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[8.554553](#) - BROUWER: Guitar Music, Vol. 2 - Decameron Negro (El) / Preludios Epigramaticos

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The composer Leo Brouwer has referred to his current compositional style as "national Hyper-Romanticism". His piece for guitar orchestra, *Acerca del sol, el aire y la sonorisa* (1978), was the first in this mature phase. It displays all the characteristics of this new style: a return to Afro-Cuban roots mixed with elements of tonality, traditional form, programmatic gestures, and minimalism. This change occurred with Brouwer's realisation that the avant-garde style had reached its limit of "non-communication between the performer and listener." The guitar works of this period continue to display an intimate knowledge of the instrument. The writing is highly idiomatic and exploits the guitar's most fascinating sonorities.

Canticum (1968) was the first guitar piece that Brouwer had written since *Elogio de la Danza* in 1964. It was composed at the request of the Cuban guitarist, Carlos Molina, who was preparing a recital of Brouwer's pieces. The piece was first performed on 28th March, 1968, and served as a fantastic introduction to Brouwer's new language of meter, dynamics and timbre. It is made up of two sections, the first of which, *Eclosion*, exploits and expands upon a three-note motif, a feature of many subsequent works. After an explosive opening, the music grows from a small gesture. The growth is erratic, and occurs with a great amount of freedom. The second section, *Ditirambo*, uses an unwavering ostinato and above it expands the three-note motif with an exciting rhythmic acceleration and climb to the high registers of the instrument. This occurs in a more controlled manner, in contrast to the opening section. The presence of a steady pulse is interrupted at the climax with a return to the musical ideas of the piece's beginning.

The technique of growth from sparse gestures is also present in the work which followed *Canticum*. *La Espiral Eterna* (1971) is an instrumental tour-de-force and uses the timbral capabilities of the guitar to its fullest extent. Its inspiration is drawn from astronomy, a galaxy in the form of a spiral, whose structure can also be seen in the smallest of organisms on earth. The piece is divided into four sections, each of which exploits new sound possibilities of the guitar. The first section uses a three-note cluster as its basis, eventually resolving to a single note after expanding and contracting in a wash of continuous sound. The second section explores extreme dynamic and register contrast, combined with timbral effects. The third section makes use of the percussive effects of both of the guitarist's hands playing on the fretboard, while the fourth uses improvisation followed by descending arpeggios to allow the piece to spiral to its silent conclusion.

The artist Paul Klee served as an influence for *Parabola* (1973). In reference to the title, the composer declared:

"I'm approaching it (parabola) more philosophically and poetically. You see, this parabola is not geometrical in structure, but in meaning. I am using a nexus between the original folk basic and the very transposed, transformed language of this original."

The "original folk basic" that Brouwer refers to is the Yambú, a South American dance. The piece juxtaposes dissonant musical ideas with more familiar sonorities, which are meant to evoke the folk original. Brouwer admired in Klee his "sense of form, line, tension and balance between colour and space", and in this work has used the musical ideas in the manner that Klee would use colours.

The name *Tarantos* (1974) implies the flamenco dance, the *taranta*. The main components of this piece are collections of *enunciados*, short phrases characteristic of the dance, and *falsetas*, a term for melodic patterns in flamenco. Each musical cell has a unique character. The *enunciados* are extremely short with a single musical idea contained in each cell. The *falsetas* tend to be longer, often with a developed structure. The performer is to choose his own sequence of events, alternating *enunciado* with *falseta*, creating a unique presentation with each performance.

The first solo guitar piece of the "national Hyper-Romantic" style was *El Decameron Negro* (1981), composed for Sharon Isbin. The piece consists of three ballads based upon *El Decameron Negro* by the anthropologist Leon Frobenius. The book is based on African legends which were arranged into a narrative about a warrior who wished to be a musician. The three movements display the new Brouwer style with colour, excitement and poetry. *The Harp of the Warrior* is in traditional sonata form and combines lyricism and strength in its recreation of the warrior's instrument. *The Flight of the Lovers through the Valley of Echoes* begins boldly and steadily becomes more hurried. Central to this movement is the depiction of echo effects on the guitar. *The Ballad of the Love-Sick Maiden* is in rondo form. The primary statement is a tender ballad, which is interspersed with rhythmically driving sections.

Preludios Epigramaticos (1981-1983) are a set of six short preludes based on lines from poems by Miguel Hernandez: 1. *Desde que el alba quiso ser alba, todo eres madre*. 2. *Tristes hombres si no mueren de amores*. 3. *Alrededor de tu piel áto y desato la mía*. 4. *Rie que todo rie: que todo es madre lleve*. 5. *Me cogiste el corazón y hoy precipita su vuelo*. 6. *Llego con tres heridas, la del amor, la de la muerte, la de la vida*. The pieces are extremely concise in musical structure and compositional elements. There are shared musical themes between these Preludes and the *Retrats Catalans* (1981) for guitar and chamber orchestra.

The *Variations sur un Thème de Django Reinhardt* (1984) also display this economy of material, and are unique in Brouwer's solo guitar output as being the only example of theme and variations. The basis of the piece is Reinhardt's famous jazz piece *Nuages*. The variations do not consistently approach the theme in a jazz-like manner. After a slow introduction, the theme is stated plainly. The first three variations are named after baroque suite movements and use the rhythmic characteristics of each dance: *Variation I (Bourrée)* is in a quick, cut-time, meter, *Variation II (Sarabanda)* is a slow dance, and *Variation III (Giga)* is a quick dance with perpetual motion. The following two variations (*Improvisazione* and *Interlude*) return to jazz roots, with an emphasis on rhythmic freedom and contrasts in texture. The final Variation is entitled *Toccata*. It evokes the fantasy and direction that its baroque namesake possesses, but is transformed using inventive changes in meter.

Paisaje Cubano con Tristeza (1996) is part of a group of compositions that evoke impressions on aspects of the Cuban landscape. The other pieces in this series are the *Cuban Landscape with Rain* and the *Cuban Landscape with Rumba*, both for guitar quartet, as well as *Paisaje Cubano con Campanas* for solo guitar. These works incorporate the sounds of minimalism more prominently than in Brouwer's other pieces for guitar, using repetition as a musical basis. *Paisaje Cubano con Tristeza*, as its title implies, is different for its overt lyricism as opposed to the rhythmically insistent qualities of its predecessors.

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