

VIVA la *Revolución!*

A CONCERT TRIBUTE TO ALBERTO GINASTERA

In celebration of the 200th Anniversary of Argentinian Independence, Tuesday 25 May, 2010, Llewellyn Hall, ANU.

Minh Le Hoang, guitar

Adrian Walter, guitar

Marcela Fiorillo, piano.

Justine Anderson, Soprano.

ANU Percussion Ensemble, and School of Music students, conductor Gary France

Reviewer: Zsuzsi Sobosla

National pride is an interesting thing. At its best, it encompasses a country's cultural and political histories, and also its artistic figureheads. In Canberra, the 200th anniversary of Argentinean independence [La *Revolución de Mayo*—this year, Tuesday May 25, 2010] was commemorated in the presence of His Excellency the Ambassador with a concert tribute to the greatest of his country's 20th classical composers. Not every culture so recognizably celebrates its history through its art.

Alberto Ginastera's music refers to indigenous traditions, from pre-Columbian through to contemporary *Creole* and *grollo* folk practices, merged with a more academic Western concert discipline .

Ginastera wrote music that is technically disciplined but emotionally volatile. The programme notes indicate that in his most mature pieces Ginastera makes folk regional traits into a universal language, on a par with Bartok in middle Europe. .

His guitar sonatas extend the techniques of Spanish guitar, I watch both Minh Le Hoang and Adrian Walter, both lecturers at the School of Music, striking, sliding, slapping and caressing neck and body of their respective guitars with a sense of significance that we can forget has any political relevance in our Australian lives. The urgency and emotional imperatives in these works is striking. The guitar makes a political statement; its playing is not just a pastime. .

Minh Le's playing of the Sonata op. 47 highlighted the ornamental characteristics of the criollo tradition, whilst Walter played the Three Preludes, 1957 of Ginastera's cotemporary, Maximo Diego Pujol, in a mellifluous performance which journeyed from dusky whispering to archly dignified melancholy. Walter, the new Head of School, exemplifies how to infuse contained dignity with disciplined passion

Two piano works performed by Marcela Fiorillo were characterized by rapid repeated staccato notes alternating with glissandi, strident chords and fiery arpeggios. The Sonata op.22 in particular was fiercely elegiac.

The concert highlight, the massive *Cantata Para America Magica* for voice and percussion, is a formidable piece, scored in 6 movements for soprano, 2 pianos, celeste, and a ten-piece ensemble featuring a huge array of percussion instruments. The performance was skillfully-modulated and saw these School of Music students working a range of dynamics from quiet agitation to a warrior's bellow. The effervescent soprano Justine Anderson, roaring above this orchestra at full bore, was startling.

Ginastera spoke about this piece as 'metaphysically inspired' by Mesoamerican symbology, running a symbolic cycle from creation through to destruction and vice versa. Written in 1960, it quotes indigenous references in both structure and tonalities, but also runs a compositional range from 12 tone to serial inversions.. Shifting, odd-numbered metric groupings evoke ceremonial drums and build emotional impetus. At times I am reminded of the more emotionally volatile of Ligeti's later vocal works, combined with a sense of architecture and resonant power on a par with the works of Xenakis. The virtuosic Soprano howls, hisses and declaims in surges throughout the work, alternately baying for, and lamenting the prophesized loss of, blood,. It seemed a journey through political and social histories, ancient and modern, and a struggle with a history of beliefs.

The Argentinean embassy, in partnership with ANCLAS and the ANU School of Music, co-sponsored the event. The student orchestra *deeply* understood the work [a tribute to Gary France as their teacher/conductor and the significance of their performance practice. Anyone not present at this evening missed a major performance event.