2018

GUITAR ARRANGEMENTS OF SELECTED DANZAS OF JUAN F. ACOSTA, WITH NEW CONSIDERATIONS OF HIS MUSIC AND MUSICAL LIFE

Hermelindo Ruiz Mestre

University of Kentucky, hermelindo@hermelindoruiz.com

Author ORCID Identifier: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5511-393X

Digital Object Identifier: https://doi.org/10.13023/etd.2018.345

Click here to let us know how access to this document benefits you.

Recommended Citation


https://uknowledge.uky.edu/music_etds/125
STUDENT AGREEMENT:

I represent that my thesis or dissertation and abstract are my original work. Proper attribution has been given to all outside sources. I understand that I am solely responsible for obtaining any needed copyright permissions. I have obtained needed written permission statement(s) from the owner(s) of each third-party copyrighted matter to be included in my work, allowing electronic distribution (if such use is not permitted by the fair use doctrine) which will be submitted to UKnowledge as Additional File.

I hereby grant to The University of Kentucky and its agents the irrevocable, non-exclusive, and royalty-free license to archive and make accessible my work in whole or in part in all forms of media, now or hereafter known. I agree that the document mentioned above may be made available immediately for worldwide access unless an embargo applies.

I retain all other ownership rights to the copyright of my work. I also retain the right to use in future works (such as articles or books) all or part of my work. I understand that I am free to register the copyright to my work.

REVIEW, APPROVAL AND ACCEPTANCE

The document mentioned above has been reviewed and accepted by the student’s advisor, on behalf of the advisory committee, and by the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS), on behalf of the program; we verify that this is the final, approved version of the student’s thesis including all changes required by the advisory committee. The undersigned agree to abide by the statements above.

Hermelindo Ruiz Mestre, Student

Dr. Dieter Hennings-Yeomans, Major Professor

Dr. Michael Baker, Director of Graduate Studies
GUITAR ARRANGEMENTS OF SELECTED DANZAS OF JUAN F. ACOSTA,
WITH NEW CONSIDERATIONS OF HIS MUSIC AND MUSICAL LIFE

____________________________________
D.M.A. PROJECT
____________________________________

A D.M.A. project submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Musical Arts in the
College of Fine Arts at the University of Kentucky

By

Hermelindo Ruiz Mestre

Lexington, Kentucky

Co-Directors: Dr. Dieter Hennings-Yeomans, Associate Professor of Guitar,
and Dr. Noemi Lugo, Professor of Voice

Lexington, Kentucky

Copyright © 2018 Hermelindo Ruiz Mestre
ABSTRACT OF D.M.A PROJECT

GUITAR ARRANGEMENTS OF SELECTED DANZAS OF JUAN F. ACOSTA,
WITH NEW CONSIDERATIONS OF HIS MUSIC AND MUSICAL LIFE

Juan Francisco Acosta (1890-1968) was a prolific composer, band conductor, and educator from Puerto Rico who created 1,256 original compositions. Even though his activities and influence were integral to the musical life of Puerto Rico in the twentieth century, many details of his life and works remain unknown.

This project centers on Acosta’s contribution to the Puerto Rican tradition of the danza—a dance-based genre originating in the nineteenth century—through the study and arrangement of five of Acosta's danzas. Although Acosta composed most danzas for piano, he adapted them for performances by the municipal bands that he led in various towns. This practice of modifying his works for different instruments, as well as the importance of the guitar in Latin America, underpins the author’s choice to arrange his piano music for varied types of guitar combinations, including solo, duo, trio, and quartet. The five works are Bajo la sombra de un pino, Mercedes, Eres una santa, Dulce María, and In memoriam.

The guitar arrangements of these five danzas are preceded by important information on the composer within the Puerto Rican music world, with emphasis on the intersections of the band and danza traditions. To enhance the study of these works, this document discusses basic stylistic features, including a comparison of forms, rhythms, and dance characters, and relates Acosta's treatment of the danza puertorriqueña to approaches of his Puerto Rican contemporaries. This document also includes performance guidelines to introduce Acosta's danza style to student and professional players.

Based on primary biographical and musical sources, this study presents a foundation for a clearer understanding of the life and works of Acosta upon which further research, analysis, and criticism can be conducted. The arrangements offer a fresh look at new guitar repertoire using the peculiarities of rhythms and traditions of Puerto Rican and
Caribbean heritage. The arrangements also serve a pedagogical purpose by adding to the existing repertoire of ensemble music for the classical guitar.

KEYWORDS: Juan Francisco Acosta, Danza puertorriqueña, Puerto Rico, guitar arrangements, classical guitar, Caribbean Music.
GUITAR ARRANGEMENTS OF SELECTED DANZAS OF JUAN F. ACOSTA,
WITH NEW CONSIDERATIONS OF HIS MUSIC AND MUSICAL LIFE

By

Hermelindo Ruiz Mestre

Dr. Dieter Hennings-Yeomans
Co-Director of D.M.A. Project

Dr. Noemi Lugo
Co-Director of D.M.A. Project

Dr. Michael Baker
Director of Graduate Studies

April 25, 2018
DEDICATION

To the Almighty God for the immense gifts he plants in our hearts.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I owe a deep debt of gratitude to the members of my advisory committee: Dr. Dieter Hennings-Yeomans, Dr. Noemi Lugo, Dr. Diana Hallman, and Dr. Stephen Rankin. Thank you for being extraordinary mentors and for teaching me the standards of excellence and kindness that I wish to keep forever. Also, I would like to thank my family, friends, and professors at the University of Kentucky, for your unwavering support.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## PART I

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgments</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of examples</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. Acosta as Band Leader and Composer</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. The Music of Acosta's Contemporaries</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. Guitar arrangements</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. Performance Guidelines</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Appendices

- Appendix A: Letter from Juan F. Acosta (1958) ...................................... 31
- Appendix B: Guitar Arrangements of Selected Danzas of Acosta:             34
  - *Mercedes* (trio) ........................................................................... 35
  - *Eres una Santa* (quartet) ........................................................ 40
  - *Bajo la sombra de un pino* (quartet) ....................................... 45
  - *Dulce María* (guitar solo) ........................................................ 49
  - *In memoriam* (duet) .................................................................... 52
- Appendix C: Manuscripts of Selected Danzas ........................................ 56

Bibliography ......................................................................................... 70
PART II
PROGRAM NOTES

Program I: Concert "Music of Argentina and Uruguay" ........................................73
Program II: Concert "Music of Ernesto Cordero" ..............................................78
Program III: Concert "Cuba y Puerto Rico" .......................................................82
Program IV: Lecture-Recital "The Music of Juan F. Acosta" .............................86
Program V: Concert "Music of Spain" .................................................................90
Bibliography ......................................................................................................94
Vita ....................................................................................................................95
LIST OF EXAMPLES

Example 1. “Mercedes” (mm. 13-14) ........................................... 23
Example 2. “Mercedes” (mm. 29-30) ........................................... 23
Example 3. “Inmemoriam” (mm. 21-24) ..................................... 23
Example 4. “Inmemoriam” (mm. 40-44) ..................................... 23
INTRODUCTION

This document brings to light a selection of unedited works by Juan Francisco Acosta (1890–1968) in new arrangements for the classical guitar. Acosta was a prolific composer, conductor, and educator from Puerto Rico whose name remains relatively unknown decades after his death. His lack of notoriety is surprising for a composer whose output exceeds 1,200 musical pieces and whose influence was integral to the musical life of Puerto Rico in the twentieth century. I believe it is important to start studying and publishing Acosta’s music, and that is the purpose of this document.

As a first step towards this goal, this project examines five of Acosta’s works in the Puerto Rican tradition of the danza—a dance-based genre that originated in the nineteenth century that is unified by a common form but differentiated by a wide range of styles, characteristic rhythms, and social functions. Although Acosta composed most of his danzas puertorriqueñas (Puerto Rican dances) for piano, he likely also adapted them for performances by the large municipal bands that he led in various towns, as well as small dance ensembles. The five works selected for this study are a small portion of his output of 652 danzas: the earliest, written in 1936, is the danza that became his most well known, “Bajo la sombra de un pino.” The other four were probably written in the 1950s: “Mercedes, “Eres una santa,” “Dulce María,” and “In memoriam.” Combining the danza tradition with the Latin American love for guitar music, I present guitar arrangements of these works, following in the footsteps of classical guitarists such as Francisco Tárrega, Miguel Llobet, and Andrés Segovia, who have arranged piano music of often forgotten repertoire. The arrangements are for varied types: guitar solo, duo, trio, and quartet. To enhance the study of these works, I discuss their basic stylistic features, including a
comparison of forms, rhythms, and dance characters, and relate Acosta's treatment of the
*danza puertorriqueña* to approaches by other contemporaneous Puerto Rican composers.

I will also offer performance guidelines to introduce Acosta's *danza* style to student and
professional players. This musical discussion is preceded by important information on the
composer within the Puerto Rican music world of the first half of the twentieth century,
with emphasis on the intersections of the band and *danza* traditions.

Numerous details about Acosta's life and works are still completely unknown. His
descendants have preserved the original manuscripts of his music, but these scores have
been unavailable to musicians and the general public.¹ Most of the information published
about the composer has been written by non-musicians. The result has been frequent
confusion about the life and works of Acosta, as well as a lack of careful assessment of
his music. Hence, this document intends to offer historical insights about the composer
from a musician's perspective, building on the extant biographical information while
examining his musical output in the context of other contemporaneous Puerto Rican
composers.

This document has four sections; each one features different methodologies. The
first section will provide a biographical introduction to Acosta's musical contribution.
This section provides an opportunity to clarify details of his biography and reception, and
also to present commentaries about Acosta's work from the perspective of a musician,
with the intention of paving the way for the study of his musical legacy. Historical
information is limited to details related to his music. Particular attention is devoted to the
last ten years of Acosta's life (from 1958 to 1968); judging by his manuscripts, Acosta's

¹ The Acosta family has graciously allowed me full access to the composer's manuscripts during
my research period.
creative life intensified in these years and he wrote a considerable amount of music. The goal of this section is to reveal the artistic and historical circumstances of his work during this period. The second section offers a short comparative analysis of his style to situate Acosta's music in relation to other contemporaneous Puerto Rican composers. This section will include a brief discussion about the *danza puertorriqueña* genre.

The third section explains the motivation and methods behind the five guitar arrangements. Although his manuscripts do not reveal Acosta to have written a single piece for guitar, this part will explain why it is important to publish Acosta's music in arrangements for different instruments. The fourth and final part will entail a performance guide to the guitar arrangements. I will examine Acosta's works and provide some guidance to illustrate the performance tradition of this music. As a reference, the scores for the five guitar arrangements and the manuscripts of the original scores will both be included as an appendix.

By making available these arrangements, I present some of Acosta's long-awaited and unedited works. I hope that the reassessment of his biography from the standpoint of a musician will serve as a path for new studies and discoveries about his musical legacy. This information should facilitate the comparison of Acosta's music to that of composers from Puerto Rico and beyond—particularly of Central America, South America, and Spain.

I. Acosta as Bandleader and Composer

Juan Francisco Acosta de Arce\(^2\) was born on May 5 of 1890 in San Sebastián, Puerto Rico. As a composer, conductor, and educator, his work was most influential in

\(^2\) Juan F. Acosta is the commonly name used for the composer. Acosta himself signed his musical scores as Juan Francisco Acosta Arce.
the rural, central part of the island.³ Currently, the most important biography about the composer is a small book by Laura Castro entitled *Juan Francisco Acosta de Arce: Aproximación a su vida y obra*.⁴ Castro’s work is of particular relevance, as it provides a historical introduction to Acosta’s life. Her book “collects and integrates” all available information about the composer up to the date of its publication in 2006.⁵ Castro points out that, through the process of writing her book, she discovered many “discrepancies and contradictions around the life and scope of Acosta's works.”⁶ Although she tried to summarize and compile all information in a single publication, often omitting some of the conflicting materials, there are still many confusing details.⁷ It is beyond the scope of this document to complete a historical overview. Instead, I will place special importance on Acosta's musical career, highlighting details about his musical life based on the current historical and biographical information, thus providing new evaluations of the existing published information about the composer.

Acosta completed all of his musical education in his hometown of San Sebastián. This fact is surprising, since artists usually travel to many places to complete their training. In the article *Las sociedades recreativas hacia el cambio del siglo,* Helen

---

³ I have come to this conclusion by examining the given evidence, such as Acosta’s interviews and his own comments in scores, to determine the places where he lived. His legacy is universal, but in life, his main impact was on the rural parts of the island.


⁵ Ibid., 8. Except where otherwise indicated, all translations from Spanish are my own.

⁶ Ibid., 8.

⁷ Even the most comprehensive biography on Acosta’s life, the book mentioned before by Laura Castro, is relatively short (about ten pages of information). I believe there is still a great amount of information that could be gathered on the topic, especially from students and people who met Acosta.
Santiago describes Acosta’s social environment when growing up.\(^8\) She paints the recreational atmosphere of the local casinos and the rising social advantages of this town in comparison to other cities in Puerto Rico, which had a huge influence on Acosta staying in his hometown for his education.\(^9\) In 1847, San Sebastián became the second Puerto Rican town in history to have a casino, which speaks for the social and economic strength of the town.\(^10\) In casinos, as well as in most places of entertainment in Puerto Rico, dancing was an essential activity. The casino provided fertile soil for the development of the Puerto Rican musical genre of the *danza*, which became important in Acosta’s oeuvre.\(^11\)

Acosta started studying music at age thirteen with Jesús Figueroa (1878–1971), the patriarch an internationally acclaimed family of classical musicians. Figueroa was a composer himself and had formal musical training. It was a privilege for Acosta to begin his discovery of music under the tutelage of such a musician. A few years later, the famous composer and euphonium virtuoso Ángel Mislán (1862–1911) replaced Figueroa as a bandleader in San Sebastián.\(^12\) This replacement gave Acosta the opportunity to study with another distinguished musical figure of the time. José A. Balseiro, an

\(^8\) Helen Santiago, *Ángel Mislán: Notas y tiempo.* (San Sebastián, Puerto Rico: Casa Pepiniana de la Cultura, 1996).

\(^9\) Lidio Cruz Monclova, *Historia de Puerto Rico.* For a discussion of the economical and social potential of San Sebastián, a town in the center part of the island, see *San Sebastián de las Vegas del Pepino: Historia de una ciudad grande* by Helen Santiago (Puerto Rico: Editorial Panamericana, Inc., 2016).

\(^10\) Santiago, *Ángel Mislán: Notas y tiempo.*

\(^11\) The Puerto Rican *danza* name will be used for the *Danza puertorriqueña* genre, a specific style of music that will be explained in this document. It is important to mention that the Puerto Rican *danza* is not one specific rhythm but a musical genre of different rhythms used within the specific musical form of the *danza*.

\(^12\) Details can be found in Laura Castro’s book, *Juan Francisco Acosta de Arce: aproximación a su vida y trayectoria musical.*
important composer from Puerto Rico, described Acosta’s teacher Mislán as one of the most gifted artists that Puerto Rico has ever had.13 Amaury Veray, another renowned composer and musicologist from Puerto Rico, called Mislán “the most independent and personal of all our danza composers.”14

In viewing Acosta’s education from the perspective of a musician, one sees many discrepancies in the accounts of non-musicians—that is, every published document about the composer that has been uncovered for this project—. They do, however, agree that Acosta had a limited academic education, having only attended public school up to third grade. Yet he enjoyed an exceptional degree of musical education.

Acosta started composing at age fourteen. Even earlier in his training, he was allowed to help in making musical arrangements for bands. When he was only nineteen years old, he substituted for Mislán as leader of the municipal band of San Sebastian.15 According to the many Acosta students and family members, he could transcribe anything by ear without the use of a musical instrument.16 In different interviews, one of Acosta’s granddaughters Gladys Ramos, and his student Lololo Ruiz mentioned how Acosta used to write music down just from his head, implying the absence of musical instruments.17 This rare musical skill of perfect pitch demonstrates his natural ability and the high quality of his early musical training.

---

13 “Uno de los temperamentos artísticos mejor dotados que hemos tenido.” José A. Balseiro “La Danza Puertorriqueña.” Ensayos sobre la Danza Puertorriqueña, edited by Marisa Rosado (San Juan, P.R: Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña, 1977), 54.


15 Castro, Juan Francisco Acosta de Arce, 5.


17 Castro, Juan Francisco Acosta de Arce, 21.
The presence of military bands in Puerto Rico was important since it set the ground for the band tradition on the island in the nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{18} This tradition would be significant in Acosta's musical career. Acosta lived through the United States' military invasion of Puerto Rico in 1898 and the transition from Spanish control oversight by the United States government as an American unincorporated territory. Commenting on musical life in these times, Veray points out how music education had been widespread throughout Puerto Rico since the middle of the nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{19} Despite the shift toward the American control, the Spanish tradition of the military band was so strong that it persisted well after the United States government established itself on the island.\textsuperscript{20}

Since Acosta's training was mainly focused on the band music tradition, he eventually became an authoritative figure in this medium. These bands will consist of whatever musicians and instruments were available; there was a great variety in the formations of these bands and their instrumentations. Nevertheless, these kind of ensembles were always at the forefront of the musical developments at the time, since bands were playing at all the most important social events.\textsuperscript{21} In addition, many of Acosta's students emigrated to the United States, where they would form their own ensembles and would make a significant impact on the American music industry during

\textsuperscript{18} Pedro Malavet Vega. \textit{De las bandas al trio borinuen}, (Ponce, P.R: Lorena, 2002), 79.

\textsuperscript{19} Amaury Veray. "Vida y desarrollo de la Danza." Ensayos sobre la Danza Puertorriqueña, edited by Marisa Rosado (San Juan, P.R: Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña, 1977), 29.

\textsuperscript{20} Castro, \textit{Juan F. Acosta de Arce}, 26–27. Military bands were also widely popular in the United States ca. 1860-1920 hence supporting the continuation of these traditions in Puerto Rico.

\textsuperscript{21} Malavet. \textit{De las bandas al trio borinuen}, 99.
the twentieth century. Laura Castro described Acosta as “one of the band conductors who contributed the most to the foundation of bands and musical groups in the Puerto Rican diaspora.” As time progressed, the eclectic situations of Acosta’s life turned him into a multifaceted musician: educator, composer, musician, and conductor.

Acosta developed a strong musical network and was in constant communication with composers and conductors from different parts of Puerto Rico. As revealed in interviews conducted for this project, his work did not happen in solitude. He spent most of his life educating musicians and training bands, and was constantly moving between towns. Acosta is known to have lived in twenty-seven different municipalities in Puerto Rico. His family mentioned to me personally that this constant movement suited his bohemian personality. Due to the lack of information available about his experiences in many of these regions, it is difficult to trace Acosta’s career in its entirety. Interviews with Acosta’s students do revealed that the composer often traveled with his bands and students to perform in different parts of the island. Former Acosta student Miguel Sixto Ostolaza (b. 1949) mentions the composer had a connection with the towns of Quebradillas and Hatillo. These towns are both very close to Aguadilla, the city where famous composer Rafael Hernández (1892–1965) grew up, and the place where Acosta’s

---

22 The following book gives a description about this: Pedro Malavet Vega. *De las bandas al trio boricuhen*, (Ponce, P.R: Lorena, 2002).


24 Ibid., 14.

25 Personal interview with Migdalia Acosta.

26 Personal interview in 2014.

27 Ibid.
first teacher Jesús Figueroa went after leaving San Sebastián. Because of his peripatetic life, there is no doubt that Acosta’s name would have been known to musicians throughout the island.

In light of his musical versatility and activities across Puerto Rico, the question is how Acosta’s music stayed under the radar during his lifetime and remained almost unknown to musical scholars, who continue to omit his name in conversations about music in the decades after his death. Although one of Acosta’s compositions is among Puerto Rico’s most famous dances (“Bajo la sombra de un pino”), his name is barely mentioned in textbooks. There is more than one argument that could explain this historical obscurity. One of these is the decline of interest in band and the danza genre in favor of pop music. During the second half of the twentieth century, traditional music was increasingly displaced by newer forms like plena, salsa, merengue, and guarachas. Technological media like radio and television allowed for different ways of consuming music and for the proliferation of new musical styles. Puerto Rican historian Ricardo Alegría pointed out that Acosta became an advocate for the preservation of the Puerto Rican danza during this time of changing tastes.

Another explanation for Acosta’s musical obscurity is that his family has kept his musical manuscripts private for many years. In Latin America, the families of composers are usually responsible for preserving manuscripts and other important documents. Music libraries and conservatories often lack the facilities to house the work of local composers.

---

28 Rafael Hernández was an international figure and one of the most influential Puerto Rican composers of all time. He was also a contemporary of Juan F. Acosta.

29 Malavet, *De las bandas al trio borinquen*, 99.

Because of this practice, the artistic legacy of many composers depends on the intentions of their heirs. There is a total of forty books of manuscripts in the family collection, each volume containing at least twenty-five compositions.\textsuperscript{31} I have been fortunate enough to examine these books, which contain works in a wide variety of genres: mazurkas, waltzes, merengues, religious hymns, and dances, among others.\textsuperscript{32} Most of the music is either for solo piano or for band ensembles that include brass and wind instruments.

Thirty-seven years after his death, Acosta’s descendants compiled scanned copies of his holograph manuscripts into a two-volume anthology entitled \textit{La obra musical completa de Juan F. Acosta de Arce}.\textsuperscript{33} This anthology, located at the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C., includes an index as well as the texts of his entire musical output. This publication has a copyright date of 2002, but it was not made available before 2005, thus making it unknown to musicologists from the island in the early years of this century. Furthermore, the document is only available in the mainland United States (distant from Puerto Rico), which explains why no Latin American scholars have completed studies of this music up to the present date.

One of the most remarkable aspects of Acosta’s musicianship was the facility with which he composed. Perhaps the most relevant proof of this is his extensive catalog, totaling 1,259 works.\textsuperscript{34} In addition, numerous documents claim that his most famous

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{31} Private Collection kept by Acosta’s family.
\item \textsuperscript{32} Castro, \textit{Juan Francisco Acosta de Arce}.
\item \textsuperscript{33} Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. "La obra musical completa de Juan F. Acosta de Arce". (1. ed. San Juan, P.R. : Sucesión Juan F, Acosta [2002].
\item \textsuperscript{34} Castro, \textit{Juan Francisco Acosta de Arce}, 18.
\end{itemize}
piece, “Bajo la sombra de un pino,” was composed in one day (July 7, 1936) and premiered the next day.35

Acosta’s composition of danzas spanned his entire musical life. As documented in a letter written to the Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña and dated on 20 January 1958, his output of danzas increased in his last decade.36 In this letter, in which Acosta was requesting copies of a recently published edition of the works of Juan Morel Campos, he affirms that he had composed 160 danzas. He also explains that most of them were unedited. The index of Acosta’s works in the Library of Congress includes a total of 752 Puerto Rican dances, which suggests that, if compared to the numbers cited in this letter of 1958, he wrote almost 600 dances in the last ten years of his life. If this is the case, Acosta’s late-career productivity is remarkable and proves the importance of studying his last ten years separately.

Perhaps the most significant advantage for the study of this period is that there are still people alive who knew Acosta, particularly in the three main towns where he lived during the last decade of his life: Adjuntas, San Sebastián, and Quebradillas. Acosta’s manuscripts are another significant primary resource. These incorporate many non-musical details (dates, locations, dedications, etc.) that can give insights for future research.

II. The Music of Acosta’s Contemporaries

By the time Acosta began to compose, the danza was considered one of Puerto Rico’s most important musical treasures. In an essay from 1958, Amaury Veray described

35 Ibid., 19.
36 A digital copy of this letter is included in the Appendix I, page 31 of this document. The original is located in the Archivo General de Puerto Rico, and catalogued as: “Centenario de Juan Morel Campos,” 1958. Exp. C58, caja.
the *danza* as “our most elevated musical expression.” That Acosta devoted more than half of his musical output to the *danza* certainly speaks to the creative potential he saw in the genre, as well as to his connection to the Puerto Rican musical heritage that it represented. A discussion of this musical genre aids in illustrating the musical environment of contemporaneous composers.

The *danza* developed sometime in the mid-nineteenth century and, by the early twentieth century, gradually became a cultural symbol of Puerto Rico. From its very origins, the genre was intended by its creators to be autonomous and distinct from other Latin American dance types—especially those of Cuban and Venezuelan roots—. Manuel Gregorio Tavárez (1843–1883) is considered the father of the genre; he helped distinguish it by use of Puerto Rican rhythms and elements of European style blended together. Tavárez absorbed the harmonic and melodic ideas of the Romantic composers during his study at the Paris Conservatoire at age fifteen; he was particularly influenced by the music of Frédéric Chopin. Tavárez began to compose *danzas* after he returned to Puerto Rico, inspired in part by the nationalist political movements of the era. Many other composers followed Tavárez's practice of writing music in a blend of local and European styles. Juan Morel Campos (1857–1896) is probably the most important figure amongst them. Campos’s main contribution was to make the genre accessible to the masses through band music. In this way, the *danza* became a native voice that reflected the concerns of local people. Campos’s creative genius is on display in the high quality of his music; he is probably one of the most gifted composers to ever have come from Puerto Rico.

---

Rico. Feliz Guzmán Rivera described Campos as the most important Puerto Rican composer in his DMA dissertation about the music of this composer.\(^3\)

Immediately following Campos’s death came the transfer of power over Puerto Rico from Spain to the United States. Amid this tumultuous political climate, Puerto Rican composers turned increasingly to local styles; this helped establish the danza as the predominant genre on the island during the first half of the twentieth century. Veray identifies three main stages of development of the danza, which corresponds to important changes in the political system of Puerto Rico:

It would not be difficult to indicate three fundamental periods: the era of Tavárez, the time of Morel Campos, and the time of Quintón. The three periods can be called: the formation, plenitude, and consequence of the Puerto Rican danza. The same stages coincide with three different interpretations of our political platform: separatism (the formation of dance), assimilation and autonomism (in the production of Morel Campos and his school, and the danza of San Juan). Finally, the change of sovereignty, in which the dance of José Ignacio Quintón falls fully.\(^3\)

“Separatism,” which Veray links the early development of the genre, or formation, was a nationalistic movement that pushed for Puerto Rican independence from Spain beginning in the mid-nineteenth century. In the period of “assimilation and autonomism,” he suggests that the danza reached its maturity or “plenitude,” when Puerto Ricans more thoroughly absorbed and openly expressed characteristics of their unique culture. With


\(^3\) “No sería difícil indicar tres épocas fundamentales: época de tavárez, época de Morel Campos, y época de Quintón. Los tres periodos podemos llamarlos formación, plenitud y consecuencia de la danza puertorriqueña. Las mismas etapas coinciden con tres interpretaciones distintas de nuestra plataforma política: el separatismo, (formación de la danza), el asimilismo y autonomismo, [en la producción de Morel Campos, su escuela y a la danza de San Juan]. Finalmente el cambio de soberanía en el cual cae de lleno la danza de José Ignacio Quintón.” Veray. "Vida y desarrollo de la Danza," 32.
the shift of governmental and military control at the end of the Spanish-American War, the *danza* continued to hold its cultural power, as Veray implies in his use of the word “consequence” (*consecuencia*) for this third and last period. He also places José Ignacio Quintón (1881–1925) as the primary composer of the genre after the change of sovereignty. Quintón balanced his output between art music and popular dances, but he also merged elements of these different traditions. In creating the genre of and championing the term *danzas de conciertos*, he combined the popular *danza* with the iconic form of the concerto and the ideals of art music. At this time, the *danza* continued as a medium for Puerto Rican composers to express their art in a nationalistic way.

Numerous other composers besides Quintón and Acosta devoted their main musical output to the *danza* genre during their generation. These include Jesús Figueroa, José Enrique Pedreira, Simon Madera, Monsita Ferrer, Luis R. Miranda, and many others. By the end of the nineteenth century, contrasting styles or schools of *danzas* had emerged in the two main population centers of the island: the School of San Juan and the School of Ponce.¹⁴⁰ San Juan is the capital of Puerto Rico on the northern side of the island, while Ponce is a city in the south. Both cities had an enormous political, cultural and artistic influence on the rest of the island. The style of the School of San Juan was predominantly casual, up-tempo, and generally meant for dancing. Some of the most important composers of this school include Jesús Enrique Pedreira, Simon Madera, and others. The School of Ponce was generally more European-influenced: its compositions were meant to be played as an art-form and were intended for an educated public. There is insufficient evidence and more information is needed to categorize Acosta to any of the

---

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 29.
two schools. He mostly followed in the tradition of Tavárez and the danza ponceña, although his extensive output includes a variety of other styles that should be studied independently. Since rhythm is the main element for the study of the Puerto Rican danzas, a more in-depth look at rhythm will be included in the fourth and final part of this document.

The history of the danza correlates closely with the social context in which it evolved. Acosta was a contemporary of Quintón, but his music is more related to that of Campos—especially its social purpose. Veray emphasizes the socio-political relevance of Campos works: “Morel's danza is the consequence of many other factors. There is no doubt that the most prominent is the political situation that accompanies it.” Campos used band music as a medium that spoke directly to the people, creating works for bands (or dance orchestras) that were meant for dancing by broad audiences. Acosta's and Campo's music are comparable in this regards, even though they wrote numerous decades apart. While Acosta's music followed Campos's example, the social situations in Puerto Rico had changed tremendously. The island became a Commonwealth of the United States in 1952, creating a new political situation in which Puerto Ricans were still ruled by the United States government but also enjoyed local autonomy. This new environment stimulated a mixture of emotions and political controversies. On one side, the Commonwealth created a sense of autochthony: Puerto Ricans started to feel like the island had a certain degree of independence from the United States government. Yet this same political situation also highlighted the dependency and continued colonial status of

---

41 "La danza moreliana es la consecuencia de muchos otros factores. No es de dudar que el más destacado sea la condición política que se arrastra con ella." Veray. "La misión social de la danza Puertorriqueña," 44.

42 Ibid., 41.
Puerto Rico. Most of Acosta's musical output (as seen in the letter described before) was written amid the turmoil of these changes.⁴³

Other than Acosta, there were several other important danza composers in the second half of the twentieth century. One of the most fascinating figures is Narciso Figueroa (1906–2004), the son of Acosta's former teacher Jesús Figueroa. Figueroa trained in Paris, and his music was oriented towards the progressive art music of his time.⁴⁴ He used the modern harmonic language he learned from masters of classical music like Claude Debussy, Igor Stravinsky, and Béla Bartók. This represents the opposite extreme from Acosta, who wrote accessible music and limited its harmonic resources to suit the popular taste; Acosta's music was also intended for a wide variety of musical events. José A. Balseiro describes this same dichotomy with two of the most important danza composers of the previous century: "[Tavárez's] music is more for the small gatherings of the salon, while that of Campos… looks, and finds, exalted, the heart of the multitude."⁴⁵ This quotation also applies to works by Acosta and composers such as Narciso Figueroa, even though they composed a century later than Tavárez and Campos. This quote also demonstrates how the Puerto Rican danza encompasses a wide range of styles within a single musical tradition.

The variety of events in which the danza evolved is quite varied. Almost all entertainment events included music; from aristocratic parties to the municipal retreats in

---

⁴³ See Appendix I, on page 29.


⁴⁵ "La música de éste [Tavárez] es más para el recogimiento de salón, la de Campos… busca, y encuentra, exaltada, el corazón de las multitudes." Balseiro. "La Danza Puertorriqueña," 50–51.
the town centers that everybody could attend on the weekends. The musical aspects of
these events could provide sufficient material for a study of their own. This also applies
to the instruments in the bands and the different musical environments of every single
situation; each ensemble and event will be adapted to the specific conditions. Music and
dancing were an essential part of every occasion.

**III. Guitar Arrangements**

In light of the necessity of publishing Acosta's music, this document presents five
piano pieces arranged for guitar. There are many reasons why this document focuses
exclusively on Acosta's music; the principal one is the necessity of finally publishing part
of his vast musical output. There is a real urgency in the revival of Acosta's music
following the many years during which it remained hidden. This document will present
five of Acosta’s pieces, and this section will elucidate the reasoning behind the guitar
arrangements.

As far as we know from surviving manuscripts, Acosta did not write any pieces
for guitar. Nonetheless, the guitar is an instrument that could easily accommodate most of
his music. In the first place, Acosta's works for piano show that he was not concerned
with creating highly idiomatic writing for that instrument. Because of this, I believe that
adjusting Acosta’s work to other instruments and ensembles still has the potential to
showcase the qualities of his music. In this section, I will illustrate how my guitar
arrangements reflect this perspective. Additionally, the guitar was and is an instrument of
enormous popularity in Latin America. While the piano was particularly important during
the nineteenth century, having these pieces played on the guitar will better attract new
listeners who might then be interested in rediscovering more of this music. Acosta’s huge
catalog also affords great flexibility in the selection of the pieces; one can choose works in which the melodic writing and use of counterpoint best suit the nature of the classical guitar.

Acosta wrote most of his pieces for solo piano, but this has more to do with practical activities involved in his work than with his probable final musical intentions. One of Acosta’s most significant contributions was as a band teacher and conductor. He devoted his whole life to developing these ensembles and to writing music for them. As with other *danza* composers, his music was intended to be adaptable for a variety of purposes and does not always sound its best on the instrument specified in the score.

Veray explains something similar about the dances of Manuel Gregorio Tavárez in an essay: “As it is an idiomatic dance for the piano, it does not always sound good in symphonic arrangements.”

46 Discussing Juan Morel Campos’s dances in the same document, Veray writes that such a work “has dancing as its primary function… which is why their dances for the piano seem, most of the time, to be reductions made by the author.”

47 For both Campos and Acosta, these piano versions could be thought of as reductions of pieces that they would later orchestrate for various ensembles. In other words, even though they wrote most of their pieces for piano, these pieces were probably ultimately intended for other instruments or ensembles. This is my primary argument in arranging Acosta’s music for guitar.

---


47 “La danza de Morel Campos tiene como función principal el baile, y en esta época es sistemática la organización de la orquesta de baile puertorriqueña. De ahí que sus danzas al llevarse al piano parezcan, la mayoría de las veces, reducciones hechas por el autor.” Ibid., 31.
Before going into Acosta’s music specifically, it is important to stress that the tradition of arranging music for guitar can be traced along with the development of the instrument itself. Famous players of early plucked-string instruments (like the lute, vihuela, or Romantic guitar) have all arranged music originally written for other instruments or ensembles. This tradition extends backward as far as the example of Luis de Narváez (fl. 1526–1549) arranging the music of Josquin des Prez (ca. 1450/55–1521). The arrangements can sometimes seem to fit the guitar better than the original instrumentation; this is the case, for example, with Francisco Tárrega’s arrangements of the music of Isaac Albéniz.

There are several reasons why guitarists will arrange music for their instrument in this manner. Sometimes arrangements allow guitarists to play music that is particularly close to their hearts. This may result in the transcription of works for another solo instrument—for example, all of J. S. Bach’s violin and cello suites have been arranged for guitar—or the arranging of full-ensemble pieces for a solo instrument. This latter category draws on the tradition of Franz Liszt, who made many piano reductions of orchestral works; another example is the guitar arrangements by Francois da Fossa (1775–1849) of Joseph Haydn’s symphonies. In a more nationalistic trend, folk music is adapted to portray the musical characteristics of different countries. Puerto Rico boasts a fantastic example of folk music adaptations in the works of Josefino Pares (1862–1908). Pares was a classical guitarist born and raised on the island. He went to Spain to study under Ferrer Esteva and is noted to have also studied with Francisco Tárrega (the

---

father of the modern classical guitar). Numerous anecdotes illustrate that Pares frequently played his arrangement and variations on the popular theme *Seis Chorrerao* by Julian Andino.  

Various prominent guitarists from Puerto Rico have followed this tradition of arranging either classical works by other composers or traditional music. Perhaps the best-known example of a guitar arrangement in this style is *9 danzas transcritas para la guitarra* by Leonardo Egúrbida. Juan Sorroche's arrangements are also well known and comprise a substantial amount of solo and ensemble material. Other guitarists who have published or recorded arrangements of Puerto Rican music in this manner include Felix Rodriguez, Iván Rijos, Néstor Hernández (a pupil of Acosta), Renaldo Guadalupe, Mario Ramos, Alberto Rodriguez, and José Antonio López. All the preceding traditions have served as an inspiration for these new arrangements of Acosta's music. Also, making most of these arrangements for guitar ensembles provides pedagogical performance and advantages. The practice of ensemble music offers essential lessons for the development of any serious guitarist and allows for musical interpretations that goes beyond the typical training of a classical guitarist. Because of the focus on solo guitar playing, classical guitarists often show limited competence when compared with other instrumentalists. These arrangements are therefore intended help guitarists improve their ensemble skills. Ensemble music is also beneficial for learning to play the guitar in less typical registers and fretboard positions.

---

49 Ibid., 19.

50 Ibid., 20.


52 Not all of Juan Sorroche’s arrangements have been published, but his music is frequently recorded by important classical guitarists of Puerto Rico and of other countries.
The possibilities of arranging music for the classical guitar are always related to the capacities of this style of playing. Especially in ensemble pieces, the guitar allows for an expansion of some of the most aurally unique characteristics of the instrument. These include a wide palate of tone colors and different timbral effects (pizzicatos, harmonics, contrasting registers, scordatura, etc.).

To conclude this section, I must clarify that many details in the guitar arrangements intentionally differ from the original piano scores. These arrangements are not meant to be literal transcriptions. There are variations in the harmonies, additional voices, and free arrangements. Because this music has never been published—and to better illustrate my own alterations—the original manuscripts appear as an appendix at the end of the document. These manuscripts should serve as a reference for those interested in comparing both versions.

IV. Performance Guidelines

As mentioned previously, one of the primary reasons for the publication of these arrangements is the pedagogical advantage that ensemble music provides to guitarists. This final section provides performance guidelines to better inform players who might be interested in this music, and to help them perform the arrangements in a more educated manner. Further information about the original musical pieces and the guitar arrangements will broaden the approach that musicians might take in their interpretations.

To start with, the five musical works included in this document were chosen based on specific fundamental musical parameters. Studying each of these parameters will provide insights on the musical arrangements as well as lead the performance guidelines. These criteria include rhythm, form, melodic material, counterpoint, and
harmonies. In fact, the selection of the pieces was conducted with these parameters as the primary considerations. Various quotations and historical information support this discussion.

Because the *danza puertorriqueña* genre started as a dance, rhythm is a truly essential element in this discussion. Acosta used many different rhythmic patterns in his music. He often mixes different rhythmic patterns within a single dance. This is evident in almost all of my arrangements. This blending of rhythms is a notable similarity to Campos’s work. Veray explains, “For Juan Morel Campos, the Puerto Rican dance does not have a fixed [rhythmic] pattern. There is no reason for it to have one, because his dance is above all musical abstraction. The rhythmic condition sometimes serves as a pretext for melodic discourse.” Hopefully, some future scholar will conduct a statistical study on the use of rhythm in Acosta’s dances. Jesus María San Román completed a study like this with the music of Juan Morel Campos that could guide similar research on Acosta's works. Such a study could provide relevant, tangible information regarding the hundreds of different ways that Acosta uses and combines rhythmic motifs in his dances.

As much as the genre itself is called a ‘danza,’ this rhythmic diversity suggests that it is truly a “set” of different dances (or rhythms). It is important to note that the rhythmical properties in the introduction of each piece should be considered separately since they are usually less metrical and contrast with the rhythmic drive of the later dance.

---


54 “Para Juan Morel Campos la danza puertorriqueña no tiene patrón fijo. No tiene por qué tenerlo, porque su danza está por encima de toda abstracción musical. La condición rítmica sirve a veces de pretext para el discurso melódico.” Veray. "La misión social de la Danza Puertorriqueña," 43.

sections. The following examples show some of the main rhythmic patterns used in the accompaniment of the five arrangements:

Example 1. “Mercedes” (mm. 13-14)

Example 2. “Mercedes” (mm.29-30)

Example 3. “Inmemoriam” (mm.21-24)

Example 4. “Inmemoriam” (mm.40-44)

The next parameter for discussion is musical form. In the introduction of Egúrbida's previously mentioned book, he states that the Puerto Rican *danza* is “the most accomplished form that has been created by the popular genius of Latin American
This quote refers to the typical formula for the musical structure of a danza, which is Introduction, A, B, C, A. This citation also demonstrates the importance that this musical style holds in the eyes of Puerto Rican musicians. The composer Braulio Dueño Colón reports that very little has changed since the standardization of this musical form at the end of the nineteenth century. Acosta was conventional in his use of this form, using it for most of his dances, including all five arranged in this document. The only variation in this form is when the composer adds additional transitions or expands the typical sixteen-measure phrases of the merengue sections—usually just for a few further measures. The piece “Mercedes” is an interesting example of how the composer uses these transitions. When analyzing mm. 65–70, one notes that a transition has been added before the recapitulation. These additions can also appear in the guise of a small coda, as in the case of “Dulce Maria” (mm. 71–74) or “Inmemoriam” (mm. 84–90). Even though these variations are slight and occasional, it is important to remember the statement at the beginning of this paragraph. The form of the danza is interesting of itself, which might be the reason why Acosta uses it exclusively and almost without alteration.

Acosta’s training as a wind player had an impact on his way of conceiving music in the case of melodic writing. His melodic writing is always continuous, and he most often uses complete musical “sentences.” The selection of arranged dances demonstrates the scope of this continuous melodic movement. Although Acosta may have derived them from wind practice, my opinion is that this melodicism can also be idiomatic to the

---

56 “Es la forma más completa que haya generado el genio popular latinoamericano.” Egúrbida, 9 danzas transcritas para la guitarra, introduction.


58 The word merengue describes the rhythmical sections of the dance specifically in the context of the Puerto Rican danza genre. It should not be confused with the separate merengue genre from the Dominican Republic.
guitar. In these melodies, one hears the continual stream of musical ideas that resembles a typical wind instrument melody. Similarly, Acosta is always meticulous about the use of contrasting melodic material for the different musical sections, including in the present works.

Counterpoint is another musical parameter that invites study in Acosta’s music. Although the musical textures are largely that of melody and accompaniment, the way in which Acosta treats melodic lines demonstrates his understanding of counterpoint. “Mercedes” prominently displays this fact in all the dance sections. As with his melodic writing, Acosta’s use of counterpoint seems connected to his early training as a wind player. The melodic writing in the accompaniment part frequently resembles the euphonium part in contemporaneous band music. Also notable is the fact that Acosta uses different types of counterpoint to highlight the different sections of his pieces, thereby creating textures that contrast from section to section. This can more subtle than one might suspect. Take, for example, the piece “Mercedes.” Section C of this piece (mm. 49–65) is a strongly contrapuntal section that contrasts with the entire remainder work.

Polyphony is perhaps the sonic trait that most immediately differentiates classical guitar from other styles of guitar playing. Playing polyphonic music on the guitar raises numerous technical challenges. In the worst case, the necessity of creating more than two independent lines on a single guitar can compromise the performance from a technical standpoint because of the physical nature of the instrument. It is nonetheless possible to play complex counterpoints of up to three simultaneous lines. Polyphony, which is the most common musical texture in the classical guitar repertoire, creates a technical demand that makes classical guitar playing particularly elaborate. It is because of this that
I believe the study of single lines—when played in chamber music—should be better emphasized in the repertoire for classical guitar. These new arrangements have been made so that they could serve this educational purpose.

The distribution of the polyphony among multiple parts allows the players to become more conscious of all the subtleties within the music—as listeners as well as producers of sound. In this way, learning and performing Acosta’s music can help to improve the musicianship of guitarists. The roles of the guitars in the ensemble pieces have been balanced so that each instrument gets equal prominence. The main themes are exchanged around the different parts (as if interchanging the protagonists), as are their roles in the different sections. Again, these are not literal transcriptions of the piano pieces. I have freely added and changed numerous details in these arrangements to increase their pedagogical value. The manuscripts in Appendix II should help to identify the initial intentions of the composer.

Musical texture—that is, the different configurations in which music is arranged in “vertical” layers—is always an important aspect of polyphonic music. Nonetheless, texture is often the subject that performers most despise. Composers usually use varying textures as a compositional device that compliments their musical discourses. The arrangements in this document intentionally highlight textural changes as a way of guiding musical interest.

Harmonic language is perhaps the area in which Acosta’s music is least noteworthy. Acosta uses a diatonic, functional approach to develop his harmonic discourse, using chromatic lines almost always as passing notes. The next quotation shows how this relates to Acosta’s music, while also bringing back the comparison to the
music of Morel Campos. Veray affirms about Juan Morel Campos that “the popular flavor of his works is the result of his academic inconsistency.” He also adds that Campos’s music “should not be looked at purely for its academicism. It would be in vain to enumerate technical imperfections that only interest from the point of view of musical analysis." I would argue that the same description applies to Acosta's music. This demonstrates again the similarities in how different musicologists have described Campos’s and Acosta’s musical language.

Although all the music selected for these arrangements demands an advanced level of instrumental technique, it is important to mention that Acosta's output also includes numerous easier pieces. Luis A. Santiago has discussed the different levels of difficulty in his music and how important this variety of challenges is to the technical development of a wind band. From a pedagogical standpoint, it is crucial for any teacher or conductor to know how to balance the challenge level of pieces played by an ensemble. Acosta spent his whole life teaching students and leading musicians who represented a wide range of playing abilities. Because of this, his musical output encompasses many different difficulty levels, both in the technical aspects for specific instruments and in the ensemble work.

A brief discussion introduces each of the pieces arranged in this document. “Mercedes” is arranged for a trio of two guitars and a Puerto Rican cuatro. The piece is especially notable in the way each rhythmic section has its own topical personality and

---


60 “No hay que buscar en ella academicismo puro. Sería vano enumerar imperfecciones técnicas que sólo interesan desde el punto de vista del análisis musical, y esta danza transcende el campo de la música.” Veray. "La misión social de la danza Puertorriqueña," 40.

61 Castro, Juan Francisco Acosta de Arce, 65.
contrasting style of counterpoint. The performers should emphasize the diversity of the textures and the individuality of each section. The next piece, “Eres una santa,” is arranged for guitar quartet. Although the melodic writing in this piece is dense, this dance is fairly simple in its structure and development. This is a “romantic danza” and should be played more elegantly and with a more romantic phrasing. The arrangements continue with the famous dance “Bajo la sombra de un pino,” in an arrangement for guitar quartet. This piece is widely known in Puerto Rico. For this version, the focus is primarily in the exchange of material and the melodic role between all four of the guitar parts. The performance should always help to clarify the dense melodic material, while also emphasizing the counterpoint in the accompaniment parts. “Dulce Maria” is the only solo guitar piece in the collection. Its three-line counterpoint is wholly characteristic of classical guitar. The piece should be played in a slow tempo and is performance should highlight the contrasting characteristics of its dance sections. The collection finishes with the piece “In memoriam” in an arrangement for guitar duet. This piece is dedicated to the Figueroa family and shows more ambition from Acosta regarding rhythmic variety and the structure of the melodic material. Both parts are of equal importance in this piece. The virtuosic passages should be played as an extension of the musical discourse, rather than for merely to demonstrate the technical commando of the performer. Particular attention should be given to the parts in which the accompaniment responds to the main melodies.

CONCLUSION

Throughout this document, it becomes evident that many new details can be brought to light when analyzing Acosta's life and works from the perspective of a
musician. As seen here, all aspects of his musical world can be used to complement the historical information available to the public. I hope this document helps to develop a more in-depth study of Acosta’s legacy in the pedagogical terms described above. I also hope that these new guitar arrangements can help to promote the music of lesser-known Puerto Rican composers.

As for Juan F. Acosta’s contribution to music, the historian Ricardo Alegria stated: “In the history of Puerto Rican Music, and especially in everything related to the *danza*, the name, and works of Don Juan Francisco Acosta, will be an essential part.”\(^6\) Although Veray stated in 1958 about the future of the Puerto Rican *danza* that “It is possible that not much could be added,” This document proves that there is still more to discover from this beautiful musical genre.\(^6\) Many areas of interest about Acosta’s life and works simply remain unknown. I believe that the letter reproduced in the appendix will raise awareness about the importance of studying Acosta’s ten final years, especially while people who had close relationships with him still remain alive. Additionally, attention should be offered to on the numerous non-musical details that Acosta left in his manuscripts.

Luis Enrique Juliá (b. 1953), a guitarist and composer from Puerto Rico, wrote in the musicology journal *Musiké* that Juan F. Acosta is “one of the most prolific Caribbean composers of the twentieth century.”\(^6\) In making this statement, Juliá provokes the argument that Acosta’s legacy should be considered outside of his native country and

---

62 “En al historia de la música puertorriquena, y en especial en todo lo referente a la Danza, el nombre y obra de don Juan Francisco Acosta, será parte escencial de la misma;” Castro, *Juan Francisco Acosta de Arce*, 60.

63 Veray. "Vida y desarrollo de la Danza," 23.

within the whole Carribean region. I would like to take his statement further and suggest that Acosta’s work should be compared to that of prominent Latin American composers. Although the intention of this study is not to claim a position for Acosta’s within any musical or geographical canon, I hope that this document establishes a foundation upon which further meaningful research, analysis, and criticism can be conducted.

In addition, the guitar arrangements can help explore new possibilities by providing a fresh look at guitar repertoire. The peculiarities of the rhythms and background of this Caribbean music could open new frontiers for guitar students. The arrangements also serve to encourage the valuable study of ensemble repertoire among classical guitar students. To conclude, I hope that this document clears the path for future works of scholarly scrutiny that would add to Acosta’s biographical information and to the analysis of his vast musical catalog. For now, I am elated to share the new arrangements with which I hope to bring to some light this music.
APPENDIX A: LETTER FROM JUAN F. ACOSTA (1958)
APPENDIX A: LETTER FROM JUAN F. ACOSTA 1958

Chichén-Itzá, 26 de enero, 1958
Instituto de Cultura
Juan F. Acosta

Estimado:

Soy maestro y compositor de música. Tiengo 160 danzas de mi inspiración, en su mayoría inéditas. Soy un admirador del gran maestro ido, don Juan Morel Campos, y en mi mente, se puede decir: tengo todas sus bellas danzas. Todes esto es para explicarles una propuesta que tienen en sus bellas danzas que ellos han editado, para un recuerdo eterno del maestro y de esa gran institución. Muchas gracias y quedo atentamente,

Juan F. Acosta

[Signature]
Adjuntas, P.R.

20 de enero, 1958

Instituto de Cultura
San Juan, P. Rico

Señores:

Soy maestro y compositor de música. Tengo 160 danzas de mi inspiración, en su mayoría inéditas. Soy un admirador del gran maestro ido, don Juan Morel Campos y en mi mente, se puede decir, tengo Todas sus bellas danzas. Todo esto es, para suplicarles me puedan conseguir un libreto de sus bellas danzas que Uds. han editado, para un recuerdo eterno del maestro y de esa gran institución. Muchas gracias y quedo atentamente,

Juan F. Acosta
Box 379

ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF THE LETTER

Adjuntas, P.R.

January 20, 1958

Instituto de Cultura
San Juan, P. Rico

Sirs:

I am a music teacher and composer. I have 160 danzas of my inspiration, most of them unedited. I am a great admirer of the great Maestro gone, don Juan Morel Campos, and in my mind, one could say, I have all his beautiful dances. All of this is to beg to be able to obtain the book of his beautiful dances that you [the Instituto de Cultura] have edited, for an eternal memory of the Maestro and this great institution. Thank you very much, and I remain attentive,

Juan F. Acosta
Box 379
APPENDIX B: GUITAR ARRANGEMENTS
Mercedes
(Danza puertorriqueña)

Juan F. Acosta
(1890=1968)

Transcripción y arreglo
Hermelindo Ruiz Mestre

Cuatro
(or Guitar)

Guitar 2

Guitar 3

Elegante  \( (\text{c.} \, 80) \)

\( \text{f} \) cresc.

\( \text{p} \) rit.

\( \text{f} \) cresc.

\( \text{p} \) rit.

(\( \text{d} = \text{c.} \, 100 \))

1. con alegría

2. con alegría

(con alegría)
Mercedes
Eres una santa
(Danza puertorriqueña)

Juan F. Acosta
(1890-1968)

Transcripción y arreglo
Hermelindo Ruiz Mestre

(M.M. $\frac{4}{4} = c. 70$)
Bajo la sombra de un pino

(Danza puertorriqueña)

Juan F. Acosta
(1890-1968)

Transcripción y arreglo
Hermelindo Ruiz Mestre

Guitar 1

(M.M. \( \frac{1}{4} = c. 56 \))

Guitar 2

Guitar 3
\( \mathbb{R} = D \)

Guitar 4
\( \mathbb{R} = D \)

\( \frac{45}{\text{Bajo la sombra de un pino}} \)

Juan F. Acosta
(1890-1968)
Dulce María
(• Danza Puertorriqueña •)

Juan F. Acosta
(1890-1968)

Transcripción y arreglo:
Hermelindo Ruiz Mestre

(M.M. 3 = c. 60)
Inmemorian

(Danza Puertorriqueña)

Juan F. Acosta
(1890-1968)

Transcripción y arreglo
Hermelindo Ruiz Mestre

Guitar 1
\( \text{\( \frac{6}{4} \)} = \text{D} \)

Guitar 2
\( \text{\( \frac{6}{4} \)} = \text{D} \)

\((\text{M.M.} \ \frac{4}{4} = \text{c. 70})\)

\(\text{\textit{dim.}}\)

\(\text{\textit{con alma}}\)

\(\text{(M.M.} \ \frac{4}{4} = \text{c. 92})\)

Inmemorian

(Danza Puertorriqueña)

Juan F. Acosta
(1890-1968)

Transcripción y arreglo
Hermelindo Ruiz Mestre

Guitar 1
\( \text{\( \frac{6}{4} \)} = \text{D} \)

Guitar 2
\( \text{\( \frac{6}{4} \)} = \text{D} \)

\((\text{M.M.} \ \frac{4}{4} = \text{c. 70})\)

\(\text{\textit{dim.}}\)

\(\text{\textit{con alma}}\)

\(\text{(M.M.} \ \frac{4}{4} = \text{c. 92})\)

Inmemorian

(Danza Puertorriqueña)

Juan F. Acosta
(1890-1968)

Transcripción y arreglo
Hermelindo Ruiz Mestre

Guitar 1
\( \text{\( \frac{6}{4} \)} = \text{D} \)

Guitar 2
\( \text{\( \frac{6}{4} \)} = \text{D} \)

\((\text{M.M.} \ \frac{4}{4} = \text{c. 70})\)

\(\text{\textit{dim.}}\)

\(\text{\textit{con alma}}\)

\(\text{(M.M.} \ \frac{4}{4} = \text{c. 92})\)
Escrita en Adjuntas, año 1954, a la memoria de
mi muy recordada doña Carmen Sanabria de Figueroa
APPENDIX C: MANUSCRIPTS OF SELECTED DANZAS
"Mercedes"

Danza para piano

Por

Juan J. Acosta

Adjunto a Rico

Dedicada con respeto y admiración a la muy distinguida señora esposa amada del compañero amigo, Arístides Somoza Bravo, secretario del Supremo. L. Urdan.
"Cristina Santa"

Danza para piano

for

Juan C. Acesta

adjuntas 62

ano, 1959
"Bajo la Sombra de Tintín"

Zanža para piano

por

Juan F. Acosta

Ecrita en Hatillo, S. Rico, en 7 de julio, 1836.

y dedicada a mi ilustre amigo y compañero,

Felipe M. Arana
"Bajo la Sombra de Típico" Danza por Juan P. Breña

...
Escrito en Habilla, en julio 7-1936
Escrito en Alzamores año, 1954, a la memoria de
mi querida señora Carmen Sarabia de Dávila.
Primary Sources:

Papers of Juan F. Acosta. Autograph scores, letters, financial documents. Private collection of Migdalia Ramos Acosta and Acosta Family. Collection held in Toa Alta, Puerto Rico. Also administered by Vilma Ramos Acosta


Secondary Sources:

Aponte, Carmelo F. "Recordando a Juan Francisco Acosta de Arce." Aguinaldo Navideño. San Sebastián, P.R. Ed.1990.


Egürbida, Leonardo. 9 danzas transcritas para guitarra. San Juan, P.R.: Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña, 1972.


Discography


Part II:

PROGRAM NOTES
PROGRAM I

Music of Argentina and Paraguay
April 20, 2016
Niles Gallery
7:00pm

Sonata op. 47
I. Esordio
II. Scherzo
III. Canto
IV. Finale

Alberto Ginastera
(1916–1983)

Choro de Saudade
Maxixe

Agustín Barrios
(1885–1944)

Variaciones sobre un tema paraguayo*

Diego Sánchez Haase
(b. 1970)

Visiones Crepusculares, Op.18*+
I. Ocaso de Otoño
II. Vals en la capilla derruída
III. En el bosque

Marcos Pablo Dalmacio
(b. 1981)

Tango Suite
I. Tango no.1, Deciso
II. Tango no.2, Andante
III. Tango no.3, Allegro

Astor Piazzolla
(1921–1992)

* written for Hermelindo Ruiz
+ world premiere
Tyler Garrett Stark- second guitar
Program Notes

Music of Argentina and Paraguay

This program represents a tribute to the music of Argentina and Paraguay. It includes major compositions within the guitar repertoire, as well as new works dedicated to Hermelindo Ruiz by a composer from each country. Argentina and Paraguay both have musical traditions in which the guitar plays an indispensable role. This program showcases the different facets of guitar art-music from these countries.

The first piece is the Sonata, Op. 47 by Alberto Ginastera. This is an expansive modern sonata in four movements, written in 1976 and dedicated to Brazilian guitarist Carlos Barbosa Lima. The piece is full of harmonic colors created mostly by the intervals of perfect fourths and minor seconds, and it makes discrete allusions to Argentine folkloric rhythms within different sections. One example of the ambition of the piece is Ginastera's quotation from Richard Wagner's Die Meistersinger at the end of the second movement.\(^1\) The piece is divided into four autonomous movements, each one with its own peculiarities. The first movement opens with a grandiose set of arpeggios and big chords. This contrasts with a more sudden and melodic second section. The second movement is the typical scherzo of a sonata, with considerable virtuosity and technical display. The third movement is more atmospheric and explodes the sonorities of the guitar by alternating in between full chordal sonorities and small linear melodies. The piece finishes with an utterly rhythmic last movement.

\(^1\) Alberto Ginastera, *Sonata for Guitar, op. 47* (New York: Boosey & Hawks, 1984), Preface (unnumbered).
that utilizes different rhythms from the folk music of Argentina, but treated in a modern manner.

The program continues with two works by Paraguay’s most famous composer, Agustín Barrios Mangoré. A guitarist and composer who used to called himself “the Paganini of the jungles of Paraguay,” Barrios traveled throughout Latin America, incorporating the landscape of the whole continent into his music.\(^2\) Interestingly, his *Choro de Saudade* and the *Maxixe* are constructed on the *choro* and the *maxixe* respectively, two popular rhythms of Brazil. Both pieces are extremely different. *Choro de Saudade* is a slow rondo piece of a melancholic affect, while the *Maxixe* is a happy dance with numerous technical challenges of considerable virtuosity. In these pieces, one sees Barrios's mastery of his idiomatic and poetic style of writing for the guitar.

The next piece in the program was composed in 2013 by Paraguayan composer Diego Sánchez Haase and dedicated to Ruiz. The piece is a set of variations on the tune “Campamento Cerro León,” one of the most famous patriotic songs of Paraguay. The composer sets out to deconstruct the theme in a free manner, putting special effort into expanding the folk rhythms of his native land (especially the *polka paraguaya*). It is an intense and energetic piece. The program continues with another piece dedicated to Ruiz, this time from Marcos Pablo Dalmacio, a young Argentinean composer who currently lives in Brazil. “Visiones Crepusculares (Crepuscular Visions), op.18” was composed in 2015 and gives an evocative and programmatic description to its titles: the first movement is

“Autumn Sunset,” the second is “Waltz of the Ruined Chapel,” and the last one is “The Forest.”

The *Tango Suite* for two guitars by Astor Piazzolla ends the program. Each of its three movements is a perfect example of the modern Argentine *tango nuevo*, or new tangos. The work is full of the melodic exuberance and the “mood swings” that are characteristic of Piazzolla’s best works. The piece starts with *Tango no. 1, Deciso*. The listener will hear numerous percussive and rhythmical effects. Typical of Piazzolla, there will be a slower middle contrasting section. The piece continues with *Tango no. 2, Andante*. This is a slower and beautiful second movement. The last movement, the *Tango no. 3, Allegro* is, again, a faster tango. This is an incredibly virtuosic tango and has a more advanced harmonic language; its sonorities are more modern than the two previous tangos.

Musical traditions throughout Latin America, although hugely diverse, have always been interrelated. The influence of Brazil in this program is more evident than intended. Agustín Barrios’s pieces used Brazilian rhythms, and Argentine composer Marcos Pablo Dalmacio lives in Brazil. If by paying homage to Argentina and Paraguay, we ended up in Brazil, there are probably other sounds from the whole Latin American region in this musical program.
Concert Program II

Music of Ernesto Cordero

December 6, 2016
Niles Gallery
3:00pm

    Preludio no. 1: Lento e expressivo
    Preludio no. 2: Andante espressivo
    Preludio no. 3: Allegro
    Preludio no. 4: A piacere
    Preludio no. 5: Allegreto

Bocetos Sonoro, no. 4 (1980)                    Ernesto Cordero (b. 1946)
Bocetos Sonoro, no. 5 (1980)

Pregunta (2000)                          Ernesto Cordero
Mapeyé (1967)                              Ernesto Cordero (b. 1946)

La Catedral de Taxco (2008)                   Ernesto Cordero (b. 1946)

Concierto Antillano (1983)                   Ernesto Cordero (b. 1946)
    I. Campo y Mar
    II. Pavana al estilo del son cubano
    III. Seis Milonga

Zixi Ren, piano
The Music of Ernesto Cordero

This concert celebrates the 70th birthday of Puerto Rican composer Ernesto Cordero. Cordero (b. 1946) is undoubtedly the most important guitarist-composer from Puerto Rico. His music has been played by some of the most prominent guitarists of the twentieth century. These include Manuel Barrueco, Ángel Romero, Alirio Díaz, Costas Costiolis, and Scott Tennant. Cordero calls himself a nationalist composer, borrowing popular themes and rhythms from his native Puerto Rico. His music is also influenced by other parts of the Caribbean region and incorporates melodic transformations and modern sonorities with popular themes from the area.

This program includes a representative selection of different eras and styles from the entire musical output of the composer. It starts with the *Preludios Primaverales* (“Spring Preludes”). These are five short and innovative pieces. The title from the fact that these are some of Cordero’s earliest compositions. Prelude nos. 3 and 4 were written when Cordero was twenty-one years old and starting his guitar graduate studies at the Royal Conservatory of Music in Madrid, under the guidance of Regino Sainz de la Maza.

Similar in length and proportions, the next pieces are the *Bocetos Sonoros*. These were written in 1980, in New York City where Cordero moved to study with composer Julián Orbón from 1977 to 1981. These pieces were written with a didactical purpose, yet the composer specifies in the published score that they can serve both the concert artist as

---

well as guitar students. Because of their depth and inventiveness, they can be described as small musical poems for the guitar.

The program continues with the pieces *Pregunta* (“Inquiry”) and *Mapeyé*. They were composed at different times: “Pregunta” was written in 2000 and “Mapeyé” in 1967. Although these works contrast in character, they use a similar melodic and harmonic language. Both pieces used a traditional and more diatonically oriented harmonic language. The composer wrote in the introduction to the published score: “it is my judgment that the integral or successive interpretation of both works in the same program is recommended. This recommendation is also justified by the contrasting elements inherent in these two pieces.”

“Pregunta” is a slow and melodic piece with a romantic feeling. “Mapeyé” is faster, and its harmonic progression and melody were borrowed from an indigenous song. Even to this date, the melody of the *Mapeyé* is often associated with the music of the peasants and usually played in the rural areas of Puerto Rico. Cordero uses the traditional way the *Mapeyé* is played, which follows the form of a theme and variations. The *Mapeyé* always uses a repeated “Andalusian” or “Phrygian” cadence and a singer who improvises over the theme—which is what the guitar does in this version.

Written in 2008, *La Catedral de Taxco* is the most recent piece in the program. The piece pays homage to an old cathedral from the eighteenth century located in the state of Guerrero in México. Cordero specifies about the piece: “Through the running of the piece, we will hear sounds simulating or evoking church bells, Gregorian chants, indigenous melodies, the horns of automobiles cruising nearside the cathedral, even

---

touches of Flamenco music that can be identified with the “churrigueresco” style of the old building.”

The program concludes with a piano reduction of the *Concierto Antillano* for guitar and orchestra. The famous Brazilian guitarist Carlos Barbosa Lima wrote in the preface of the published score: “The *Concierto Antillano*... is acclaimed as one of the finest concerti written for guitar and chamber orchestra. It effectively integrates diverse cross-cultural elements of the Greater Antilles. These are the Spanish-speaking island-nations of Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Dominican Republic.”

The first movement is based on two distinct images: the countryside and the Caribbean Sea. The second integrates the contrasting rhythms of an old *pavana* (a slow dance from the Renaissance used in *vihuela* music) and a *guajira* (a modern rhythm from Cuba of African-American influences). The third movement is based on a popular theme from Puerto Rico and is a *tour de force* featuring variations and transformations of the original *Seis Milonga* theme. This piece has become one of Cordero’s best known pieces because of its accessibility for the listener and master control of the writing for guitar and the orchestra.

---


Concert Program III
Music of Cuba and Puerto Rico

December 9, 2017
Niles Gallery
7:30pm

Fragmentos
*Miguel Cubano
(sobre una plena de Canario)
(b. 1956)

Elogio de la Danza
*Leo Brouwer
(I. Lento, Allegro Moderato
II. Obstinato, Vivace
(b. 1939)

Sonata del pensador no. 4
*Leo Brouwer
I. Recuperación de la memoria
II. Iluminaciones
III. Elogio de la meditación
IV. Alla danza
(b. 1939)

Margarita
Manuel Gregorio Tavárez
(1843–1883)

Sara
Ángel Mislán
(1862–1911)

Tercera Reflexión sobre
el Concepto de la Nada*
John Rivera Pico
(b. 1992)

Three Sketches for quartet
*Hermelindo Ruiz
I. Prelude
II. Dreaming
III. With Drive
(b. 1987)

Kathleen West, flute
Andrzej Kunecki, violin
Joshua Adam Bermudez, cello

* World Premiere
Program Notes:

Music of Cuba and Puerto Rico

Famous poet Lola Rodriguez de Tió wrote: “Cuba and Puerto Rico are two wings of the same bird.” The cultural interchange of both Caribbean islands can be traced back through centuries. This program showcases this interconnection using the music of modern guitar composers. Additionally, Hermelindo Ruiz was recently invited to participate in the Catedra Manuel de Falla in Spain to study under the guidance of Cuban composer Leo Brouwer. This experience greatly inspired him, hence the dedication of this recital to the legendary maestro.

The program starts with *Fragmentos*, a set of variations on an Afro-Caribbean theme of 'Plena' music, written by the Puerto Rican composer Miguel Cubano in Paris in 1979. The work is built as a set of seven short, deconstructed variations of this popular song. It is not until the end that one will hear a direct quote from the original melody.

The program continues with two pieces written fifty years apart by guitarist-composer Leo Brouwer. *Elogio de la danza*, written in 1964, is one of Brouwer’s most famous pieces. This early composition has two main sections, in which the influence of Russian composer Igor Stravinsky is evident. The next piece, *Sonata del Pensador no. 4*, is one of Brouwer’s most recent sonatas for guitar. It is an extensive four-movement work. The title of the piece (and its respective movements), “Sonata of the Thinker,” alludes to the thoughtful nature and insightful musical discourse of this work. In his most recent years, Brouwer has composed with increasing reflection upon his musical career, using quotes from numerous earlier compositions. Furthermore, he extensively uses the aesthetics and compositional
devices associated with different modernist styles; audiences will hear strict atonal sets, tonal sequences, impressionistic passages, and minimalist sections, all within a single piece of music.

The next two pieces feature some of the earliest examples of the musical genre *danza puertorriqueña*. Manuel Gregorio Tavarez, a child piano prodigy from Puerto Rico, wrote the first piece. In *Margarita*, he blends a Caribbean rhythm, similar to the *habanera*, with the Romantic phrasing and harmonies that he learned in Paris from the music of Chopin. The piece was originally written for piano and Leonardo Egúrbida arranged it for guitar. The next piece, *Sara* by Angel Mislán, was written later and shows the influence of the foxtrot from North America. The guitar arrangement of this piece from the original piano score is by Ruiz. Both works show the richness of Caribbean music and vulnerability to the influence by European and American trends.

John Rivera Pico, a young composer from Puerto Rico, wrote a new piece to add greater variety to this program. The piece is dedicated to Ruiz. *Tercera Reflexión sobre el Concepto de la Nada* intends to contrasts with all the previous works in this program. The work is the third in a set of reflections for various instruments and ensembles by this young, talented composer.

To finish the program, Ruiz will be performing one of his own compositions, which he worked on under the guidance of Leo Brouwer. The *Three Sketches* were originally written for solo guitar. Ruiz was motivated by Brouwer to rewrite the piece using different compositional devices while orchestrating it for a

---

small chamber ensemble. Although the work shares musical content with its predecessor, the solo version, both feature distinctive musical developments and objectives. Although different in scope, both have been a pretext for the art of enjoying life by simply having fun with music.
Lecture Recital - Program IV

THE FURTHER PROJECTION OF JUAN F. ACOSTA’S PIANO MUSIC AS GUITAR ARRANGEMENTS

April 12, 2018
Niles Gallery
5:00pm

Musical Program

Bajo la sombra de un pino (solo)
Juan F. Acosta (1890–1968)
Josiane Feliciano - guitar

Migda Enid (duet)
Juan F. Acosta (1890–1968)
Josiane Feliciano - guitar

Eres una santa (trio)
Juan F. Acosta (1890–1968)
Tyler Garrett Stark - guitar
Josiane Feliciano - guitar

Mercedes (trio)
Juan F. Acosta (1890–1968)
Tyler Garrett Stark - guitar
Josiane Feliciano - cuatro
THE FURTHER PROJECTION OF JUAN F. ACOSTA’S
PIANO MUSIC AS GUITAR ARRANGEMENTS

Introduction:

This presentation provides an overview of the life and works of composer Juan F. Acosta (including a review of the danza puertorriqueña, one of Acosta’s favorite musical genres). The recital will include the performance and analysis of four different musical pieces written by Juan F. Acosta in new guitar arrangements.

Lecture order:

1) Biography:

Juan Francisco Acosta de Arce (1890–1968) was a composer, conductor, and educator from Puerto Rico.8 He studied music under the guidance of Jesús Figueroa and Ángel Mislán, two of the most distinguished musical figures in Puerto Rico at the time. Throughout his life, Acosta wrote a total of 1,256 works.9 Unfortunately, his music has stayed mostly unpublished and unknown five decades after his death. This part will showcase all aspects of his musical legacy.

2) About the Puerto Rican Danza:

It is crucial to note that Acosta’s compositional output focuses on the genre of the danza puertorriqueña. By Acosta’s time, the danza was considered one of Puerto Rico’s most important musical treasures. Musicologist and

---

8 Juan F. Acosta is the commonly used name for the composer. Acosta himself will signed his musical scores as Juan Francisco Acosta Arce.

9 Laura E. Castro, Juan Francisco Acosta de Arce: aproximación a su vida y trayectoria musical (San Sebastián, PR: Banda Comunitaria de San Sebastián Inc., November 2006), 5.
composer Amaury Veray described the danzas “our most elevated musical expression.”

3) Musical Analysis of *Bajo la sombra de un pino*:

*Bajo la sombra de un pino* is Acosta’s most famous piece. It is widely known in Puerto Rico. This part includes an analysis of the historical and musical details of the piece. This piece is also one of the most recognizable examples of the Puerto Rican *danza*.

4) About the Guitar Arrangements:

There are several reasons to arrange Acosta’s music for guitar. The first is the pedagogical purpose of ensemble practice for classical guitarists. The intention behind making these arrangements is to help guitarists improve their ensemble skills. Second, Acosta wrote most of his pieces for solo piano, but this has more to do with the eclectic situation of his work than with his probable final musical intentions. Also, by arranging his music for different instruments, scholars can discover and performers can extend the existing repertoire.

5) Musical Analysis of *Eres una santa* and *Mercedes*.

The lecture will continue with the analysis and performances of the pieces *Eres una santa* and *Mercedes*. These pieces have been selected for their contrasting characters. The discussion includes musical form, textures, and counterpoint.

6) Conclusion:

---

Throughout the study of Acosta's music, it becomes evident that further investigation of his life and works can bring many new details to light. I hope this lecture proves the need for the publication and analysis of his musical output. Particular attention should be given to the last ten years of Acosta's life and his impact in the places where he lived at this time. These includes the cities of Adjuntas, San Sebastián, and Hatillo.
Concert Program V
Music of Spain

May 3, 2018
Niles Gallery
6:00pm

PROGRAM

Asturias (Leyenda)  Isaac Albéniz
(1860–1909)

Hug the Dark  Mercedes Zavala
_on a poem by Charles Bukowski_ (b. 1963)

Suite Populaire Espagnole  Manuel de Falla
_I. El paño moruno_ (1876–1946)
II. Nana (Bercause)
III. Canción
V. Asturiana
VI. Jota

Joshua Adam Bermubez - cello

- INTERMISSION -

Concierto de Aranjuez  Joaquín Rodrigo
_I. Allegro con spirito_ (1901–1999)
II. Adagio
III. Allegro gentile

Mengying Wan - piano
Program Notes:

This concert features music by some of the leading Spanish composers of recent centuries and a relatively new piece by living composer Mercedes Zavala. The program starts with one of the most famous pieces for the guitar. *Asturias* was originally written for piano, but has been arranged numerous times by prominent classical guitarists. The guitar arrangement in this program is by Pepe Romero. Isaac Albéniz is one of the most famous romantic nationalistic composers of Spain. Although the composition is dedicated to Asturias (a province in the northwest of Spain), the music is actually influenced by the Andalusian region in the southern part of the country.

The next work was written by Mercedes Zavala, who is currently a professor at the prestigious Conservatory of Madrid and a composer who is frequently programmed in concerts worldwide. *Hug the Dark* was written in 2015 and was inspired by a poem by the German-American writer Charles Bukowski. The piece is an abstract representation of the humanity of darkness and developed as a set of atonal and non-interrelated musical sections.

The program continues with the *Suite Populaire Espagnole*. The composer, Manuel de Falla, is arguably one of the greatest Spanish composers of all time. This piece was originally written for piano and voice. It was later arranged as an instrumental suite by Falla and the violinist Paul Kochanski. Since then, the piece has become known in different versions, which often omit some of the original movements. This suite is a set of Spanish folk songs in a modern harmonizations by de Falla. The guitar and cello version for this concert combines two different
adaptations of the piece; the cello arrangement is by Maurice Maréchal and the guitar part by Miguel Llobet.

The program concludes with one of the most famous Spanish pieces of all time, the *Concierto de Aranjuez*. This work was originally intended as a concerto for guitar and orchestra and was dedicated to Regino Saíñz de la Maza. Joaquin Rodrigo wrote the piece in 1939, although it did not receive its wide popularity until a few decades later. The version in this concert features a piano reduction of the orchestral score.

Although the music is rather traditional, it neo-classical style includes some elements of modernity. The first movement, *Allegro con spirito*, evokes the flamenco guitar with the numerous *rasgueados* (strummings) and scales. It has an imperial feel that is redolent of the Spanish city of Aranjuez. This first movement follows a concerto form or ritornello form, similar to the sonata form. The interaction of the guitar and the orchestra are equal, creating a lot of virtuosity and excitement in both parts.

The second movement, *Adagio*, is perhaps the reason for the wide popularity of this concerto. An enchanting and nostalgic melody captures the tragic story behind the movement. It is written in a slow tempo, and the melody resembles a traditional *cante jondo* of Andalusian influence. This movement also includes two considerable solo cadenzas for the guitar.

The third movement, *Allegro gentile*, is a joyful rondo. This last movement is a typical Rodrigo-style finale, which could be characterized as a scherzo-like rondo full of fun and virtuosity. The influence of Rodrigo’s teacher Paul
Dukas is recognizable in the orchestration and especially in the structural intention of the last movement. This movement also has a gentle and imperial feel that resembles, again, the city of Aranjuez and its gardens, which the concerto depicts.


Vita

Education

Yale University 2012-2013
- Artist Diploma

Yale University 2010-2012
- Masters Degree in guitar performance

Music Conservatory of Puerto Rico 2005-2010
- Bachelors degree in music

Professional Experience

Goeiz Publications 2010-Present
- President and project developer.

University of Kentucky 2015-2018
- Graduate teaching assistant.

Yale University 2010-2012
- Individual classes instructor

Honors

Andrés Segovia-José Miguel Ruiz Morales 2011
- Symphonic and Modern Music Prize - Spain

Yale University 2010-2013
- Full Scholarship

Joven destacado del año 2008
- Asociación puertorriqueña de la UNESCO

Premio Angel Mislán 2007
- Casa Pepiniana de la Cultura

Hermelindo Ruiz Mestre