

Antonio Lauro

If Venezuela has a Gershwin, it is Antonio Lauro

The most famous of all Venezuelan composers was born in Ciudad Bolívar in 1917. His father, who had come from Calabria in the south of Italy, was an enthusiastic amateur musician who played saxhorn in the local band, as well as clarinet and guitar and who composed waltzes and mazurkas.

After his father's death, the young Antonio settled in Caracas with his family in 1926.

In 1931 he began his musical studies at the Escuela de Música y Declamación (today Escuela de Música José Ángel Lamas) with the composer Narciso Llamozas. In 1933 Lauro's excellent bass voice won him a place in the choral group "Orfeón Lamas" which had been founded by the great Vicente Emilio Sojo and he soon became a principal soloist.

In 1934 Antonio Lauro began his formal guitar studies with Raúl Borges. He quickly displayed exceptional talent for the guitar and became the official guitarist of the radio station Radio Caracas Broadcasting. He accompanied popular singers and wrote his first pieces for the guitar, his favourite instrument.

In 1935, he founded a vocal-instrumental group "Cantores del Trópico", with Eduardo Serrano, Marco Tulio Maristany and Manuel Enrique Pérez Díaz. In 1938, Eduardo Serrano left the group and the trio began a highly successful tour of South America.

Lauro returned to Caracas in 1941 and in 1942 decided to continue his musical studies with Vicente Emilio Sojo and Juan Bautista Plaza.

He finished his studies in 1947 and began to receive awards and prizes for his compositions. He won the Annual Music Prize three times, a prize which is awarded by the Ministry of Education : in 1947 for his string quartet "Leonardo", in 1948 for his guitar work "Pavana al estilo de los vihuelistas" and in 1949 for his "Canción y Bolera al estilo criollo" from his "Suite para piano".

In the 1950s, Lauro became a music teacher and worked as a percussionist in the Venezuelan Symphony Orchestra.

He was imprisoned for several months between 1951 and 1952 during the dictatorship of Marcos Pérez Jiménez because of his support for the Democracy movement. His "Sonata for Guitar" and his "Suite for Guitar", two important works, date from this period.

Lauro also won the Vicente Emilio Sojo Prize three times : in 1948 for his symphonic poem "Cantaclaro", in 1955 for his symphonic suite "Giros Negroides" and in 1956 for his "Concierto para Guitarra y Orquesta", which he dedicated to Alirio Díaz and which he interpreted himself with the Venezuelan Symphony Orchestra under the direction of the composer Antonio Estévez.

In 1958, Lauro created the choral group "Madrigalistas de Venezuela" which performed music from the Italian Renaissance as well as traditional Venezuelan folk melodies and original compositions.

In 1959-60, Lauro became president of the Venezuelan Symphony Orchestra.

In 1969, he formed a guitar trio, the "Trio Raúl Borges" in honour of his guitar teacher, with Flaminia de Sola and Antonio Ochoa.

Lauro made several tours as a guitar soloist and gave concerts between 1980 and 1982 in Paris and London where he was invited by John Williams and Paco Peña.

In 1985 Lauro received the National Music Prize from the President of the Republic of Venezuela.

Antonio Lauro wrote a large variety of original works, arrangements and transcriptions for the guitar, works for guitar and voice, guitar and harpsichord, duos and trios for guitar, works for piano, choral and orchestral works. His works for guitar have become classics, enriching the repertoire of this instrument with a number of pieces of great importance, influenced by the popular rhythms of his native country. His "Venezuelan Valses" which helped to establish his international reputation are now essential and required pieces in many competitions and festivals such as the Alirio Díaz International Guitar Competition.

Antonio Lauro was a composer and musician of great importance and his works for guitar can be compared to the works by the Brazilian, Heitor Villa Lobos and the Paraguayan, Agustín Barrios Mangoré.

Alirio Díaz

The greatest Venezuelan guitar virtuoso

Alirio Díaz is considered with Andrés Segovia, Julian Bream, John Williams and Narciso Yepes to be one of the greatest guitarists in the history of the instrument.

He is a true myth and a living expression of the great Paraguayan guitarist, Agustín Barrios Mangoré.

Alirio Díaz was born in 1923 in La Candelaria, a small village near Carora in the State of Lara in Venezuela. Even as a small child, he showed an outstanding talent for the cuatro (a small 4-string Venezuelan folk guitar) and the classical guitar which he learned by himself.

In 1942, he moved to Trujillo and studied musical theory with the musical director and composer, Laudelino Mejías. He learned saxophone and clarinet and played in the local band directed by his teacher.

In 1945, he entered the Escuela Superior de Música de Caracas where he specialised in the study of the guitar with the teacher and composer, Raúl Borges. He also followed classes in harmony with Vicente Emilio Sojo, the father of the Venezuelan Musical Renaissance, as well as courses in general musical theory and musical history.

Alirio Díaz graduated with honours and was awarded a scholarship by the Venezuelan Ministry of Education so that he could continue his studies in Spain with the renowned Regino Sainz de la Maza at the Conservatorio Real de Música de Madrid. He was awarded the First Prize on graduation, a recognition which is given only to the most talented and exceptional virtuosos.

After Madrid, Alirio Díaz went to Siena in Italy where he continued his studies at the Academia Musicale Chigiana under the guidance of the legendary guitarist, Andrés Segovia, who quickly recognised his exceptional talent and named him as his assistant and successor as professor of guitar at the academy.

Alirio Díaz began a career as an international soloist performing throughout the world with the most prestigious orchestras and recording the principal repertoire for the guitar from the 16th Century to the present day with a particular attention to Spanish, Italian and Latin American works. Through his recordings and concert performances, he was also able to present the great music from his native Venezuela to an international audience.

Alirio Díaz' interpretation of Spanish music is without equal as are his performances of Bach and Scarlatti. His transcriptions are complete and thoughtful and his arrangements are imaginative and fantastic.

Alirio Díaz settled in Rome in 1964 and shares his time between Venezuela and Europe where he gives master classes and works on his guitar arrangements and publications.

He has received numerous awards and honours including the Inter American Music Prize, the highest cultural award given by the Organisation of American States in recognition of his extraordinary musical achievements.

In Venezuela he is always received with great enthusiasm and in 1993 an Annual Guitar Festival was created which bears his name.

Alirio Díaz is the author of two autobiographical books and the founder of Caroni Music, a company whose aim is to promote the splendid and varied musical tradition of his country throughout the world - music which he arranges and performs with energy and passion.

Alirio Díaz can now, through his Caroni Music Editions, make this wonderful musical heritage available throughout the world and become the Ambassador of Venezuela's cultural wealth and identity.

The Caroní Music Editions are prepared and revised by Alirio Díaz and include a large collection of music for guitar from the 16th Century to the present day.

We also publish a large selection of music for orchestra, piano and voice in Traditional, Popular and Classical styles.

In preparing the Lauro editions, we have adhered closely to his original manuscripts which have been revised by Alirio Díaz.

The versions include a number of ossias which were made by Lauro himself and other ossias which reflect the performances and recordings which have been made by Alirio Díaz in his long and close association with the music.

The ossias of Antonio Lauro are noted A. L

The ossias of Alirio Díaz are noted A. D

Las Ediciones para guitarra de Caroní Music han sido preparadas y revisadas por Alirio Díaz e incluyen una larga selección de música desde el siglo XVI hasta los tiempos presentes.

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Al preparar las obras de Antonio Lauro, nos hemos mantenido extremadamente fieles a sus manuscritos originales, los cuales han sido revisados por Alirio Díaz.

Las versiones incluyen un número de ossias que fueron compuestas por Lauro mismo y otras que reflejan las ejecuciones y las grabaciones que fueron hechas por Alirio Díaz en su larga y dedicada asociación con la música.

Las ossias de Antonio Lauro están identificadas con A. L.

Las ossias de Alirio Díaz están identificadas con A. D.

Les éditions pour guitare de Caroní Music sont préparées et révisées par Alirio Díaz et incluent une large sélection musicale depuis le XVI^e siècle jusqu'à notre époque.

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Pour préparer les œuvres d'Antonio Lauro, nous sommes restés très près des manuscrits originaux, lesquels furent révisés par Alirio Díaz.

Nos versions incluent un certain nombre d'ossias composées par Lauro lui-même et d'autres qui sont le résultat des enregistrements et exécutions d'Alirio Díaz effectuées au cours de sa longue et étroite association avec cette musique.

Les ossias d'Antonio Lauro sont identifiées par A. L.

Les ossias d'Alirio Díaz sont identifiées A. D.



THE WORKS FOR SOLO GUITAR BY ANTONIO LAURO Analysis and Interpretation

By LUIS ZEA

PART 6: THE VALSES – EL MARABINO

AS I pointed out in part two, *El Marabino* refers to a person born in Maracaibo, the capital of the *Estado Zulia* (north west of the country) and one of Venezuela's major cities. *Estado Zulia* is one of the most progressive regions of the country (where most of the oil industry is based) and its inhabitants, particularly the *marabinos* or *maracuchos*, as they are more often called, have an unmistakable accent and like to speak rather on the loud side! (Possibly related to Maracaibo's usual temperature of around 40°C . . .) But they too are hard-working people, well-known for their wit, liveliness, and especially for the pride they take in their land, so much so that one often hears people talking or telling jokes about the *maracuchos* and their '*República del Zulia*', implying that they look upon themselves as citizens of another country altogether!

Considerations for Performance

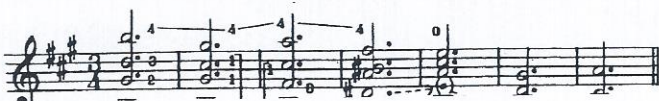
Tempo) The marked tempo (Allegro $\text{♩} = 200$) seems appropriate to the spirit of the piece but remember that speed markings are always relative and that choosing the 'correct tempo' goes hand in hand with understanding the character of the music.

Glissando) In b.4 Lauro wants the top E to be played gently so that it can be heard as the end of the glissando and not as a separate note:



Example 1

Harmony) Listen to the harmony, which will help to clarify the bass line. Lauro has always stressed the importance of the bass. It does not really mean accentuating it but just playing it so that it can be heard clearly. In bars 9 to 13, for example, the bass describes a beautiful line that deserves special care. Listen to its harmonies and literally sing the melody as you play the following chords:

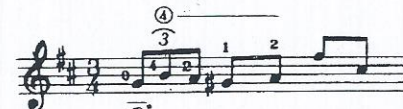


Hemiola) Notice the graceful hemiola at the end of the first section, (which reappears at the end of the vals). Make sure not to accentuate the crotchets C sharp, B and A;



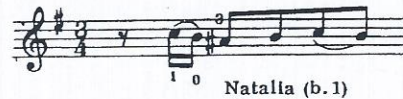
Example 3

Triplet Rhythm) The triplet in the second half is not often given a clear rhythmic definition, probably because it tends to be confused with a similar rhythm which occurs in the famous *Natalia*:



El Marabino (b. 18)

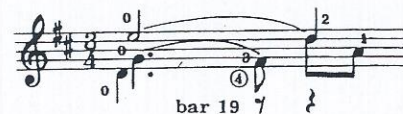
Example 4a El Marabino



Natalia (b. 1)

Example 4b Natalia

Appoggiaturas) The appoggiaturas and their resolutions should be played *legato*, making sure that the dissonance is heard clearly but not accented, and its resolution played gently (bar 19 should really be notated as shown below):



Example 5



Example 6

Melody and Accompaniment) Both melody and accompaniment have to be presented to the listener with clarity. To this end it is simpler and more natural to think of 'singing with the

not only does it project the melody easily but it *simultaneously* gives the proper perspective to the accompaniment. It is like 'killing two birds with one shot', as we say in Venezuela. If you try to reveal the identify of the melody by focusing on the accompaniment you are really trying to do two things at once, and so you'll probably end up 'firing two shots without even killing one bird!' Remember also not to underestimate the role of the accompaniment. Melody and accompaniment pay tribute to each other in the same way as a flower pays tribute to the leaves that surround it and vice-versa. In places like b. 2 and 3, for example, the melody can be lost and confused with the accompaniment:



Example 7

All we need to 'sing with the instrument' is to be aware of the melody and to let the spontaneous desire to play it take over. The result? The melody sings itself and the guitarist becomes one with it.

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| 3. OPUS 19 2:53 | 16. A SONG NOT FORGOTTEN 3:12 |
| 4. SYLVIA WALTZ 2:41 | 17. EASY SUMMER MORNING 2:53 |
| 5. OPUS 22 3:35 | 18. WINTER PRINCE 2:35 |
| 6. OPUS 20 3:26 | 19. GRANMA'S OLD PAVANA RAIL 2:40 |
| 7. HOMERID SUITE 3:32 | 20. LIBRARY 3:34 |
| 8. A NORWEGIAN'S FANTASY 2:31 | 21. LONELY SOUL 1:35 |
| 9. OPUS 15 2:07 | 22. RUTH 1:53 |
| 10. S. 2:00 | 23. PARABLE 7:29 |
| 11. OPUS 21 2:34 | |
| 12. SUIPET 4:21 | |
| 13. SUIPET THE BEAV 3:49 | |

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ANTONIO LAURO: HIS GUITAR WORKS

By LUIS ZEA

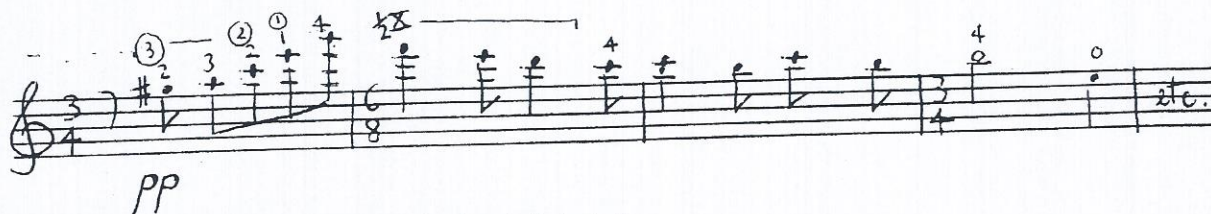
No. 15

The performance of Lauro's Valses: 'Carora'

As I mentioned in part two (Nov. '84 issue), *Carora* is the name of the town where Alirio Díaz was born (*Estado Lara*, west of Venezuela). At first the *vals* did not have a title, but Alirio Díaz liked it so much that Lauro dedicated it to him, and then Díaz himself decided to call it *Carora* out of love for his homeland.



A noticeable feature of this *vals* is the absence of metrical changes from 3/4 to 3/2. We only find shifts to 6/8. Like in previous *vals*, these changes are implicitly suggested in the music by the presence of two consecutive dotted crotchets, or by the rhythm ♩ ♩ ♩ as the following example illustrates:
Ex. 1 (P.1, 2nd system)



Sometimes the metrical change occurs in the whole texture, i.e. in both the melody and the bass:
Ex. 2 (P.1, 4th system)



The accent signs (>) in the score are really intended to make the performer aware of this total shift to 6/8, rather than to indicate an accent on each beat.

A common mistake takes place in this passage, namely to allow the bass notes A, and particularly G & F, to ring across the barline:

Ex. 3



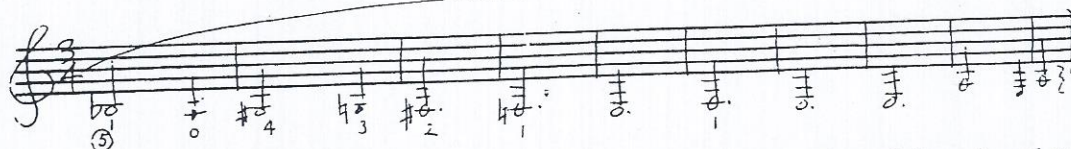
This results in a blurred bass-line profile which in turn obscures the harmony. In general, strings can be damped with either hand. In this case, however, the right hand is pretty

busy (notice, by the way, my suggested right hand fingering for this passage), so it seems wiser to use the left hand in order to solve the problem. The 6th string can be stopped by releasing each *barré* (V, III & I) on the downbeats, as shown in Ex. 2 above. Naturally, it means more work for the left hand, but slow practice should yield the desired results. Make sure that the sound of the open 6th is not heard when the first finger abandons that string.

From the last bar quoted in Ex. 2 onwards the chromatic movement of the bass describes a descending line from B flat to E which is greatly enhanced by the beautiful harmonies on top of it. Once again we should strive for *clarity*. To this end I would like to make the suggestions that follow:

a) Play the bass line only as *legato* as possible while you inwardly hear the melody above it.

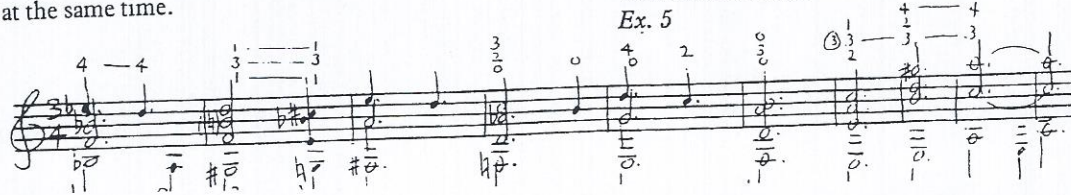
Ex. 4 (Bass line in last ten bars of first section)



b) Again play this bass line and actually sing (or hum) the melody at the same time.

c) Now try singing the melody again and accompany yourself with the following harmonic reduction⁽¹⁾:

Ex. 5



These simple ideas will direct your ears to subtler aspects of the music and are most likely to heighten your intuitive understanding of it.

At the beginning of the second section there are several accent signs (>) like the ones we found in the previous section (see Ex. 2 above).

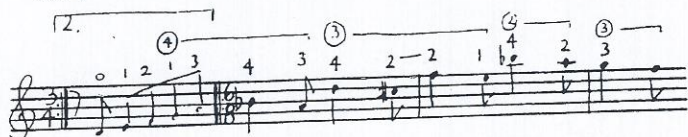


Once again it must be made clear that such accents are not meant to denote an emphasis on those beats. Their purpose is to point out the metrical change to 6/8. Still, I personally feel that these accent signs are not only unnecessary but misleading, and that the score communicates itself quite unambiguously to the eye and ear *without* them.

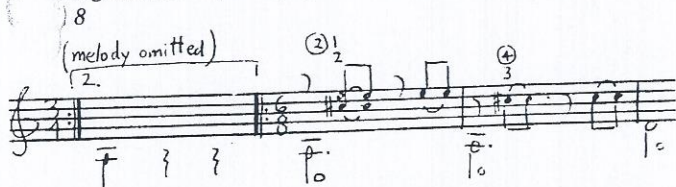
Notice that the melody in this section starts its journey in the middle of the texture and then moves up gradually into the high register. In the opening bars there is the chance of losing the melodic line because the notes around it are very close to it (see Ex. 6). I would suggest the following:

a) Play the melody alone (the first few bars will do).

Ex. 7



Sing this melody and play the rest of the texture.



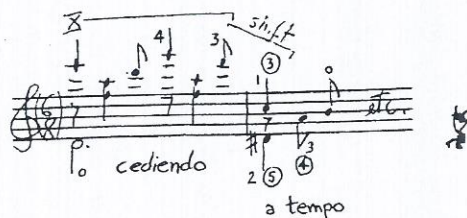
The object of these exercises is to make you more aware of the melodic line, so that your ears never lose track of it.

The wide range of the melody (from open D to high G on ①), and its steady and long ascent in wave-like patterns without any breathing points (i.e. rests) along its course impart an anguished character to the music and explain the marking *cediendo* toward the end of this phrase that opens the second section. The term *cediendo* is used here as a succinct way of saying: 'be prepared to hold back and take time to breathe before you to on'. Basically the same can be said about the next phrase: With it the drama of the music increases and one feels

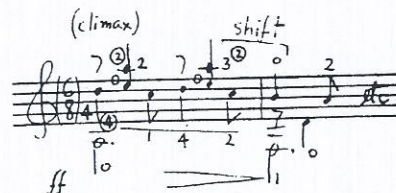
that something significant is about to happen. In fact, the *vals* reaches its moment of climax in the following phrase (see Ex. 9b below).

Several left hand shifts in this section tend to cause trouble, especially the ones shown here:

Ex. 9a



Ex. 9b



If you have difficulties with these shifts try the 'forward-backward' method of practising which I described in the article on *Andreína* (see part 13, Feb. issue). Notice that in Ex. 9a the left hand will tend to move naturally from the high F down to the fifth position inasmuch as one allows the music to breathe properly. In Ex.9b the fingering suggested above leaves finger 1 free to jump to the low F in first position, although this fingering requires a stretch between fingers 3 & 4 which is rather awkward. Each player has to make his/her own decision.

Finally, two printing errors should be corrected:

1) The re-statement of the 4-bar phrase which opens the *vals* (third system) is to be played *mf* and not *piano*, as the score wrongly indicates. The same applies in p.3.

2) P.1, second system, last bar, the crotchet A on the third beat is missing in the score:

Ex. 10



Notes

(1) Incidentally, Lauro's notation of the chords marked with an x is incorrect. The A# & G# (see score, p.1, last system, b.2&4) should really be B# & Ab respectively, as I have indicated in the harmonic reduction.

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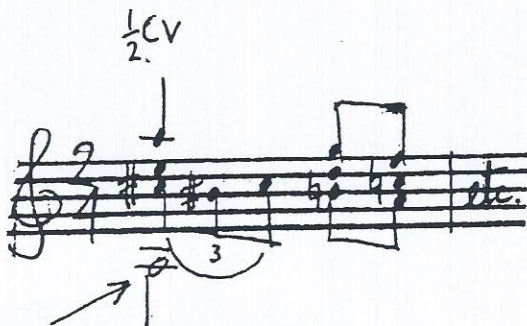
I first heard the children's song *Ana Cristina* sometime during the early 70's, in an arrangement for three guitars made by Lauro himself and played by the *Trio Raúl Borges* (Antonio Lauro, Flaminia De Sola and Antonio Ochoa). Around this time the *Trio* made an LP in which they included *Ana Cristina*. Later I learnt that the piece was originally intended for solo guitar. Either as an ensemble item or as a solo, the piece works very well and is a charming example of what Lauro himself describes as his 'polytonal' style.⁽¹⁾ Lauro dictated it to one of his granddaughters.

Considerations for Performance


Printing Errors

Look up part three of the series (Dec. '84 issue). Also note that a bass A (open string) is missing in bar 2, 2nd. system:

Ex. 1



Musical character and Tempo

adults", evidently taking into account the non-traditional harmony of the piece. Such description does suggest the kind of musical character which Lauro had in mind when he composed *Ana Cristina*. Notice that the rhythm 2/4  is present in every bar of the piece, just like in the first movement of Lauro's *Triptico (Armida)*. Since this rhythm is also a characteristic feature of two other Venezuelan folk genres, namely the lively *merengue* and the festive Christmas song *aguinaldo*, there is the risk of giving *Ana Cristina* the wrong identity if one plays the music faster than its musical character suggests. In fact, I do find the given tempo indication ($\text{♩} = 60$) too fast for the character of the song to emerge freely and clearly. To my ears the identity of the piece is better revealed by playing it somewhere around $\text{♩} = 44$.

Contrasts

Remember to make wise use of contrasts of colour and dynamics which will enhance the overall effect of your performance. Allow your imagination to guide you.

String quartet sound

Notice that *Ana Cristina* moves predominantly in four parts. In order to achieve a more convincing characterisation I like to imagine the sonority of a string quartet playing the piece *con sordina*. In my experience the image of a string quartet's muted sound seems to help in capturing and conveying the rather introspective spirit of the music.

Hearing, understanding and playing

On several occasions I have heard students who were quite able to produce all their notes faultlessly but whose playing failed to project the music's melody clearly to the listener. The reason for this usually lies in lack of musical understanding and/or poor listening. These problems show up when the students are asked to play the melody alone and legato, only to find themselves totally unable to do so. We should always remember that we can only play what we hear and understand. This is why we constantly have to aim at refining our perception and strive for musical goals.

NOTES

- (1) For a discussion of Lauro's 'polytonal' style see my article on *Yacambu* (Dec. '85 issue).

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ANTONIO LAURO: 1917-1986

LUIS ZEA

On the 18th of April 1986 Antonio Lauro died in Caracas at the age of 68. The whole guitar world is saddened by the news. Lauro was born in Ciudad Bolívar on the 3rd of August 1917. His parents were Antonio Lauro and Armida Cuttroneo, both Italian immigrants who came to Venezuela at the turn of the century and settled in Ciudad Bolívar where they quickly integrated into the life and customs of their new homeland. Lauro the father, a barber and musician, used to sing with 'delicate Italian voice', as Alirio Díaz once put it, and played the guitar by ear. From his domestic music-making must have emanated the first musical sounds that touched his son's ears. He died as a young man in 1922, aged 30. A few years later Mrs. Lauro moved to Caracas with her three children, Antonio, who was the eldest — already with guitar in hand — and his two sisters Carmen and Armida. The financial situation of the Lauro family was far from ideal those days. In order to earn his living and be able to study the young Antonio became the 'official guitarist' of the radio station *Broadcasting Caracas*. That was the title given to the person whose job was to accompany folk and popular vocal groups and singers who performed for the radio.

During the 1930's Lauro came into contact with four outstanding musicians who were to exert a decisive influence on his musical development: Juan Bautista Plaza, Vicente Emilio Sojo, Salvador Llamozas and Raul Borges. With them Lauro began formal studies of music history and aesthetics, composition, piano and guitar at the *Escuela Superior de Música* in Caracas. Raul Borges opened his *Cátedra de Guitarra* in 1933, an event which marked the beginning of an era in the history of the guitar in Venezuela. Lauro immediately enrolled as one of his first students, later joined by Alirio Díaz, Rodrigo Riera, Manuel Enrique Pérez Díaz, Rómulo Lázarde and others. Under Borges' guidance Lauro gains a deeper understanding of the instrument and a wider vision of its repertoire. Lauro's personal contact with such great artists as Segovia and especially Mangoré — whose playing Lauro always recalled with profound admiration and astonishment — made a powerful impression on him and greatly contributed to his guitar education. It was not too long before Lauro became the first Venezuelan guitarist to perform Bach, Handel, Albéniz, the vihuelistas, etc. in public recitals and on the radio.

Lauro's continued involvement with folk and popular music also yielded positive results. In 1935 he joined his compatriots Manuel Enrique Pérez Díaz and Marco Tulio Maristani — both guitarists, singers and composers — to form the vocal and instrumental trio *Cantores del Trópico* whose primary purpose was the promotion of Venezuelan music. The group achieved great success in Venezuela and other Latin American countries. They made seven recordings of which six have remained as extremely rare and valuable collectors' items. In his various capacities as a bass singer, composer, guitarist and arranger Lauro revealed himself as a highly creative and versatile musician. His first compositions begin to appear during the early years of the *Cantores'* career: *Morenita*, an *aire de joropo* for three voices and guitar written for the trio, and three waltzes for that instrument.

A passionate nationalism accompanied Lauro all his life. Always preoccupied with the general neglect (especially by politicians) of his country's music and the lack of music education in the schools Lauro was to find in the teaching profession the opportunity to make one of his most enduring contributions to Venezuela. Many years of his youth were spent teaching music in numerous schools and creating and conducting student choirs as a means of fostering and preserving the folk music of this country. He regarded such activities as vital for the development and cultural well-being of any country. His concern with these matters is vibrantly expressed in two articles which Lauro wrote in 1944 for the *Revista Nacional de Cultura*, from which I quote: 'It is with the

begins' I believe it necessary to remind you of the alarming state of the Venezuelan popular art today. We have suffered and are suffering from such a huge invasion of degenerate, foreign rhythms, and their cultivation and commercialisation have been so intense that only through untiring dedication to the fosterage and retrieval of our national music will we be able to prevent the total loss of our folklore. By persevering we shall undoubtedly achieve a return to what is essentially Venezuelan . . .'

Thanks to the efforts of Lauro and others like him the situation has improved considerably and Venezuela is today one of the few Latin American countries with a significant number of choral groups.

In 1947 Lauro finishes his studies of composition and writes his first orchestral work: *Cantaclaro*, a symphonic poem based on the novel by the distinguished Venezuelan writer Rómulo Gallegos who was then the President of Venezuela. A year later Gallegos' government is overthrown by a *Junta Militar* which established a dictatorship that lasted for ten years. As a democrat, Lauro became a victim of the political prosecutions carried out by the new régime and ended up in jail (1951-52). While being a prisoner Lauro writes his *Misterio de Navidad* for narrator, soloists, choir and orchestra as well as his two most substantial and original compositions for solo guitar: *Suite Venezolana* and *Sonata. Giros Negroides*, another orchestral work (symphonic suite) and the *Concierto para Guitarra y Orquesta* were written a few years later.

During the 60's and 70's Lauro is engaged in a variety of activities: president of the *Orquesta Sinfónica Venezuela*, xylophonist of that orchestra, director of the *Juan Manuel Olivares* School of Music, founder and member of the guitar trio Raul Borges, professor of guitar at the *Escuela de Música del Este* and later at the *Juan José Landaeeta* Conservatory of Music, a position which he held until his death. Just recently Lauro received the *Premio Nacional de Música*, the highest award given to a musician in Venezuela for his services to the country. The award was presented to him by the President of Venezuela. In the late 70's and early 80's Lauro returns to the platform at a soloist. He goes on a concert tour around Venezuela (24 concerts in one month) and begins his travels to Europe to teach and perform in international festivals. Particularly memorable was his visit to London in July of 1980. Graciously invited by John Williams and Paco Pena, Lauro gave his first and last Wigmore Hall recital with a programme of his own music. His playing was unique. There was a magical charm about it. His rhythms were lucid and spontaneous, there was beauty and freedom, there was life.

As a person Lauro was quiet, agreeable and reserved. You could immediately feel the presence of this tall, well-built man, and an air of calm confidence around him. Being a family man Lauro enjoyed spending time at home with his wife Maria Luisa and his children Natalia, Leonardo and Luis Augusto. He preferred to stay away from too much travelling. His articulate manner of speaking greatly enhanced his teaching. Going back to my student years with him I remember the importance he attached to having a clear sense of rhythm, something which he sometimes described as "knowing how to say the notes". Lauro was also a remarkably modest man, and yet he was well aware of his own worth and place in the guitar world and would not hesitate to defend himself whenever somebody tried to intimidate him. Once in an interview on television he was asked why did he pay so much attention to the music of the people (ie. folk and popular music) instead of exploring new idioms and keeping up-to-date with current musical trends?, to which he replied: "But I *am* the people! I can only write what I am. I do what I like despite the risk of being labelled as a conservative or old-fashioned." There are no lucubrations in his music. His message is simple and direct. For many of us Lauro will remain one of the great guitar composers whose music shall continue to sing and dance for a

HIS GUITAR WORKS

By LUIS ZEA



Trio Cantores del Trópico ('Singers from the Tropic') in the Plaza de Toros, Bogotá, Colombia (May 2, 1940). From left to right: Marco Tulio Maristany (tenor), Antonio Lauro (bass) and Manuel E. Pérez Díaz. Reprinted from A. Díaz, 1980, p.157 (see bibl.). *Natalia* was written around this time.

No. 14

The performance of Lauro's Valses: *Natalia* (Vals No. 3)

Among Lauro's *vals* *Natalia* is likely to be the most famous of all. This is certainly true in Venezuela, where it enjoys tremendous popularity and occupies a special place in the heart of many people. At guitar recitals the first shouts requesting an encore are almost always "*Natalia!*", "*el vals No. 3!*", or simply "*el vals de Lauro!*" (i.e. *the vals* by Lauro!). You hear it not just on the guitar but in all kinds of arrangements for other instruments, ensembles, etc.; naturally, its musical quality has a lot to do with its success. For many guitarists, *Natalia* has also meant the strongest stimulus to start learning the instrument seriously.

When I visited Lauro at his home in Caracas early this year I mentioned that *Natalia* was next on the list of *vals*es to be discussed in the series and, thinking that it would be interesting to hear the story of this *vals* in Lauro's own words, I asked him if he could tell us something about its composition:

"First of all, that *vals* was written many years before *Natalia* was born. At that time I did not think of the name which I later gave to my daughter. I was in Ecuador on a tour with the *Cantores del Trópico*, (1) Guayaquil to be more precise, and there, one night in the hotel, an idea crossed my mind, it came suddenly, it was 'in the air' and somehow I caught it, and I wrote my sketch so that I wouldn't forget it, but I liked the idea very much. Then, as time went on, I matured the idea more and more. Before I write a piece, especially the popular, tonal ones, I always like to play it many, many times, for one or two years. When the piece sinks in, when it feels spontaneous, when I've left our notes or added others which I've liked better, then I write it definitely. This is a way of finding the definitive version of a piece. Of course, I haven't done this with more complex works in which you always have to work in view of what has been done, as in a sonata, for example. But with the *vals*es, which are generally simple, you know, the typical Venezuelan *vals* in two parts — I almost always work in



1938
exactly when I was in Ecuador, but we left Venezuela at the end of 1933, and came back in 1941, or toward the end of 1940. We were in those countries on tour for about 2½ years. When my daughter was born, the *vals* had already become quite famous and everybody enjoyed it. So I decided to give it my daughter's name — it made her feel so happy when she was little".

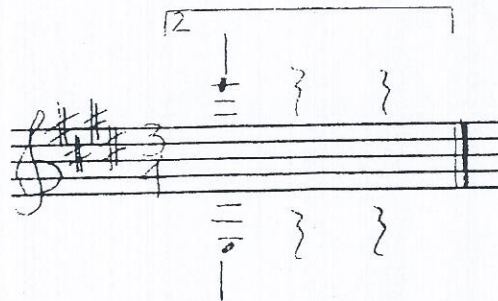
I asked Lauro who was the first person who popularized *Natalia*: was it Alirio Díaz, or yourself?

"Actually, when I first played it — and I played it in front of many people, including many guitarists — the *vals* did not really have a great success. I did not foresee, then, that it was going to be liked so much. It was Alirio Díaz who played it marvellously well and who popularised it. He not only played it but took it abroad. But even before it was in the hands of Alirio, it was Segovia who liked it very much and took it with him and recorded it. The first recordings were those old 78 rpm discs, sometime during the fifties, I don't remember exactly. Later, it appeared on one side of a small 45rpm disc which circulated widely in Europe, with *Natalia* on one side and something else which I can't remember on the other. Of course, when Alirio Díaz saw that Segovia had recorded it, he then recorded it too some years later. Naturally, Alirio imparts to it that typical Venezuelan character, but Segovia interprets it magnificently, and John Williams has also played it very well."

This is, then, the story of *Natalia*, the *vals* which Lauro danced with his daughter on the occasion of her 15th birthday. Regarding its performance I would like to make the observations that follow:

1) There are two mistakes in the printed score, a correction of which appeared in part 2 of the series (see Nov. '84 issue). Another error occurs in the very last bar of the *vals*, where instead of the four-note E major chord Lauro wants only two notes:

Ex. 1



Lauro also wants *Natalia* to end *without a rallentando*.

2) The rhythmic motive ♩ ♩ ♩ is highly characteristic of *Natalia* and functions as a unifying element. Make sure that it receives a clear rhythmic definition every time it appears.

3) Like *Maria Carolina*, *Natalia* is written in ternary form. It is then a good opportunity to recall Salvador Llamozas' eloquent description of the parts of the Venezuelan *vals* which I quoted in part 9 (see Sept. '85 issue), since it may again be of help in the task of characterizing each section of this *vals*. Remember that Llamozas' description is not intended to be taken literally. Rather use it as a source of inspiration or simply to stimulate your imagination. It seems to me that in

prevails over the others, whereas in the third section the melodic element takes over. By this I mean that sections one and two strike the ear more by their rhythm than by anything else, and that the last section does it by the singing quality of its melody.

4) Enough melodic interest is generated by the bass line in the first eight bars of the middle section, which shows the rhythmic cell $\frac{3}{4}$ J. J J that is so typical of the Venezuelan *vals*:

Ex. 2a

middle section. (p. 1, systems 5 & 6)

In this passage, however, the real focus of attention lies in the superimposition of 6/8 in the top part and 3/4 in the bass:

Ex. 2b

This exciting combination of metres and rhythms creates a texture that resembles the accompaniment of the *cuatro*⁽²⁾ with its vigorous accents on the third and sixth quaver of the bar in 6/8:

Ex. 2c

The sound-image of the *cuatro* is vital to achieve a convincing characterization of this passage. Here we can indeed use Llamozas' words and say that 'the rhythm is enlivened and kindled, and the enthusiasm bursts'!

5) *Natalia* contains many metrical changes from 3/4 to 6/8, mainly identified by the presence of two consecutive dotted crochets. In the E major section the two metres are juxtaposed eight times in succession (see ex. 5 below).

6) Lauro prefers the four semiquavers in the third part to be played with slurs as indicated in the next example:

Ex. 3

However, Lauro pointed out that the question of playing the semiquavers with or without the slurs is not really as important as achieving clarity of rhythm.

7) I suggest that the G# which opens the E major section is held slightly (agogic accent) in order to allow the listener more time to appreciate — and indeed enjoy — the beautiful change from E minor to E major:

Ex. 4

I also feel that a little touch of *vibrato* heightens the lively singing quality of that note.

8) Lauro once had a discussion with a friend who obstinately argued that it was not possible to compose a Venezuelan *vals* successfully unless the traditional phrase structure of 4 bars (or multiples of it) was preserved. To express his disagreement

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4 to 10 bars:
Ex. 5

E major section (from bar 2, fifth system, to last bar of the vals).

Whether with the approval of Lauro's friend or without it, the high musical quality of the result speaks for itself.

Notes

- (1) The main creative force of this vocal and instrumental group was Antonio Lauro. The group was formed in 1935 with the primary purpose of promoting the music of Venezuela inside as well as outside this country. *Los Cantores del Trópico* were on tour in Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, Perú and Chile: their repertoire consisted mainly of folk and popular music. They were highly successful, although they only worked together until 1943. Lauro was also an accomplished bass singer.
- (2) The *cuatro* is a Venezuelan folk instrument, extremely popular in this country where it is used chiefly as a strummed instrument for accompaniment. It is similar to the guitar in shape but much smaller in size, and only has four strings, hence its name *cuatro*.

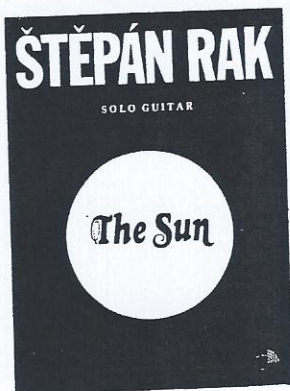
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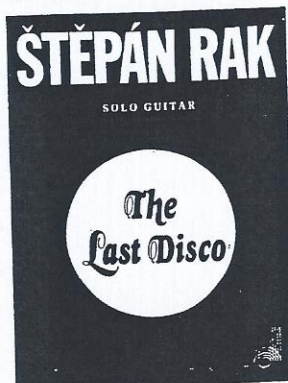
"Vicente Emilio Sojo". Serie: Investigaciones No. 2. Caracas: Ediciones de la Presidencia de la República.

In Luis' January article *Tatiana* (Vals No. 1 — which we described as Vals No. 4) we omitted his music example 8, herewith, with our apologies to our readers and to Luis Zea.
Ex. 8

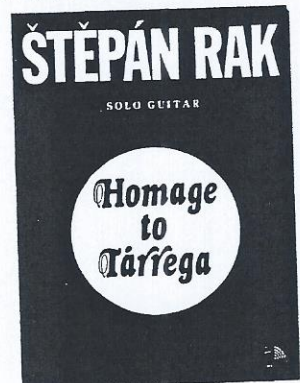
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THE WORKS FOR SOLO GUITAR BY ANTONIO LAURO Analysis and Interpretation

By LUIS ZEA

PART 21: OTHER SINGLE ITEMS – NELLY

Nelly is a *gaita*, a Venezuelan folk *genre* cultivated especially in *Estadio Zulia* (north-west of the country) especially during Christmas time. It takes its name from the dedicatee Mrs Nelly de Afanador, a friend of Lauro. Some readers might recall Lauro's visit to the UK in July 1980, when he performed at the Wigmore Hall and also recorded a radio programme for the BBC. On these occasions the composer played *Nelly* accompanied on the *cuatro* by his daughter Natalia. I am sure that those of you who heard these performances will remember their wonderfully striking rhythmic effect.

Considerations for Performance 6/8 versus 3/4

While 3/4 is an essential feature of the *vals*, 6/8 is characteristic of the *gaita*. True, we find 6/8 in a *vals* and 3/4 in a *gaita*, but there is a difference. When 6/8 is introduced in a *vals* it is done against the leading metre of 3/4, whereas in the *gaita* the situation is reversed; 6/8 predominates over 3/4 and becomes the leading metre, so that when 3/4 appears it is heard against a fundamental pulse in 6/8. 3/4 now enriches 6/8. Misunderstanding of this difference can easily lead the performer to play the *gaita* as if it was a *vals*, thus betraying its original rhythmic identity. I think the key lies in relating what you play to an inwardly-heard framework of 6/8. Bear in mind that it is mainly in the bass that 3/4 shows up. The melody moves in 6/8 throughout.

Suggestions for fingering

I have two suggestions to make: a) p.1, first system, last bar, play the basses D and G with the open strings instead of using the *barré* on V shown in the score:

Example 1 shows a musical staff in 6/8 time. The melody consists of several notes, with a final quaver in the first system. A bracket labeled 'hinge bar' is placed under this quaver, indicating a performance technique. Above the staff, the Roman numeral 'C III ----' is written, indicating a change in position.

Example 1

This not only facilitates left-hand work but also allows the bass G to last as long as the notation indicates. Use a hinge bar for last quaver of the bar (C) and then a full *barré* to reach the bass C.

on 5. b) second page, first system, last bar, I find that the change of position required by the printed fingering (from CII to CIV) induces the player to produce an unwanted accent on the downbeat of the next bar (on the note E#). Such an accent disrupts the melodic continuity of the phrase (made up of the notes C#, F# and E#). My suggestion is to use the fingering shown below:

Example 2 shows a musical staff in 6/8 time. Above the staff, a fingering diagram is shown with Roman numerals: 'CII' over the first two notes, 'CIV' over the next two notes, and 'II' over the final note. The notes are C#, F#, and E#.

Example 2

I find that this fingering works better and also permits a smoother arrival on the next phrase which begins on position II too.

The 'furruco' effect

Among the accompanying instruments used in the *gaita zuliana*:¹ is the *furruco*, a drum with a long stick attached to the centre of its head. As the stick is rubbed downwards by the hand it puts the skin into vibration, producing a highly characteristic sound. Lauro evokes this effect with the *portamento* shown in the next example:

Example 3 shows a musical staff in 6/8 time. A note is marked with a slur and the word 'portamento' above it, indicating a glissando effect.

Example 3

The *portamento* needs enough weight to produce the intended sound. It also requires to be played quite fast, just before the crotchet E which is the arrival note of the *portamento*.

Mordents

I always heard Lauro play the two-note mordents in *Nelly* before the beat:

Example 4a shows a musical staff in 6/8 time. Two notes are marked with vertical lines above them, indicating mordents.

Example 4a



Example 4b

These mordents are most effective if they are played fast, light and with the clearest rhythmic definition. Notice that the two notes of the ornament and the main note are slurred by the left hand, so that the right hand only plays the non-melody note(s).

Notes

1 The *gaita zuliana* (i.e. the *gaita* from *Estado Zulia*) is the most popular of all.



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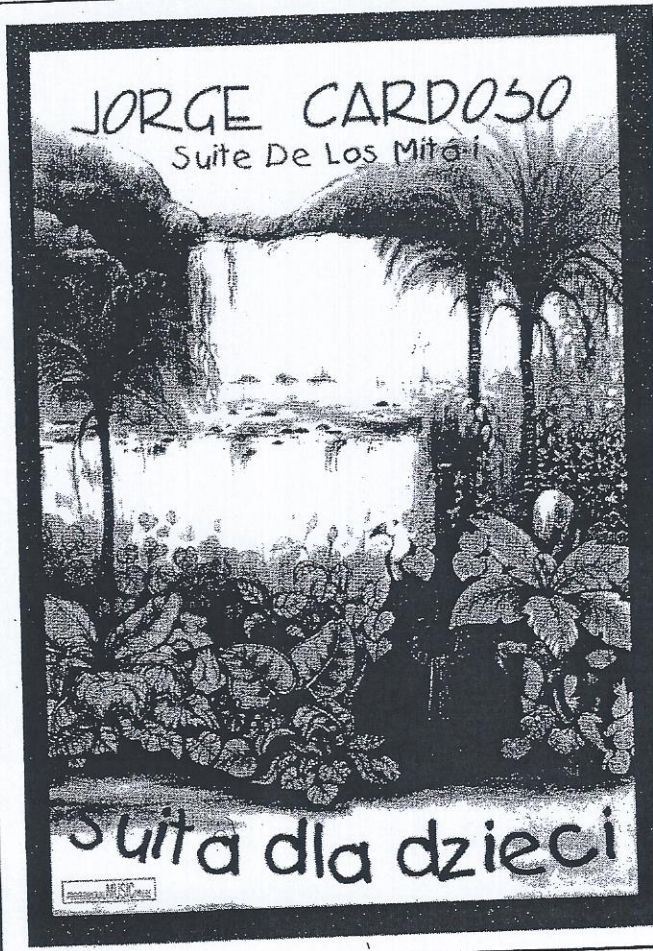
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THE WORKS FOR SOLO GUITAR BY ANTONIO LAURO

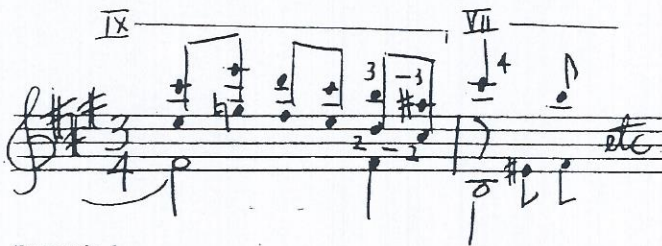
Analysis and Interpretation

By LUIS ZEA

PART 17: THE VALSES – MARIA LUISA

Considerations for Performance

FINGERING FOR A DIFFICULT VALS: 'Maria Luisa' was especially written for my wife . . . and it is as difficult as she is! . . . This was Lauro's remark when I asked him about the origin of this vals¹. That Maria Luisa is far from easy to play well will have become evident to those who have tried their hands on it. Perhaps the most difficult spot in the whole piece is the passage in sixths which occurs near the end of the first section, particularly the part quoted below:



Example 1

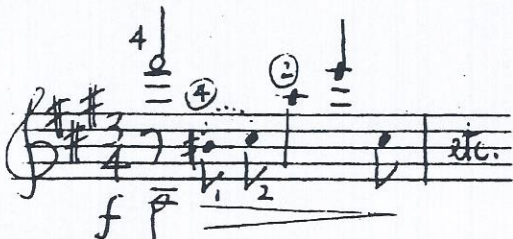
There is no easy way out here. Still, I would like to suggest using fingers 2 and 3 (instead of 3 and 4) for the two sixths on the third beat, as I have indicated above. In this way finger 4 is free to go to the C# on the next bar. I have also changed the fingering for the quavers on the last beat of the following bar:



Example 2

The use of fingers 3 and 4 for the A and C# allows the hand to travel comfortably from second to seventh position, whereas the printed fingering requires an unnecessary shift to ninth position which makes the arrival on the seventh position more hazardous.

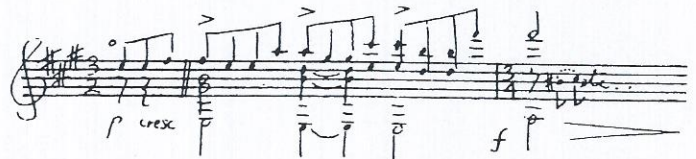
A further suggestion for fingering: I like to use a left hand slur for the B# and C# in the example that follows:



Example 3 Page 1. last bar of systems 1. 3 and 5

I find that the slur helps to connect both notes and facilitates the job of the right hand.

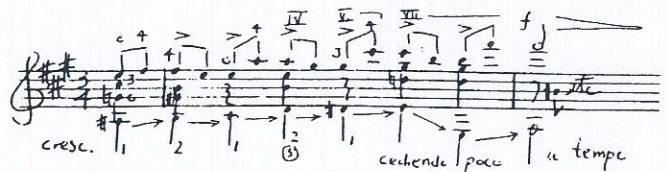
ACCENTS AND CHANGES OF METRE: Although written in 3/4, *Maria Luisa* begins with a hemiola (shift to 3/2) clearly articulated by a) the contour of the melody and b) the rhythm $\uparrow \uparrow \uparrow$ in the bass which suggests the longer beats in 3/2:



Example 4

My understanding of the meaning of the accents sign (>) in the above example is that they are intended to point out the change of metre to the performer rather than to indicate an emphasis on those beats. As I have not seen a copy of the original manuscript I cannot tell whether such accents are actually Lauro's or have been added by the editor². In any case, I wish to mention again that I personally regard these accents as unnecessary and misleading because the hemiola is self-evident to the perceptive eye and ear, and because the performer is asked to accentuate notes on which no dynamic emphasis is required³.

In the next appearance of the opening melodic material (3rd system) we also find accents, this time on every crotchet-beat:



Example 5

Once more I have to say that I do not see the need for accents here. What I find significant about this passage is that the rising bass line adds movement and direction to the melody. The presence of accents can only lead the performer to hamper the forward motion of the melody. My advice is: forget about the accents and let the music flow naturally.

The typical lively interplay of 6/8 in the melody

and 3/4 in the bass appears toward the end of section one of the vals:

Example 6

In order to convey the playful character of this passage I think it is important to hear and feel the total sound created by the superimposition of these metres rather than trying to bring out one metre more than the other. The same can be said about the superimposition of 3/2 and 3/4 at the beginning of the D major section:

Example 7

TEMPO: Regarding the tempo of *Maria Luisa* I must say that I find the given speed marking ($\text{♩} = 184$) much too fast to let the graceful dance character of the vals emerge naturally. I prefer somewhere between 156 and 160 as a more suitable tempo for this vals.

CHOPIN QUOTATION: The thirds that open the second section of *Maria Luisa* were inspired by a similar passage from one of Chopin's best known waltzes:

Example 8a (Waltz Op. 69 No. 1 in A flat major by F. Chopin)

Example 8b (Continuation of Maria Luisa, last bar of p. 2)

Lauro's reference to Chopin is shown above in brackets. Lauro loved the sound of the two successive thirds. 'Those notes have such a charm!' he used to say when recalling Chopin's waltz. Take time to enjoy these notes and make use of vibrato to enhance their singing quality. In the context of *Maria Luisa* the thirds are absorbed into Lauro's style and they are no less charming than those of the illustrious Polish composer.

RISING CHROMATIC BASS LINE: Further on in this section we find a long, ascending chromatic bass line that moves from D to B:

Example 9

Listen to how the intensity of the music increases gradually as the bass line rises. The eloquence of the harmonies in this passage and in the bars that follow it are worthy of our attention. Notice that after arriving in B minor Lauro introduces an interrupted cadence which reanimates the forward momentum of the music and heightens the expectations of the listener:

interrupted cadence

Example 10 (Page 3, third system, bars 1-4)

I suggest (as I've already done with previous vals such as *El Negrito*, *Yacambú* and *Carora*) that you try the following ideas:

- Play the bass line alone (quoted in Example 9a above), connect the notes carefully and hear the harmonies that go with it (that is, listen to them inwardly);
- Again play the bass only and sing (or hum) the melody of the vals;
- Sing the melody and this time accompany yourself with the following harmonic reduction of the entire passage:

Example 11 (Passage from last bar of p. 2 to first bar, last syst.,

The purpose of these exercises is to deepen your understanding of the music, particularly to sharpen your harmonic awareness so that you can impart a clearer and stronger sense of direction to the music.


Notes

- 1 I have Lauro's words on tape. When I played it for Maria Luisa she could not help bursting into laughter.
- 2 When asked about this Lauro showed a tendency to forget what he had written in the original manuscript, although he was of course aware of every change of metre in his *valses*. I believe that sometimes the solution to this kind of problem is not to be found in the notation or in what the composer may have to say about his music but 'behind the notes', i.e. in the music itself.
- 3 For a similar case of unnecessary and misleading accents see my article on *Carora*.
- 4 This harmonic reduction moves in four parts except in those places where it became necessary to reduce the number of voices to a minimum in order to facilitate the purpose of the exercise.

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THE WORKS FOR SOLO GUITAR BY ANTONIO LAURO

Analysis and Interpretation

By LUIS ZEA

PART 16: THE VALSES – EL NIÑO

I CAN vividly remember the occasion when Lauro grabbed his guitar during one of my lessons with him and began to play an unknown, beautiful *vals*. Its elaborate contrapuntal treatment and its intensely lyrical character reminded me of V. E. Sojo's style of harmonising popular melodies, with which I had become quite familiar. Curious to find out, I asked Lauro whether it was in fact a transcription he had made of one of Sojo's harmonisations. I was surprised – as well as delighted – to hear his reply: 'No, it is mine . . . it is my latest *vals*, it is called *El Niño*'. This happened around May 1971, the year he composed that *vals*. Today, when I listen to *El Niño* I still feel the same freshness which I experienced the first time I heard Lauro play it.

Considerations for Performance

CONTRAPUNTAL TEXTURE: The most distinctive feature of *El Niño* – one which makes it stand out among the other *vals*es – is precisely its fluid, rich contrapuntal texture. In this respect, only certain passages of Maria Carolina come close to *El Niño* (see October '95 article). A fairly consistent 3-part voicing is maintained throughout. The outer parts contain mostly longer note values, while the inner voice provides most of the quaver motion. The primary task of the performer is to clarify these contrapuntal lines. Here are a few practical suggestions which should help you achieve this goal:

- Sing or hum the melody and play the bass line only;
- Play the melody alone and sing the bass line. (Change the bass line an octave higher if your voice register requires it);
- Again sing the melody and play the bass and the inner voice(s) only.

The purpose of these sing-and-play exercises is to sharpen your contrapuntal awareness. Use your ears and listen to how different voices complement each other. The singing and playing should be done as *legato* as possible since the clarity of the melodic lines depends greatly on how well the notes are connected. Remember that successful contrapuntal playing is essentially the result of clear contrapuntal hearing.

RITENUTO: The timing of the *ritenuto* at the opening of the *vals* requires a good sense of rhythm. When done properly – i.e. musically – the *ritenuto* will allow the melody to take a breath naturally before its journey begins *a tempo* in the

FINGERING: I prefer to retain Lauro's original fingering for the left hand in the bar shown below instead of the fingering suggested by R. Sainz de la Maza (which I have indicated in brackets):

Example 1

It seems easier to use finger 2 as a guide-finger to connect the C# and E along the third string, as well to make the shift of position more secure and relaxed.

VIBRATO: The indication *vibrato molto* shown in Example 2 was put by Lauro in the original manuscript but it is missing in the printed score:

Example 2a (E major section, p. 2, 1st system, b. 2)

Lauro also liked to apply vibrato to the E major chord with the appoggiatura F#, two bars later:

Example 2b

The vibrato effect that Lauro wants is not compatible with Sainz de la Maza's fingering who asks for the G# to be played on the first string with a half-harmoné and the appoggiatura F# with finger 4

to preserve the fingering that Lauro indicated in the original manuscript, and which is the one I have given here. Lauro used to linger slightly on that chord so that he could highlight the presence of the appoggiatura (which produces that beautiful major second), and also to heighten the singing quality of the G# by means of the vibrato.

APPOGGIATURAS: And talking about appoggiaturas, *El Niño* contains many of them.

It does not hurt to mention once more how important it is to connect the dissonance and its resolution. Make sure that you play them *legato* and that the resolution is given its full value.

CHANGES OF METRE: In the following example we find the repetition of one rhythm suggesting the shift from 3/4 to 3/2 in the melody, as we have seen already in many other *valses*.

Example 3a (p. 1, 2nd, syst, b. 2 and 3)

The shift also occurs in the bass, where it is implied by the rhythm $\underline{\underline{d}} \underline{\underline{d}}$ which can be read as $\frac{3}{2} \text{ o d}$

Notice that the tenor voice continues in 3/4 and 'chases' the melody:

Example 3b

In the second section we find the usual change to 6/8 suggested by the dotted crotchets in the bass and the rhythm in the melody:

Example 4 (p. 2, 3rd syst, b. 2 and 3)

Remember that it is more a matter of hearing and feeling the metrical change than of actually emphasising the beats.

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