig, que también se encargó de publicar el libreto de su ópera *La leyenda de Rudel*, después de la cual Castro produjo dos óperas más: *Satán vencido* y *El beso de la Roussalka*, ambas extraviadas.

En noviembre de ese año se festejaron las bodas de plata del presidente de México Porfirio Díaz y su esposa Carmen Romero Rubio. Para conmemorar tan importante ocasión Castro fue invitado a tocar su *Concierto para piano* en el Teatro del Conservatorio. El periodista Enrique Olavarría y Ferrari hizo una crónica de la presentación, refiriéndose a la partitura como un “grandioso concierto”:

Es esta composición una de las pruebas más inequívocas — entre las muchas que ya tiene dadas — de cuanto ha trabajado y de cuan admirables progresos ha hecho su autor, y ha puesto de relieve las siguientes cualidades que trae Ricardo Castro, depuradas hasta la quintaesencia: temperamento exquisito, técnica formidable y dúctil estilo correcto, elegantísimo.

La partitura del *Concierto para piano* de Castro porta una dedicatoria a Carl Reinecke.

Para redondear la audición del *Concierto* de Castro, Jorge Federico Osorio nos propone tres breves piezas para piano solo de este autor. Primero, la *Berceuse Op. 36 núm. 1*, escrita en 1906 para ser incluida en el *Álbum Musical* del periódico *El Mundo Ilustrado*, es una tierna y evocativa canción de cuna que contiene lo mejor del pensamiento romántico de Castro. Prosigue el *Chant d'amour* (Canto de amor) escrito en 1896 y dedicado a Felipe Pedrell, escuchado por primera vez en la inauguración de la sala de conciertos de los editores Wagner y Levien en la ciudad de México. En 1902 el periódico *El Imparcial* comentó sobre ella:

El Chant d'amour hace honor al compositor por su valentía e inspiración; recuerda la manera erótica de Wagner y los arranques apasionados de Liszt; el "Canto de amor," una frase tierna y vehemente, se desarrolla con gran amplitud, crece en interés, no decae un momento, por el contrario, se destaca insistente, suplicante o impetuosa, con dramáticas inflexiones sobre un fondo ricamente armonizado.

Y, por último, *Plainte Op. 38 núm. 2*, concebida como una suerte de canción sin palabras en el último año de vida de Castro es, en palabras de Rogelio Álvarez Meneses, "una de las miniaturas

mejor logradas de Castro, en la que hace gala de su depurado oficio compositivo al crear una pieza exquisita con gran economía de medios."



Manuel María Ponce

Manuel María Ponce (nacido el 8 de diciembre de 1882 en Fresno, Zacatecas) fue una personalidad singular en el ámbito de la cultura musical de México al desarrollar una gran cantidad de actividades a favor de la difusión y el enriquecimiento artístico. Ponce combinó

su brillante carrera de compositor con las de pianista, director de orquesta, pedagogo, musicólogo, investigador sobre el folclor musical mexicano (dando como resultado una considerable cantidad de escritos al respecto), crítico musical, entre otras actividades. Igualmente, ha recaído en el nombre de Ponce el título de iniciador del movimiento Nacionalista musical posterior a la culminación de la Revolución mexicana. Así lo evidenciamos gracias a Otto Mayer-Serra:

En el año 1912 — pocos años después de volver de su primer viaje a Europa — Manuel M. Ponce se presentó al público mexicano con su memorable concierto en el Teatro Arbeu, cuyo programa estuvo dedicado exclusivamente a composiciones propias; entre ellas figuraba toda una serie de piezas para piano, basadas en melodías populares. Este acontecimiento artístico significó la inauguración de una nueva fase en la música mexicana. Su iniciativa significó, para México, un paso decisivo hacia el recobramiento de su propia personalidad musical. Dentro de la evolución general de la música, Ponce creó con ello una nueva ramificación de la corriente 'folklorista' que había provocado, en diversos países, la formación de escuelas nacionales.

De la misma forma que Ponce es reconocido con todos los atributos

mencionados, un importante sector del público no ha podido disfrutar plenamente de la difusión de la música de concierto de este compositor y, en ocasiones, sólo se le recuerda por algunas de sus canciones que han dado varias vueltas al globo terráqueo (*Estrellita o A la orilla de un palmar*).

Para comprender el pensamiento musical de Ponce es indispensable saber que su obra está dividida en dos fases creativas, una romántica y la otra moderna, divididas cada una de ellas en dos. La etapa romántica comprende de 1891 a 1904, antes de su primer viaje a Europa y de 1905 a 1924, a su regreso de la primera experiencia europea. Y la moderna de entre 1925 y 1932, en la que durante su estancia en París se familiarizó con el impresionismo; y de 1933 a 1948, desarrollada al regreso del músico de la capital francesa. A esta etapa se le ha llamado como "la más nacionalista" en su producción, y según el músico y crítico Adolfo Salazar:

...ésta es la última, decisiva etapa de la carrera de Ponce. En ella, los avances del arte moderno se unirán, armoniosamente y sin estridencias, a la savia de la tierra. Es el momento de su plenitud... la conversión de Ponce fue sincera y se expresó con la misma naturalidad en su segunda manera que en la primera...

Ponce había encontrado la fuerza y determinación suficientes para dar un vuelco en la vida musical mexicana gracias a sus experiencias en el extranjero. Alumno del Conservatorio Nacional de México desde 1901 y discípulo del español Vicente Mañas y el italiano Eduardo Gabrielli, Ponce decidió que el medio musical de su país no lo satisfizo en ese momento particular para continuar con sus progresos artísticos. De tal suerte, realizó su primer viaje a Europa hacia 1904, llegando primero a Italia y posteriormente a Alemania, países en los que estuvo bajo la tutela de Cesare Dall'Olio, Luigi Torchi y Martin Krause, discípulo este último de Franz Liszt y profesor, a su vez, de Claudio Arrau.

Así, a su regreso a México, Ponce creó algunas de sus célebres partituras como el *Concierto para piano núm. 1*, las *Estampas nocturnas*, el *Trío romántico* para violín, violoncello y piano (todas escritas entre 1911 y 1912) y la *Balada mexicana* (1916).

En lo que se refiere a su *Concierto para piano núm. 1* cabe mencionar que el propio Ponce tocó su estreno como solista el 7 de julio de 1912 en el Teatro Arbeau de la ciudad de México con una Orquesta llamada “Beethoven”

dirigida por Julián Carrillo. La obra es, definitivamente, de un lenguaje netamente europeo pero, a diferencia del Concierto de Ricardo Castro, éste es más cercano a la música alemana que a la francesa, sabiamente decantado por la pluma de Ponce y que asoma en diversos momentos las sensaciones del México de principios del siglo XX. Estructurado en tres secciones (*Allegro appassionato*, *Andantino amoroso* y *Allegro*) que se tocan sin interrupción, este *Concierto para piano* está impregnado de las enseñanzas que recibiera de su profesor Krause como antecedente directo de la idiomática de Liszt, aunque en momentos está claramente perfumado por el espíritu de Chopin, notorio en el solemne inicio de la obra. Y aunque no existen tintes nacionalistas en este *Concierto*, hay que reconocer que el segundo movimiento parece evocar una tierna canción de amor mexicana, especialmente en el diálogo entre el corno inglés y el piano.

Por razones evidentes, a este *Concierto* se le ha conocido durante mucho tiempo como “romántico”, y en él conviven de forma genial temas de gran lucimiento para el solista, lirismo, introspección, virtuosismo y una gran belleza. Pablo Castellanos, musicólogo,

pianista y eminente estudioso de Ponce, ha comentado:

En la literatura pianística de todo el Continente Americano y de la Península ibérica, del período correspondiente al romanticismo, no figura un concierto nacionalista más representativo (como el Concierto para piano núm. 1 de Ponce).

Como complemento al *Concierto* de Ponce, Jorge Federico Osorio nos ofrece cuatro breves piezas para piano solo de este autor: la *Arrulladora mexicana* (1909) y que está basada en la canción popular *La rancherita*; después, una de las piezas universalmente conocidas de Ponce: su *Gavota* del año 1901 y en cuyo tema principal parece encapsularse aquel ocaso romántico de la sociedad mexicana antes de enfrentarse al movimiento revolucionario. También escuchamos la *Romanza de amor* que data de 1914, escrita por Ponce para su esposa Clema y cuyo atractivo singular radica en sus sensibles cambios armónicos. Termina el álbum con el *Intermezzo núm. 1* que pertenece a la segunda etapa creativa de Ponce, aunque se desconoce su fecha exacta de composición. Esta es considerada como una de las “pequeñas grandes joyas” no sólo del repertorio de Ponce sino del pianismo mundial.

Aunque breve, el *Intermezzo* está estructurado en forma sonata, con una introducción, dos temas subsecuentes, una exposición que nos conduce a una cadenza, la reexposición y la fantástica y breve coda final.

José-María Álvarez ha sido editor de notas al programa para Orquestas como la Sinfónica Nacional de México, Filarmónica de la Ciudad de México, Filarmónica de Jalisco y actualmente de la Orquesta Sinfónica del Estado de México.

A portrait of Jorge Federico Osorio, a middle-aged man with light hair, wearing a black tuxedo and a white bow tie. He is seated at a grand piano, with his hands clasped in front of him. The background is softly blurred, showing warm, bokeh-style lights.

JORGE FEDERICO OSORIO

Recipient of the prestigious Medalla Bellas Artes, the highest honor granted by Mexico's National Institute of Fine Arts, Jorge Federico Osorio has been lauded throughout the world for his superb musicianship, powerful technique, vibrant imagination, and deep passion. He has performed with many of the world's leading orchestras, and has collaborated with such distinguished conductors as Marin Alsop, Rafael Frühbeck de Burgos, James Conlon, Bernard Haitink, Manfred Honeck, Lorin Maazel, Ken-David Masur, Jorge Mester, Carlos Miguel Prieto, Robert Spano, and Jaap van Zweden, among many others.

His concert tours have taken him to Asia; North, Central, and South America; and Europe, where he has performed at Amsterdam's Concertgebouw, London Royal Festival Hall, and Leipzig Gewandhaus, to name a few.

Osorio has appeared on Chicago's Symphony Center distinguished Piano Series on four separate occasions. He has also given two recitals in New York City at Lincoln Center's Alice Tully Hall, both of which were highly acclaimed by *The New York Times*. North American festival appearances have included the Hollywood Bowl, Mainly Mozart, Bard,

Newport, Grant Park, and Ravinia, where he has performed all five Beethoven concertos with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra under the direction of James Conlon over two consecutive evenings.

A prolific recording artist, Osorio has documented a wide variety of repertoire, including a solo Brahms CD that *Gramophone* proclaimed “one of the most distinguished discs of Brahms’ piano music in recent years.” Orchestral recordings include Beethoven’s five Piano Concertos and Choral Fantasy; both Brahms Concertos; and concertos by Chávez, Mozart, Rachmaninov, Ravel, Rodrigo, Schumann, Tchaikovsky, and Weinberg. Osorio’s acclaimed solo recordings on Cedille Records include *The French Album*, *Final Thoughts – The Last Piano Works of Schubert & Brahms*, *Russian Recital*, *Salón Mexicano*, an entire disc devoted to music of Ponce, a 2-CD set of Debussy and Liszt, and *Piano Español*. Osorio’s recorded work may also be found on the Artek, ASV, CBS, EMI, IMP, and Naxos labels.

Highly revered in his native Mexico, Osorio resides in the Chicagoland area and is a Steinway Artist.

jorgefedericoosorio.com



Photo: Benjamin Ealovega

CARLOS MIGUEL PRIETO

Musical America's 2019 Conductor of the Year, Carlos Miguel Prieto was born into a musical family of Spanish and French descent in Mexico City. His charismatic conducting is characterised by its dynamism and the expressivity of his interpretations. Prieto is recognised as a highly influential cultural leader and is the foremost Mexican conductor of his generation. He has been the Music Director of the Orquesta Sinfónica Nacional de México, the country's most important orchestra, since 2007. Prieto

has also been Music Director of the Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra since 2006, where he has led in the cultural renewal of New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina. In 2008, he was appointed Music Director of the Orquesta Sinfónica de Minería, a hand-picked orchestra that performs a two-month-long series of summer programmes in Mexico City. In 2022, Prieto became Music Director Designate of the North Carolina Symphony Orchestra; he will begin his tenure in the 2023–2024 season

Recent highlights include engagements with the London Philharmonic Orchestra, NDR Elbphilharmonie, Frankfurt Radio Symphony, the Hallé, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, the Spanish National Orchestra, Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, BBC National Orchestra of Wales, Strasbourg Philharmonic, and Auckland Philharmonia. Prieto is in great demand as a guest conductor with many of the top North American orchestras including in Cleveland, San Francisco, Dallas, Toronto, Minnesota, Washington, and Houston, and has enjoyed a particularly close and successful relationship with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra.

Since 2002, alongside Gustavo Dudamel, Prieto has conducted the Youth Orchestra

of the Americas (YOA), which draws young musicians from both American continents. A staunch proponent of music education, Prieto served as Principal Conductor of the YOA from its inception until 2011 when he was appointed Music Director.

Prieto is renowned for championing Latin American music and for his dedication to new music. He has conducted over 100 world premieres of works by Mexican and American composers, many of which he commissioned. Prieto places equal importance on championing works by African-American and other Black composers such as Florence Price, Margaret Bonds, Courtney Bryan, and many more. Prieto has an extensive discography that covers labels including Naxos and Sony. Recent Naxos recordings include Rachmaninov Piano Concerto No. 2 with Boris Giltburg and the Royal Scottish National Orchestra, which won a 2018 Opus Klassik award and was listed as a 2017 *Gramophone* Critics' Choice, and Korngold's Violin Concerto with Philippe Quint and the Orquesta Sinfónica de Minería, which received two Grammy nominations.

carlosmiguelprieto.com

ORQUESTA SINFÓNICA DE MINERÍA

The Music Academy of the Mining Palace is a non-profit private organization, established in 1978 by a group of music-loving engineers, alumni of the National and Autonomous University of Mexico's Engineering Faculty. The Academy sponsors the Orquesta Sinfónica de Minería, a professional body of the highest quality, regularly performing a series of summer programmes at the famous Nezahualcóyotl Hall. In the late 18th century, one of the most exquisite neoclassical buildings in the Americas was built in Mexico City: the Palacio de Minería, housing, until 1954, the School of Mining. Mining was the foremost economic activity in colonial Mexico, and the Palace became a center for serious musical activities. In the 20th century, the Palace became the base of the Engineering Faculty, and later a permanent Music Academy was established, thus honoring a fruitful tradition and the commitment of Mexican engineers. The orchestra has been directed by the late Jorge Velazco, Luis Herrera de la Fuente, and Carlos Spierer. Appointed in 2006, Carlos Miguel Prieto is the current principal conductor.

ORCHESTRA PERSONNEL

First Violin

Shari Mason, Concertmaster
Beata Kukawska
Vera Koulikova
Hector Robles
Vladimir Tokarev
Olga Pogodina
Moises Medina
Serguei Gorbenco
Benjamin Carone
Alma Osorio
Edgardo Carone
Ksenia Matelina

Second Violin

Eva Liebhafner, Principal
Carlos Gandara
Fernando Velazquez
Mariana Valencia
Juan Sosa
Mariana Andrade
Alejandro Serna
Abraham Bautista
Maria Belmonte
David Ramos

Viola

Gerardo Sanchez, Principal
Erika Ramirez
Judith Reyes
Carlos Guadarrama
Robert Nelson
Omar Perez
Astrid Cruz
Emilio Ahedo

Cello

William Molina Cestari, Principal
Fabiola Flores
Sona Poshotyan
Roberto Herrera
Rodrigo Duarte
Adriana Carrasco

Bass

Alexei Diorditsa, Principal
Jesus Bustamante
Benjamin Harris
Mario Martinez

Flute and Piccolo

Maria Vakorin, Principal
Alethia Lozano
David Rivera

Oboe and English horn

Claire Kostic, Principal
Norma Puerto de Dios
Rolando Cantú

Clarinets

Daniel Parrette, Principal
Luis Zamora

Bassoon

Virya Quesda, Principal
Carly Gomez

Horn

Gerardo Diaz, Principal
Silvestre Hernandez
Mateo Ruiz
Mario Miranda

Trumpet

James Ready, Principal
Juan Luis Gonzalez

Trombone and Tuba

Iain Hunter, Principal
Alejandro Santillan
Matthew Williams
Eric Fritz, Principal

Timpani and Percussion

Rodrigo Alvarez, Principal
Samir Pascual
Topacio Ortiz
Marco Mora

Artistic Coordinator

Robert Schwendeman

Producer James Ginsburg
Engineer Bill Maylone
Session Director (Mexico) Bogdan Zawistowski
Session Engineer (Mexico) Gabriel Castañon
Assistant Director (Mexico) Santiago E. Osorio
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