

Opinion Article

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Sonata for Clarinet and Piano, by Domingo Lobato

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Introduction

Domingo Lobato Bañales was a Mexican composer (1920-2012), and an important figure in the Mexican musical panorama. His music combines elements from the European Classical tradition with Mexican folk styles and traditions. Lobato was named Professor Emeritus by the University of Guadalajara. The works of Domingo Lobato include religious music for choir and for the organ, symphonies, concerti, chamber music, music for theatre and ballet. Yet the most important work of Domingo Lobato was his teaching. He trained and inspired several generations of musicians in the western region of Mexico, many of whom are now outstanding pianists, organists, composers and singers. His notable former pupils include maestra Leonor Montijo, maestros Javier Hernandez and Hermilio Hernandez, Victor Manuel Amaral, Hilda Cruz Romo, Arturo Javier Gonzalez, Francisco Orozco, Maria Luisa Lizarraga, Jose Guadalupe Flores, Maria Elena Camarena, Amelia Garcia de Leon, Victor Manuel Medeles, Eva Perez Plazola, among many

others.

Lobato's Sonata for Clarinet and Piano, from 1963, was originally written for oboe and piano, and later adapted for clarinet and piano by Lorenzo Sanchez, D.M.A. It can be generally characterized as a tonal work in three standard movements. Lobato's style is eclectic and combines elements from French Impressionism with neoclassicism. Throughout the work, Lobato also includes elements that allude to nationalistic qualities of the composer's native Mexico. These elements are particularly pronounced in the second and third movements, where the rhythm and character are reminiscent of a religious festival and regional dances, respectively [1].

The opening movement begins with polytonal chords in the piano part, which later lead into a lyrical melody played by the clarinet. Lobato's mastery of the sonata form, leads the listener through the movement with lyrical phrases that permeate the entire movement, played by the clarinet.



Figure 1: Beginning section of Lobato's Clarinet Sonata. Lobato uses polytonal chords to create an ambiguous atmosphere at the beginning of the sonata.

The composer includes a short Cadenza fantasia before the recapitulation of the first theme.

The second movement takes the listener to Lobato's home state of Michoacán. Lobato used various programmatic ideas in this movement. As the composer described, in the opening, the piano paints an atmospheric evening near a church preceding a religious festival. "Outside the church, musicians warm up for the dancing

festivities that are to take place later. Inside the church, the clarinet intones a melody that is reminiscent of the rosary's Santa Maria recited by the pious villagers. The musicians outside are heard from time to time." As in a film, the music continues to shift scenes depicting the various activities on this particular evening before completely giving way to the dancing that takes place in the third movement.

Cadenza fantasia



Figure 2: Excerpt from Lobato's Clarinet Sonata, 1st movement – cadence section.



Figure 3: Section from Lobato's Clarinet Sonata, 2nd movement, representing the fast changes between the melody portraying the metaphorical festive noise outside the church and the prayer like type of melody.

Figure 4: Excerpt from Lobato's Clarinet Sonata, 2nd movement, representing the main prayer-like melody played by the clarinet, with chord interjections played by the piano, imitating church bells.

The third movement is written in 6/8 time, and Lobato makes use of his state's regional dance rhythms, including hemiola and duplets on beat four of the measures. As can be seen often in

Mexican folk music, Lobato often writes four measure phrases that repeat.



Figure 5: Beginning section from Lobato's Clarinet Sonata, 3rd movement. Example of the hemiola rhythms used by Lobato to imitate rhythms found in traditional Mexican folk music.

The dance-like section goes on for a while leading to a virtuosic clarinet solo marked *libre* (free).

Figure 6: Clarinet cadenza from Lobato's Clarinet Sonata, 3rd movement, (m.86 to m.86).

The dance continues shortly after the solo and leads into a short coda where the piano provides a rhythmic countermelody that would normally be played by a tuba or other low brass instruments in a traditional folk setting.

Figure 7: Excerpt from Lobato's Clarinet Sonata, 3rd movement, with example of hemiola and duplet rhythms. The piano part at m.110 and 112 provides the countermelody imitating the tuba in the traditional Mexican banda.

The ending of the movement includes multiple virtuosic runs that drive the work to an exciting conclusion.

Domingo Lobato's Clarinet Sonata is a great addition to the clarinet repertoire, filling a void of underrepresented Latino composers. It is a leading example of how composers can write music that combines both the musical language of their time with music from their own culture, by including traditional folk elements into their works, through rhythms or other musical tools. From the reference to the prayer-like melodies, polytonal chords, bell sounds on the piano, and the use of hemiola and duplet rhythms, Lobato wrote a piece that is unique and that can be a reference in clarinet

music representative of Mexican folk traditions [2].

Acknowledgement

None.

Conflict of Interest

No conflict of interest.

References

1. Sanchez, Lorenzo. Biography, score, and program notes.
2. CD Intuición, Luso American Duo, Virginia Figueiredo and Lorenzo Sanchez, Centaur Records, 2019.