

THE PIANO SONATA IN COSTA RICA

by

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To my mom, Cecilia, who never stopped encouraging me.

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# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### **Statement of its purpose**

Although academic papers and dissertations on Costa Rican music are not completely uncommon, only a handful focus on piano music.<sup>1</sup> The purpose of this document is to provide an overview of the sonata genre in the Costa Rican piano literature. Even though piano music has been written in Costa Rica since the end of the nineteenth century, the first piano sonata was not written until 1965. There are only six composers – five of them living – that have written at least one sonata for piano, and only one of these sonatas has been published. By writing about these sonatas, I hope not only to promote more performances of Costa Rican piano music – and more specifically large-scale works, but also to showcase the richness of expression of these composers and their piano sonatas.

In this document, I will provide an overview of one piano sonata by each of the Costa Rican composers that have written in this genre. This work is divided into two parts. The first part aims to provide more context on the history of Costa Rican piano music. The second part includes a biographical sketch of each composer, an overview of the elements of their musical style, and an overview of form, structure, and musical language in the selected piano sonata.

### **Scope of Research**

In this project, I will provide an overview of one piano sonata of each of the composers that have written in this genre in Costa Rica. Since only six composers have written at least one

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<sup>1</sup> Some of the most notable include Matarrita (2004), Andrade (2008), Carmona (2010), and Gell (2017). See the References cited for more information.

sonata, I was able to briefly discuss context, style, form, and any other particular aspects about each selected sonata. In the case of composers who have written more than one sonata, I selected a sonata that I feel is representative and compelling enough to showcase the composer's work. The composers that I will be studying are Mario Alfagüell (b. 1948), Marvin Camacho (b. 1966), Carlos Escalante (b. 1968), Luis Diego Herra (b. 1952), Félix Mata (1931-1980), and Manuel Matarrita (b. 1972).

### **Preliminary Review of Literature**

The piano sonata as a genre in the musical output of creation in Costa Rica not only has been scarce in terms of production but also the scholarly output dedicated to it. In general terms, most of the existing literature does not relate specifically to a particular genre, since they tend to focus on particular works or composers.

#### *Academic Music in Costa Rica*

Two main sources explore musical creation in Costa Rica from a historical perspective. Flores (1978) is a very thorough source that discusses music in Costa Rica since the sixteenth century, up until 1978. Although it is a dated book, Flores provides solid research and clear writing, making this book one of the most important of its kind for Costa Rican academic music. Chatski, et al. (2012) take a more modern approach to music history and explore the musical creation in Costa Rica since 1940, as well as the musical style of some of the most important composers in Costa Rica in the twenty and twenty-first centuries. Most of the composers that are discussed in the book are either currently active or retired but still living. In a way, the book functions as a continuation of Flores' work.

### *Piano Music in Costa Rica*

Five dissertations relate to piano music in Costa Rica. Gell (2017) is the only work that focuses on a piano sonata written in Costa Rica, more specifically, three small sonatas that comprise the *Dantesque sonatas for piano* by Marvin Camacho. Matarrita (2004) is another example of a dissertation focused on a specific piano work – the Concerto for Piano and Orchestra by Carlos Enrique Vargas. Both Andrade (2008) and Quesada (2015) wrote about the piano works (in general) of two important Costa Rican composers, Benjamín Gutiérrez (b. 1937) and Mario Alfagüell (b. 1948), respectively. Carmona (2010) is probably one of the sources more directly related to this document, since his work focuses on the sonata genre, but it is limited to those that use serialism, and not only in Costa Rica but in Central America.

### *Costa Rican composers and non-piano music*

Among the dissertations on Costa Rican music, there are three – written in the last five years – that focus on works composed for other instruments (including vocal music), however, these works are by composers who have written sonatas for piano, which makes them relevant to my study. Gamboa (2015) wrote his dissertation about the Symphony No. 1 of Luis Diego Herra, a composer who also wrote a piano sonata in 1994. Ramírez (2015) explores Carlos Escalante's Clarinet Concerto, as well as his musical style and influences. Escalante wrote the longest piano sonata in Costa Rica to date. Ortiz (2016) focuses on Costa Rican composers and vocal music, especially those who were trained abroad and how this experience influenced their compositions. The author briefly discusses Marvin Camacho, who wrote three piano sonatas.

## CHAPTER TWO

### COSTA RICAN PIANO MUSIC: A BRIEF OVERVIEW

Costa Rica is one of the smallest countries of America. It is situated in Central America, bordered by Nicaragua to the north, Panama to the southeast, the Pacific Ocean to the west, and the Caribbean Sea to the east. During the Spanish colonial period in the seventeenth century, the Central American region underwent a much slower process of development. Andrade explains that “the fever for gold and other precious metals, which divided the Spanish between the territories formerly inhabited by the Aztec and Inca empires, delayed Spanish settlement in the continent’s isthmus.”<sup>2</sup>

Costa Rica, along with Mexico and the Central American region, gained independence from Spain in 1821. During the first years of the country as an independent nation, music served primarily to two main institutions: government and church. María Clara Vargas writes,

Similar to most Latin American countries, the development of music in Costa Rica during the first years of its independent life was determined by the two main social institutions: government and church. Naturally, the professional level of the first national musicians was not proficient, but it fulfilled the needs of the religious and military rituals.<sup>3</sup>

A turning point of music history in Costa Rica was the creation of the *Dirección General de Bandas* in 1845, which was organized by musician José Martínez;<sup>4</sup> this institute started to

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<sup>2</sup> Juan Pablo Andrade, “Costa Rican Composer Benjamín Gutiérrez And His Piano Works” (DMA diss., University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 2008), 9.

<sup>3</sup> María Clara Vargas, “Práctica Musical en Costa Rica, 1845-1942” [Musical Practice in Costa Rica, 1845-1942] (MA Thesis, Universidad de Costa Rica, 1999), 49. All translations are by the present author unless otherwise noted.

<sup>4</sup> There are some discrepancies concerning the nationality of José Martínez. Vargas affirms that he was of Spanish origin, while Flores states that he was Guatemalan.

organize the bands that were emerging in other provinces in Costa Rica at the time. Even though these were military bands – and Costa Rica abolished its army in 1948, the bands changed their name to “National Band” and the institution still exists to this day. Martínez was succeeded on his death in 1852 by Manuel María Gutiérrez (1829–1887), who is the composer of Costa Rica’s national anthem (1852). Gutiérrez was succeeded by Rafael Chávez Torres (1839–1907). These last two composers wrote marches, mazurkas, waltzes, and similar pieces for band.<sup>5</sup> Chávez also wrote one of the earliest pieces known for piano in Costa Rica, a mazurka title “Manuelita” (1893).<sup>6</sup> About music in these years, Bernal Flores comments,

During the first part of the 19th century, Costa Rica was [already] organized politically but its geographical and cultural isolation made it difficult to manifest itself to a high degree; a few foreign musicians began to teach music in the territory, two modest theaters were built, a system of bands (*Dirección General de Bandas*) was organized, and European instruments were joined with some instruments like the marimba. By 1830 the first pianos arrived in Costa Rica.<sup>7</sup>

The economy in Costa Rica started to grow around this time, mainly because of coffee export. This created an oligarchy of coffee plantations owners, and it was this upper-class of the society that helped to finance the Costa Rica National Theater, inaugurated in 1897.<sup>8</sup>

Costa Rican piano music during the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century was mostly influenced by European salon music, as it was the case in other Latin American countries. This music included works like miniatures, character pieces, and

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<sup>5</sup> Bernal Flores Zeller, "Art Music. Costa Rica, Republic of," *Grove Music Online*, ed. Deane Root, accessed May 3, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.41086>

<sup>6</sup> Manuel Matarrita, “La Creación Musical Para Piano en Costa Rica: Una Mirada a partir de las Obras Escogidas” [Musical Creation for Piano in Costa Rica: A Look from the Chosen Works], in *Música para piano de compositores costarricenses*, Vicerrectoría de Investigación, Universidad de Costa Rica (forthcoming): 5.

<sup>7</sup> Bernal Flores Zeller, “La Vida Musical de Costa Rica en el Siglo XIX,” In *Die Musikkulturen Lateinamerikas im 19. Jahrhundert*, ed. Robert Günther, (Munich: Gustav Bosse Verlag Regensburg, 1982), 275.

<sup>8</sup> Matarrita, “Creación musical,” 2.

dances such as waltzes and mazurkas.<sup>9</sup>

Bernal Flores' opinion of the early compositions in Costa Rica is not very favorable. He writes, "The general characteristics of Costa Rican musical creation during the 19th century will be [*sic*]: cultivation of small forms such as marches, waltzes, mazurkas, etc.; it is written for a small band, orchestra or chamber ensemble, or various solo instruments, such as the piano (...) It is in a traditional tonal style (...). It lacks contrapuntal and harmonic knowledge."<sup>10</sup>

However, Matarrita argues that Flores may have dismissed some of the piano pieces of these years a little too quickly. Even though it is true that most of the piano music was written in small forms, music from this time was not lacking the technical complexities of music composition. Some of these works are the aforementioned mazurka by Rafael Chávez Torres, as well as a Minuet by Mercedes O'Leary, published in a bi-monthly publication dedicated to literature and arts – led by writer Aquileo J. Echeverría, titled *Revista Notas y Letras*.<sup>11</sup> According to Matarrita, both pieces show proper knowledge of the instrument and good comprehension of the mazurka rhythm. O'Leary's Minuet also shows a more sophisticated treatment of the instrument, which reflects on the key of the piece (G-flat major).<sup>12</sup>

Other works published in *Notas y Letras* include *Pasatiempo* by Emmanuel García, the mazurka *El 11 de Noviembre* by Luz Machado, the polka *María Luisa* by Luis Z. Barrantes, and the dance *En tu ausencia* de Francisco Tinoco.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Matarrita, "Creación musical," 5.

<sup>10</sup> Bernal Flores Zeller, *La música en Costa Rica* (San José: Editorial Costa Rica, 1978), 60-61.

<sup>11</sup> Matarrita, "Creación musical," 5.

<sup>12</sup> Matarrita, 6.

<sup>13</sup> Matarrita, 6.

The European repertoire that was performed in the house concerts started to change after 1900. According to Vargas,

In the first decade of the 20th century, the pieces that made up the programs of the evenings and after-church concerts began to vary with respect to those of the late 19th century(...) In these programs, the names of composers of the repertoire appeared more and more frequently classic, especially Germans. Thus, little by little, composers almost unknown until then, such as Bach, Handel, Mozart, Schubert, Grieg, Mendelssohn, and Wagner, among others, began to appear in the evening and concert programs.<sup>14</sup>

In the first few decades of the century, two of the most important composers were Alejandro Monestel Zamora (1865-1950) and Julio Fonseca Gutiérrez (1885-1950). Monestel wrote a large number of sacred works and was also one of the first Costa Rican composers to use native music.<sup>15</sup> Andrade lists some similarities between them, “they both studied in Brussels, wrote a great deal of sacred music, investigated and adapted some elements of folk music into their compositions and, coincidentally, died in the same year, 1950.”<sup>16</sup> The musical style of both composers is considered ‘late-romantic’. Some of the most important piano compositions of Fonseca besides his most famous work, *Vals Leda* (which is discussed briefly in chapter eight), are a Nocturne (1913), and *Danza de los Gnomos* (Dance of the Gnomes, 1921). In the case of Monestel, some of his most important piano compositions are found in his collection *Álbum para piano* (Album for piano), in which pieces such as *Barcarola* can be found. All of the above works have been published.

After the death of both of these composers in 1950, there was a departure in the style of compositions for piano. The establishment of the National Symphony Orchestra in 1940 and the

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<sup>14</sup> María Clara Vargas Cullell, *De las fanfarrias a las salas de concierto* [From the fanfares to the concert halls] (San José: Editorial UCR, 2004), 177.

<sup>15</sup> Flores, *La Música en C.R.*, 127.

<sup>16</sup> Juan Pablo Andrade, “Costa Rican Composer Benjamín Gutiérrez,” 9.

National Conservatory of Music in 1942 helped to impulse the musical scene in Costa Rica.

Matarrita comments that, “The first decade of the second half of the 20th century witnessed the appearance of the first composers who began to experiment with languages that were moving further and further away from common harmonic practice and the aesthetic ideal of European romanticism.”<sup>17</sup>

One of the first composers to change this paradigm was Carlos Enrique Vargas Méndez (1919-1998). Similar to Fonseca and Monestel, Vargas studied abroad in Italy. He was a pianist, organist, conductor, teacher, and composer. Vargas wrote the first Piano Concerto (1944) and the first Symphony (1945) in Costa Rica. Most of his piano works are from his youth years – all published by the University of Costa Rica, but there are two unpublished works that show a high level of technical skill. The first one is *Música para “Gracielina”* (1954), which includes a dodecaphonic series in the opening and the ending. This piece could be considered the first piano piece of modernist character.<sup>18</sup> The other work is a piano reduction of his Symphony, which unlike other reductions by composers such as Fonseca or Monestel, it was not intended as a simple guide, but rather as a piece to be performed at the piano.<sup>19</sup>

Bernal Flores (b. 1937) and Benjamín Gutiérrez (b. 1937) are considered the first truly avant-garde composers in the country.<sup>20</sup> Flores, who is also an important music historian, pedagogue, and ethnomusicologist, wrote *Siete tocatas para piano* (Seven toccatas for piano, 1956-1959), a collection of seven dodecaphonic miniatures in which each of the miniatures uses

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<sup>17</sup> Matarrita, “Creación musical,” 22.

<sup>18</sup> Matarrita, 23.

<sup>19</sup> Matarrita, 23.

<sup>20</sup> Andrade, “Costa Rican Composer Benjamín Gutiérrez,” 9.



all 88 keys of the keyboard. These pieces were also written with the theories of Howard Hanson in mind, who was Flores' professor at Eastman School of Music.<sup>21</sup>

Benjamín Gutiérrez is considered the most relevant composer of the second half of the twentieth century in Costa Rica. Gutiérrez studied under the instruction of important composers such as Darius Milhaud and Alberto Ginastera. Despite this his piano production is rather small, and limited to five short pieces, in addition to his most famous composition, *Toccata y Fuga* (1959).<sup>22</sup>

It was around this time when Félix Mata composed the first piano sonata, a work that Matarrita considers “the piano work of largest scope written in the country [Costa Rica] in the second half of the century, both structurally and in terms of technical demand.”<sup>23</sup> I will discuss this work with more detail in chapter seven.

Rocío Sanz Quirós (1934-1993), who studied abroad in California and briefly at the Tchaikovsky Conservatory in Moscow, wrote just one piano solo work titled *Evoluciones* (n.d.), a collection of four short pieces. These are written in a language “far from tonal centers (although not necessarily atonal *per se*), and a peculiar use of repetition as a compositional resource, both in chords and rhythmic cells.”<sup>24</sup>

Ricardo Ulloa Barrenechea (n. 1928) is a multi-talented artist who has worked in areas such as poetry, visual arts, and music. He studied abroad in Madrid. His most relevant piano composition is his Suite from 1979. This work is a suite in three movements (fast-slow-fast), and

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<sup>21</sup> Matarrita, “Creación musical,” 24.

<sup>22</sup> For further reading about Gutiérrez and his piano works, see Andrade, Juan Pablo. “Costa Rican Composer Benjamín Gutiérrez And His Piano Works” DMA diss., University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 2008.

<sup>23</sup> Matarrita, 27.

<sup>24</sup> Matarrita, 29.

similar to Mata's Sonata it was not premiered until recently, in 2012. The language is in some ways similar to Sanz' work, especially because of the treatment of dissonance, and the repetition of musical motifs.<sup>25</sup>

After the reformation of the National Conservatory in the 1970s and its change to a more integral approach, the School of Musical Arts of the University of Costa Rica implemented the degree of Bachelor of Music with emphasis in Composition. Some of the first composers of this first generation of academia were Mario Alfagüell and Luis Diego Herra, which I will discuss in chapters three and five, respectively.

William Porras González (n. 1956), Allen Torres Castillo (n. 1955), and Andrés Saborío Bejarano (n. 1958), are some of the composers that Matarrita groups together as being from the same generation. Porras has a fairly large output of piano works, recently published in a collection. Some of the most notable are *Congestionadititico* (2019) and *Tambitopiano* (1984). Similar to Porras, Torres has written in both tonal and atonal languages. Some of his works for piano are *Pieza Dodecafónica* (Dodecaphonic piece, n.d.) and *Fuga sobre "Caña Dulce"* (2012), a fugue on one of the most famous folk songs from Costa Rica. Saborío has piano works that are written in a more conventional style. One of these works is *Festival Indígena*, a collection of two small works inspired by *yarabí*, a South American dance. The first work was written in 1974 and the second in 1997.<sup>26</sup>

As for the proliferation of composers and works in the twenty-first century, Matarrita believes that there are several reasons for this. He writes,

The consolidation of the composition schools, the escalation of the piano schools along with the appearance of new schools (which has allowed a greater and better level of

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<sup>25</sup> Matarrita, "Creación musical," 29.

<sup>26</sup> Matarrita, 35.

execution and possibilities of the works being executed), the development of music writing software and globalized knowledge of styles, scores, and historical heritage. As expected, there is no stylistic line or musical language favored by the collective. Each one has developed their own voice from their training, their possibilities, and their aesthetic taste.<sup>27</sup>

The rest of the composers which I will discuss in this document, namely Camacho, Escalante, and Matarrita, all belong to this group of composers. Among some of the composers more active in this century, Matarrita lists the following in alphabetical order:<sup>28</sup>

- 1) Pilar Aguilar Muñoz (b. 1956)
- 2) Jorge Alvarado Bravo (b. 1986)
- 3) Alejandro Cardona Ducas (b. 1959)
- 4) Otto Castro Solano (b. 1972)
- 5) Sandra Duarte Molina (b. 1968)
- 6) Marco Antonio Quesada Aguilar (b. 1964)
- 7) Patricia Molina Cerna (b. 1963)
- 8) Eddie Mora Bermúdez (b. 1965)
- 9) Luis Enrique Monge Fernández (b. 1959)
- 10) José Mora Jiménez (b. 1977)
- 11) Andrés Soto (b.1986)
- 12) Ana Isabel Vargas Dengo (b. 1949)

In Table 2-1 below, I have summarized some of the piano works written by these composers, and other relevant elements of their careers.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Matarrita, “Creación musical,” 36.

<sup>28</sup> Matarrita, 36-46.

<sup>29</sup> Based on the composers listed in Matarrita, 36-46, and Orquídea Guandique Araniva, “La composición musical en Costa Rica: ¿Hacia dónde nos lleva?” *Cuadernos Intercambio* Year 10, vol. 10, no. 12 (2013): 177-203, <http://hdl.handle.net/10669/19069>.

<b>Composer</b>	<b>Selected piano works</b>	<b>Degree in composition</b>	<b>Studies abroad (Country)</b>	<b>Other observations</b>
Pilar Aguilar Muñoz (b. 1956)	<i>Estelí</i> (2009), <i>Huellas en el Mar</i> (2010), <i>Mariposas</i> (2015), <i>Bajo el cristal gótico</i> , suite in 5 mov. (2016)	-	England	Retired piano professor from the University of Costa Rica.
Jorge Alvarado Bravo (b. 1986)	<i>Nous, bitonalidad consonante</i> (2014), <i>Anuarios para piano</i> (collection, n.d.)	-	-	Piano professor at <i>Conservatorio Castella</i> .
Alejandro Cardona Ducas (b. 1959)	<i>Tlanahuatl (Raíz) – Variaciones sobre la Paulina</i> (2005), <i>El silencio que hay en todas las soledades - Fantasía ¿quasi una sonata?</i> (1996)	x	USA and Mexico	Professor at the National University of Costa Rica.
Otto Castro Solano (b. 1972)	<i>Kiautl</i> (Rain), for left-hand (written for Pilar Aguilar's method for left-hand only, 2014)	x	Mexico	Dedicated fully to electro-acoustical works.
Pablo Chin (b. 1982)	<i>De mi memoria fluye lo que tú llamas belleza</i> (2009)	x	USA	Holds a DMA in Composition. Currently teaches at Montclair State University.
Sandra Duarte Molina (b. 1968)	<i>Tres Miniaturas para piano</i> (n.d.), <i>Peldaños</i> (1991), <i>Re-Calmo</i> (2016), <i>Esperanza</i> , for left-hand (2014)	x	-	
Bayron Latouche Artavia (b. 1980)	<i>Calle Glóster</i> (2008), <i>Suite Casa Cósmica</i> (2014)	x	England	Professor at the National University of Costa Rica. Also holds a degree in choral conducting.
Patricia Molina Cerna (b. 1963)	Suites <i>Mi madre la tierra</i> (2011) and <i>El Mago</i> (2016), other works with pedagogical intent.	-	-	Holds a Masters in Piano Performance.

Table 2-1. Selected piano works of Costa Rican composers from the last twenty years

Luis Enrique Monge Fernández (b. 1959)	<i>Distancias</i> (n.d.), <i>InterMotivos</i> (2008)	-	Germany	Professor of piano at the National University of Costa Rica.
Eddie Mora Bermúdez (b. 1965)	<i>Amighetti I</i> (“ <i>La niña y el viento</i> ”, 2003), <i>Amighetti II</i> (“ <i>El niño y la nube</i> ”, 2003), <i>Retrato II</i> (2005), <i>Ye’ Sulé I</i> (2011), <i>Troika</i> for left-hand (“ <i>Sputnik</i> ”, “ <i>Stal</i> ” y “ <i>Perestroika in D</i> ”, 2014)	-	Russia	Holds a Masters in Violin performance. Started composing in 1995 after returning to Costa Rica.
José Mora Jiménez (b. 1977)	<i>Encores (Melody Drops, Streams, and Swells</i> , 2012), <i>Dos estudios para la mano izquierda</i> , for left-hand (2014)	x	Netherlands	Currently living and working in Netherlands.
Mauricio Pauly (b. 1976)	<i>Continuity on the parks</i> (2002)	x	England	Based in England. Currently teaches at the Royal Northern College of Music.
Marco Antonio Quesada Aguilar (b. 1964)	<i>Aproximaciones metafóricas, Rock-Do, Polvo</i> (n.d.)	x	-	Professor of music appreciation at the University of Costa Rica.
Andrés Soto (b. 1986)	<i>Mascarada</i> (2007), <i>Bolero abuelo</i> (2009), <i>Intermezzo</i> (2009), and the collection <i>Melus purus</i> (five pieces, 2014)	x	USA	Based in New York. Does most of his work in film scoring and arranging.
Alonso Torres Matarrita (b. 1980)	<i>La belleza interior</i> (2005), <i>Calypso</i> (2009)	x	Portugal	Currently pursuing a PhD in sound design at the University of Aveiro.
Ana Isabel Vargas Dengo (b. 1949)	<i>Suite Fauna Tropical</i> (10 short pieces, n.d.), <i>21 Danzas libres para niños y jóvenes</i> , many other piano pieces with pedagogical purposes.	-	-	Music educator. Daughter of composer Carlos Enrique Vargas.

Table 2-1 (cont.). Selected piano works of Costa Rican composers from the last twenty years

## CHAPTER THREE

### MARIO ALFAGÜELL (b. 1948)

#### Biographical Sketch

Mario Alfagüell (Alfaro Güell) is a Costa Rican composer, pianist, and pedagogue. He is the most prolific composer that Costa Rica has ever had; his output includes more than four hundred works in a variety of genres and instrumentations. He has written for voice, piano, chamber ensembles, and orchestra, in genres such as concerto, symphony, opera, and oratorio.<sup>30</sup>

Mario Alfagüell was born in 1948 in San José, Costa Rica. He was born into a very catholic household, and because of that some of his first encounters with music were as an altar boy in Catholic masses for the archbishop, Monsignor Rubén Odio Herrera, who was his great uncle.<sup>31</sup>

In 1966, Alfagüell entered the National Conservatory of Music to study piano and composition with important pedagogues such as María Clara Cullell (1931-1993) and Benjamín Gutiérrez (b. 1937). Before entering the conservatory, Alfagüell took a music appreciation class with Carlos Enrique Vargas (1919-1998). Then, as a music major, he studied acoustics with Bernal Flores (b. 1937). Alfagüell studied for ten years at the National Conservatory of Music.

During his college years, Alfagüell became close to Vargas, who was the principal conductor of the National Symphony Orchestra at the time. After the rehearsals, Alfagüell normally went to Vargas's house to talk about music-related topics, listen to music, and on some

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<sup>30</sup> Jorge Carmona Ruiz, "Sonatas para piano de construcción serialista en Centroamérica (1980-1997)" [Piano Sonatas of serialist construction in Central America (1980-1997)] (PhD Diss., Universidad Nacional de Costa Rica, 2010), 97.

<sup>31</sup> José Pablo Quesada Rosales, "The Musical Style of Mario Alfagüell" (DMA diss., Texas Christian University, 2015), 48.

occasions to play some of his newly written compositions.<sup>32</sup> Alfagüell considers the time he spent at the University of Costa Rica as the first period of his musical creativity.<sup>33</sup> This period is characterized by an autodidactic and experimental approach to musical writing. The most important pieces from this period include *Coral Figurado*, Op. 1 for two male singers, trumpet, violin, and electric bass (1969); *Preludio, Fuga y Postludio*, Op. 3 for four instruments (1971); *Homenaje a Beethoven*, Op. 4 for piano (1970); Piano Trio, Op. 5 (1972-75), *Cantata Navideña Latinoamericana*, Op. 6 for choir (1976); and *Preludio, Villancico y Coral*, Op. 7 for choir (1976).

Between 1976 and 1980, Alfagüell studied composition at the *Staatliche Hochschule für Musik* in Freiburg, Germany, with the Swiss composer Klaus Huber, and the British composer Brian Ferneyhough. In addition to this, he took summer courses in Santiago de Compostela (Spain) with Rodolfo Halffter, and in Granada with Carmelo Bernaola. Alfagüell also met many prominent avant-garde composers such as Luigi Nono, Vinko Globokar, Karlheinz Stockhausen, Hans Werner Henze, and Heinz Holliger.<sup>34</sup>

Alfagüell's activity as a composer was more limited during his years in Europe, in lieu of his personal growth. His compositional approaches changed to a more formal and methodical approach. Alfagüell's use of both intuitive and methodical approaches generated some confusion reflected in his musical output.<sup>35</sup> The most important works he wrote during this time – which Alfagüell considers his second period of music composition, are *Ofertorio*, Op. 8a for three

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<sup>32</sup> Quesada, "Mario Alfagüell," 50.

<sup>33</sup> Quesada, 50.

<sup>34</sup> Quesada, 51.

<sup>35</sup> Quesada, 52.

singers (1978), *Ocho Montepulcianones*, Op. 9 for choir (1978), and *Cuartetos de Arcos*, Op. 10 (1979).

In 1980, Alfagüell returned to Costa Rica and began teaching composition and music history at the University of Costa Rica (UCR) and the National University of Costa Rica (UNA). His works have been performed in Canada, Mexico, United States, Guatemala, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Venezuela, Uruguay, Germany, Italy, Poland, Spain, Switzerland, and Togo.<sup>36</sup>

The knowledge he acquired in Europe finally produced a significant amount of works during the 1980s. For example, in 1982 he wrote ten compositions, many as he had written between 1969 and 1979.<sup>37</sup> Alfagüell considers his return to Costa Rica as his third period of music composition. Some compositions from this period include *Sonata para la Mano Izquierda*, Op. 14 for piano (1982), *Episodios Sinfónicos*, Op. 19 for orchestra (1982), *Cuarteto para Arcos*, Op. 20 for string quartet (1982), *Cocorí*, Op. 30, a ballet in two acts (1987), and *Misa I*, “*Poliecuménica*,” Op. 31 (1988). His compositions have won some of the most prestigious awards in Costa Rica, such as the *Premio Áncora* (1975), *Premio Nacional de Composición Musical “Aquileo J. Echeverría”* (on three occasions; 1982, 2001, and 2007), and *Premio Jorge Volio en Artes* (First prize on two occasions, in 1984 and 2002).

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<sup>36</sup> Tania Vicente, “Biografías De Compositores Costarricenses Contemporáneos,” in *Música Académica Costarricense: Del presente al pasado cercano*. [Costa Rican Academic Music: From the present to the near past] (San José, Costa Rica: Universidad de Costa Rica, 2012), 292.

<sup>37</sup> Quesada, “Mario Alfagüell,” 53.



## Overview of Musical Characteristics

Alfagüell's musical style is highly individual, demonstrating a very characteristic style among his works in spite of the large size of his catalogue. When we look across his catalogue, we can find several important features.

The first one is the use of non-traditional ensembles, as pointed out by Chatski.<sup>38</sup> She adds, "His work includes ensembles such as French Horn, Trumpet, and Trombone, 5 Timpani, harp, and strings, in his Concerto grosso Op. 181; harp, timpani, marimba, tubular bells, and strings in his Concerto Op. 168 for French horn and small orchestra; solo harp, piccolo clarinet in c, clarinet in c, bass clarinet, timpani, violins, violas, and cellos, in his Concerto for harp and small orchestra op. 204; marimba, piano, harpsichord, harp and orchestra in his Sinfonia concertante Op. 182."<sup>39</sup>

Another trait in all of his work is the preference for using comic, and almost satirical titles in his music. For example, there are titles such as *Eclipse de sol para piano* (Sun eclipse for piano), *Otra piecita posterior a Beethoven Op.22 para piano a cuatro manos* (Another little piece subsequent to Beethoven for piano four hands), or *Siete piezas para perder el tempo Op.51a, para piano a cuatro manos* (Seven pieces to waste the tempo, for piano four hands),<sup>40</sup> as well as many others that may get lost in translation such as *Tarantela de la tarántula atarantada* (Tarantella of the dazed tarantula), which is part of the "Seven pieces to waste the tempo".

His musical language is very often based on musical material from the popular tradition,

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<sup>38</sup> Ekaterina Chatski, "Rutas Para Explorar Los Elementos Estilísticos Del Lenguaje Musical De Un Compositor," in *Música Académica Costarricense: Del presente al pasado cercano*. [Costa Rican Academic Music: From the present to the near past] (San José, Costa Rica: Universidad de Costa Rica, 2012), 129.

<sup>39</sup> Chatski, "Rutas," 131.

<sup>40</sup> There is a discrepancy regarding the title of this piece. Chatski writes "...para perder el tiempo" (to waste time), but Carmona lists this piece as "...para perder el tempo" (to waste the tempo), which could be part of the comical nature of the title.

more specifically, musical material compiled in Costa Rica's Central Valley by author Emilia Prieto, who was one of the most important scholars of folklore in Costa Rica.<sup>41</sup> Based on these songs, he extracts numbers derived from the intervals of the source material and later employs them in his personal process, deciding the contour of the melodies, rhythm, dynamics, articulation, instrumentation, and texture.<sup>42</sup> Carmona also adds, "You could say that his compositional technique corresponds to a highly personal integral serialism, in that he extracts from the intervals of the source material a series of 'polyvalent little numbers', as he calls them himself."<sup>43</sup>

For other authors such as Gerardo Meza, Alfagüell's main purpose as a composer is to de-canonize music. In his works, irony is present as a way to mark irreverence towards composers from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.<sup>44</sup> Among his main characteristics are the avoidance of conventional tonal functions and even conventional clarity and logic of a musical structure.

As Meza points out, he achieves this by fragmenting melodies, augmenting note values and breaking rhythm relationships, and making heavy use of aleatoric elements as a feature of indeterminacy which gives importance to improvisation, as well as the use of mobile structures and mix graphic notation that differs from standard notation.<sup>45</sup>

This last element may be Alfagüell's most characteristic stylistic feature. I have yet to

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<sup>41</sup> Carmona, "Sonatas en Centroamérica," 98.

<sup>42</sup> Carmona, 98.

<sup>43</sup> Carmona, 98.

<sup>44</sup> Gerardo Meza Sandoval, "Mario Alfagüell: Su Música y un Paradigma," *Revista Estudios* 23 (December 2010): 9, <https://doi.org/10.15517/re.v0i23>.

<sup>45</sup> Meza, "Mario Alfagüell," 9.

find a piece in his catalogue that uses traditional standard notation, or even a piece that has not been written by the composer's handwriting (Ex. 3-1).



Example 3-1. Alfagüell, *Sonata Opus 430*, opening idea

Regarding this feature, Chatski summarizes his use of graphic notation in four main techniques.<sup>46</sup>

- a) The predominance of signs from standard notation.
- b) Variants and additions in the use of standard signs.
- c) Study and description of the signs in the notation for different instrumental groups.
- d) Rejection of the standard signs and invention of new symbols and methods of notation.

### The Sonata Op. 111 “Sonata Quasi un Claro de Luna” (2000)

In the vast catalogue of works by Mario Alfagüell, there is a relatively large corpus of piano sonatas, especially if compared to the rest of the composers studied in this document.

<sup>46</sup> Chatski, “Rutas,” 132.

Dr. Carmen Méndez, who is also Mario Alfagüell’s wife, created a complete catalogue of his works in 2009, and according to this catalogue, Alfagüell had composed seventeen sonatas for piano by then. A good number of his most recent works in the genre are sonatas composed for the left hand alone, which is also a genre in which no other composer has worked as significantly as Alfagüell.

Title	Year
Sonata para la mano izquierda (piano left hand), Op. 14	1982
Sonata, Op. 29 <sup>47</sup>	1984
Sonata para la mano izquierda, Op. 46	1990
Sonata para la mano izquierda, Op. 349	2016
Sonata para la mano izquierda, Op. 350	2016
Sonata para la mano izquierda, Op. 351	2016
Sonata, Op. 430	2019

Table 3-1. Selected piano sonatas of Mario Alfagüell

The Sonata Op. 111 ‘Sonata Quasi un Claro de Luna’, was composed in March 2000,<sup>48</sup> and is written in two movements, a feature present in many of his works. In words of the composer, “I always criticize works written in three or four movements; mine are one or two movements.”<sup>49</sup> The first movement is titled *Episodios* (Episodes) and the second movement *44 quasi variaciones* (44 quasi variations). It is dedicated to his son Mario; in the score, there is a dedication that says, “To my son Mario Alfaro Méndez, in his 15<sup>th</sup> birthday.” The sonata was

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<sup>47</sup> For a more in-depth analysis of this sonata, see Jorge Carmona Ruiz, “Sonatas para piano de construcción serialista en Centroamérica (1980-1997)” [Piano Sonatas of serialist construction in Central America (1980-1997)] (PhD Diss., Universidad Nacional de Costa Rica, 2010).

<sup>48</sup> Date listed in the cover of the score.

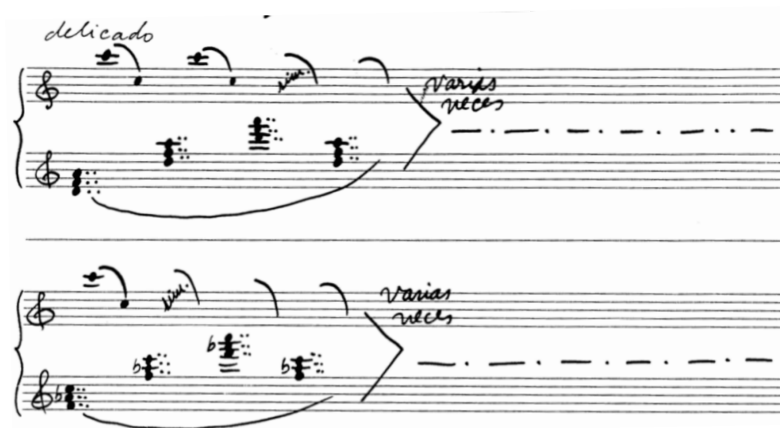
<sup>49</sup> Alfagüell, quoted in Carmona “Sonatas en Centroamérica,” 99.

awarded the *Premio Nacional “Aquileo J. Echeverría”* in 2001, the most important honor in Costa Rican academic music. It was premiered by the composer in November 2001 and has an approximate duration of 30 min. according to the program of that concert.

The title of the sonata alludes to Beethoven’s Sonata Op. 27 No. 2 “Quasi una fantasia.” In this case, Alfragüell combines the appellative ‘Moonlight’ (in Spanish, *Claro de Luna*), and Beethoven’s own subtitle “Quasi una fantasia,” hence the *Quasi un Claro de Luna* title. The opus number ‘111’ also suggests a relationship to Beethoven’s Sonata in C minor of the same opus; both works are in two movements, and in both cases, the second movement is a theme with variations.

In this sonata, Alfragüell uses several elements of his musical language that are present in many of his works. The first one is his use of rhythm. In this category, Quesada divides the composer’s rhythmic notation into three different categories: ametric, metric, and proportional.<sup>50</sup>

One important aspect of the sonata is the use of ametric rhythm. For example, both of the movements in the sonata are written without any meter indication, and do not have any bar lines (Ex. 3-2).



Example 3-2. Alfragüell, *Sonata Quasi un Claro de Luna*, I. Episodios, opening idea

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<sup>50</sup> Quesada, “Mario Alfragüell,” 76.

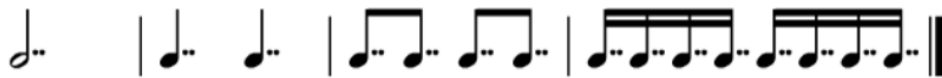
Alfagüell also represents rhythm in a non-traditional way, making frequent use of dotted rhythms to represent certain rhythm values without having to switch between meters (Ex. 3-3, 3-4, and 3-5).



Example 3-3. Duple simple meter.



Example 3-4. Duple compound meter.



Example 3-5. Symmetric Duple Simple Meter  
*Source:* Quesada, “Mario Alfagüell,” 79.

Another type of rhythmic notation that the composer uses is proportional rhythms. Here, Alfagüell uses dotted rhythmic notation to represent proportional notation – especially in the second movement. Proportional notation is by definition, “a system that assigns rhythmic durational values to ametric music organizations.”<sup>51</sup> Dotted rhythmic notation (Ex. 3-6) represent rhythms “...based on the addition of dots to the note heads of the traditional rhythmic notation system.”<sup>52</sup>

<sup>51</sup> Quesada, “Mario Alfagüell,” 79.

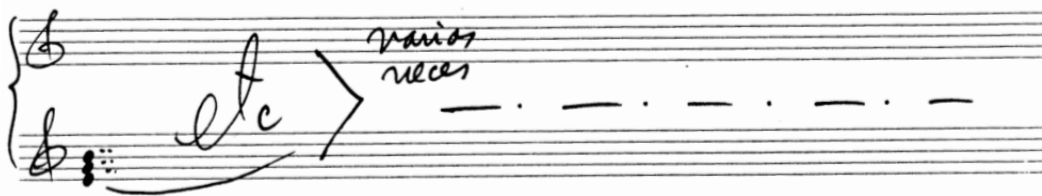
<sup>52</sup> Quesada, 79.



Example 3-6. Alfagüell, *Sonata Quasi un Claro de Luna*, II. 44 quasi variaciones, variation XVI

As mentioned before, graphic notation is at the core of Alfagüell’s musical style.<sup>53</sup> In the case of this sonata, he uses graphic notation in several ways, but there are three main ideas that are represented with this technique: repetition, sustention, and the use of irregular lines.

Repetition is represented through the use of dots and dashes, followed by the indication “varias veces” which means several times. (See Ex. 3-2). He also uses the abbreviation “etc.” (etcetera) to represent that a pattern repeats itself many times (Ex. 3-7).



Example 3-7. Alfagüell, *Sonata Quasi un Claro de Luna*, I. Episodios, p. 2

Sustained sounds are represented through two main symbols, one for chords and a different one for arpeggiations. Quesada explains, “He sustains chords using a horizontal line and he sustains arpeggiations using slurs connected to each individual pitch.”<sup>54</sup> These ideas are especially prominent in the second movement of the sonata (Ex. 3-8).

<sup>53</sup> Quesada, “Mario Alfagüell,” 81.

<sup>54</sup> Quesada, 81-82.



Example 3-8. Alfagüell, *Sonata Quasi un Claro de Luna*, II. 44 quasi variaciones, opening idea



Example 3-9. Alfagüell, *Sonata Quasi un Claro de Luna*, II. 44 quasi variaciones, variation XIII

Irregular lines are also prominent in the musical language of the composer, and are found in both movements of this sonata, with more prominence in the second movement (Ex. 3-10). According to Quesada, “Alfagüell uses irregular lines when a selection of pitches indicates rhythmic and dynamic improvisation. The overall goal of this notation is to express in sounds the irregular activity of the graph.”<sup>55</sup>



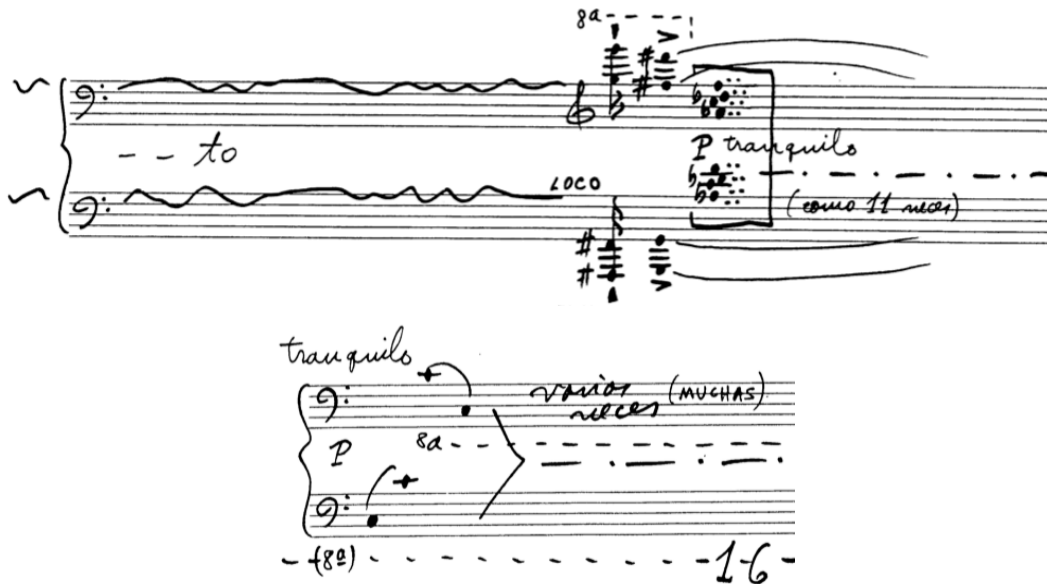
Example 3-10. Alfagüell, *Sonata Quasi un Claro de Luna*, II. 44 quasi variaciones, var. XXIII

<sup>55</sup> Quesada, “Mario Alfagüell,” 82.



The sonata also presents some non-standard musical indications. One of them is the use of markings that are presented with question marks, such as “¿súb?” (which means *subito*) and “¿accelerando?”. This kind of markings reinforce the idea that the performer should be a co-creator of the musical text.

The composer also seems to change his ideas on the number of repetition of musical patterns. In page 9 of the first movement, he indicates *como 11 veces* (around 11 times) after his usual dashes and dots, but in page 16 he not only writes *varias veces* (several times) but adds *muchas* (a lot), in parenthesis (Ex. 3-11).



Example 3-11. Alfagüell, *Sonata Quasi un Claro de Luna*, I. Episodios, pp. 9 and 16

The ending of the sonata is also fitting of the composer’s wit and satirical vein. At the end of variation No. 44 – the last variation, there is a suggested ‘encore’ for the performer. The translated version of the text reads:

If the patience of the audience has not been exhausted, the *Canción Op. 111a* (Song Op. 111a), with text by Beethoven, can be performed as "Encore", especially if there is a

singer nearby. Some of the Eleven Sonatinas of the same Op. 111, could continue to challenge the patience of the audience.<sup>56</sup>

Perhaps one of the reasons why Alfgüell does not include a performance guide to his notation, is because of his approach to the performer being more of a co-composer of the work, rather than just a performer.<sup>57</sup> This relates particularly to the liberty in the approach to his notation and symbols. According to Quesada, "...performers have the freedom to interpret his music using their own parameters, including a personal interpretation of the graphic notation."<sup>58</sup>

In terms of harmony, the sonata makes use of both common practice triads – and particularly minor triads, as well as more chromatic collections and dissonant sonorities. Both of the movements in the sonata open with a series of minor chords. In the case of the second movement, the composer writes different chords for each hand, creating a more dissonant sonority, while still using conventional triadic harmonies.

Even though the sonata does not pretend to follow traditional fixed forms, it is possible to identify certain moments where the textures changes, and the harmonies become less triadic and more dissonant.

In the opening movement, the first section resembles the triplets found in Beethoven's Sonata Op. 27 No. 2, because of the design of the ostinatos (See Ex. 3-2). This texture changes abruptly at the bottom of the fourth page, in which a faster rhythm introduces different material, expanding the sound to the extremes of the keyboard and introducing more aleatoric figures, in many cases more dissonant than the opening (Ex. 3-12).

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<sup>56</sup> Mario Alfgüell, *Sonata Quasi un Claro de Luna, II*, variation no. 44.

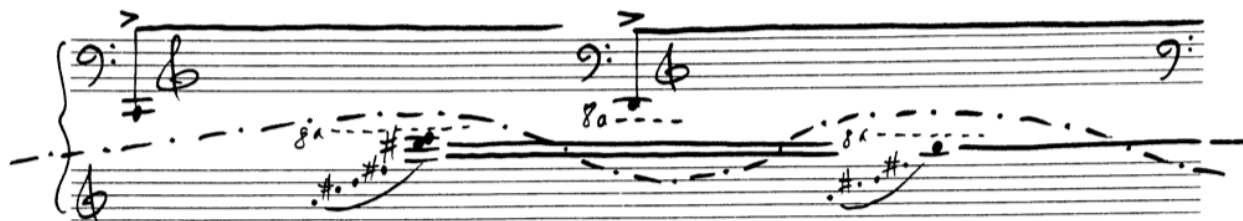
<sup>57</sup> Quesada, "Mario Alfgüell," 83.

<sup>58</sup> Quesada, 84.



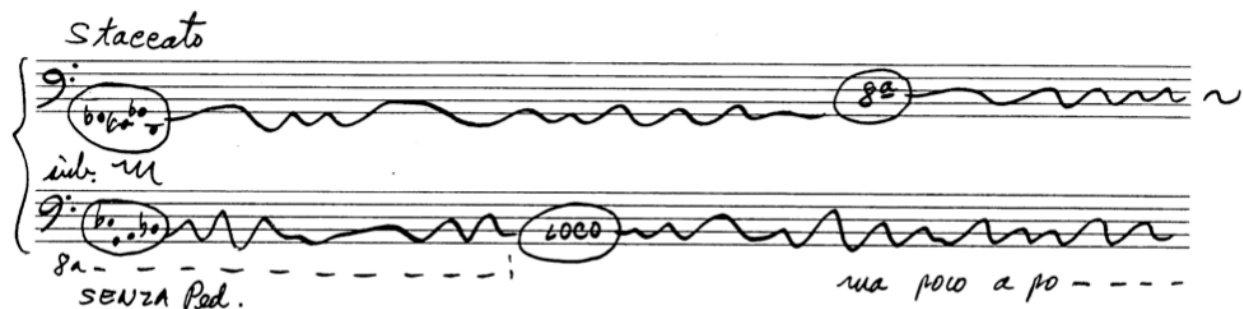
Example 3-12. Alfagüell, *Sonata Quasi un Claro de Luna*, I. Episodios, middle of p. 5

This section develops into a texture in which there is a dialogue between the low and the top registers of the keyboard, with a constant <A, C#, D, F#> arpeggio (Ex. 3-13).



Example 3-13. Alfagüell, *Sonata Quasi un Claro de Luna*, I. Episodios, p. 7

A long chord (marked with horizontal lines) interrupts this texture and introduces a series of aleatoric figures at the end of p. 8 (Ex. 3-14), which then dissolves into a texture of dissonant octaves, with a series of dissonant chords in the middle (Ex. 3-15).



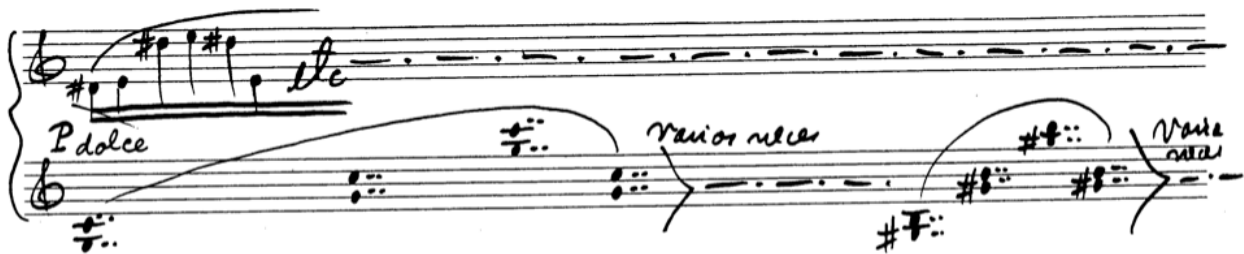
Example 3-14. Alfagüell, *Sonata Quasi un Claro de Luna*, I. Episodios, middle of p.9



Example 3-15. Alfagüell, *Sonata Quasi un Claro de Luna*, I. Episodios, bottom of p. 9

This idea gets developed in the following two pages, until the music reaches a clear pause at the end of p. 12, marked by a long chord and a fermata.

The next section combines the arch design of the opening chords (i.e., thirds that move two octaves up and down), as well as ostinatos in the right hand that make frequent use of the minor second interval (Ex. 3-16).



Example 3-16. Alfagüell, *Sonata Quasi un Claro de Luna*, I. Episodios, middle of p. 13

A series of arpeggios in fifths brings this section to a pause at the top of p. 16. This same figure is used as a transition, transforming to fast repeated chords that suddenly stops with the broken octaves that resemble the opening idea (Ex. 3-17). This idea could be considered a sort of recapitulation of similar material to the opening, not so much in its melodic or harmonic material, but in the atmosphere and the patterns that it presents. The movement ends without any sense of closure.

Handwritten musical score for piano, consisting of two systems. The first system shows a grand staff with treble and bass clefs, a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#), and a common time signature. The right hand has a series of vertical lines, and the left hand has a series of vertical lines with some notes. The word "etc" is written in the center. The second system is marked "tranquilo" and "P" (piano). It features a grand staff with a common time signature. The right hand has a series of notes with a slur and the word "varias (MUCHAS) veces" written above. The left hand has a series of notes with a slur and the word "varias" written above. The system ends with a double bar line and the number "1-6" below it.

Example 3-17. Alfagüell, Sonata Quasi un Claro de Luna, I. Episodios, bottom of p. 16

## CHAPTER FOUR

### MARVIN CAMACHO (b. 1966)

#### Biographical sketch<sup>59</sup>

Marvin Camacho was born in Barva, Heredia in 1966. He started his studies in piano and composition at the *Conservatorio Castella*, a public institution with a strong focus on the performing arts for primary and secondary school, and continued his studies at the School of Musical Arts at the University of Costa Rica (UCR). He studied with Roger Wesby, Mario Alfagüell, Luis Diego Herra, Bernal Flores, Benjamín Gutiérrez, and Pilar Aguilar.

His works have earned many important awards such as the *Premio Nacional de las Artes* (1984), in recognition of his *Meditación Bribri para contrabajo solo* (Bribri Meditation for solo double bass); *Premio Nacional en Composición “Aquileo J. Echeverría”* (2007), in recognition of his *Sinfonía No. 2 “Humanidades”* (Symphony No. 2 “Humanities”); *Premio ACAM* (2010), in recognition of his *Sonata dall’Inferno* for piano; *Premio Nacional en Composición “Aquileo J. Echeverría”* (2012), in recognition of his *Concierto No. 1 “Iniciático” para piano y orquesta* (Concerto No. 1 “Iniciático” for piano and orchestra); and *Premio ACAM* (2016), in recognition of his *Salmo No. 1: De la sabiduría del Rey Salomón para orquesta* (Psalm No. 1: “from the wisdom of King Salomon” for orchestra).

A large number of his works have been recorded professionally and have been performed at some of America’s greatest venues such as Carnegie Hall and *Palacio de Bellas Artes* in Mexico City. Some of the CD’s where his works are recorded are *Memoria Musical Costarricense Vols. I, II y III*, *Disparate y Locura*, *Reflexiones de Don Quijote*, and *Tiempos y*

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<sup>59</sup> Personal website of composer Marvin Camacho, <http://marvincamacho.com/biografia/>.

*Abstracto, and Nosotros – Música de Cámara Costarricense*. His first CD comprised entirely of his works, *Rituales y Leyendas*, was published in 2012 and includes works for different ensembles, performed by artists of different countries. In 2013, another CD of this type was published, a double album titled *Salmos Cotidianos*, which includes a selection of orchestral and choral works with orchestra. In November 2015, he published *Las Memorias de Sibō*, an album-book that recreates the Costa Rican indigenous mythology with performances by the Kaltak Woodwind Quintet, with narration by the composer.

As a lecturer and composer, Mr. Camacho has been a guest speaker at the *Universidad de Valladolid*, the *Escuela Superior de Música de Cataluña*, *Universidad Autónoma de Madrid*, *Universidad Complutense de Madrid*, the *Unión de Escritores y Artistas de Cuba*, the *Festival de La Habana de Música Contemporánea*, *Festival Leo Brouwer de Música de Cámara* (Cuba), the *Vilnius Academy of Arts* (Latvia), *Conservatorio Nacional de Música de México*, and the *Seminario de Composición Musical* (Costa Rica). His works have been performed at the *Festival Internacional de Música de Cádiz*, *Miami Music Festival*, *International Double Reed Society Conference* (New York), *Pará International Music Festival* (Brazil), *Festival Internacional de Música Académica Latinoamericana*, and *Festival Música Clásica por los Caminos del Vino* (Argentina).

He is currently professor at the University of Costa Rica where he coordinates the Arts Department, as well as the *Programa de Cursos Libres y Extensión Docente*, both at the School of General Studies. He is also a professor at the *Etapa Básica de Música de la Sede Regional del Atlántico*, which is part of the University of Costa Rica too. Camacho also serves as the President of the Heredia Symphony Guild and is a Member of the *Colegio de Compositores Latinoamericanos de Música de Arte*.

## Overview of Musical Characteristics

In the catalogue available in the composer's website, there are sixteen works for solo piano, most of them written in the last twenty years. This number is high within his production and perhaps is the most works for solo piano by a composer, outside of Alfagüell's output. The only other genre that has more works in his output is chamber music, many of which also feature the piano. Camacho has mentioned in interviews that the piano is his main instrument of support for his creative process.<sup>60</sup>

In her discussion of Camacho's musical style, Chatski mentions three main characteristics present in his works. The first one is the influence of literary themes, and more specifically, of Spanish literature and art. Some good examples of this are the *Sinfonía No. 1 en tres cuadros orquestales a Francisco Goya* (Symphony No. 1 in three orchestral pictures to Francisco Goya), as well as *Las Cortes de Cádiz en dos poemas* (The Cortes of Cádiz in two poems), *Homenaje a Federico García Lorca* (Hommage to Federico García Lorca), *Un Hombre llamado Don Quijote* (A Man named Don Quixote), and *Quijotadas*.<sup>61</sup> His Three Dantesque Sonatas for Piano – which I will discuss in the next sub-chapter, are also derived from Dante's The Divine Comedy.

Other works that are influenced by his love for literature are *Canto a Debravo* (Tribute to Debravo),<sup>62</sup> and *Preludio y Canto Negro* (Prelude and Black Chant), dedicated to Nicolás Guillén, a distinguished Cuban poet. He has also written many works dedicated to other

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<sup>60</sup> Chatski, "Rutas," 230.

<sup>61</sup> Chatski, 225.

<sup>62</sup> Jorge Debravo (1938-1967) is perhaps Costa Rica's most prominent poet. He was born in Turrialba, a town in which Camacho has lived for many years. January 31, the day he was born, is celebrated in Costa Rica as the National Day of Poetry.



historical figures such as Martin Luther King Jr., in his *Homenaje a Luther King* (Homage to Luther King), St. Augustine, in his *Visiones de San Agustín para piano* (Visions of St. Augustine for piano), and Frida Kahlo, in his *Homenaje a Frida para piano* (Homage to Frida for piano), to name a few.<sup>63</sup> It is no surprise that there are many works influenced by, or dedicated to literature, since Camacho is also a writer and has written three collections of poems: *De amor y deseo* (2004), *Mono a cuadros* (2007), and *Viajes. Siete poemas caminando México* (2008).<sup>64</sup>

The second aspect of his musical style mentioned by Chatski is the use of graphic notation, which is more prominent in his early works than in his more mature style, although one could also find this writing in *Siete Haikus* (Seven Haikus) for solo piano, written in 2010. The earlier works that use graphic notation are *Reflexión sobre el Vitae de Mía* (Reflection on Mía's Vitae, 1985), *Misa Breve* (1990), and *Lamento bribri* (Bribri lament, 1990).<sup>65</sup> For example, in the second movement of his *Misa Breve (Gloria)*, some measures are indicated by the number of seconds they should last, instead of using standard bar lines or even a particular meter (Ex. 4-1).<sup>66</sup> Another example can be found in his solo piano work *Siete Haikus* (Seven Haikus), which is based on the traditional Japanese poetry form (Ex. 4-2).

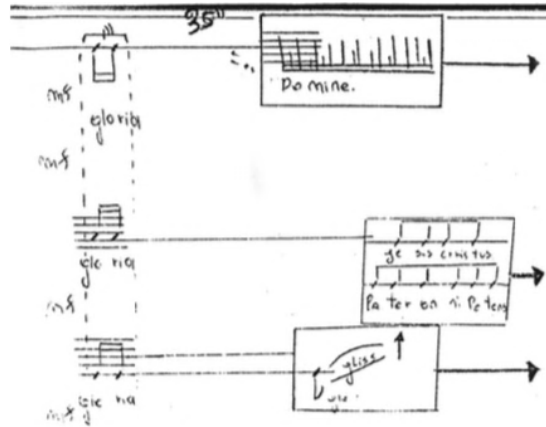
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<sup>63</sup> Leonardo Gell Fernández-Cueto, "Marvin Camacho Y Sus Tres Sonatas Dantescas Para Piano: Hacia Una Propuesta Interpretativa," [Marvin Camacho and his Three Dantesque Sonatas for Piano: Towards a Performance Proposal] (MM Thesis, Universidad de Costa Rica, 2017), 23.

<sup>64</sup> See <http://marvincamacho.com/poesia/>.

<sup>65</sup> Chatski, "Rutas," 225.

<sup>66</sup> Chatski, 226.



Example 4-1. Camacho, *Misa Breve*, II. Gloria, Universidad de Costa Rica [Tesis en Composición Musical, 1990], 25  
 Source: Chatski, "Rutas," 228.



Example 4-2. Camacho, *Siete Haikus*, I, mm. 13-14

The third aspect that Chatski mentions about his musical style is his harmonic language, which is very often based on sonorities built upon parallel fifths (both perfect and diminished) and parallel octaves.<sup>67</sup>



Example 4-3. Camacho, *Sonata dall'Inferno*, III. Allegro vivo, mm. 26-28

<sup>67</sup> Chatski, "Rutas," 228.

Leonardo Gell – a pianist who has performed, premiered, and recorded many of Camacho’s works, lists nine main musical characteristics of his style, and more specifically, his style in what he calls the Dantesque cycle, in his thesis about Camacho’s Three Dantesque Sonatas.<sup>68</sup>

- 1) A chord built with fourths and fifths, plus a second between the lowest note and the next note.
- 2) Use of clusters.
- 3) Chromatic passage work.
- 4) A prominent use of minor seconds, augmented fourths, or diminished fifths in the melody.
- 5) A note or chord repeated *ad libitum*, imitating a percussion instrument. This usually goes from slow to fast, and back to slow.
- 6) An element repeated three times, usually at the beginning or at the end of a section, movement or work.
- 7) Use of tremolos.
- 8) Use of upper and lower neighbor tones.
- 9) Extended techniques (singing or declamation, as well as playing inside the strings).<sup>69</sup>

### **The Three Dantesque Sonatas and the Sonata Dall’Inferno (2007)**

The Three Dantesque Sonatas were originally not conceived at the same time. Gell writes, “In 2009, during one of my visits to Costa Rica, I encouraged Camacho to complete the cycle, since he did not think of dedicating a sonata to each of the parts or chants from the *Divine Comedy*....”<sup>70</sup> In 2010, Camacho wrote the *Sonata dall’Purgatorio*, and in 2012, he finished the cycle by composing the *Sonata dall’Paradiso*.

Regarding Camacho’s motivation to write these sonatas, Gell mentions that the Three Dantesque Sonatas, “were not conceived solely for his implicit desire to recreate the base text

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<sup>68</sup> Gell, “Marvin Camacho,” 29.

<sup>69</sup> Gell, 29-35.

<sup>70</sup> Gell, “Marvin Camacho,” 18.

(...) Flora Elizondo<sup>71</sup> asked him to compose a sonata for piano, and it was then that, in 2007, the *Sonata dall'Inferno* was born.”<sup>72</sup> According to Gell, Elizondo premiered the first movement that year, and a full premiere was made by Gell in 2008. The work was first recorded by Gell in 2009, in the album *Presagios*. Gell also premiered the second sonata of the cycle, *Sonata dall'Purgatorio*, dedicated to him, in a recital in Cuba in 2011. The last sonata of the cycle *Sonata dall'Paradiso*, was dedicated to Manuel Matarrita, and premiered by Matarrita in 2012, in a recital in Costa Rica's National Theater.<sup>73</sup>

The *Sonata Dall'Inferno* was written in 2007 and dedicated to Flora Elizondo. The dedication reads: “A *Flora Elizondo, con todo mi agradecimiento, aprecio y cariño* (To Flora Elizondo, with all my thanks, appreciation and love).” The work is written in three movements. Chatski mentions that “the first and third movements are in ternary form, with a *quasi da capo* recapitulation. The second movement is based on two elements that alternate with each other, giving the leading role to the second element, which gets more developed when compared with the first, which always repeats identically.”<sup>74</sup>

When discussing a musical work based on Dante's text, it is inevitable not to think of Franz Liszt's *Après une lecture du Dante: Fantasia quasi Sonata* (After a Reading of Dante: Fantasia quasi Sonata), a work written in 1849 also inspired by Dante's *Divine Comedy*. Liszt also wrote *A Symphony to Dante's Divine Comedy*, although this work is not performed as often as the *Dante Sonata*.

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<sup>71</sup> A Costa Rican pianist who was a piano professor at the University of Costa Rica for over two decades.


<sup>72</sup> Gell, 27.

<sup>73</sup> Gell, 27.

<sup>74</sup> Chatski, “Rutas,” 230.

## I. *Allegro con fuoco*

In this movement, one could find a lot of the elements that define the style in the cycle as mentioned before. There is a prominent use of the interval of fifth and octave, as well as the use of a minor second plus a fifth, especially in the right hand (Ex. 4-4).



Example 4-4. Camacho, *Sonata dall'Inferno*, I. *Allegro con fuoco*, mm. 15-17

The use of the augmented fourth and diminished fifth interval, also known as the “devil’s interval”, is present in this movement both as a blocked and broken intervals in the melody. This interval is prominently used in Franz Liszt’s *Dante Sonata*, as shown in the opening measures (Ex. 4-5).



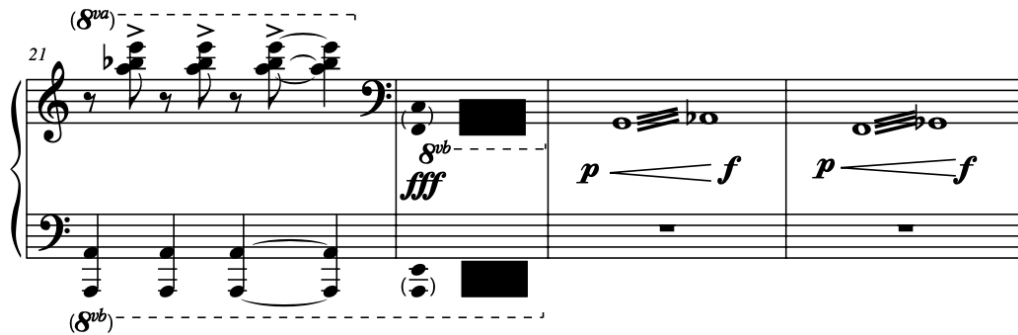
Example 4-5 (cont.). Liszt, *Après une lecture du Dante: Fantasia quasi Sonata*, mm. 1-10<sup>75</sup>

<sup>75</sup> Franz Liszt, *Après une lecture du Dante: Fantasia quasi Sonata*, *Neue Liszt-Ausgabe*, series 1, band 7, (Budapest: Editio Musica, 1974), 32.

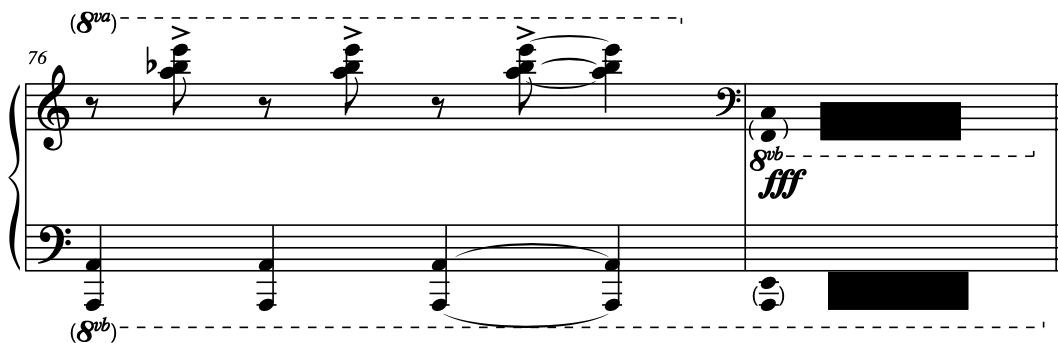


Example 4-5 (cont.). Liszt, *Après une lecture du Dante: Fantasia quasi Sonata*, mm. 1-10.

The use of clusters is also prominent, which seem to mark the end of a section, for example in m. 22, m. 49, and one more time at the end of the movement (Ex. 4-6 and 4-7).



Example 4-6. Camacho, *Sonata dall'Inferno*, I. Allegro con fuoco, mm. 21-24



Example 4-7. Camacho, *Sonata dall'Inferno*, I. Allegro con fuoco, mm. 76-77

One element that is not mentioned before is the use of polyrhythm throughout this movement. There is a constant use of a quarter-note triplet in the right hand vs. two quarter notes in the left hand, as found in mm. 19-20 (Ex. 4-8).

Example 4-8. Camacho, *Sonata dall'Inferno*, I. Allegro con fuoco, mm. 18-20

There is another example of polyrhythm in mm. 42-43, with the use of eight-note triplets in the right hand vs. sixteenth notes in the left hand, although this only appears once in the movement (Ex. 4-9).

Example 4-9. Camacho, *Sonata dall'Inferno*, I. Allegro con fuoco, mm. 42-43

As Chatski mentions in her discussion of this work, the form of this movement could be analyzed as large ternary (Table 4-1).

Section	Measures
A	1-22
B	23-55
A'	56-77

Table 4-1. Formal scheme, Camacho, *Sonata dall'Inferno*, I. Allegro con fuoco

Even though the formal structure of this movement is not sonata-allegro form, it does show some larger characteristics of that form, such as the use of a large ternary structure, with a recapitulation that repeats the beginning A section almost identically.

One could argue for identifying two contrasting themes in the A section. The first theme is marked by a more melodic use of the right hand, with octave doubling and two defined phrases. The second theme is characterized by heavy use of syncopation and polyrhythms, as well as the characteristic design of a second plus a fifth in the right hand, which is constant from m. 13 until m. 22. The tremolos in mm. 23-26 act as a small bridge to the B section.

In the middle B section, there is a sense of developmental character in the music. For example, there is material from the A section (the three quarter-note triplets plus a half-note figure) that gets transformed rhythmically, first over a left-hand ostinato in mm. 27-36, and then sequentially in mm. 36-43, building tension throughout the section, which ends in a *fff* cluster in m. 49, bringing back the A section in m. 56.

One curious aspect of the left-hand ostinato in this middle section is the similarity with Chopin's *Revolutionary Etude Op. 10 No. 12 in C minor* (Ex. 4-10 and 4-11).



Example 4-10. Chopin, *Etude Op. 10 No. 12*, mm. 10-12<sup>76</sup>

<sup>76</sup> Frédéric Chopin, *Etude Op. 10 No. 12*, *Complete Works for the Piano*, vol. 7, (New York: G. Schirmer, 1895), 53.





Example 4-11. Camacho, *Sonata dall'Inferno*, I. Allegro con fuoco, mm. 28-29

The tremolos return in m. 50, this time for six measures instead of four, and with a long crescendo rather than small swells. In the recapitulatory A section, both of the themes from the first A section are also repeated, but unlike a “true” sonata form, there is no change in the tonal areas of these themes.

In summary, even though this movement is not in sonata form, there are many elements that resemble this form and give the movement a more cohesive unity (Table 4-2).

Section	Themes/Features	Measures
A	Primary theme	1-12
	<i>Octaves, more melodic</i>	
	Secondary theme	13-22
	<i>More rhythmic</i>	
Bridge	<i>Tremolos</i>	23-26
B	“Development-like”	27-48
Bridge	<i>Tremolos, crescendo</i>	50-55
A'	Primary theme	56-67
	<i>Octaves, more melodic</i>	
	Secondary theme	68-77
	<i>More rhythmic, ending with cluster</i>	

Table 4-2. Reinterpreted formal scheme, Camacho, *Sonata Dall'Inferno*, I. Allegro con fuoco

## II. *Moderato misterioso*

This movement is based on two main “images”, as labeled by Chatski. This first idea is built by an open fifth sonority in the left hand (G-flat, D-flat, G-flat), and a B-flat minor arpeggio in second inversion in the right hand (Ex. 4-12). Chatski adds:

The second movement alternates two images expressed through some musical elements. The first one, played in the high register, is based on two close superposed chords: The second inversion of the minor chord on the note F, and a chord based on the fifth interval, on the note G-flat. This element is always played with a *ff* dynamic, drawing, in this way, a picture of stupor. The second element is made of the resource already used in the previous movement, which is, the open fifth chords duplicated at the octave.<sup>77</sup>

The musical score for 'Moderato misterioso' is presented in a grand staff with two systems. The top system is for the right hand, and the bottom system is for the left hand. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat), and the time signature is 2/4. The right hand melody is in a high register, starting with a dotted quarter note followed by eighth notes, and ending with a half note. The left hand bass line is in a lower register, starting with a dotted quarter note followed by eighth notes, and ending with a half note. The dynamic is marked *ff*. The score is labeled 'Moderato misterioso' and '8va'.

Example 4-12. Camacho, *Sonata dall'Inferno*, II. *Moderato misterioso*, mm. 1-3

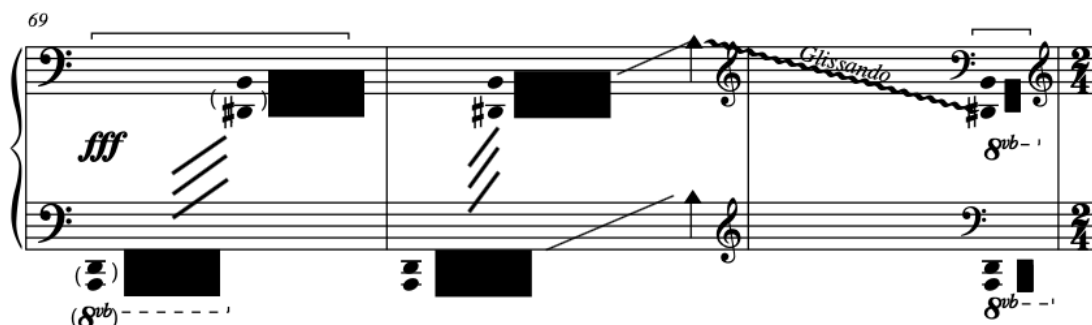
As Chatski points out, this element appears with a *ff* dynamic all five times is present (mm. 1, 7, 14, 34, and 97). In m. 97 it appears repeated, closing the movement. The second idea, the construction of a melody with the open fifth plus an octave is very characteristic from Camacho (Ex. 4-13). This idea also appears in the first movement.

<sup>77</sup> Chatski, “Rutas,” 230.



Example 4-13. Camacho, *Sonata dall'Inferno*, II. Moderato misterioso, mm. 10-12

Another important aspect of the second movement is the use of clusters, this time not as a closing element like in the first movement, but as a climactic one. The clusters in mm. 69 and 70 appear as a tremolo that moves through every register (Ex. 4-14).



Example 4-14. Camacho, *Sonata dall'Inferno*, II. Moderato misterioso, mm. 69-70

### III. *Allegro vivo*

The third movement of the sonata, *Allegro vivo*, returns to the large ternary form found in the first movement. There is a clear use of an ostinato in the bass (Ex. 4-15), constructed by a three-note motif of an ascending fifth and a minor second (C, G, A-flat), which later changes its center to F (F, C, D-flat). This ostinato only changes in mm. 39-54, which gestures a new section in the movement (the middle B section).

**Allegro vivo**

The image shows a musical score for Example 4-15. It consists of two staves: a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) and a bass staff. The time signature is 3/4. The first two measures of the grand staff are marked *mf*. The last two measures of the grand staff are marked *p* and *f*, with a crescendo hairpin. The bass staff contains a continuous eighth-note pattern throughout.

Example 4-15. Camacho, *Sonata dall'Inferno*, III. Allegro vivo, mm. 1-4

The clusters and tremolos found in the first two movement are also present in this one. Similar to the function of the cluster in the first movement, they also appear here as a closing element of the middle section, in mm. 49-54 (Ex. 4-16).

The image shows a musical score for Example 4-16, starting at measure 50. It features a grand staff and a bass staff. The grand staff contains several clusters of notes, with a dashed line indicating a specific pitch level (G<sup>b</sup>). The bass staff contains a rhythmic pattern. A *rit.* marking is present in the middle section. The time signature is 3/4.

Example 4-16. Camacho, *Sonata dall'Inferno*, III. Allegro vivo, mm. 50-54

Another element that also appears in this movement is the use of two-note tremolos, which are always in a design of a two repeated measures, where the second measure is a repetition of the first measure a second down (Ex. 4-17).

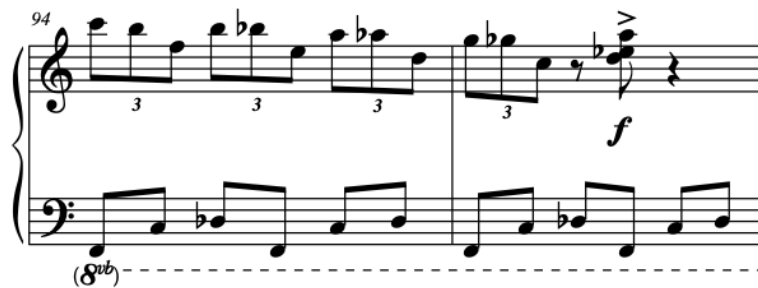
The image shows two examples of two-note tremolos from Example 4-17. Each example consists of a grand staff and a bass staff. The first example shows two measures of a tremolo in the grand staff, marked *p* and *f*, with a crescendo hairpin. The second example shows two measures of a tremolo in the grand staff, marked *p* and *f*, with a crescendo hairpin. The bass staff contains a rhythmic pattern. The time signature is 3/4.

Example 4-17. Camacho, *Sonata dall'Inferno*, III. Allegro vivo, mm. 7-8 and 22-23

The syncopation that is prominent in the first movement, as well as the use of polyrhythm (three eighth notes in the right hand against two eighth notes in the left hand) are two elements that appear throughout this movement, as we can see in Ex. 4-18 and 4-19.



Example 4-18. Camacho, *Sonata dall'Inferno*, III. Allegro vivo, mm. 26-30



Example 4-19. Camacho, *Sonata dall'Inferno*, III. Allegro vivo, mm. 94-95

Chatski argues that the scarce use of elements, along with the use of voices that are not duplicated, have a connection with the programmatic nature of the work, "...the shortage of musical resources conveys a hapless and dark picture, located in the infernal realm."<sup>78</sup>

As mentioned earlier, in the first movement of this work there are sonata-form elements within the large ternary structure – such as two seemingly contrasting themes in the A section. This movement, in contrast, functions more as a strict large ternary form, with no contrasting

<sup>78</sup> Chatski, "Rutas," 232.

themes within the A sections, in part because the ostinato in the bass does not allow for contrast between ideas (Table 4-3).

<b>Section</b>	<b>Themes/Features</b>	<b>Measures</b>
A	<i>Lively left-hand ostinato</i>	1-38
B	<i>More sudden dynamic changes, clusters transition to...</i>	39-54
A'	<i>Lively left-hand ostinato, full- keyboard glissando ending.</i>	55-105

Table 4-3. Formal scheme, Camacho, *Sonata dall'Inferno*, III. Allegro vivo

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CARLOS ESCALANTE (b. 1968)

#### Biographical Sketch

Carlos Escalante Macaya was born in Barcelona in 1968; his parents were from Costa Rica, so he adopted Costa Rican citizenship. He studied at the University of Costa Rica with Luis Diego Herra, Benjamín Gutiérrez, and Bernal Flores, where he obtained a Bachelor of Music degree with emphasis in Composition in 1995. In 2002, Escalante obtained his Master of Music degree at the University of Cape Town in South Africa. In Cape Town, he studied with Peter Klatzow (b. 1945) and Henryk Hofmeyr (b. 1957).

His work has been recognized with many prizes in Costa Rica and abroad. In 1997, Escalante won first prize in the Latin American Composition Competition sponsored by the Costa Rica National Theater, on behalf of its 100-year celebration. He was chosen “Composer of the year” in the Music for theater category (2000) by the *Asociación de Compositores y Autores Musicales de Costa Rica* (ACAM) and in 2001, he was awarded the Peter Klatzow Composition Prize (South Africa).<sup>79</sup>

For several years, Carlos Escalante has been an associate composer for the National Theater Company and the National Dance Company. He was also the musical director for the National Theater Company. His work with these groups has made him one of the most recognized composers for theater and incidental music. His compositions include chamber music, music for orchestra, piano, choir, video, and film, and have been recorded in seven

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<sup>79</sup> Ana Catalina Ramírez Castrillo, “Costa Rican Composer Carlos Escalante Macaya and His Concerto for Clarinet and Strings” (DMA diss., Temple University, 2014), 10.

nationally produced albums.<sup>80</sup> Escalante currently teaches at the University of Costa Rica and the National Institute of Music.

### Overview of Musical Characteristics

Escalante's musical style has been heavily influenced by his interdisciplinary work with theater and dance. When discussing his style, Chatski mentions both the use of *perpetuum mobile* and *ostinato* techniques in some of his works, elements that are derived from dance music, "...furthermore, the dance-like element is perceived in the *ostinato* resource, found not only in the percussion instruments, but also in the melodic instruments, which are often the string instruments. The *ostinato* used by Escalante is different from other composers because of the use of syncopated accents."<sup>81</sup> This element can be found at the core of some works such as *Hardit Barejo!*, *De garúas, aguaceros y escampes*, and some of his Preludes for piano.<sup>82</sup>

Similar to the music of other Costa Rican composers such as Marvin Camacho, Escalante also draws inspiration from extramusical sources such as literature and film. This can be found in works such as *Hardit Barejo! (dinqu' a l' ouro e mièjo)* for orchestra, based on a popular folk tale from Gascogne, in the south of France. Another example of this is the *Ricercare for Solo Clarinet (Felliniana No. 2)*, which is inspired by the movies of the Italian filmmaker Federico Fellini.

Ana Catalina Ramírez, who wrote a dissertation about Escalante's Concerto for Clarinet

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<sup>80</sup> Ramírez, "Carlos Escalante," 10.

<sup>81</sup> Chatski, "Rutas," 250.

<sup>82</sup> Chatski, 250.



and Strings, and premiered and recorded this work, lists some important elements that are essential to the musical style of Escalante.<sup>83</sup>

- 1) Melodic and rhythmic motives as important building blocks.
- 2) Sharp contrasts between rhythmically active accompaniment and extended lyrical lines.
- 3) Minimalistic techniques.
- 4) Prolongation of harmonies through ostinatos and pedal points over which different lines are presented.
- 5) Four-part chorale textures at end of movements or sections.
- 6) Frequent syncopation and anacrusis (e.g. Latin American rhythms).
- 7) Frequent root movement and melodic motion by fourths and fifths.
- 8) Chromatic and modal melodic lines.

### **The Sonata for solo piano (2002)**

The Sonata for solo piano was written in 2002,<sup>84</sup> as the composer's final project for his Master's degree at the University of Cape Town, South Africa.<sup>85</sup> It is dedicated to the Costa Rican pianist Juan Pablo Andrade,<sup>86</sup> with a cover that reads "*...a scorpio, ad scorpio..*" [sic]. As a matter of fact, the sonata was not only dedicated to Andrade, but it was a project that the pianist and the composer started to discuss when they were both students at the University of Costa Rica.<sup>87</sup> It was premiered in 2013 by Juan Pablo Andrade, and it has been performed in Italy, Switzerland, and in the United States.<sup>88</sup>

The sonata is written in four movements, each with its own title. It is important to note

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<sup>83</sup> Ramírez, "Carlos Escalante," 17-18.

<sup>84</sup> This sonata was revised by the composer in 2018. The text that I use in this document is based on the revised edition, which according to the composer "is easier to play, or at least, less uncomfortable [for the pianist]."

<sup>85</sup> Carlos Escalante, e-mail message to author, March 16, 2020.

<sup>86</sup> Juan Pablo Andrade is a Costa Rican pianist. He maintains a very active international career as a soloist, recitalist, collaborative pianist, pedagogue, adjudicator and clinician. He is currently Assistant Professor of Piano at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley. Andrade also recorded two movements of this sonata, which can be found here: <https://soundcloud.com/escalantemacaya/escalante-macaya-sonata-i>

<sup>87</sup> Juan Pablo Andrade, phone call to author, March 11, 2020.

<sup>88</sup> Juan Pablo Andrade, phone call to author, March 11, 2020.

that this is the only Costa Rican piano sonata written in four movements. The first two movements have titles in Latin, and the last two movements draw from more traditional genres such as minuet and toccata, respectively. The overall structure of the sonata follows the standard sequence of a fast first movement, a slow second movement, and it even includes a dance (Minuet) as the third movement, which is a tradition that many sonatas followed in the eighteenth century. The sonata closes with a fast toccata.

Besides Escalante's large output of works for theater and dance, he has also written works for large orchestra, chamber ensembles, and instrumental music – including piano solo. Some of these works are also written in more traditional forms, for example his *Sinfonía Centenario* (Centennial Symphony, 1997), Concerto for Cello and Orchestra (2015), and his aforementioned Concerto for Clarinet and Strings (2012).<sup>89</sup> Escalante also wrote two other sonatas before the piano sonata; a sonata for violin and piano (1992), and a sonata for cello and piano (1994).

### **I. *Saltatio***

The title in this movement comes from the Latin word for “Dance.”<sup>90</sup> It is the longest movement in this sonata, with an approximate duration of eight minutes.<sup>91</sup> Rhythm is a central

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<sup>89</sup> For a more exhaustive analysis of this work, see Ana Catalina Ramírez Castrillo, “Costa Rican Composer Carlos Escalante Macaya and His Concerto for Clarinet and Strings” (DMA diss., Temple University, 2014).

<sup>90</sup> Carlos Escalante, e-mail message to author, March 16, 2020.

<sup>91</sup> Based on Juan Pablo Andrade's recording, available on the composer's soundcloud profile.

element in this movement. It is written in  $\frac{12}{8}$ , with an ever-present use of hemiolas<sup>92</sup> that divide the measure into  $\frac{6}{8} + \frac{3}{4}$  and in other themes, into  $\frac{3}{4} + \frac{6}{8}$  (Ex. 5-1 and 5-2).

Example 5-1. Escalante, *Sonata for solo piano*, I. Saltatio, mm. 1-2

Example 5-2. Escalante, *Sonata for solo piano*, I. Saltatio, mm. 21-23

According to the composer, it is possible to observe some influence of Ginastera’s style in this movement, which was one of the composers he studied before writing this sonata.<sup>93</sup>

The minimalist element mentioned both by Chatski and Ramírez can be found in this movement as well. Although not a minimalist work, one could argue that the scarce use of rhythmic elements and textures definitely point to that stylistic feature.

One other prominent feature is the use of the interval of a second throughout the movement, both in the harmony and in the melody. This sonority is present from the beginning

<sup>92</sup> A term denoting the ratio 3:2. In modern notation, a hemiola occurs when two bars in triple meter, are performed as if they were notated as three bars in duple meter, or vice versa. Alison Latham, “Hemiola,” *The Oxford Companion to Music*, ed. Deane Root, accessed March 15, 2020.

<sup>93</sup> Carlos Escalante, e-mail message to author, March 16, 2020.

of the movement and returns many times in the movement (See Ex. 5-1). This interval also plays a role in the left hand, since the top voice moves constantly between A and B-flat (Ex. 5-3).

Example 5-3. Escalante, *Sonata for solo piano*, I. Saltatio, mm. 3-5

In the melody, the interval of a second appears not only in the (still) rhythmical theme that begins in m. 15, both in the right-hand melody and the melodic response in the left hand (Ex. 5-4) but also in the more lyrical section in F minor, in the right hand (Ex. 5-5).

Example 5-4. Escalante, *Sonata for solo piano*, I. Saltatio, mm. 24-26

Example 5-5. Escalante, *Sonata for solo piano*, I. Saltatio, mm. 52-54

The first movement does not follow a typical sonata-allegro form. However, there are some elements of the form that are notable in this movement: a return of some of the material presented towards the beginning of the sonata, as well as the return of other themes. One could then identify the contrast between the lyrical theme in A minor that starts in m. 48, and the more rhythmical section, in mm. 1-39. In addition to the change in pace and character, the A-minor theme, or secondary theme, moves away from the jagged and dissonant sonorities from the first theme to a more tuneful and tonal character.

This trend continues with what could be considered as the third theme in this A section, a more melodic theme in C minor (m. 66); it interrupts this mood and returns to the driving character of the beginning, this time with a pedal point in a low A, which sounds more like transition material rather than a standalone section. What comes in mm. 100-124 is a combination of several ideas, as well as the rhythm and hemiolas from the A section. These features suggest a similarity to those that are present in the development of a sonata.

In m. 125, there is a rhetorically weak return of the A section, not only because of the previous measures, but also because it returns not to the first idea of A (m. 1), but to the second idea (m. 15), in the same key as before but in a different register. A new theme can be heard in m. 141. This theme is in A minor, and similar to the second and third theme from the A section, this one has a more legato character. A shorter version of both the second and the third theme appears in mm. 162 and 169, respectively. The second idea of A returns one more time, now in a different key – A minor, rather than the original key of D minor, which leads to an energetic and driving coda in m. 194. The movement ends in a *fff* climax, culminating on a white-keys cluster in the bass (Ex. 5-6).

\* Cluster on white keys.

Example 5-6. Escalante, *Sonata for solo piano*, I. Saltatio, mm. 205-207

In summary, the opening movement of this sonata loosely follows a large ternary structure, in which the composer juxtaposes themes that are more dissonant and have a certain rhythmic drive, with themes that are more melodic and more tuneful (Table 5-1).

Section	Themes	Measures
A	Primary theme (first idea)	1-14
	D minor (second idea)	15-39
“Bridge”		40-47
Secondary group	Secondary theme A minor <i>More lyrical</i>	48-65
	Third theme, C minor <i>More melodic and tonally clear</i>	66-85
Bridge/Transition to...	Pedal point (A), right hand moving	86-99
B	Several motifs, especially the rhythm from A, ends in V7	100-124

A'	Second idea from A, D minor, <i>Different register</i>	125-140
	New theme, A minor <i>Legato melody</i>	141-162
Secondary group	Second theme, A minor <i>First idea shorter this time</i>	162-168
	Third theme <sup>2</sup> C minor, <i>shorter</i>	169-176
	Second idea from A, now in A minor (!)	177-193
Coda	Energetic, ends in white-keys cluster	194-207

Table 5-1. Formal scheme, Escalante, *Sonata for solo piano*, I. Saltatio

## II. "*de profundis clamavi*" (*Out of the depths I cried*)

The title of the second movement "*de profundis clamavi*," comes from a Gregorian chant that is based on psalm 130. According to the composer, "the melody of this chant is used in this movement, which at the same time was written using medieval polyphonic techniques."<sup>94</sup> This movement is an adaption from music that was originally composed by Escalante for a dance choreography by Henriette Borbón (premiered in 1999), in a performance that has the same title as this movement.<sup>95</sup>

The movement begins with slow and static bell chimes in the right hand (F-sharp), that

<sup>94</sup>Carlos Escalante, e-mail message to author, March 16, 2020.

<sup>95</sup>Carlos Escalante, e-mail message to author, March 16, 2020.

frame both the opening and the ending. It is written in B minor, which is not closely related to the D minor key of the first movement.

There is a prominent use of three-voice polyphony in the first half of this movement (Ex. 5-7).

Musical score for Example 5-7, showing three-voice polyphony in B minor. The score is in 2/4 time and consists of two staves. The right-hand staff begins with a treble clef and a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). The left-hand staff begins with a bass clef and the same key signature. The music starts at measure 37, marked with a box containing the number 37. The first measure of the right hand has a dynamic marking of *pp* and a fermata over the note. The second measure of the right hand has a dynamic marking of *mp* and a *(loco)* marking. The right hand plays a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes, while the left hand plays a bass line with eighth and sixteenth notes. The piece concludes with a double bar line at the end of the fourth measure.

Example 5-7. Escalante, *Sonata for solo piano*, II. de profundis clamavi, mm. 37-41

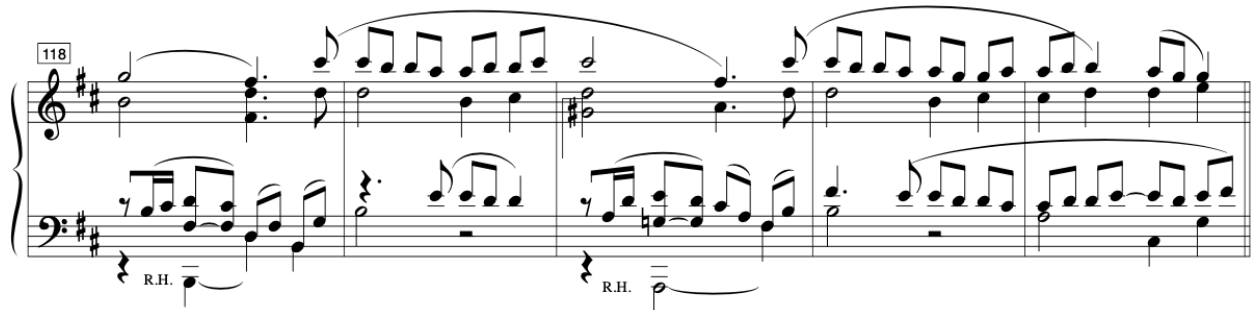
The movement changes to a more homophonic texture in m. 80, where the left-hand plays an arpeggiated accompaniment instead of a single line, while the right hand plays a melody with a richer texture (Ex. 5-8).

Musical score for Example 5-8, showing a homophonic texture in B minor. The score is in 2/4 time and consists of two staves. The right-hand staff begins with a treble clef and a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). The left-hand staff begins with a bass clef and the same key signature. The music starts at measure 85, marked with a box containing the number 85. The first measure of the right hand has a dynamic marking of *ff* and a *dramático* marking. The right hand plays a melody with eighth and sixteenth notes, while the left hand plays an arpeggiated accompaniment with eighth and sixteenth notes. The piece concludes with a double bar line at the end of the fourth measure.

Example 5-8. Escalante, *Sonata for solo piano*, II. de profundis clamavi, mm. 85-88

Another important aspect of this movement is the use of the bells in the low register of the instrument. Escalante presents these bells with the right-hand crossing over the left, which first appears in m. 118 (Ex. 5-9) and carries on through the climatic section in mm. 130-133, where it appears in octaves.





Example 5-9. Escalante, *Sonata for solo piano*, II. *de profundis clamavi*, mm. 118-122

Overall, this movement has a very intimate and contemplative character that conveys the atmosphere of music from another time.

### III. Menuet

The most relevant feature of this movement is its palindromic structure.<sup>96</sup> For Escalante, this structure was always of interest to him, and this is the first and only time he has ever written a palindromic work.<sup>97</sup>

This type of writing can be traced back to works from the eighteenth century. For example, the Minuet from Haydn's Symphony No. 47 is so exactly palindromic that he wrote out only the first section, followed by the instruction *Menuet al roverso*.<sup>98</sup> Escalante acknowledges this movement as one of his models for using this structure, along with some of the motets of the *Ars Nova* by Guillaume de Machaut (1300-1377), as well as the *Concierto Pentafónico para*

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<sup>96</sup> In music, a palindrome is a piece or passage in which a retrograde follows the original (or 'model') from which it is derived. The retrograde normally follows the original directly. Brian Newbould, "Palindrome," *Grove Music Online*, ed. Deane Root, accessed March 20, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.41238>

<sup>97</sup> Carlos Escalante, e-mail message to author, March 16, 2020.

<sup>98</sup> Newbould, "Palindrome,".

*Clarinete y Orquesta* (Pentatonic Concerto for Clarinet and Orchestra, 1968) by Costa Rican composer Bernal Flores.<sup>99</sup>

In the twentieth century, we can find palindromic structure in some works of composers of the Second Viennese School. Alban Berg (1885-1935) makes use of this structure in the *Lyrische Suite*, *Kammerkonzert*, and in the film music from the Act 2 interlude in *Lulu*. Anton Webern (1883-1945), uses palindromic structure in his Symphony Op. 21 – more specifically – in the development section of the first movement.<sup>100</sup>

This movement uses the palindromic structure in a very strict manner. In m. 67, the retrograde version of the model begins. Both versions, the original and the retrograde, are separated by an arpeggiated chord over two measures, marked *ppp* and *liberamente* (Ex. 5-10).

Example 5-10. Escalante, *Sonata for solo piano*, III. Menuet, mm. 61-66

We can see where the retrograde version starts in m. 67 and compare it to the ending of the model (Ex. 5-11).

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<sup>99</sup> Carlos Escalante, e-mail message to author, March 16, 2020.

<sup>100</sup> Newbould, "Palindrome,".

(regolare) *accelerando...* **Tempo I** (♩ = 88 / ♪ = 176)

67 *pp* *mp* *p subito.* *mp cantabile*

Example 5-11. Escalante, *Sonata for solo piano*, III. Menuet, mm. 67-73

In general, this movement has more transparent textures, and a harmonic language that draws on standard harmonies often enriched by blocked seconds, a recurring element from the opening movement (Ex. 5-12).

18 *pp subito.* *p*

Example 5-12. Escalante, *Sonata for solo piano*, III. Menuet, mm. 18-20

The movement also explores sonorities that are more impressionist, such as the  $\frac{7}{8}$  theme in m. 27, which uses the whole-tone scale (Ex. 5-13).

30 *mp*

Example 5-13. Escalante, *Sonata for solo piano*, III. Menuet, mm. 30-34

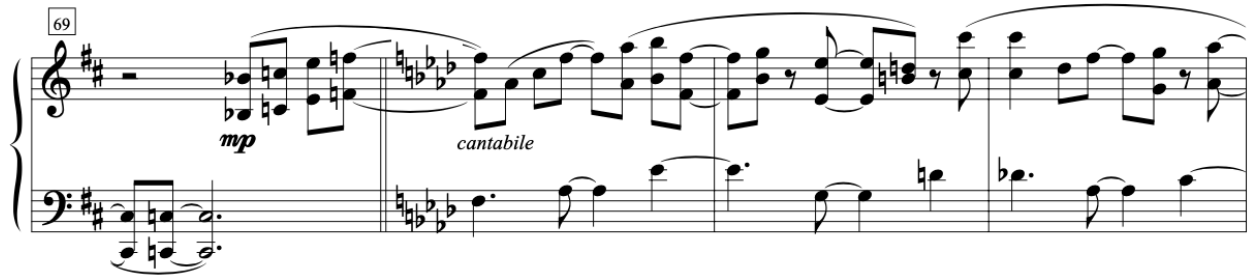
In a similar way to the previous movement, the overall character of this movement is gentle and intimate, with a predominance of *pp* and *p* dynamics. The movement fades into the same atmosphere of the opening measures, and we can also appreciate here the retrograde version of the opening idea (Ex. 5-14).

The image shows a musical score for a minuet in three parts. The first system covers measures 1-4, and the second system covers measures 114-119. The music is in 3/4 time. The first system starts with a tempo marking of quarter note = 88. The dynamics are *pp* (pianissimo) and *p* (piano). The performance instruction *muy delicado* is written below the first measure. The second system includes the instruction *ritardando e morendo...* above the first measure and *lunga* above the final measure. The dynamics in the second system include *ppp* (pianississimo). The score features a retrograde of the opening idea, with the right hand playing the original melody backwards and the left hand providing harmonic support.

Example 5-14. Escalante, *Sonata for solo piano*, III. Menuet, mm. 1-4 and mm. 114-119

#### IV. Toccata

The last movement of this sonata is a toccata with significant Latin American influence. This can be heard in its rhythmic drive and the heavy use of syncopation, which at times suggest patterns commonly found in the *son cubano*, typical of Cuban popular music, for example in mm. 70-72 (Ex. 5-15).



Example 5-15. Escalante, *Sonata for solo piano*, IV. Toccata, mm. 69-72

Just like the rest of the sonata, the toccata uses a tonal language. It is written in B minor, a key not closely related to the D minor of the first movement. However, the first and last movements are similar in the obscuring of clear harmonies by using chromatic figures in the melody, and modulations to distant keys. In the case of the toccata, we move from B minor to F minor, C-sharp minor, C minor, and B-flat minor, before a final return to B minor.

The chromatic element in the melody is a recurring motif that first appears in the opening idea, with a two-note gesture of a minor second – perhaps derived from that recurring minor second in the first movement. This element is clearer in the theme that starts in m. 25, with the chromatic descending melody in octaves in the right hand, in m. 32 (Ex. 5-16).



Example 5-16. Escalante, *Sonata for solo piano*, IV. Toccata, mm. 32-35

One other relevant feature of this toccata is the use of a slow and quasi-lyrical middle section, which is not typical of other toccatas in the piano literature. Even though the section that starts in m. 87 is marked *poco meno mosso*, and a few measures later *ancora meno mosso*, this

does not mean that the piece loses its Latin character, on the contrary, it maintains the syncopated rhythm patterns to preserve the flair.

Also similar to the first movement, this movement is structured in large ternary form (Table 5-2). The A section contains three themes, with the third one being slightly slower than the first two (*poco meno mosso*). In the B section, there is another change in tempo, and the quarter note is indicated at M.M. 98, in contrast to the quarter note M.M. 154 from the opening. This creates a stark contrast with both the opening A and the following A' section.

However, the most interesting characteristic of the structure can be found in the A' section. Here Escalante avoids the classic return of the material heard in A. Instead, we hear a return that gets presented in reverse order. This means that, when expecting the three themes of A (a, b, and c), we instead hear c, b, and a, perhaps as a reminder to the palindromic structure of the third movement. The movement closes in a climatic *fff* and a low B in the bass, that is emphatically accented by the suggested fingering 4, 3, and 2 (Ex. 5-17).<sup>101</sup>



Example 5-17. Escalante, *Sonata for solo piano*, IV. Toccata, mm. 187-190

The overall structure of this movement can be seen in full in Table 5-2.

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<sup>101</sup> What this fingering suggest is to play the note putting all of these fingers together to heavily accentuate the low B.

Section	Themes	Measures
A	First theme (a) B minor	1-24
	Second theme (b)	25- 45
	Third theme (c) <i>Poco meno mosso</i> B minor – F minor	46-86
B	<i>Poco meno mosso</i> (a) C-sharp minor	87-102
	<i>Ancora meno mosso</i> (b) C minor <i>More melodic and tonally clear</i>	103-119
Bridge Transition to...	<i>Lo stesso tempo ma accelerando</i>	120-127
A'	Third theme, <i>Poco meno mosso</i> , (c) B-flat minor (!)	128-136
	Second theme (b) B minor	137-154
Bridge	<i>Repeated F-sharp</i>	155-158
	First theme (a) <i>Extended with variations in the left hand</i> B minor	159-190

Table 5-2. Formal scheme, Escalante, *Sonata for solo piano*, IV. Toccata

## CHAPTER SIX

### LUIS DIEGO HERRA (b. 1952)

#### Biographical Sketch

Luis Diego Herra was born in San José in 1952. Like many other Costa Rican composers, he began his studies at the *Conservatorio Castella*. He later studied at the School of Musical Arts at the University of Costa Rica, where he earned degrees in conducting and composition. His studies in conducting were under the guidance of Agustín Cullell, and in composition of professors Bernal Flores and Benjamín Gutierrez.

From 1978 to 1982, Herra studied conducting at the Strasbourg Conservatory in France, under conductors Leo Barzin and Pierre Deveraux. In 1982, he won the First Medal in orchestral conducting.

As a composer, he has written works for orchestra, chamber music, instrumental (including piano solo), choir, vocal, and incidental music for theater. His compositions have won some of the most prestigious awards in Costa Rica; these include *Premio Ancora* (1982), *Premio Nacional de Composición Musical “Aquileo J. Echeverría”* (on five occasions, in 1984, 1990, 1993, 1998, and 1999). His works have been performed in the United States, Mexico, El Salvador, Panama, and Poland.<sup>102</sup>

Among Herra’s most important works we can find several for solo instrument and orchestra such as the Concertos for Marimba (1994), Piano (1999), and Saxophone (2005). His

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<sup>102</sup> Norman Gamboa, “Costa Rican Composer Luis Diego Herra And His Symphony I An Annotated Edition” (DMA diss., Louisiana State University, 2015), 26.



Symphony I (1990) is also a pivotal work in the literature of Costa Rican orchestral music.<sup>103</sup>

Mr. Herra also had a successful career as a conductor. He has been the Principal Conductor of the University of Costa Rica's Symphony Orchestra, the National Youth Orchestra, and Assistant Conductor of the National Symphony Orchestra, as well as having conducted as a guest the UNESCO-Paris Chamber Orchestra, Mexico's Northwest Chamber Orchestra and the National Orchestras of Panama and El Salvador.<sup>104</sup>

In 1986, Mr. Herra served as visiting faculty at the *Escuela Victoriano López* in San Pedro Sula, Honduras. He taught conducting and composition at the School of Musical Arts at the University of Costa Rica and served as the dean of the College of Fine Arts from 1995 to 1999, and in 2011-2012 he served as director of the School of Music.<sup>105</sup>

His music has been recorded in several nationally produced albums, and several of his works has also been published by the University of Costa Rica university press.<sup>106</sup>

### **Overview of Musical Characteristics**

The music of Luis Diego Herra can be grouped into three distinct categories, and two clearly defined compositional periods. Norman Gamboa comments, "The first category includes solo pieces and music for chamber ensembles, the second his orchestral, choral and band compositions, and the third group contains his music for the stage."<sup>107</sup> For Chatski, Herra's

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<sup>103</sup> For a detailed analysis of this work, see Norman Gamboa, "Costa Rican Composer Luis Diego Herra And His Symphony I An Annotated Edition" (DMA diss., Louisiana State University, 2015).

<sup>104</sup> Vicente, "Biografías," 300.

<sup>105</sup> Gamboa, "Luis Diego Herra," 27.

<sup>106</sup> Vicente, "Biografías," 302.

<sup>107</sup> Gamboa, "Luis Diego Herra," 27.

compositional periods can be classified into experimental and a more conventional. The first period embraces his years as a student in Strasbourg, France, as well as his workshops in Paris with professors Ivo Malec and Betsy Jolas; his second period started towards the end of the 1980s and it is still underway.<sup>108</sup>

Among the most important works of his first period are *Cuadros para orquesta* (Pictures for orchestra, 1978), *Trío y percusión* (1980), and the ballet *De la Piedra* (1981).<sup>109</sup> During this period, Chatski defines the style of Herra as being a time of experimentation. He uses techniques that were considered vanguard at the time (in the '70s and '80s), such as principles of sound mass, aleatoric music, and extended instrumental techniques.<sup>110</sup> Similar to the works of Alfgüell, Herra also used graphic notation, although in combination with traditional notation. In some cases, he indicates the duration of a certain passages in time, such as 10" (Ex. 6-1).

The image shows a musical score for piano, Example 6-1, from Herra's *K. 509 for piano*, measure 12. The score is written for two staves (treble and bass clefs). Above the first staff, there are two instances of "10\"", indicating a 10-second duration for the passages. The first staff has the instruction "orden de notas ad. lib." above it. The second staff also has "orden de notas ad. lib." above it. The first staff starts with a *ppp* dynamic marking, followed by a *cresc.* marking. The second staff starts with a *ppp* dynamic marking and ends with a *ffff* dynamic marking. Below the second staff, there is a "sempre Ped." instruction. At the end of the second staff, there is an "attacca" instruction.

Example 6-1. Herra, *K. 509 for piano*, m. 12

The second period of composition started during the last years of the 1980s. According to the composer, this change occurred due to “his self-reflection about who he was as a composer,

<sup>108</sup> Chatski, “Rutas,” 147.

<sup>109</sup> Chatski, “Rutas,” 147.

<sup>110</sup> Chatski, 147.

bearing in mind his target audience and those who would perform his music.”<sup>111</sup> His works from this moment on focused on the possibility to “blend traditional musical structures with Latin American flair.”<sup>112</sup> The second period of Herra is mostly characterized for changes in harmonic treatment, form, and instrumentation.<sup>113</sup>

Unlike the works from Herra’s experimental period, the works from his second period use a more functional approach to harmony, with two main features: non-standard modulations, and an unorthodox construction of cadences, where there is a tendency to weaken the cadence with a separation between harmonic rhythm and surface rhythm (Ex. 6-2).<sup>114</sup>



Example 6-2. Herra, *Sueños de Invierno para violín, fagot y piano*, mm. 231-233  
Source: Chatski, “Rutas,” 150.

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<sup>111</sup> Luis Diego Herra, interviewed by Ekaterina Chatski, San José, Costa Rica, April 1, 2011.

<sup>112</sup> Chatski, “Rutas,” 150.

<sup>113</sup> Chatski, 150.

<sup>114</sup> Chatski, “Rutas,” 150.

## **The Sonata for piano (1994)**

The Sonata for piano was written in 1994 and published in 1995.<sup>115</sup> It is dedicated to Raúl Herrera. It is interesting to note that for unclear reasons, this sonata is not part of the catalogue published in the book by Chatski et al., and is also omitted in the catalogue that is included in Norman Gamboa's dissertation, which were published in 2009 and 2015 respectively.

The sonata is written in three movements and is only the composer's second work for piano. His first work for piano, *K. 509*, earned him national recognition in 1982 with the *Premio Ancora*, and was recorded in 1996 as part of Scarlett Brebion's *Confluencia*,<sup>116</sup> an album dedicated entirely to works by Costa Rican composers.<sup>117</sup> Brebion plays the complete sonata in a 1996 recital and interview that was broadcasted by *Canal UCR*, a TV station which is part of the University of Costa Rica.<sup>118</sup> It has an approximate duration of fifteen minutes. This is the only available recording of the sonata and it was also the premiere of the sonata. Brebion also premiered the composer's Concerto for piano and orchestra with Costa Rica's National Symphony Orchestra, in June 2000.<sup>119</sup>

### **I. *Andante – Moderato***

The first movement of the sonata is in C minor. It starts with an introduction (*Andante*) in G minor and has an almost improvisatory character supported by the quick scalar passages in the

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<sup>115</sup> There is a copyright legend at the bottom of the score: Copyright 1995 Editorial PASO, S. J. Costa Rica.

<sup>116</sup> Scarlett Brebion Kelemen is a French-born and Costa Rica-naturalized pianist. Since 1986, she has been the pianist for the National Symphony Orchestra.

<sup>117</sup> Scarlett Brebion Kelemen (pianist). *Confluencia*. Recorded 1996, [label not specified], 1996, compact disc.

<sup>118</sup> Scarlett Brebion, "Entrevista y Recital en Canal UCR — 1996" YouTube video, 58:14. Posted by "Scarlett Brebion" September 19, 2017. <https://youtu.be/sGZsmc6VHtk>.

<sup>119</sup> A recording of this concerto can be found here <https://youtu.be/MkvWK1fRazI>.

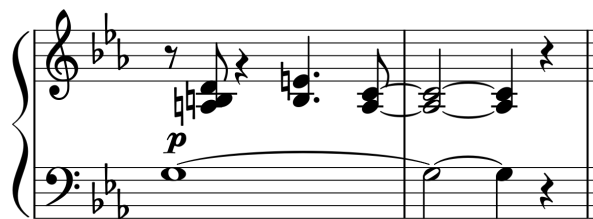
right hand. Harmonically, the introduction plays with the duality of the dominant harmony in major and minor modes, ending the introduction in a half cadence, with a Gmaj7 chord in m. 17 (Ex. 6 -3).



Example 6-3. Herra, *Sonata for piano*, I. Andante – Moderato, mm. 13-17

Unlike other sonatas previously studied in this document, the first movement of this sonata presents an archetypal sonata form. The first theme of the sonata, in C minor, is characterized by a thin, two-voice texture, which suggests something similar to a woodwind duet rather than a work for piano. The main idea has an innocent and child-song character and gets repeated with small variations in F minor, in m. 41, leading to a small bridge that brings the piece from F minor to a clear dominant seventh chord in G major (D7) in m. 68. One unusual aspect of this transition – besides its quick harmonic changes, is the use of the  $\frac{1}{2}$  time signature, which is not commonly found.

The second theme of the sonata, in m. 69, presents a more syncopated rhythm, which has a more latin flavor overall (Ex. 6-4).



Example 6-4. Herra, *Sonata for piano*, I. Andante – Moderato, mm. 69-70

As expected in traditional sonata form, this theme is in the dominant key, G major; it also has a more subdued character. After an 8-measure G pedal point the theme moves to D major, which leads back to the same bridge we heard before in m. 57. This rapidly changing bridge brings the music to a resting point in E-flat major chord, with an unresolved  $\hat{2}$  in the right hand.

The development section starts with the first theme of the sonata in A-flat minor (with the C-flat spelled as B natural), with small rhythmic changes in the melody – this time with more syncopation. A second section in the development starts in m. 129, which is derived from thematic material from m. 34-40. This material gets developed by imitation happening in both hands, starting with the melody in the left hand, and reinstating this theme a fifth above (Ex. 6-5).

Example 6-5. Herra, *Sonata for piano*, I. Andante – Moderato, mm. 129 and 135

Following the typical sonata-form structure, the development ends in a clear dominant chord sustained in mm. 147 and 148, which leads to the recapitulation in m. 150.

The recapitulation brings the primary theme back note by note until m. 164, after which the same rapidly changing bridge takes us from C minor to a V chord in the same key. The secondary theme, as expected, is now in the tonic, although now in the major mode. The pedal point first heard in m. 78 is presented again in C, and after a brief octave passage, this idea is presented in G major. The theme with chords in the left hand and eighth-notes in the right hand from m. 34 (which is presented towards the end of the development), returns in m. 217 in the same key as the exposition, this time with the hands inverted, which frames the movement as a

whole. After an arpeggiated C minor chord, the main idea returns one more time as a coda, with the rhythmical variations that were presented at the beginning of the development, bringing the movement to an almost abrupt ending (Ex. 6-6). We can see the overall structure of this movement in Table 6-1.



Example 6-6. Herra, *Sonata for piano*, I. Andante – Moderato, mm. 236-240

Section	Themes/Features	Measures
Introduction	<i>Improvisatory, quick scales, ends in V#7</i>	1-17
Exposition	Primary theme (i, Cm)	18-56
Transition	<i>Rapid-changing chords</i>	57-68
	Secondary theme (V, G)	69-100
Transition	<i>Rapid-changing chords</i>	101-112
Development	<i>Themes from exposition, imitation</i>	113-148
Recapitulation	Primary theme (i, Cm)	149-164
Transition	<i>Quick-changing chords</i>	165-176

	Secondary theme (I, C)	177-223
Coda	<i>Main idea with variations</i>	224-240

Table 6-1. Formal Scheme. Herra, *Sonata for piano*, I. Andante – Moderato.

## II. *Andante*

Just like the opening movement, the second movement of the sonata also opens with an Andante section and it is also in C minor, albeit with a more somber character than the first movement. It is written in a clear large ternary form (A-B-A). The opening A section has a virtuosic and more chromatic line in the right hand, and an expansive melody in the bass (Ex. 6-7).



Example 6-7. Herra, *Sonata for piano*, II. Andante, m. 18

The B section (Moderato), presents clear influence from jazz idioms, particularly the ‘walking bass’ line in the left hand (Ex. 6-8).<sup>120</sup> The composer adds the indication *sensual*, making clear the flirtatious character of this section.

<sup>120</sup> In jazz, a line played pizzicato on a double bass in regular crotchets in 4/4 meter, the notes usually moving stepwise or in intervallic patterns not restricted to the main pitches of the harmony. Gunther Schuller, "Walking bass," *Grove Music Online*, ed. Deane Root, accessed March 5, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.29835>.



24 **Moderato** ♩ ca. 110

*mf sensual*

Example 6-8. Herra, *Sonata for piano*, II. Andante, mm. 24-26

The A section returns in m. 54, which is an almost exact repetition from the initial A section (starting from m. 10). The ending follows Herra's tendency of disassociating the harmonic rhythm and the surface rhythm, as discussed previously (Ex. 6-9).

67 *con libertad*

*p*

*accel. cresc.*

*ff*

Example 6-9. Herra, *Sonata for piano*, II. Andante, mm. 67-73

Overall, the second movement presents a highly chromatic language in both the A and B sections, and a darker character. In this movement, the jazz influence becomes clearer by the use of the 'walking bass' and the swing-like rhythm. A formal scheme is shown below in Table 6-2.

Section	Themes/Features	Measures
A	<i>More chromatic lines, expansive bass melody</i>	1-23
B	Moderato, <i>'walking' bass</i>	24-53
A'	<i>More chromatic lines, expansive bass melody</i>	54-73

Table 6-2. Formal scheme, Herra, *Sonata for piano*, II. Andante

### III. *Allegro*

The third movement is almost as long as the first two movements combined, shifting the weight of the composition to the ending rather than to the first movement. The first section, *Allegro*, maintains the chromatic quality of the second movement, giving a sense of unity within the sonata (Ex. 6-10).



Example 6-10. Herra, *Sonata for piano*, III. Allegro, mm. 1-3

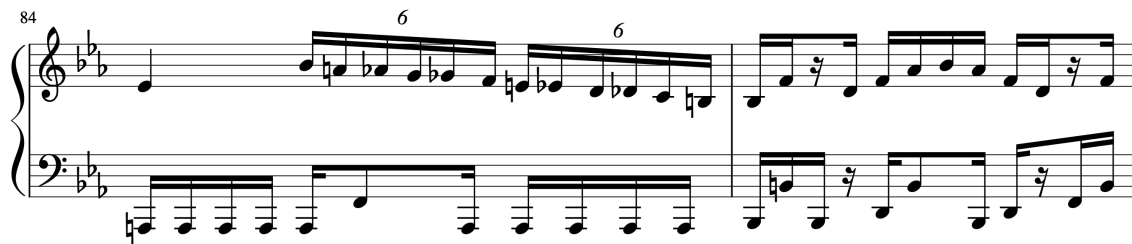
We can see a descending chromatic line in the left hand in this example, which combines with several three-note chromatic lines in the right hand. Because of the chromatic nature of this section, it is difficult to establish a tonal center. This section ends in a G minor-major 7<sup>th</sup> chord (mM7), which is not very frequently found in common practice harmony.

The second section, *Tranquilo*, is a lyrical theme in G minor written in a more homophonic texture, with prominent use of polyrhythm; examples of these are the use of half-note triplets in the right hand and eighth notes in the left hand, and in other moments, quarter-note triplets against eighth notes (Ex. 6-11).



Example 6-11. Herra, *Sonata for piano*, III. Allegro, mm. 30-32

The third section, *Allegro*, is more virtuosic than the opening Allegro, and presents a *quasi-improvisatory* quality. It retains the chromaticism of the first section, but unlike that section, this one does not present a clear melody in the bass or right hand. Its tumultuous and agitated character is achieved by presenting two moving lines that consist mostly of sixteenth notes, sixteenth-note triplets, or a syncopated rhythm that includes eighth notes and sixteenth notes (Ex. 6-12). This section is almost as long as the first two sections combined.



Example 6-12. Herra, *Sonata for piano*, III. Allegro, mm. 84-85

The fourth section returns to the *Tranquilo* character, but the material is different from the first *Tranquilo*. This section is written in B-flat minor and begins with a tonic chord in first inversion. There is a minimalistic character in this section because of the repeated note texture in the right hand (Ex. 6-13).

100 **Tranquilo** ♩ ca. 90

The musical score for Example 6-13 consists of three measures. The right hand (treble clef) plays a continuous eighth-note pattern: B-flat, A, G, F, E, D, C, B-flat. The left hand (bass clef) plays a simple bass line with notes marked with asterisks and 'ad.' (ad libitum): B-flat, A, G, F, E, D, C, B-flat.

Example 6-13. Herra, *Sonata for piano*, III. Allegro, mm. 100-102

Unlike the first *Tranquilo*, where the melody was in the right hand, now the melody is in the bass, and has an expansive character. Both *Tranquilo* sections are equally short; 26 and 24 measures long, respectively.

124 **Festivo** ♩ ca. 120

The musical score for Example 6-14 consists of five measures. The right hand (treble clef) plays a simple bass line with notes marked with asterisks and 'ad.' (ad libitum): B-flat, A, G, F, E, D, C, B-flat. The left hand (bass clef) plays a complex, rhythmic pattern with many notes, including a low A0 note.

Example 6-14. Herra, *Sonata for piano*, III. Allegro, mm. 124-128

The fifth and final section, *Festivo*, uses the lowest register of the instrument and opens with the lowest note, A0, perhaps to emulate the sound of drums (Ex. 6-15).

Example 6-15. Herra, *Sonata for piano*, III. Allegro, mm. 170-173

This last section has a more palpable latin flair, especially because of the syncopated rhythm in both hands. The main theme of this section starts in A minor in m. 133, and is characterized by the i-V-i progression. This theme quickly modulates to D-flat minor, and then back to A minor. A similar theme is presented in C major in m. 164 which follows the I-V-I pattern. There is a direct modulation (i.e., there is no preparation) to E major in m. 171 (See Ex. 6-15), which presents this theme one more time before returning to a reiteration of the opening of the *Festivo* section.

The first section of the *Festivo*, mm. 124-154, returns almost in its entirety before an interruption of this material appears in m. 209. This small codetta is directly derived from the ending of the first section of the final movement, mm. 15-18. All the chromaticism from this movement and of the sonata as a whole, suddenly resolves to a clear C major chord in the final two measures (Ex. 6-16).

Example 6-16. Herra, *Sonata for piano*, III. Allegro, mm. 211-213

One could argue that this final movement is episodic, rather than written in a traditional form structure such as sonata or rondo. It is important to note that, although both *Allegro* and *Tranquilo* sections return in terms of tempo indications, the material in the second *Allegro* and the second *Tranquilo* are not a reappearance of the first ones (Table 6-3).

Section	Themes/Features	Measures	
A	<i>Allegro - Chromatic</i>	1-18	
B	<i>Tranquilo - G minor</i> <i>Lyrical character</i>	19-45	
C	<i>Allegro - Chromatic</i> <i>and improvisatory</i>	46-99	
D	<i>Tranquilo,</i> B-flat minor	100-123	
E	<i>Festivo</i>	a	124-162
	<i>Latin</i>	b	163-178
	<i>elements</i>	a	179-208
		Codetta	209-213

Table 6-3. Formal scheme, Herra, *Sonata for piano*, III. *Allegro*

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### FÉLIX MATA (1931-1980)

#### Biographical Sketch

Félix Mata Bonilla was born in 1931 and died in 1980. His father, Julio Mata Oreamuno (1899-1969), was a cellist and an important composer and educator. Julio Mata was director-general of the military bands of Costa Rica at the end of the 1940s, and also a founding member of National Conservatory of Music (later School of Musical Arts, University of Costa Rica), as well as a founding member of Costa Rica's National Symphony Orchestra. As a composer, he wrote a few sacred works, operettas, a zarzuela, and some orchestral pieces.<sup>121</sup>

Félix Mata started to study piano at an early age with his cousin, Virginia Mata Alfaro. In 1955, he graduated as a dental surgeon from the University of Costa Rica, and in 1970, he graduated from the National Conservatory of Music of the University of Costa Rica.<sup>122</sup> Mata combined his music career with a job as a dentist.<sup>123</sup>

His music catalogue is very small; it consists of eight art songs, a suite for strings (and a transcription of this suite for piano solo), a piano trio, and the piano sonata.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> Jorge Luis Acevedo Vargas, "Mata (Oreamuno), Julio," *Grove Music Online*, ed. Deane Root, accessed 29 April, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.46346>.

<sup>122</sup> Zamira Barquero and Gerardo Duarte, "Canciones de Julio Mata & Félix Mata," in accompanying booklet, *Canciones de Julio Mata & Félix Mata*. Universidad de Costa Rica, Escuela de Artes Musicales, 2011, compact disc.

<sup>123</sup> Manuel Matarrita, "Las hermosas canciones de Julián Marchena y Félix Mata," *La Nación*, February 24, 2013, <https://www.nacion.com/viva/cultura/las-hermosas-canciones-de-julian-marchena-y-felix-mata/M5XJOCB7CBHGHKXT44DGSXPSGI/story/>.

<sup>124</sup> Matarrita, "Julián Marchena y Félix Mata," under "Vuelos supremos."

His vocal works have been recorded in several nationally and internationally produced albums and have been published by the University of Costa Rica.

### **Overview of Musical Characteristics**

The most defining element in Mata's musical style is the use of rich chromatic harmonies that are grounded in conventional harmony. These elements can be found in his eight songs, as well as his suite for strings.

Manuel Matarrita briefly discusses this in an article about art song in Costa Rica, where he writes, "Félix Mata achieved a special treatment of the voice in his songs, in which he used texts by the Costa Rican poet Julián Marchena (1897-1985), and in some occasions of his own inspiration. His songs use extended harmonies, with clear influence from jazz music."<sup>125</sup>

The fact that Mata uses this harmonic language in the '60s in Costa Rica is noteworthy, considering that two of the most important composers in the country during this decade – Benjamín Gutiérrez and Bernal Flores – were drifting away from tonality in the more strict sense, each in their own way. Meza explains that in Costa Rica, "...two composers competed for a place of relevance: Bernal Flores, with a proposal for free dodecaphonism, and Benjamín Gutiérrez, with a proposal that moves between tonality and atonality, but with a specially measured balance."<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> Manuel Matarrita, "El desarrollo de la canción artística en Costa Rica," (2011), 29.  
[https://www.academia.edu/662508/El\\_desarrollo\\_de\\_la\\_canci%C3%B3n\\_art%C3%ADstica\\_en\\_Costa\\_Rica](https://www.academia.edu/662508/El_desarrollo_de_la_canci%C3%B3n_art%C3%ADstica_en_Costa_Rica).

<sup>126</sup> Gerardo Meza Sandoval, *Tres Compositores Centroamericanos Del Centro Latinoamericano de Altos Estudios Musicales del Instituto Torcuato di Tella* [Three Central American Composers from the *Centro Latinoamericano de Altos Estudios Musicales* from the Torcuato di Tella Institute] (Costa Rica: Editorial Alma Mater, 2015), 109.



## The Sonata for piano (1965)

The Sonata for Piano (*Sonata para piano* in its original title), is the first piano sonata written by a Costa Rican composer. Interestingly, the first Costa Rican piano concerto was written more than twenty years before this sonata, and another work for piano and orchestra was written two years before the sonata, in 1963.<sup>127</sup>

The sonata was not published during the composer's lifetime, and in fact, it was unknown to the audience and pianists for many years. Costa Rican pianist and conductor Walter Morales performed the work for the first time at Carnegie Mellon University in June 2008, more than forty years after it was finished. In 2010, Morales gave the Costa Rican premiere at the Foyer of the National Theater of Costa Rica, the country's most important venue for the arts. According to Morales, both the piano Suite and the Sonata were written in 1964 and 1965 respectively, which is before the composer attended the University of Costa Rica to study music.<sup>128</sup> In 2018, Morales completed performance editions of Félix Mata's Piano Sonata and the Suite for Piano, and he has recently transcribed several of Mata's art songs for solo piano.<sup>129</sup>

The Mata sonata has a clear tonal writing that evokes the nature of some Romantic piano music, by composers such as Grieg or Schumann, and it also has a highly chromatic harmonic language that suggests some late-Romantic influence, reminiscent of the sound world of piano works by Scriabin and Rachmaninoff. Matarrita comments that the sonata "also introduces extended chords, as well as progressions and harmonies derived from 'jazz' style, which was at

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<sup>127</sup> The works referred are the Concerto for Piano and Orchestra by C. E. Vargas, and the Concerto for Piano, Percussion and Orchestra by Bernal Flores (1963). For a thorough analysis of the Vargas Concerto, see Matarrita, Manuel, "An Analytical Study of Concerto for Piano and Orchestra, Op. 13, by Costa Rican Composer Carlos Enrique Vargas" (DMA diss., Louisiana State University, 2004).

<sup>128</sup> Walter Morales, e-mail message to author, May 5, 2020.

<sup>129</sup> Walter Morales, e-mail message to author, May 5, 2020. This edition is the one I have used for the purpose of my analysis.

this moment not frequent in piano music written in Costa Rica.”<sup>130</sup>

The sonata is written in three movements that follow the conventional fast-slow-fast structure. Among all sonatas discussed in this document, the Mata sonata is undoubtedly the most conventional in terms of harmonic language and use of form.

### I. *Andante - Allegro molto*

This movement starts with a 12-measure slow introduction (Andante), which will return several times later in the movement. The initial 2-measure idea in mm. 1-2 in the right hand (Ex. 7-1), functions as material for the primary theme in m. 13, now in the left hand.

Andante ♩ = 66

The image shows a musical score for the first two measures of the Andante introduction. It is in 4/4 time and marked *p*. The right hand (treble clef) plays a sequence of chords: a half note G4, a half note F4, a half note E4, and a half note D4. The left hand (bass clef) plays a sequence of chords: a half note G2, a half note F2, a half note E2, and a half note D2. The notes are written as whole notes. The tempo is marked "Andante" with a quarter note equal to 66 beats per minute. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat).

Example 7-1. Mata, *Sonata for piano*, I. Andante – Allegro molto, mm. 1-2

The ending of the introduction will also appear later in this movement, most of the times as a literal repetition, but other times transformed (Ex. 7-2).

The image shows a musical score for measures 9-12 of the Andante introduction. It is in 4/4 time and marked *f ed animando*. The right hand (treble clef) plays a sequence of chords: a half note G4, a half note F4, a half note E4, and a half note D4. The left hand (bass clef) plays a sequence of chords: a half note G2, a half note F2, a half note E2, and a half note D2. The notes are written as whole notes. The tempo is marked "Andante" with a quarter note equal to 66 beats per minute. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The score includes a *rit.* marking in measure 12.

Example 7-2. Mata, *Sonata for piano*, I. Andante – Allegro molto, mm. 9-12

<sup>130</sup> Matarrita, “Creación Musical” 27-28.

The primary theme starts in m. 13 with the melody in octaves in the left hand, and rather virtuosic broken chords moving an octave above in rapid succession in the right hand. After this 8-measure phrase, there is a change of texture to a broken arpeggio figure that has a “hidden” melody in the downbeat and last eighth note of each arpeggio. The initial 8-measure phrase returns in m. 33, which leads to the transition in m. 41. The transition also presents a broken arpeggio figure similar to m. 21, that modulates to the secondary theme group in B-flat major (III) as expected.

The secondary group theme first introduces a lovely lyric theme in the right hand (secondary theme<sup>1</sup>), accompanied by broken arpeggios in the left hand. The harmonies in this section are often chromatically enriched by the use of chords with altered 9ths and 11ths. (Ex. 7-3).

53 **Andante con espressione** ♩ = 84

The musical score for Example 7-3 consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef and the lower staff is in bass clef. The key signature has two flats (B-flat major). The tempo is marked 'Andante con espressione' with a quarter note equal to 84 beats per minute. The dynamics are marked 'a tempo p tranquillo'. The right hand has a melodic line with a long slur over measures 53-56. The left hand has a broken arpeggio accompaniment. The piece concludes with a fermata over the final chord in measure 56.

Example 7-3. Mata, *Sonata for piano*, I. Andante – Allegro molto, mm. 53-56

A modulation to the mediant (III) of B-flat major (enharmonically spelled as C-sharp minor), makes way for a new theme in m. 71 (secondary theme<sup>2</sup>) – a more expansive theme in G-sharp minor (Ex. 7-4).

71 **Meno mosso** ♩ = 56

*a tempo ff*

Tea Tea Tea Tea Tea Tea Tea

Example 7-4. Mata, *Sonata for piano*, I. Andante – Allegro molto, mm. 71-72

This theme contrasts with both the primary and the previous secondary theme because of the texture – the left hand plays the bass in a much lower register of the piano, and the use of more chromatic motion in the harmonies. This theme is also less stable harmonically, with key changes in mm. 75 and 77.

The closing theme in m. 79 is a repetition of mm. 9-12, a return of G minor over a cadential 6/4, ending the exposition in the tonic (Ex. 7-5). In this case, this gesture works more like a retransition (i.e., a kind of *turnaround* that will make it easier to return to the tonic in the primary theme). Often, sonata movements that include a retransition tend to have a second ending that serves the purpose of establishing a final cadence in the secondary group key, but that is not the case in this movement.

*sf f ed animando*

rit.

Tea Tea Tea Tea

Example 7-5. Mata, *Sonata for piano*, I. Andante – Allegro molto, mm. 79-82

The setup of the closing section is achieved in a very smooth way, mainly because of the 4-note descending chromatic gestures in mm. 75 and 77, which helps to modulate from the distant G-sharp minor to the tonic key.

One remarkable aspect of this movement is that the aforementioned gesture from mm. 9 and 79 (the cadential 6/4 idea) keeps returning throughout the movement. The first half of the main idea (mm. 1-2 in the right hand., and mm.13-16 in the left hand.) is present in this gesture (See Ex. 7-1 and 7-2), yet Mata uses this as a way of bringing the listener's attention back to the main idea. The relationship between the cadential 6/4 idea and the main idea can be clearly observed in Ex. 7-6.

The image shows a musical score for piano, measures 9-10. The score is in G-sharp minor (one flat) and 6/4 time. The right hand (treble clef) features a series of chords and melodic lines, with a bracketed section labeled "Derived from main idea" spanning measures 9 and 10. The left hand (bass clef) has a rhythmic accompaniment of eighth notes. The dynamic marking is *f ed animando*. The score includes a box with the number "9" in the top left corner.

Example 7-6. Mata, *Sonata for piano*, I. Andante – Allegro molto, mm. 9-10

It is then no coincidence that this idea functions as a closing element, and as a bridge between sections. We find this idea between the introduction and the exposition, between the exposition and the development, between main sections in the development (mm. 99-103 in C minor, over a cadential 6/4), and as the retransition from the development into the recapitulation.

The development, starting in m. 83, uses two main techniques to transform the main idea from the primary theme. The first technique is the use of a diminution of the rhythmical values, presented in the left hand (i.e., the value of each note is cut in half, so the idea is now in eighth notes and in a faster tempo). This passage is interrupted by the aforementioned cadential 6/4

idea, which introduces the second technique. In m. 103, the main idea appears in augmentation, interwoven between fast descending arpeggios (the value of the notes is doubled in comparison to m. 83). In this section of the passage, there is an interpolation of both the material from the primary theme and the material from the first secondary theme, switching every two measures.

This dialogue changes in the third beat of m. 111, where there is a phrase previously heard in m. 67, only that this time there is a displacement of the beat in which the phrase is placed (Ex. 7-7 and 7-8).



Example 7-7. Mata, *Sonata for piano*, I. Andante – Allegro molto, m. 67



Example 7-8. Mata, *Sonata for piano*, I. Andante – Allegro molto, mm. 111-114

This idea leads to a cadential progression in A-flat minor (notice the ii-V motion in m. 114) that is interrupted abruptly once again by the cadential 6/4 idea, bringing the piece back to the Recapitulation.

After a more normative Recapitulation, with the secondary group in the parallel major (G), the movement closes with a clear PAC in m. 185 in the tonic (Ex. 7-9).

The image displays two staves of musical notation. The first staff, labeled '183', shows a piano texture with a 'subito p' dynamic marking and a 'rit.' (ritardando) marking. The second staff, labeled '185', is marked 'Presto' with a tempo of quarter note = 112, 'a tempo', and 'f' (forte) dynamic. Both staves include figured bass notation (Teo) below the bass line.

Example 7-9. Mata, *Sonata for piano*, I. Andante – Allegro molto, mm. 183-188

The coda of this movement is an almost literal reprise of the primary theme (and therefore another iteration of the main idea), but this time in  $\frac{2}{2}$  and at a faster tempo. The coda ends with a plagal “cadence” (iv-i) in mm. 198-199 that is rhetorically emphasized by the *sforzandi* in the bass.<sup>131</sup> The overall structure of this movement is presented in Table 7-1.

<sup>131</sup> I use the plagal cadence concept proposed by Caplin. See William E. Caplin. "The Classical Cadence: Conceptions and Misconceptions." *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 57, no. 1 (2004): 51-118, <https://doi.org/10.1525/jams.2004.57.1.51>.

<b>Section</b>	<b>Themes/Features</b>	<b>Measures</b>
Introduction	<i>Andante</i>	1-12
Exposition	Primary theme (i, Gm)	13-40
Transition	<i>Arpeggios, modulates to...</i>	41-52
Secondary group	Secondary theme <sup>1</sup> (III, Bb) <i>Andante</i> <i>More lyrical</i>	53-70
	Secondary theme <sup>2</sup>	71-78
Closing theme	<i>Material from Introduction</i>	79-82
Development	Allegro moderato First section, <i>Diminution, sequential</i>	83-102
	Second section, <i>Augmentation of the main idea and secondary theme<sup>1</sup>, 6/4 idea from m. 9</i>	103-118
Recapitulation	Primary theme (i, Gm)	119-146
Transition	<i>Arpeggios, modulates to...</i>	147-158
Secondary group	Secondary theme <sup>1</sup> (I, G) <i>Andante</i> <i>More lyrical</i>	159-176
	Secondary theme <sup>2</sup> , PAC in G minor	177-184
Coda	<i>Reprise from Intro</i>	185-204

Table 7-1. Formal scheme, Mata, *Sonata for piano*, I. Andante – Allegro molto



## II. Adagio

The second movement of the sonata follows the conventional form of a middle slow movement. It is written in E-flat major, a closely related key to G minor. This movement starts with a chorale texture, that uses an open disposition of chords (Ex 7-10).

Adagio ♩ = 56

The musical score for Example 7-10 is in E-flat major, 3/4 time, and begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic. It features a chorale texture with open chords in both hands, marked with 'Ceo.' below the notes. The right hand has a melodic line with a long note in the first measure, while the left hand provides a steady accompaniment of chords.

Example 7-10. Mata, *Sonata for piano*, II. Adagio, mm. 1-4

In this movement we can appreciate Mata's predilection for jazz-influenced harmonies, such as the use of the major 7<sup>th</sup> chord, and other 7<sup>th</sup> and added 9<sup>th</sup> chords. The preference for these chords gives the movement a lush sound throughout.

The middle section which starts in m. 25, has a faster surface rhythm, slowly building tension and momentum towards the climax of the movement in mm. 41-46 (*piú mosso*). The dialogue between the melody in the right and left hands helps to move this section forward (Ex. 7-11).

The musical score for Example 7-11 is in E-flat major, 3/4 time, and begins with a pianissimo (*pp*) dynamic. It features a dialogue between the melody in the right and left hands, marked with 'Ceo.' below the notes. The right hand has a melodic line with a long note in the first measure, while the left hand provides a steady accompaniment of chords.

Example 7-11. Mata, *Sonata for piano*, II. Adagio, mm. 41-44

The A section returns in m. 47 with a few different flourishes in the right hand, such as the ones in mm. 63-65. The overall form of this movement could be analyzed as simple ternary (Table 7-2).

Section	Measures
A	1-24
B	25-46
A'	47-74

Table 7-2. Formal scheme, Mata, *Sonata for piano*, II. Adagio

### III. *Allegro Vivace*

The last movement of the sonata returns to G minor, the key of the first movement. It is also as dramatic as the opening movement, with a tempestuous and agitated character, in great part thanks to the texture of fast-moving triplets (Ex. 7-12).

**Allegro Vivace** ♩ = 192

Example 7-12. Mata, *Sonata for piano*, III. *Allegro Vivace*, mm. 1-4

Just like the first movement, this is also in clear sonata form. The incessant triplets texture can be heard from m. 1 until the end of the primary theme in m. 43.

After a short transition in mm. 43-50, in which the surface rhythm suddenly slows down and the music modulates to the usual scale degree III (B-flat major), we arrive at the secondary

theme in m. 51. One interesting aspect of the secondary theme is that the triplet figure is still very much present, now in arpeggiated chords distributed in both hands (Ex. 7-13).

The image shows a musical score for Example 7-13. It is a piano piece in 3/4 time, marked 'Meno mosso' with a tempo of 160. The score is in B-flat major and consists of two staves. The right hand features a melodic line with a triplet figure (three eighth notes) and a 'legato' marking. The left hand plays arpeggiated chords, also featuring a triplet figure. The piece is marked 'a tempo' and 'p' (piano). The score includes a repeat sign at the end of the excerpt.

Example 7-13. Mata, *Sonata for piano*, III. Allegro Vivace, mm. 51-54

A similar texture is also explored in the exposition of the first movement, albeit only briefly, as shown in Ex 7-14.

The image shows a musical score for Example 7-14. It is a piano piece in 3/4 time, marked 'Andante - Allegro molto'. The score is in B-flat major and consists of two staves. The right hand features a melodic line with a triplet figure (three eighth notes) and a 'legato' marking. The left hand plays arpeggiated chords, also featuring a triplet figure. The piece is marked 'p' (piano). The score includes a repeat sign at the end of the excerpt.

Example 7-14. Mata, *Sonata for piano*, I. Andante – Allegro molto, mm. 41-44

The secondary theme presents a more lyrical character, with an expansive melody in long and held notes, as well as rich chromatic harmonies that resemble much of late-romantic piano music.

Another similarity with the first movement is the ending of the exposition. In both movements, Mata ends with a V chord and a repeat sign. Looking more closely, one could see

that both endings use the same pitches in the melody –  $\hat{1}$ ,  $\#\hat{7}$ ,  $\hat{3}$ ,  $\hat{2}$ , as well as practically the same harmonic progressions (Ex. 7-15).

Example 7-15. Mata, *Sonata for piano*, I. Andante – Allegro molto, m. 80 and III. Allegro Vivace, mm. 117-118

The development brings us back to the first movement, especially in the way it is structured; both are constructed in sections. In the case of the third movement, there are two clearly defined sections. The first one, in mm. 119-143, uses the triplet motif from the primary theme as the main texture, and drives the music from an implied C minor to a clear V7 in B-flat minor, leading to the expansive *Meno mosso* in m. 144.

The second section varies the triplets texture, with intercalated measures of straight quarter-note octaves in the right hand and syncopated chords in the left hand. This section is also more modulatory than the first one, and it ends in the same way it was introduced, with ascending three-beats figure in chords (Ex. 7-16).

Example 7-16. Mata, *Sonata for piano*, III. Allegro Vivace, mm. 154-158

The recapitulation follows the expected procedures for a standard sonata form movement, and bring the secondary theme in G major, the parallel mode of G minor.

One final similarity with the first movement is the ending. In both movements, Mata brings back the primary theme one more time as a coda. In the third movement, he combines the beginning of the primary theme with the ending, to bring the sonata to a grandiose ending. All of these similarities between the first and third movements make the sonata more cohesive as a whole. The overall structure is shown below in Table 7-3.

<b>Section</b>	<b>Themes/Features</b>	<b>Measures</b>
Exposition	Primary theme (i, Gm)	1-43
Transition	<i>Slower surface</i> <i>rhythm,</i> <i>modulation to...</i>	43-50
	Secondary theme, <i>Meno mosso</i> (III, B-flat), open ending	51-118
Development	<i>Themes from Expo.,</i> <i>expansive ending</i>	119-158
Recapitulation	Primary theme (i, Gm)	159-202
Transition	<i>Slower surface</i> <i>rhythm,</i> <i>modulation to...</i>	202-209
	Secondary theme (I, G)	210-278
Coda	<i>Primary theme</i>	279-294

Table 7-3. Formal scheme, Mata, *Sonata for piano*, III. Allegro Vivace

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### MANUEL MATARRITA (b. 1972)

#### Biographical Sketch

Manuel Matarrita Venegas was born in 1972 in Santo Domingo, Heredia. He started taking music lessons when he was eight years old, in the pre-college program of the School of Musical Arts at the University of Costa Rica, where he later earned his Bachelor's and *Licenciatura* in Piano Performance.<sup>132</sup> In Costa Rica, Matarrita studied with professors Higinio Fernández and María Clara Cullel, the latter who was one of the main figures in the development of piano teaching in Costa Rica. Matarrita earned his MM in Piano Performance at the University of New Orleans, and his DMA at Louisiana State University, with professors Mary Ann Bulla and Constance K. Carroll, respectively.<sup>133</sup>

He is currently one of the most active pianists in Costa Rica and Central America. As a soloist, he has played with every major orchestra in Costa Rica, as well as with orchestras in Colombia, Peru, Brazil, El Salvador, and the United States. As a soloist, he has collaborated with such conductors as Agustín Cullell, Giancarlo Guerrero, Irwin Hofmann, Jorge Lhez, Jindong Cai, Roman Kopfman, Martín Jorge, Lior Shambadal, Francesco Belli, and Alejandro Gutiérrez.

Dr. Manuel Matarrita was the winner of the prestigious *Premio Nacional "Aquileo J. Echeverría"* in 2012 and 2015.<sup>134</sup> He has appeared as a soloist and accompanist in Costa Rica

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<sup>132</sup> A degree awarded after completing four years of study (Bachelor's) but is not considered a post-graduate degree.

<sup>133</sup> <http://laretreta.net/matarrita/biography.html>

<sup>134</sup> Natanael Porras López, "Manuel Matarrita, un pianista costarricense que busca mantener vivo el legado de los compositores y compositoras de Latinoamérica," *Feed Back CR*, November 22, 2018, <https://www.feedback-cr.com/2018/11/22/manuel-matarrita-un-pianista-costarricense-que-busca-mantener-vivo-el-legado-de-los-compositores-y-compositoras-de-centroamerica/>.

and around the world, with appearances in Spain, Italy, Serbia, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Argentina, El Salvador, Peru, Brazil, Colombia, Puerto Rico, Cuba, and the United States. Since 2008, he has been one of the official pianists of the International Voice Competition “Ciudad de Trujillo,” in Peru.

Currently, Dr. Matarrita is Professor of Piano at the University of Costa Rica, where he also served as Director of the School of Music between 2013 and 2017. Dr. Matarrita is also an active member of the World Piano Teachers Association (WPTA). He currently serves as President of the WPTA-Costa Rica, where he founded and directs the Costa Rica Pianists Symposium (*Encuentro de Pianistas de Costa Rica*), an annual event that takes place in San José every year since 2014.

His love for Spanish and Latin American repertoire is reflected in the publication of a book of Costa Rican songs, *Canciones Populares Costarricenses* (Costa Rican Popular Songs, 2008), as well as two albums dedicated to Costa Rican music – *Una milpa y buenos güeyes* (2012), and *Flores del corazón* (2017). He has recorded two other albums, *Confidencias* (2016), which is entirely dedicated to Latin American music, and *Evocación* (2017), which is dedicated exclusively to Spanish composers.

In 2012 Matarrita started his career as a composer, and in more recent years he has been writing works not only for piano solo, but also for other instruments such as oboe, clarinet, trumpet, and horn, as well as several art song cycles.<sup>135</sup> His works have already earned him recognition as a composer, and in 2018 he won first prize in the *Concurso de Composición para*

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<sup>135</sup> Manuel Matarrita, phone call to author, April 19, 2020.

*Piano* (Piano Composition Competition), organized by WPTA-Argentina<sup>136</sup> for his set of variations, *Desvaríos sobre "La botijuela"*.

### Overview of Musical Characteristics

Despite just having recently discovered his vein as a composer, Manuel Matarrita has already written several works for solo piano, as well as different song cycles such as *Cantos Errantes*, *Despedidas*, and *Serenatas*, in which he set poetry by some of the most important Costa Rican poets like Jorge Debravo (1938-1967), Lisímaco Chavarría (1873-1913), and Julián Marchena (1897-1985). He also wrote *Dos Canciones sobre Poemas de Rubén Darío*, where he set music to poetry by the Nicaraguan poet.

Matarrita's passion for Latin American and Costa Rican music has influenced many of his compositions. His first original work for solo piano, *Desvaríos sobre La Botijuela* (Deliriums on "La botijuela", 2012), is a set of ten variations based on a Costa Rican folk dance (Ex. 8-1). Matarrita explains this in the foreword.

This musical theme is a *danza criolla* (creole dance), a rhythm that in Costa Rica is clearly related to other international dances such as habanera and contradanza. Some of the variations of this work make direct musical allusions to the style of composition of important figures of Latin American pianism, namely: Heitor Villa-Lobos, Manuel M. Ponce, Ignacio Cervantes, Astor Piazzolla, Ernesto Nazareth, and Alberto Ginastera. Other variations, on the other hand, set rhythms present in the traditional musical imaginary of Costa Rica, even though they are not unique to the country. Such are the cases of rhythms such as pasillo, calypso, swing criollo (cumbia), and tambito.<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> World Piano Teachers Association – Argentina.

<sup>137</sup> Manuel Matarrita, *Desvaríos sobre "La botijuela" - a set of variations of a Costa Rica song through Latin American Dance Rhythms* (SMP Press). <https://www.sheetmusicplus.com/title/desvaros-sobre-la-botijuela-variations-on-la-botijuela-digital-sheet-music/21697033>.



5 **La Botijuela (Danza)**

*mf*

**Marcato alla Ginastera**

*p misterioso*

The image shows two musical excerpts. The first, 'La Botijuela (Danza)', is in 3/4 time with a key signature of three flats and a mezzo-forte (mf) dynamic. The second, 'Marcato alla Ginastera', is in 5/8 time with a key signature of three flats and a piano (p) dynamic, marked 'misterioso'.

Example 8-1. Matarrita, *Desvaríos sobre "La botijuela"*, mm. 5-9 and 272-276

One other example of the inclusion of Latin American style elements in his music is the insertion of Latin dances and rhythms. The last movement of *Páshtö*,<sup>138</sup> *sonata for oboe and piano* is titled "Rondo Carioca," and is a Rondo that alternates Samba and Bossa-Nova, both very representative rhythms from Brazil (Ex. 8-2).

**Allegro gostosinho**

2

The image shows the beginning of the 'Allegro gostosinho' movement. It is in 2/4 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The piano part features a rhythmic pattern characteristic of Samba or Bossa-Nova.

Example 8-2. Matarrita, *Páshtö*, *sonata for oboe and piano*, IV. Rondo Carioca, mm. 1-4

<sup>138</sup> A term in the Cabécar language that means "reeds."

Another example of Matarrita’s inclusion of Costa Rican elements can be found in the *Preludio y Toccatina* (2019), which is based on two popular Costa Rican songs, "La guaria morada" and "Los amores de Laco". In this work Matarrita transforms these songs beyond simple homophonic writing, and instead adapts them to more pianistic textures, such as virtuosic swift sixteenth-note arpeggios in where he embeds the melody of “La guaria morada” for the Prelude, and a very rhythmic-driven toccatina for “Los amores de Laco”.

The sonata for clarinet and piano *Buláwa*, “...uses as a generator material the Costa Rican folk song *El torito* (The little bull), which appears fragmented and transformed throughout the work.”<sup>139</sup>

The incorporation of elements from the western canon is also an important feature of Matarrita’s works, not only in terms of form – such as the *Sonatica* – but also in some fixed genres and compositional techniques. For example, the last movement of *Buláwa* is a three-voice fugue based on a fragment of the aforementioned song as the subject (Ex. 8-3).

**Póngale bonito**

Example 8-3. Matarrita, *Buláwa*, sonata for clarinet and piano, III. Torito en Fuga, mm. 1-9

<sup>139</sup> Manuel Matarrita, foreword to *Buláwa*.

It is interesting to note that besides the *Sonatica*, Matarrita has written sonatas for clarinet, oboe, and horn, as well as a sonatina for trumpet, all with piano accompaniment. This is more than a coincidence, since one of his long-term projects is to write a piece for every instrument, similar to what Paul Hindemith accomplished.<sup>140</sup>

There are two works that not only incorporate one technique that is more associated with the Central European tradition but rather completely blends both this tradition with Costa Rican and Latin American music.

The *Quince Inventiones Ticas* (Fifteen Costa Rican Two-Part Inventions, 2018) is according to the composer, “a collection of fifteen works for piano that uses a series of songs and dances that belong to the traditional Costa Rican imaginary, as well as the Two-voice [*sic*] inventions (BWV 772-786) by J. S. Bach.”<sup>141</sup> All of the pieces in this collection use fragments of existing works, but at the same time they are “stylized in light of other compositions and musical patterns of the Baroque period.”<sup>142</sup> The work even follows the same tonal scheme established by J. S. Bach in his collection of two-part inventions.<sup>143</sup>

Another work that completely merges different styles is the *Partita Mestiza* (2020), which is based on the Baroque instrumental dance suite. Matarrita describes that in this work, “Traditional dances from the Central European historical tradition, such as allemande, courante, sarabande, minuet, bourrée, and gigue, merge with rhythms from the Caribbean and Central and South America, such as the Cuban son montuno, the Brazilian bossa-nova, the Colombian

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<sup>140</sup> Manuel Matarrita, phone call to author, April 19, 2020.

<sup>141</sup> Manuel Matarrita, foreword to *Quince Inventiones Ticas*, (SMP Press, 2018).  
<https://www.sheetmusicplus.com/title/costa-rican-two-part-inventions-inventiones-ticas-digital-sheet-music/21697028>.

<sup>142</sup> Matarrita.

<sup>143</sup> Matarrita.

pasillo, the Argentine vidala, the Paraguayan guarania, the huayno of the Andean highlands and the Costa Rican tambito” (Ex. 8-4).<sup>144</sup>



Example 8-4. Matarrita, *Partita Mestiza*, I. Preludio (Son montuno), mm. 9-12

One final aspect that is interesting in Matarrita’s short catalogue is the use of non-standard indications and tempo markings, which perhaps is a way of conveying a very specific character and mood, rather than just indicating the tempo of the work. In Ex. 8-3, *Póngale bonito* is Costa Rican slang for “Hurry up” (in this context), but it could also mean “work hard to do something well.”

### The Sonatica (2015)

The word *Sonatica* comes from a wordplay on the musical genre sonata, and the popular demonym “tico,” which is a colloquial term for Costa Rican natives. The origin of this term relates to the “tendency of Costa Ricans to use *-tico* as the diminutive suffix in Spanish instead of the more common and widely used *-ito*.”<sup>145</sup> When used as a suffix, *-tico* denotes something very small, as the suffix *-ito* would. Even though this suffix is found in other Spanish-speaking

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<sup>144</sup> Manuel Matarrita, foreword to *Partita Mestiza*, (SMP Press, 2020).  
[https://www.sheetmusicplus.com/title/partita-mestiza-digital-sheet-music/21696907?ac=1&fbclid=IwAR37Kwt4O3siKNaySUYehGcpItJzN-Ta4j2fOPpqHu\\_yTL2KLMQP1oamhA](https://www.sheetmusicplus.com/title/partita-mestiza-digital-sheet-music/21696907?ac=1&fbclid=IwAR37Kwt4O3siKNaySUYehGcpItJzN-Ta4j2fOPpqHu_yTL2KLMQP1oamhA).

<sup>145</sup> Definitions.net, s.v. “tico,” accessed April 19, 2020, <https://www.definitions.net/definition/TICO>.

countries, in Costa Rica the use of this suffix can also denote affection, which makes it unique.<sup>146</sup>

The Sonatica is a sonata for piano that was written in 2015, and was premiered by the composer in August of that same year. The work has also been performed outside of Costa Rica, Greece and Argentina.<sup>147</sup> It is written in three movements, each with its own title. In addition, each movement represents the music of three different geographical regions of Costa Rica, which have different musical styles and influences. The composer chose genres that have “...representative rhythms that are present in the Costa Rican traditional musical imaginary, although these are not exclusive from the country [Costa Rica].”<sup>148</sup>

The northwest region of Costa Rica is represented in the first movement, *Tambito molto*, the central valley in the second, *Pasillo*, and the Caribbean region (in the south), is represented in the final movement, *Run-down*. One of the motivations for the Sonatica was the idea to write a sonata that had Costa Rican rhythms, and that represented music that is in the imaginary of the Costa Rican audience since there were none.<sup>149</sup>

The harmonic language of the sonata as a whole – and Matarrita’s style in general, is generally tonal, but always expanded by the free use of dissonance, extended chords, and in many occasions, jazz-influenced harmonies.

At the core of the sonata is the rhythmic element, which as Andrea Zanni, an Argentinian pianist and teacher, comments “...is one of the main structural elements, upon which the

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<sup>146</sup> Definitions.net, s.v. "tico,".

<sup>147</sup> Manuel Matarrita, phone call to author, April 19, 2020.

<sup>148</sup> Matarrita, “Creación musical,” 51.

<sup>149</sup> Manuel Matarrita, phone call to author, April 19, 2020.

different musical ideas and sonorities are built. Syncopation, accents, off-beat figures, rhythmic ostinatos, irregular rhythms, and percussion-like touch are all part of this work.”<sup>150</sup>

### **I. *Tambito Molto***

The rhythm known as *tambito*, is considered Costa Rica’s official rhythm. Towards the end of the 1920s, Costa Rica’s government – and particularly the Ministry of Education, realized that there was not a rhythm that was representative enough of their culture that Costa Ricans could recognize as their own.<sup>151</sup> This prompted a series of trips by some of the most important composers of the time. Matarrita points out that, “Roberto Cantillano, José Daniel Zúñiga and Julio Fonseca embarked in tours to the provinces, trying to find some elements that could fulfill these expectations.”<sup>152</sup> This group of composers concluded that the Costa Rican folklore was in the northwest region of Costa Rica, in Guanacaste, which is bordering Nicaragua.<sup>153</sup> The folklore found in Guanacaste, slowly became synonymous with the folklore of Costa Rica as a country.

When discussing nationalist elements in Costa Rican piano music, Matarrita suggests to classify this musical intertext into two categories, or levels: “Direct (clear use of fragments of traditional material), or indirect (allusions to elements from the national imaginary such as rhythms and dances, without making explicit references to other works previously written).”<sup>154</sup>

There have been other piano works that are deliberate in the use of the *tambito*, for

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<sup>150</sup> Andrea Zanni Ruiz, “Sonatica (2015) de Manuel Matarrita” (unpublished manuscript, February 14, 2019), 3.

<sup>151</sup> Vargas Cullell, *De las fanfarrias a las salas*, 177.

<sup>152</sup> Matarrita, “Creación musical,” 13-14.

<sup>153</sup> Matarrita, 14.

<sup>154</sup> Matarrita, 48.

example, *Tambitopiano* (1984) by William Porras (b. 1956), and *De ronda y tambito* (2013) by Marvin Camacho (Ex. 8-5).

The image shows two systems of musical notation. The first system, starting at measure 106, features a piano (p) part with a complex, rhythmic melody in the right hand, characterized by frequent chromaticism and slurs. The dynamics are marked *p*, *f*, and *p* in a repeating pattern. The bass line is simpler, consisting of quarter notes and eighth notes. The second system, starting at measure 109, shows a mezzo-forte (*mf*) piano part. The right hand has a melodic line with slurs and a fermata over a half note, while the bass line continues with a rhythmic pattern of quarter and eighth notes.

Example 8-5. Camacho, *De ronda y tambito*, mm. 106-112  
 Source: Matarrita, “Creación musical,” 50.

This first movement of the *Sonatica* is written in D minor and has a lively character, with the *tambito* rhythm at the core of this character. This movement includes many elements of the distinctive extended tonal language of the composer, which can be appreciated even from the opening measures.

Two main melodic ideas that are recurring throughout the first movement and also in the sonata, are the stepwise descending three-note figure and the lower neighbor three-note figure, both in quarter notes (Ex. 8-6).<sup>155</sup>

The image displays two musical staves in D minor. The first staff shows a stepwise descending three-note figure: G4, F4, E4. The second staff shows a lower neighbor three-note figure: E4, D4, E4.

Example 8-6. Recurring melodic ideas in *Sonatica*  
 Source: Zanni, “*Sonatica* (2015)” 4.

<sup>155</sup> Zanni, “*Sonatica* (2015),” 4.

The movement opens with an 8-measure introduction that presents an arpeggiated gesture that defines the  $\frac{6}{8}$  feeling of the *tambito* but also hints at the persistent change to  $\frac{3}{4}$ , a representative trait of this rhythm, as well as of many other dances in Latin America.<sup>156</sup> This arpeggiated gesture will return later in the movement, many times acting as a type of bridge, especially between larger sections.<sup>157</sup> This idea appears at the end of the exposition and between the exposition and the development (mm. 79-82), at the end of the re-exposition (returning to the beginning at the repeat bar, mm. 180-181), and one last time in the codetta, in mm. 182-183 (Ex. 8-7).



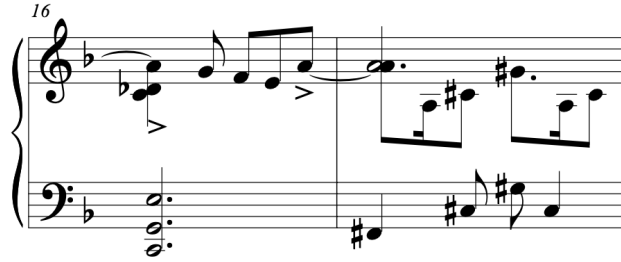
Example 8-7. Matarrita, *Sonatica*, I. *Tambito* molto, mm. 1-5

After the fermata on the flat-II chord in m. 8 (E-flat), the first theme of the movement begins with a contrapuntal texture where three voices are defined, and imitation can be found between the bass line in m. 11 and the inner voice in m. 13, which is then answered by the bass in m. 14. The juxtaposition of the  $\frac{3}{4}$  feeling is more evident in this theme, particularly with the top voice having the melody in quarter notes, surrounded by the  $\frac{6}{8}$  in the other measures. One interesting aspect of this first phrase is the presentation of the *tambito* rhythm in its most basic form (m. 17 in the left hand), which is: ♩ ♪ ♪ ♩ (Ex. 8-8).

<sup>156</sup> Zanni, “Sonatica (2015),” 4.

<sup>157</sup> Zanni, 4.





Example 8-8. Matarrita, *Sonatica*, I. Tambito molto, mm. 16-17

The second part of this primary theme starts in m. 25, with the melody derived from the lower-neighbor figure in a slightly varied rhythm. In this section, the *tambito* rhythm is present in the left hand (Ex. 8-9).



Example 8-9. Matarrita, *Sonatica*, I. Tambito molto, mm. 23-27

After a brief passage of more virtuosic arpeggios in mm. 32-35, this primary theme arrives to A minor, and dissolves into a simpler rhythm in  $\frac{3}{4}$  in m. 40. This brief transition gradually accelerates the surface rhythm to lead into the secondary theme in m. 47.

The secondary theme has a more percussive texture, with two defined layers. The first layer alternates both hands that imitate a more percussive accompaniment, from where the melody stands out in the top voice; this texture is also very chromatic. The two dotted-half notes chords interrupt this texture (Ex. 8-10).

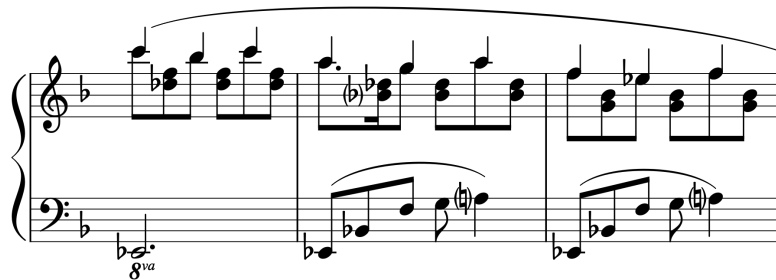
Example 8-10. Matarrita, *Sonatica*, I. Tambito molto, m. 47-50

This phrase is repeated in mm. 51-58, and then arrives to C major in m. 58, giving space to a series of more expressive melodic lines in a descending fifths sequence. A final cadence in the dominant (A major) is presented in m. 71, after two percussive interruptions of the descending three-note idea. The closing section (mm. 71-80) confirms the A major tonality and at the same time, insists on the descending three-note idea in mm. 74 and 78 (Ex. 8-11).<sup>158</sup>

Example 8-11. Matarrita, *Sonatica*, I. Tambito molto, m. 71-80

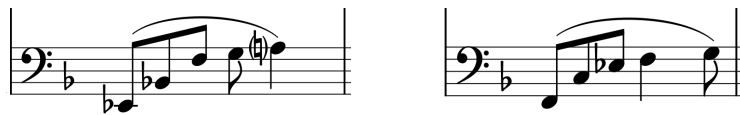
<sup>158</sup> Zanni, "Sonatica (2015)," 6.

The development section begins with the same arpeggiated gesture from the introduction. It has two defined sections, and each section develops different material from the exposition. The first section, which starts in m. 81, is based on the three-note lower neighbor idea (See Ex. 8-6), with each iteration of this idea being a third apart (Ex. 8-12).



Example 8-12. Matarrita, *Sonatica*, I. Tambito molto, mm. 84-86

This idea is first presented in E-flat major, and again in F major in m. 90. One important rhythm aspect of this section in the development is the *tambito* rhythm in the left hand, as well as the variations of this rhythm (Ex. 8-13).



Example 8-13. Matarrita, *Sonatica*, I. Tambito molto, m. 85 and m. 90

In m. 93, the same rhythmical idea from m. 17 is presented one more time (See Ex. 8-8), arriving then to an abrupt interruption of this material.

The second section of the development starts in m. 96, which has the second idea from the primary theme as its source material, this time played over a B diminished chord in the left hand with yet a new variation of the *tambito* rhythm (Ex. 8-14).

Example 8-14. Matarrita, *Sonatica*, I. Tambito molto, mm. 95-99

This idea is interjected by the three descending quarter notes, such as mm. 99 and 102. The ending of the development uses the chromatic textures from the secondary theme, making the transition to the recapitulation very smooth, and not rhetorically accented (Ex. 8-15).

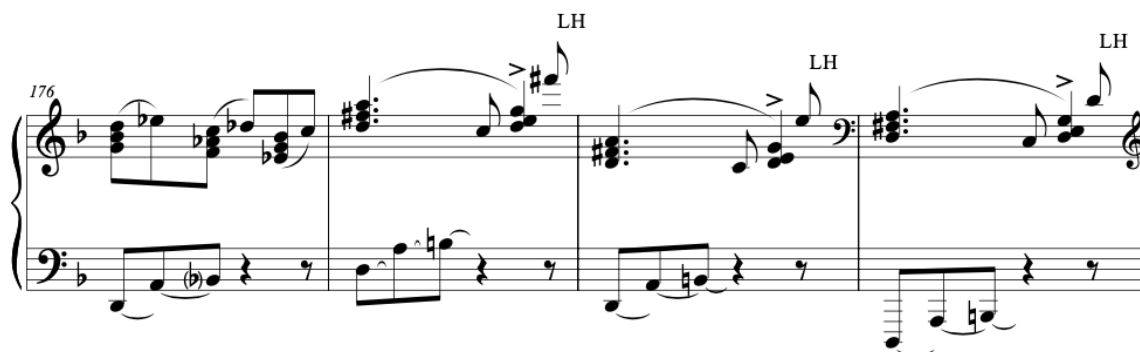
Example 8-15. Matarrita, *Sonatica*, I. Tambito molto, mm. 114-121

The recapitulation presents both themes in the expected tonal areas, with the secondary theme in the tonic (D minor). However, there are small variations in terms of rhythm or added notes. One aspect of this movement is the use of passages that sound improvisatory, such as m. 89, and more evidently m. 132, which is marked *rubato* (Ex. 8-16).



Example 8-16. Matarrita, *Sonatica*, I. Tambito molto, mm. 131-132

The ending of the sonata somewhat obscures the sense of closure of the movement, since we arrive to a final cadence in D major in m. 168. This closing section presents the three-note descending idea, with  $\hat{3}$ ,  $\hat{2}$ ,  $\hat{1}$  in mm. 177-179, played by the left hand crossing over the right hand (Ex. 8-17).



Example 8-17. Matarrita, *Sonatica*, I. Tambito molto, mm. 176-179

This section ends with one final iteration of the ascending arpeggio idea (m. 180), which now functions as the codetta. The movement ends with a transposed version of mm. 186-187, with  $\hat{6}$ ,  $\hat{7}$ , and  $\hat{1}$  in the melody and an accented D in the offbeat of the second half of the measure (Ex. 8-18).

Example 8-18. Matarrita, *Sonatica*, I. Tambito molto, mm. 185-188

The overall structure of this movement can be seen in the table below (Table 8-1).

Section	Themes/Features	Measures
Introduction	<i>Arpeggiated gesture,</i> <i>harmonically dense,</i> <i>fermata in m. 8</i>	1-8
Exposition	Primary theme, First idea (i, Dm)	9-24
	Second idea (III, F)	25-40
Transition	A minor, <i>Diminuendo,</i> <i>rhythmic accel.</i>	40-46
	Secondary theme (v, am) <i>Chromatic, blocked chords</i>	47-71
	Closing theme (V, A)	71-80
Development	<i>Themes from introduction</i> <i>and second idea.</i> <i>Two sections.</i> Smooth transition to...	81-118
	Primary theme, First idea (i, Dm)	118-131
Recapitulation	Second idea (III, F)	132-140
	<i>No quick arpeggios</i>	

Transition	D minor, <i>Diminuendo</i> , <i>rhythmic accel.</i>	140-143
	Secondary theme (i, Dm), IAC in parallel major (D)	144-168
	Closing theme (I, D)	168-179
Codetta	<i>Introduction idea</i> <i>(arpeggiated gesture)</i>	180-188

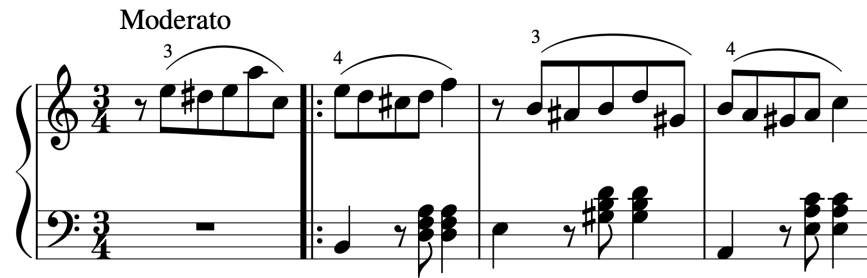
Table 8-1. Formal scheme, Matarrita, *Sonatica*, I. Tambito Molto

## II. *Pasillo (a la memoria de Julio Fonseca)*

The dance known as *pasillo* refers to a rhythm that is originally from South American countries – mostly Ecuador and Colombia. This dance was popular as salon music and it extended throughout Central America; Costa Rica was not the exception.<sup>159</sup> This dance has very defined stylistic features such as the time signature, which is  $\frac{3}{4}$  or  $\frac{6}{8}$ . It is very commonly written in minor keys, and has a ternary form structure, with two themes in minor mode and the third theme in the parallel major.<sup>160</sup> The accompaniment pattern is typically ♩ ♪ ♩, however, variations of this pattern are not uncommon. In the melody, a pickup measure of five eighth notes is a very characteristic feature (Ex. 8-19).

<sup>159</sup> Matarrita, “Creación musical,” 12.

<sup>160</sup> Raziel Acevedo Álvarez and Álvaro Guevara Duarte, *La Música Tradicional de Guanacaste: Una Aproximación Escrita* [Guanacaste’s Traditional Music: A Written Approximation] (San José: Editorial UCR, 2007), 15.



Example 8-19. Fonseca, *Claudia (Pasillo)*, mm. 1-3.<sup>161</sup>

Julio Fonseca was a pivotal figure in Costa Rican music history, and is considered the most important Costa Rican composer of the first half of the twentieth century. In his output there are works for orchestra, chamber music, and an important number of piano works, many of which are considered salon music such as *pasillos* and waltzes, including the *Vals Leda* (Waltz Leda). According to Higinio Fernández, who is the editor of a collection of some of his piano works, "...very few of his piano works [Fonseca's] were properly published, and nowadays [2006], the vast majority are unknown, both by the audience as by the pianists from our country, with a few exceptions, as the famous *Vals Leda*."<sup>162</sup>

This movement is dedicated to the memory of Julio Fonseca. The opening of the movement is marked *rubato* and has an ethereal character; there are no measures in this introduction, with a single bar line dividing this section into two equal parts of 7 measures. The chords move in blocks of sound, and out of this texture arises a single line marked *lejano* (from afar), which is a direct quotation from the *Vals Leda* (Ex. 8-20 and 8-21).

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<sup>161</sup> Julio Fonseca, "Claudia (Pasillo)," *Música para piano / Julio Fonseca*, ed. Higinio Fernández (San José: Editorial UCR, 2006).

<sup>162</sup> Higinio Fernández, "La obra para piano de Julio Fonseca", foreword to *Música para piano / Julio Fonseca*, ed. Higinio Fernández (San José: Editorial UCR, 2006).



Example 8-20. Matarrita, *Sonatica*, II. Pasillo, introduction

Example 8-21. Fonseca, *Vals Leda*, mm. 104-110

After a fermata on a *pp* V7add9 chord, the bass plays the melody from the beginning of the waltz (after the introduction), which dissolves in a descending-stepwise motion into the low D in the bass, in the downbeat of the pickup measure of the A section.

The A section starts the theme of the *pasillo* in G minor, with a more introspective melody and character, and a more homophonic texture than the opening movement. This theme is presented twice, with a slightly varied repetition starting in m. 16.

An important feature of this section is the inclusion of the three-note descending idea in mm. 9-14 (Ex. 8-22).



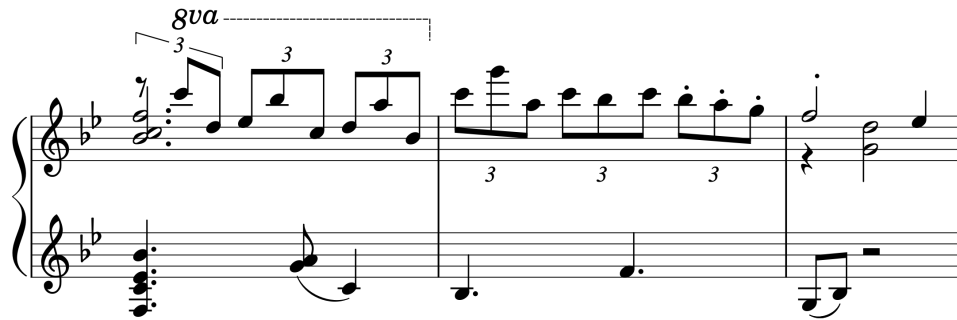
Example 8-22. Matarrita, *Sonatica*, II. Pasillo, mm. 8-15

After a PAC in G minor, the middle segment of this large A section modulates to B-flat major. This section also alludes to a theme previously heard in the first movement, which is based on the lower-neighbor idea (See Ex. 8-12). These references to the previous movement give the sonata a sense of unity (Ex. 8-23).



Example 8-23. Matarrita, *Sonatica*, II. Pasillo, mm. 28-32

In m. 34, this idea repeats in C minor, and ends in a half cadence, with an implied G7 chord obscured by the A-flat minor seventh on the right hand in m. 41. The theme returns immediately after, with small changes in the melody. In the recapitulation of this theme, we can appreciate Matarrita's fondness for improvisatory passages, such as the cascading triplets in mm. 54-55 (Ex. 8-24).



Example 8-24. Matarrita, *Sonatica*, II. Pasillo, mm. 54-56

A more emphatic G minor chord ends this A section (m. 73), and the movement modulates without preparation to the parallel major. The B section has an elegant and graceful character, with very minimal movement in the melody; it mostly moves between C and B. The texture in this section is separated into two layers; the melody of the dance, and the chords that respond to this melody, which are played by both hands (Ex. 8-25).



Example 8-25. Matarrita, *Sonatica*, II. Pasillo, mm. 74-78

Similar to the theme from the opening, this B section also repeats both phrases. The first time it ends on a PAC in G major. After two measures that resemble the chromatic alternating hands from the *Tambito molto* (see Ex. 8-15), the phrase repeats again ending in a PAC in G minor, which brings back the A section.

This return of the A section is shortened, since we move immediately to the B-flat theme in m. 109. The theme appears one last time in mm. 124-143. This theme has a weak sense of closure since it dissolves into the introduction which now acts as a postlude.

In this postlude, the quote from Fonseca’s *Vals Leda* is presented again, this time in the highest register of the keyboard and a second above in relationship to the quote from the introduction. The melody from the waltz is also presented in a more complete version, but the movement still ends in an inconclusive way. For Zanni, the D major chord at the end acts as anticipation of the final movement of the sonata, which is written in D major.<sup>163</sup> We can see the overall structure of the movement in Table 8-2.

<b>Section</b>	<b>Themes/Features</b>	<b>Measures</b>
Introduction	<i>Not measured, direct quote from Fonseca’s Vals Leda</i>	–
A	(a) G minor	1-28
	(b) B-flat major, <i>open ending</i>	29-41
	(a’) G minor	42-73
B	G major <i>More rhythmic textures</i>	74-109
A	(b) B-flat major, <i>open ending</i>	109-123
	(a’) G minor, <i>open ending</i>	124-143
Postlude	<i>Very similar to Introduction, more complete quote in higher register</i>	–

Table 8-2. Formal scheme, Matarrita, *Sonatica*, II. Pasillo

### III. *Run-down*

The third and final movement of the *Sonatica* is also a play of words. According to the composer, “The last movement is a calypso, which is a very representative rhythm of the province of Limón. The title is a play on the words Rondo (the musical structure), and the run-

<sup>163</sup> Zanni, “Sonatica (2015),” 11.

down (an afro-caribbean dish).”<sup>164</sup> Similar to the *pasillo*, the calypso is also not exclusively from Costa Rica, nonetheless, is a vital part of the musical culture of the Caribbean region.<sup>165</sup>

The calypso is better defined in the words of Carlos Saavedra, “The calypso approaches events and scandals in a very eloquent way. The *calypsonians* (composers and performers) take a standpoint between reporter, editorialist, moralist, and satirist. They talk about scandals, disasters, politics, sexual indiscretion, and local and international events. Everything from the perspective of the working class.”<sup>166</sup>

One noteworthy aspect of the writing in general of this movement is Matarrita’s intention to capture the sound of the calypso ensemble – and in particular of the string instrument known as washtub bass or *quijongo limonense*. According to Meza, “The previous construction of this instrument consisted of a washing tub that served as a sound box and a nylon string supported by a neck. Currently, the soundboard is made of wood or plywood.”<sup>167</sup> Because of the mechanism of the instrument and the way it is played, the sound is always out of tune. This is reflected in the overall texture and the more dissonant harmonies in this movement.

A descending scale introduces the bass pattern in the left hand, a 2-measure figure that repeats throughout the A section. The right hand plays a melodic idea that resembles the three-note descending idea from the opening movement, this time played in blocked chords which are

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<sup>164</sup> Matarrita, “Creación musical,” 51.

<sup>165</sup> Matarrita, 51.

<sup>166</sup> Carlos Saavedra, *Compendio de percusión afrolatina* [Afro-latin percussion compendium] (Heredia, Costa Rica: Editorial Fundación UNA, 1999), 126 in Gerardo Meza, “Square Dance y el Calypso limonense una revisión comparativa,” *Revista InterSedes* vol 6, no. 10 (September 2006): 7.

<sup>167</sup> Meza, “Square Dance y Calypso,” 8.

mostly seventh chords in different inversions (Ex. 8-26). The left-hand pattern establishes a pedal point in D, except for a brief incursion of the sub-dominant in mm. 13-16.



Example 8-26. Matarrita, *Sonatica*, III. Run-down, mm. 5-8

Three marked chords close this section in m. 20 and a new idea emerges in m. 21. This section introduces a melodic idea in D major that is more playful with the rhythm and the syncopation. This short passage in mm. 21-29 acts as a bridge to the B section which modulates to G major. Zanni mentions that this bridge serves a similar purpose to what the ascending-arpeggio idea does in the first movement (See. Ex. 8-7).<sup>168</sup> This idea returns in mm. 84-100, as a bridge between sections C and A', and as the codetta of the movement in the last four measures (Ex. 8-27).



Example 8-27. Matarrita, *Sonatica*, III. Run-down, mm. 21-23

<sup>168</sup> Zanni, "Sonatica (2015)," 13.

The B section (starting in m. 30) modulates to the subdominant of D (G major) with no preparation. This section has two 8-measure phrases. The first one is more rhythmically complex and creates a dialogue between chords in both hands. The next phrase uses the material from A in a descending sequence of fifths, and a diminution of the 3-note idea in eighth notes instead of quarter notes, as we can see in the bass (Ex. 8-28). After both phrases are repeated, the ending connects immediately to the return of the A section in m. 47.



Example 8-28. Matarrita, *Sonatica*, III. Run-down, mm. 45-48

The A section presents the theme in broken eighth notes, which drives the movement forward. A sudden change to the faraway key of A-flat minor signals the arrival of a new section.

The new section (C) starts with a 3-measure transition that leads to a theme written in a pointillistic texture, with every note staccato and scattered in both hands. A small fermata interrupts this idea, and the music returns to D major, where a quote from the *Tambito* is presented in staccato texture, in mm. 73-78 (Ex. 8-29 and 8-30).

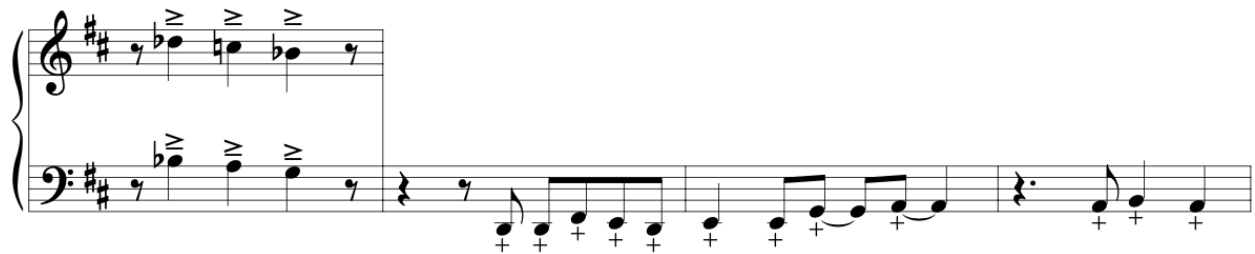
Example 8-29. Matarrita, *Sonatica*, I. Tambito, mm. 61-70

Example 8-30. Matarrita, *Sonatica*, III. Run-down, mm. 71-78

After a series of percussive chords in the next four measures and a syncopated version of the descending three-note idea, Matarrita introduces the bridge theme in D major in a more literal



representation of bass playing – a direct allusion to the *quijongo limonense*.<sup>169</sup> This passage is meant to be played with one hand muting the strings inside the instrument, and the other playing the notes on the keyboard (Ex. 8-31).<sup>170</sup> The theme is then repeated with both hands as in m. 21.



Example 8-31. Matarrita, *Sonatica*, III. Run-down, mm. 83-86

A very brief 3-measure cadenza brings the A section again in m. 104, now in C major. The pedal point changes after eight measures to G, and four measures later to D (m. 118). In m. 121 the time signature changes to  $\frac{3}{4}$ , and the more percussive chords are presented one last time moving in stepwise descending motion in the left hand (Ex. 8-32).



Example 8-32. Matarrita, *Sonatica*, III. Run-down, mm. 121-123

The D major theme from the bridge returns in the last four measures as a very brief codetta, and the sonata ends with an emphatic and open D major sonority. This final movement has a more dissonant sound throughout and is slightly more rhythmically complex than the first

<sup>169</sup> Zanni, “Sonatica (2015),” 14.

<sup>170</sup> However, this will depend on the piano since some instruments will have part of the iron covering some of this notes. A small adjustment in the contour is a possible solution.

movement, but like the rest of the sonata, it captures the essence of each particular style. An overall view of the Rondo structure can be seen in Table 8-3.

<b>Section</b>	<b>Themes/Features</b>	<b>Measures</b>
A	D major	1-20
Bridge	<i>More playful, D</i>	21-29
B	G major <i>More rhythmically diverse</i>	30-46
A	D major	47-62
C	A-flat minor <i>Staccato, pointillistic</i>	63-83
Bridge	<i>Extended techniques (inside the strings)</i>	84-100
	<i>Small cadenza</i>	101-103
A'	<i>Modulatory (C, G, and D)</i>	104-123
Codetta	<i>Material from Bridge</i>	124-127

Table 8-3. Formal scheme, Matarrita, *Sonatica*, III. Run-down

## CHAPTER NINE

### CONCLUSIONS

Musical composition in Costa Rica, mainly from the last fifty years, has been a combination of many stylistically diverse influences and trends; the piano sonata as a genre is not an exception. All of the works discussed in this document vary greatly in scope, form, style, harmonic language, and influences. They range from the more experimental approach of Alfagüell, to a more conventional approach of form and harmonic language in Mata's sonata; from a two-movement sonata in Alfagüell, to a four-movement work in Escalante's; from sonatas that use a great deal of material from the Costa Rican imaginary such as Matarrita's, to sonatas that draws more from jazz elements, such as Herra.

While it is true that all of these sonatas have been premiered, they have enough merit to be performed more often. We have seen that only one of them has been professionally recorded, and only one published by an editorial house. I believe all of these sonatas can and should be included in more publications.

I hope that by showcasing the inventiveness and the musical features of these sonatas, pianists in Costa Rica and abroad can realize that Costa Rican piano music – and specifically large-scale works such as these sonatas, can be included in recital programs more often.

I include a comparative chart below (Table 9-1), which aims to visualize some of the essential facts of these sonatas side-by-side.

<b>Sonata</b>	<b>Movements</b>	<b>Composition</b>	<b>Premiere</b>	<b>Recorded</b>	<b>Published</b>	<b>Approx. duration</b>
<b>Alfagüell, Sonata Op. 111</b> <i>Quasi un Claro de Luna</i>	2	2000	2001	-	-	30 min.
<b>Camacho, Sonata</b> <i>dall'Inferno</i>	3	2007	2008	x	-	10 min.
<b>Escalante, Sonata for solo</b> <i>piano</i>	4	2002	2013	-	-	30 min.
<b>Herra, Sonata for piano</b>	3	1994	1996	-	x	15 min.
<b>Mata, Sonata for piano</b>	3	1965	2008	-	-	18 min.
<b>Matarrita, Sonatica</b>	3	2015	2015	-	-	15 min.

Table 9-1. Comparison chart

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