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TOCCATA
CLASSICS

Gustavo LEONE



**String Quartets
Nos. 1 and 2
Una voz, un grito,
un lamento
Red Quintet
Scenes**

**Q-Arte String Quartet
Beatriz Elena Martinez, soprano
Marta Lilitiana Bonilla, harp**

INCLUDES FIRST RECORDINGS

GUSTAVO LEONE ON HIMSELF AND HIS MUSIC

I am a *porteño*, a native of Buenos Aires, but since 1987 I have lived in Chicago, where I am a professor in the Department of Fine and Performing Arts of Loyola University Chicago. Before that, from 1994 to 2007, I was on the faculty at Columbia College, also in Chicago.

I began my musical career as a classical guitarist in Argentina, studying with Luis Ainstestad, Adriana Ardizzina and Miguel Ángel Girollet. I attended the Guitar International Seminars at the University of Palestrina in Porto Alegre, Brazil, from 1976 to 1978, where I enjoyed Abel Carlevaro's guitar-technique seminars as well as master-classes by eminent guitarists such as Sérgio Abreu and Eduardo Fernandez. In the USA I performed as a guitarist with Collegium Musicum, the Contemporary Chamber Players, San Luis Obispo Chamber Orchestra, Harper Symphony, Kaia String Quartet, and CUBE Ensemble.

My composition studies began at the Catholic University of Argentina in Buenos Aires with Roberto Caamaño, Marta Lambertini and Gerardo Gandini, in whose composition workshops outside the university I advanced my technique. It was in 1987 that I moved to Chicago, to pursue graduate studies in composition at the University of Chicago, studying with Ralph Shapey, Shulamit Ran, John Eaton and Howard Sandroff.

My music has been performed by ensembles such as the Wiener KammerOrchester, Grant Park Festival Orchestra, Symphonic Orchestra of Michoacán, Czech National Symphony Orchestra, Fox Valley Symphony Orchestra, Civic Orchestra of Chicago, Pro Musica, Concertante di Chicago, Chicago Sinfonietta, Rembrandt Chamber Players, Avalon String Quartet, Spektral Quartet, Contemporary Chamber Players, CUBE Ensemble and Sonic Inertia. And works of mine have been heard at a number of festivals, among them the Latin American Courses in Contemporary Music in Brazil, the Sixth World Harp Congress, Aspen Festival of Music, June in Buffalo, Virginia Arts Festival, Composers' Conference, VIII International Festival of Contemporary Music of Morelia in Mexico, and the XXXV International Forum of New Music Manuel Enriquez, also Mexico. I have also written quite a lot of incidental music for the theatre, for productions at the Yale Repertory Theatre, Goodman Theater, Victory Gardens Theater and Teatro Vista.

In Chicago I founded (and since 2006 have co-directed) the Latino Music Festival produced by the Latino Cultural Center.

I've been the recipient of a Walter Hinrichsen Award, given by the American Academy of Art and Letters, and of grants from The Joan and Bill Hank Center for the Catholic Intellectual Heritage, Illinois Arts Council, and the Joyce Foundation. In 2007 I was an artist-in-residence at the Yale School of Drama. My music is included in the catalogues of C. F. Peters in New York and One L in Chicago, and has been recorded on Naxos.

The Cuarteto Q-Arte has premiered a number of works, including the *Quarteto senza tempi*, Op. 18b, by Johann Hasler and *Nerinfen Gorsóbico* No. 3 of Gustavo Parra, both of them Colombians. They have given the national premieres of works like *Aroma foliado* by Gabriela Ortiz (Mexico), the String Quartet of Roberto Valera (Cuba), the *Habanera sensual y contradanza caprichosa* by Guido Lopez-Gavilan (Cuba) and *Retrato V* by Eddie Mora (Costa Rica). *Scenes para cuarteto de cuerdas*, written by Gustavo Leone and based on Eugene Ionescu's *The Leader*, was dedicated to the quartet in 2011.

With a traditional academic training as an opera singer, and especially inclined towards chamber music, **Beatriz Elena Martínez** has been dedicated to exploring the technical possibilities of the voice in the contemporary repertoire, a process constantly fed by the composers with whom she works and the challenges that students share with her. Since 1996 she has performed in several cities in Latin America and Europe. She has premiered around 70 works, mostly Colombian, many of which have been written for her, and has participated in the recording of several new- music CDs and some improvisation projects. She is a member of Ensemble CG in Colombia and is currently director of the department of singing in the College of Arts ASAB of the University of Bogotá.



The harpist **Martha Liliana Bonilla** was born in Bogotá in 1985 and began her musical training at age nine with the traditional *llanera* harp. She studied classical harp with Mary Grozdanova and later with Bibiana Ordoñez, in the music department of the National University of Colombia. She received a BA from the National University of Colombia in 2008 and two years later a Masters in Interpretation under the tutelage of Chantal Mathieu in the Conservatoire Supérieur de Musique in Lausanne. She has been a guest of the Orchestra of the Bern Opera, the Symphony Orchestra of Castilla y Leon, Colombia Symphony Orchestra and the Philharmonic Orchestra of the Valley. As a soloist she has performed with the Symphony Orchestra of the Universidad Nacional de Colombia, the Bogotá Philharmonic Orchestra and the Orchestra Praeclassica of Geneva. She has performed in numerous venues in Colombia and further afield. She currently serves as harpist in the Bogotá Philharmonic Orchestra and professor of harp at the Pontifical Javeriana University in Colombia.



Photos: Martin Chalifour

The middle part is built as a crescendo of successive solos by each instrument; *ad libitum* interludes connect each section here. The beginning and the end of the work are made of two versions of a theme: the first is a heavy march, the second a dance. By mixing metric and free rhythm, the last gesture is a condensed version of the whole work.

Scenes

Dedicated to Liz Angela Garcia and the Cuarteto Q-Arte, *Scenes* for string quartet (2011) is based on another of my works, *The Leader*, a one-act comic opera (2010) for five voices, actor and string quartet. It is shaped as a prelude followed by three musical scenes in an ABA form. Scene 1 is marked *delirante* ('delirious') and it is fast and relentless. Scene 2 is marked *dolcemente* ('sweetly') and is slow and romantic. Scene 3 sees a return of the fast first section with other subsidiary themes which function as transitions, bridges and complements to the main subjects. The theatricality of this work is based on the contrast between the two musics and the allusions to operatic forms and styles.

The Cuarteto Q-Arte, formerly known as the Cuarteto Arte Latinoamericano, began its life six years ago as part of a research-and-performance project in Latin-American chamber music, part of the Instituto Taller de Creación of the Faculty of Arts of the National University of Colombia. The four musicians of the quartet – Diego García and Liz García, violins, Sandra Arango, viola, and Juan Higueta, cello – are all professors of the Music Conservatoire at the University who, having completed their studies in Europe and the United States, have focussed on exploring and disseminating music for string quartet by composers from different Latin American countries, primarily contemporary Colombians, and examining new sounds and approaches to performance, playing in a wide range of unusual venues. In 2008 the quartet recorded its first album, *Resonancias*, with works for string quartet and other instruments by composers from Argentina (Gustavo Leone), Bolivia (Sebastián Zuleta), Colombia (Blas Emilio Atehortúa and Gustavo Parra), Ecuador (Diego Luzuriaga) and Mexico (Silvestre Revueltas). Future projects include recordings of works by Fabio González Zuleta and Emilio Atehortúa Blas. They also took part in recording *Legados*, featuring works by composers from the Music Conservatory at the Universidad Nacional de Colombia, *Homenaje a Luis Carlos Figueroa* and *Cinco obras de cámara* with music by the Colombian composer Germán Darío Pérez.



The origins of this CD and the Cuarteto Q-Arte are co-terminous: the quartet began as part of a research project at the National University of Colombia on Latin American chamber music with string quartet, which resulted in a CD called *Resonancias*, with music by five Latin American composers. One of those pieces was my *Red Quintet* for harp and string quartet. That project led to another collaboration to record the music being presented in this volume.

Una voz, un grito, un lamento

Una voz, un grito, un lamento [1] – 'A voice, a scream, a lament' – was written for the 2006 Chicago Humanities Festival. The theme of the festival that year was 'peace and war – facing human conflict'. As its title suggests, this programmatic work in three parts takes up the theme of the festival and presents it in the form of series of three plateaux or contrasting parts. The first plateau represents a primordial voice, the unified voice of the people. The music is made of two melodies played by different instruments in succession. The accompaniment to the melodies is made of either sustained notes, or short, *staccato* chords. The second plateau, the scream, is a two-phrase theme with two variations and coda. This section has the form of a crescendo to a climax that dissolves into black, into silence. The theme is played each time by different instruments in the ensemble, going from the first violin, to the second, to the viola. The coda is a dissolve where each instrument plays independently from the others, slowing down and growing progressively quieter until a full bar of rest ends the second part. The last plateau is a lament for the victims of war and violence. This section is a soft cantilena played by the cello with the rest of the ensemble gliding back and forth using *glissandi* in harmonics. In the coda, the *glissandi* go higher and higher and then disappear.

String Quartet No. 1

String Quartet No. 1, written in 1995, has two movements, both slow and contemplative as well as evocative of French impressionism. The work is surrealist in that it presents recognisable themes in unusual juxtapositions and contexts. The second movement includes a soprano voice in it singing a surrealist poem. The first movement, marked *Dramático* [2], presents the main themes and motives in compound metre and in strophic form. The development of the themes occurs as a series of free strophic variations using fluctuating textures and harmonic contexts, always leading to a climax of the section. The rhythm in this movement moves from three to two by reinterpreting the compound meter into binary subdivisions, producing hemiola effects. The second movement [3] sets a surrealist poem, 'Le Chant de Mort', by the Belgian-born writer, painter and graphic artist Henri Michaux (1899–1984). The form of this movement mirrors that of the first one, a series of strophic free variations developing different aspects of the themes and the lyrics. After the loudest climax the work closes on the words 'Il est temps. Viens' ('It is time. Come'), followed by a bright chord on the last two lines of the poem.

La fortune aux larges ailes,
la fortune par erreur m'ayant
emporté avec les autres,
vers son pays joyeux,

tout à coup, mais tout à coup,
comme je respirais enfin heureux,
d'infinis petits pétards dans l'atmosphère
me dynamitèrent
et puis des couteaux jaillissant de partout
me lardèrent de coups,
si bien que je retombai
sur le sol dur de ma patrie,
à tout jamais la mienne maintenant.

La fortune aux ailes de paille,
la fortune m'ayant élevé pour un instant
au-dessus des angoisses et des gémissements,
un groupe formé de mille,
caché à la faveur de ma distraction
dans la poussière d'une haute montagne,
un groupe fait à la lutte à mort depuis toujours,
tout à coup
nous étant tombé comme un bolide,
je retombai sur le sol dur de mon passé,
passé à tout jamais présent maintenant.

La fortune encore une fois,
la fortune aux draps frais
m'ayant recueilli avec douceur,
comme je souriais à tous autour de moi,
distribuant tout ce que je possédais,
tout à coup,
pris par on ne sait quoi venu
en dessous et par derrière,
tout à coup,
comme une poulie qui se décroche,
je basculai,

Fortune with her broad wings,
fortune by mistake having
carried me with the others
to its joyful country,

all of a sudden, but all of a sudden,
as at last I was breathing happily,
countless little firecrackers in the atmosphere
dynamited me
and then knives sprouting everywhere
landed blow after blow on me,
so that I fell back
on the hard floor of my homeland
forever mine now.

Fortune with straw wings
fortune having raised me for a moment
above the anguish and the groans,
a group formed from a thousand,
hidden thanks to my distracted state
in the dust of a high mountain,
a group from the beginning made from a deadly struggle,
all of a sudden,
fell on us like a meteor,
I fell back on the hard floor of my past,
a past now forever present.

Fortune once again,
fortune with the clean sheets
having received me gently,
as I was smiling at everyone around me,
handing out everything I owned,
all of a sudden,
taken by whatever came
from below and behind,
suddenly,
like a pulley coming loose,
I lost my balance,

ce fut un saut immense,
et je retombai sur le sol dur de mon destin,
destin à tout jamais le mien maintenant.

La fortune encore une fois,
la fortune à la langue d'huile,
ayant lavé mes blessures,
la fortune comme un cheveu qu'on prend
et qu'on tresserait avec les siens,
m'ayant pris et m'ayant uni indissolublement à elle,
tout à coup la Mort vint et me dit:
'Il est temps. Viens.'
La mort,
à tout jamais mienne la Mort maintenant.

it was a huge jump,
and I fell down on the hard ground of my fate,
fate now mine forever.

Fortune once again,
fortune with the oily tongue,
having washed my wounds,
fortune like a hair one takes
and pleats with one's own
having taken me and inseparably united me with it,
suddenly Death came and said to me:
'It's time. Come.'
Death,
Death now mine forever.

Translation by Martin Anderson

String Quartet No. 2

Written in 2010 for the Cuarteto Q-Arte, my String Quartet No. 2 ⁴ is in five sections with a total duration of some twenty minutes. The first section is based on a series of solos that move from the viola to the second violin, from second violin to the first and then finish with the cello. The second part establishes a continuous pulse and irregular metric sections with passages of repeated notes. The third part provides a texture made of natural and artificial harmonics. This section ends with a polyrhythmic passage where each instrument plays different subdivisions of the beat which, after a climax, dissolves into a static sound. The fourth section is regular and repetitive. The viola plays on a regular pulse and establishes the subdivision in semiquavers (sixteenth notes); the other instruments follow the viola with similar materials. A rhythmic theme appears slowly, gradually establishing itself, expanding in register and ending with a climax. The texture then changes into an *ad libitum* passage where the instruments repeat groups of notes, freely slowing down to a moment of silence. In the fifth and final part the quartet plays a melody in rhythmic unison which grows, reaches a dynamic peak and recedes with a diminuendo to the static and translucent final sound.

Red Quintet

Red Quintet, for harp and string quartet, was written for Ensemble Noir of Canada in the summer of 2002. It is the first in a set of two quintets inspired by colours; the second is *Green Quintet*, composed in the same year (in 2006 I also wrote a *Blue Sextet*, for flute, clarinet, violin, viola, cello and piano). It is based on two characters, one metric, the other non-metric. Rhythmic themes and melodies recur in transformed versions throughout the work.