

ALBERTO GINASTERA

(1916 - 1983)

■ *Obertura para el 'Fausto' Criollo, Op. 9* (9:06)

Ollantay, Op. 17 (Three symphonic movements) (13:52)

- 2 I Paisaje de Ollantaytambo (4:35)
- 3 II Los guerreros (3:19)
- 4 III La muerte de Ollantay (5:58)

Pampeana No. 3, Op. 24

(Symphonic Pastoral in three movements) (21:14)

- 5 I Adagio contemplativo (7:53)
- 6 II Impetuosamente (7:04)
- 7 III Largo con poetica esaltazione (6:17)

Dances from the Ballet 'Estancia', Op. 8a (12:39)

- 8 I Los trabajadores agrícolas (3:09)
- 9 II Danza del trigo (3:22)
- 10 III Los peones de hacienda (2:13)
- 11 IV Danza final (Malambo) (3:55)

Odense Symphony Orchestra
Jan Wagner, conductor

ALBERTO GINASTERA

Dances from the Ballet 'Estancia', Op. 8a; Obertura para el 'Fausto' Criollo, Op. 9; Ollantay, Op. 17; Pampeana No.3, Op. 24

Born in Buenos Aires of a Catalan father and an Italian mother, Alberto Ginastera (1916-83) lived to become unquestionably the most significant figure in Argentine music during the 20th century. In his combination of deep interest in the authentic folk music of his country, with the pursuit of steadily more radical musical techniques to embody his personal vision, he stands in relation to Argentina rather as Bartók and Kodály (composers whose example plainly inspired him) stood to Hungary. Initially trained as a pianist, Ginastera studied composition at the National Conservatoire of Buenos Aires, graduating in 1938 (by which time he had already scored his first public successes). Later he studied in the USA with Aaron Copland on a Guggenheim Foundation grant, and after his return to Argentina he was active in musical education and the promotion of new music, founding the League of Composers and also a conservatory of music and drama in La Plata, becoming its first Director. In 1952 he was dismissed from this position by the Péron government, but reinstated after the dictator's fall in 1955. During the following decades Ginastera's music became celebrated worldwide and he received many commissions from the USA and Europe. In 1970 he moved to Geneva, Switzerland, where he lived for the remainder of his life.

Ginastera recognized three periods in his creative output: one of 'subjective nationalism', drawing directly on Argentine folk music; then one of 'objective nationalism' in which elements derived from folk-music were subsumed into a broader and self-consistent personal language. The third and last period he typified as 'Neo-Expressionism': here he radically updated his language in the direction of

more dramatic expression and a more 'international' appeal. The key works of this phase are his three operas, *Don Rodrigo* (1964), *Bomarzo* (1967) and *Beatrix Cenci* (1971), lurid and highly-colored musical spectacles. It should also be said that this stylistic transformation flowed from Ginastera's adoption of post-Schoenbergian serial technique, something that is only hinted at in occasional 12-note formulations that occur in the music of the earlier periods. The works on the present disc date from those earlier stages of his evolution; they remain important scores in the development of a distinctively Argentine music in the mid-20th century.

Perhaps Ginastera's first significant work was the ballet *Panambí*, based on a legend of the Guaraní Indians, which he composed in 1935-7. It was partly on the strength of the success of this work, which was only staged in 1940, that in 1941 Lincoln Kirstein commissioned a second ballet from Ginastera for the American Ballet Caravan. This became *Estancia*, a one-act sequence of five tableaux depicting aspects of rural life, loosely based on the Argentine national epic *Martin Fierro* by José Hernández (1834-1886). Hernández's poem depicts in heroic and nostalgic terms the hard life of the nomadic gauchos in the stark and desolate Pampas, the wide Argentinian plains. Ginastera's ballet, however, really depicts the day-to-day existence of their successors, when the Pampas had been carved up into big but still isolated estates to which the gauchos were tied. In his scenario a city boy comes to one of these estates and has to master all the athletic skills of the gauchos before he can win the love of a beautiful ranch girl.

In 1942 the Ballet Caravan was disbanded, before it was possible to mount the *Estancia* in the proposed staging with choreography by George Balanchine. In the event, the complete ballet was not performed until 1952. In the meantime, Ginastera extracted an orchestral suite of four movements for concert performance. The world premiere of this *Estancia Suite*, conducted by Ferruccio Calusio at the Teatro Colón, Buenos Aires, on 12 May 1943, was the signal success that estab-

lished Ginastera as one of Argentina's leading composers. The rhythmic virtuosity and orchestral bravura that he displayed in his treatment of Argentine musical folklore marked him out as a kind of musical spokesman for the nation.

Though less well-known as an expression of Argentine identity than the city-based Tango, the Malambo, a highly rhythmical country dance associated with the gauchos, had also come to be accepted as a national musical symbol. Its characteristic rhythmic structure (six bars of 6/8, divided in two groups of three) can be sensed in the opening movement, *Los trabajaiores agricolas* (The Land Workers). *The Danza del Trigo* (Wheat Dance) is a more lyrical number using the accents of the nostalgic criollo (creole) song. *Los peones de hacienda* (The Cattlemen) is a scherzo-like episode characterized by irregular rhythms and a general rustic manner. The spectacular *Danza Final*, representing a dance-tournament between the gauchos, is perhaps Ginastera's most celebrated essay in the style of the Malambo - an exhilarating explosion of kinetic energy, creating a toccata-like momentum of furious ostinato rhythms.

It was also in 1943, the year of the premiere of the *Estancia dances*, that Ginastera composed his *Overture to the Creole "Faust"* (*Obertura para el "Fausto" Criolla*), which was premiered in Santiago, Chile in 1944 by the Chilean Symphony Orchestra under Juan José Castro. In a sense the work can be considered a kind of appendix to *Estancia*, since again it deals with the life of the gauchos - this time in relation to European music. Ginastera derived the idea for his overture from a poem by the 19th-century Argentine writer Estanislao del Campo (1834-1880), in which a gaucho, a Creole, comes into Buenos Aires from the Pampas and sees a performance of Gounod's *Faust*. Deeply moved, his imagination fired by the fate of Faust, he starts to head home to the ranch but on the way meets an old friend beside a river: they tether their horses and over a bottle of gin the Creole pours out all his impressions of the opera and its characters.

Ginastera's overture begins with a recreation, in his own style, of the music of the introduction to *Faust*, and it proceeds in the nature of a fantasia on themes from Gounod's opera, such as the "Soldiers' Chorus" and the theme associated with Marguerite. These are rearranged and developed in the accents of Argentinian folk-music, and mingled along with folk-like material of Ginastera's own, notably a striking "Allegro" in the rhythm of an Argentine country dance, the zamba, which eventually carries all before it in an uproarious conclusion.

Ginastera never wrote a symphony, but the other two works on this disc represent his nearest approach to one. *Ollantay*, a set of 'Three Symphonic Movements', was composed in 1947 and dedicated to Erich Kleiber, who conducted the premiere in Buenos Aires on 29 October 1949. Ginastera was inspired in this score by a poem from the early Inca period dealing with the tragic rivalry of Ollantay, the son of the Earth, with Inca, the son of the Sun, their battle, and Ollantay's death. But the result is not so much a symphonic poem following any detailed program as a triptych of three movements which embody the predominant atmospheres of the different stages of the legend and which have their own self-sufficient forms. The language is more austere than that of the ballet and the overture, more essentialized and in one sense more 'abstract', though folkloric elements are still identifiable.

The first movement, *Paisaje de Ollantaytambo* (The Landscape of Ollantaytambo) is a kind of melancholic pastoral vision, built out of diatonic themes contrasted with a highly chromatic idea which Ginastera identified as a 'Theme of Lamentation'. The central movement *Los guerreros* (The Warriors) is then a starkly contrasting symphonic scherzo which, apart from one calmer interlude, is built out of harshly dynamic ostinato patterns and melodic ideas that suggest ancient conflict. The finale, *La muerte de Ollantay* (The Death of Ollantay), partly returns to the themes of the first movement, in more intensified form, to produce a mood of

plangent lament.

Even closer to genuine symphonic utterance, *Pampeana No.3* was commissioned by the Louisville Orchestra in 1954 and premiered by them on 20 October that year under the baton of their conductor Robert Whitney. Ginastera had already written two works called "Pampeana" (the title is intended to signify a composition which recalls the rhythms and melodies of the Argentine pampas, but without using any actual folk tunes). *Pampeanas Nos. 1* (1947) and *2* (1950), respectively for violin and piano and cello and piano, are both single-movement pieces subtitled 'rhapsody'. *Pampeana No.3*, subtitled a 'symphonic pastoral', is a triptych along similar lines to *Ollantay*, two mainly slow movements enclosing a highly rhythmic central movement which functions both as scherzo and dynamic contrast. Ginastera wrote the work shortly after his *Variaciones concertantes*, perhaps his biggest international success and the archetypal example of his 'objective nationalism'. As in that work, much of the material of *Pampeana No.3* revolves around harmonies and melodic formulations involving or implying chains of perfect fourths, an interval-sequence which - although with strong tonal implications - starts to hint at the equality of all twelve semitones which is the basis of the 12-note serial method.

The interval of the fourth is already present in the low string motifs which arise at the start of the Adagio contemplativo first movement, to be answered by chiming thirds in flutes and celesta (the music here bears some resemblance to the start of Bartók's *Concerto for Orchestra*, an influential recent work that Ginastera undoubtedly knew well). The strings, led off by the violas, begin an expressive fugato on a theme containing 11 of the 12 tones of the chromatic scale. A plangent horn theme in thirds leads into a shimmering passage of Debussyan impressionism, rising to a passionate climax (marked 'esaltato') before the movement subsides to the mysterious music of its opening, and eventually fragments and evanesces into silence.

The second movement is one of the most extraordinary rhythmic tours-de-force in Ginastera's output. A continuous tattoo of six quavers per bar is kept up virtually throughout, but with a vivid array of different themes and ostinati Ginastera rings all the possible changes on contrasts and alternations of 3/4 and 6/8 over that one basic pulse. The influence of the Malambo can be felt throughout this movement, but essentialized into a violent, motoric symphonic momentum. Massive, vehement tuttis alternate with virtuoso writing for only a few instruments (including solo piano and timpani) with all the resources of percussive syncopation keeping up the excitement and never allowing the invention to become predictable. An 'Intermezzo quasi trio', mainly for woodwind and strings, is slightly slower, and gentler in its evocation of folklike freshness, but the compulsive motion can still be sensed in it and returns redoubled in a much-varied reprise of the movement's first section, rising to a dionysiac climax and final explosion.

The slow finale plays off expressive, cantabile themes, first heard in woodwind, against repetitive figures and textures which Ginastera begins to deploy increasingly as static blocks, looking towards the procedures of his later music. With *Pampeana No.3*, however, this does not preclude a impassioned, even tragic outcry for full orchestra before the material unwinds once more. Eventually a slow spelling-out of a vast chord of perfect fourths and thirds, opening upwards, introduces a final heterophony of evocative ostinato-figures, each of which is allowed to run down to extinction until only the sustained notes of the violins and violas are left, dying away into silence.

Notes by Malcolm MacDonald

Jan Wagner has had great success since beginning his European career during the 1995/6 season. A native of Caracas, Venezuela, He becomes chief conductor of the Odense Symphony Orchestra at the beginning of the 1997/98 season. Jan Wagner was the First Prize winner of the 11th Nicolai Malko International Conducting Competition in 1995, having previously been the Top-Prize Winner of the 1994 Leopold Stokowski International Conducting Competition in New York and recipient of the 1994 Conducting Prize at the Aspen Music Festival. Maestro Wagner regularly conducts the Danish National Radio Symphony and the Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestras as well as most of the principal Danish and Scandinavian Orchestras. Other notable orchestras he has worked with include the Frankfurt Radio Symphony Orchestra, the Orquesta Sinfonica de Venezuela, the Simon Bolivar Symphony Orchestra of Venezuela, and the Melbourne Symphony and West Australian Symphony orchestras.

In the USA, Jan Wagner has appeared with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, New Jersey Symphony Orchestra, Aspen Festival Orchestra, and the Minnesota Orchestra. Jan Wagner is a graduate of the Academy of Music in Vienna, where he completed his studies with Karl Österreicher and Günter Theurig. Jan Wagner's recordings for Bridge include the Nielsen *Violin Concerto* (BRIDGE 9100), music by Poul Ruders (BRIDGE 9122) and Heitor Villa-Lobos (BRIDGE 9129).



The Odense Symphony Orchestra, located in Odense, Denmark, was formally established in 1946, but its roots go back to the year 1800. The orchestra began existence as a theatre orchestra that also played symphonic music. Today, The Odense Symphony Orchestra is a continuously developing and expanding modern orchestra with a high level of activity, subsidized by the municipality of Odense and the Danish state. When the Odense Symphony Orchestra was established it had 22 musicians, but over the years has grown steadily to its present size of 74 permanent players. The orchestra gives approximately 100 concerts each season and is based in the Odense Concert Hall, which was inaugurated in 1982. Most of the orchestra's concerts are given in the acoustically superb Carl Nielsen Hall—the hall where the present recording was made.

The Odense Symphony Orchestra frequently tours abroad including recent tours to the USA, China, Austria, Belgium, Germany, Greece, Holland, the Baltic countries, Russia, Spain and Sweden. The Odense Symphony Orchestra has recorded prolifically for labels in Denmark and abroad including Unicorn-Kanchana, Kontrapunkt, DaCapo (Marco Polo) and Classico. The Odense Symphony Orchestra's recordings for Bridge include the Nielsen *Violin Concerto*, (BRIDGE 9100) music by Poul Ruders (BRIDGE 9122) and Heitor Villa-Lobos (BRIDGE 9129).



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