

The Ph.D./D.M.A. Programs in Music

April 26, 2021 1:00 p.m.

Baisley Powell Elebash Recital Hall



Federico Díaz, guitar

Bagatelle III (1972)

William Walton
(1902-1983)

Cinco piezas para guitarra (1980)

Astor Piazzolla
(1921-1992)

Campero

Romántico

Acentuado

Tristón

Compadre

El Gran Pez (2021) *

Matías Tozzola
(b. 1986)

Rapsódico

Misterioso y con quietud

El Paseo de los Tristes (2021) *

Andrea Casarrubios
(b. 1988)

Invocación y danza (1961)

Joaquín Rodrigo
(1901-1999)

Lesley's Song (1990)

Frederic Hand
(b. 1948)

Sophia's Journey (2010)

Ballade for Astor Piazzolla (2020) *

* world premiere

This recital is given in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the D.M.A. degree.

Notes on the Program

The year 2021 marks the 100th birthday of one of the most important Latin American composers of the twentieth century, Astor Piazzolla. The pieces of this program are tied together by their relationship to Piazzolla's music.

Five Bagatelles for guitar was composed in 1972 by English composer **William Walton** and dedicated to his countryman Malcolm Arnold for his 50th birthday. The piece was written for guitarist Julian Bream who premiered it on May 27, 1972. These pieces have been very popular for classical guitarists ever since. **Bagatelle III** is marked *alla cubana* and the rhythmic material recalls the quintessential Cuban dance: the *habanera*.

In August 1980, 26-year-old Argentine guitarist Roberto Aussel met **Astor Piazzolla** in Paris, asking to commission a new piece for guitar. Aussel played pieces by several composers for Piazzolla so the maestro could better understand the musical possibilities of the guitar. One piece, Walton's *Bagatelle III* captured Piazzolla's attention, as he found the rhythmic and harmonic vocabulary of this short piece to be very similar to his own. Piazzolla asked Aussel to bring him the score of *Five Bagatelles* so he could use it as inspiration. The resulting work, **Cinco piezas para guitarra** was composed rather quickly. Piazzolla finished it in September 1980 and Aussel premiered it soon thereafter: three of the pieces premiered on December 17, 1980 and the entire set premiered on February 16, 1981. There are two versions: the score published in 1981 with some additions and changes; and the copy of the manuscript made by Aussel, which is a more reliable source. The first of the pieces is titled **Campero**, which means "from the countryside." In Argentina, the term *milonga campera* refers to a subgenre of traditional music that belongs both to rural folklore and the urban tango. **Romántico** combines lyrical ad libitum moments with a tempo sections in which the writing is more rhythmic. Piazzolla's third piece is written using nuevo tango language and its emphatic character is reflected in its title: **Acentuado**. The fourth piece is an homage in the form of a funeral march for the children who died from hunger during the Nigerian Civil War. A television documentary about that war inspired Piazzolla to write **Tristón**, which translates as "wistful." The somber atmosphere is achieved by an almost exclusive use of minor chords. **Compadre** is the title for Piazzolla's fifth piece and it alludes to the *compadrito*, a recurrent figure in the tango tradition: a provocative, overbearing troublemaker with a distinctive and complex style of speech and clothing. Piazzolla reflected these qualities in the musical language he uses in this piece.

Inspired by Piazzolla's use of *Five Bagatelles*, I decided to commission pieces from five composers, using Piazzolla's music as a starting point. Three of these pieces will premiere today. The first was recently composed by Argentine guitarist **Matías Tozzola**. In 2017, Mr. Tozzola visited the United States to attend the premiere of one of his solo guitar works, which had won first prize in the Composition Competition of the prestigious Boston Guitar Fest. I got to meet and play with Mr. Tozzola during that visit and I have been an admirer ever since. **El Gran Pez** (The Big Fish) refers to Piazzolla's passion for shark fishing. The first movement is a rhapsodic and fast conglomerate of materials that portrays the fisherman's struggle to pull the captured shark from the water. The introduction features an uneven pattern that evokes *Campero*, and the subsequent sections present gestures and articulations typical of Piazzolla's *nuevo tango* language. Using short gestures and glissandi, the second movement recreates the mysterious and calm atmosphere when the fisherman is waiting for a shark to bite.

I had the privilege of meeting **Andrea Casarrubios**, an outstanding cellist and composer from Spain, through the doctoral program here at the Graduate Center. We both attended a class in which

we had to compose a piece for a final concert, and her voice as a composer captivated me. After listening to a number of her compositions, I commissioned a piece for my Piazzolla project. In the same way that Piazzolla's drew from his country's musical tradition, Ms. Casarrubios expresses her Spanish roots through flamenco. The second world premiere in this program, **El Paseo de los Tristes** evokes the improvisatory character as well as gestures and sonorities of this quintessential Andalusian art form. The work is named after one of the most emblematic streets of the city of Granada, situated between La Alhambra and the Albaicín neighborhood.

In 1961, **Joaquín Rodrigo** was contacted by the director of the Radio-Television Française Guitar Competition, Robert J. Vidal, who encouraged Rodrigo to submit a piece to the Composition competition. For this occasion, Rodrigo decided to revive an un-premiered piece originally written for Regino Sainz de la Maza. He corrected and completed this piece and won the competition using the pseudonym "Mio Cid." **Invocación y danza** is an homage to Manuel De Falla and the piece was dedicated to and premiered by Venezuelan guitarist Alirio Díaz. Similar to *Cinco piezas*, there are multiple versions of this work: the edition of Graciano Tarragó of 1962, the edition of Alirio Díaz of 1973, and the edition of Pepe Romero of 1993.

Frederic Hand's pieces for this program showcase the multiple dimensions and evolution of his compositional language. **Lesley's Song** is a lyrical piece that he wrote for his wife in the early days of their relationship. **Sophia's Journey** was written after observing his granddaughter as a toddler, crawling on a blanket. The sudden and unpredictable movements are portrayed in the irregular accentuations of the opening pizzicato theme. The rest of the piece, which is developed from the opening theme, evokes Sophia's playful personality. The third piece of this set is also the third world premiere of the program. **Ballade for Astor Piazzolla** was written and dedicated to me. This composition conveys both the lyrical and accented qualities of Piazzolla's language.

About the Artist

Born in Mendoza, Argentina, **Federico Díaz** is an upcoming versatile musician of the new generation of guitarists with a multi-faceted career as a performing artist, arranger and composer. His performances have taken him to distinguished festivals and concert halls in more than 20 countries. He has appeared as soloist with the National University of Cuyo Symphony Orchestra, the Mozarteum University Chamber Orchestra, the Polish Chamber Orchestra Sopot and the Sinfonieorchester Magdeburg, among others. As a chamber musician he had the opportunity to collaborate with renowned artists such as Lionel Cottet, Philippe Quint, Juan Falú, Daniel Binelli, Jeremías Serigiani, Bruno Cavallaro, Juan Pablo Navarro, Matías Gonzalez, Lucía Luque, Ada Meinich, and Nora Buschmann. Mr. Diaz has a passion for tango, Argentinian folklore, and improvisation. He has been featured as a leader, arranger, and guest artist with many important musicians of the scene in Argentina as well as in Europe and the United States. He has recorded as a side man of several renowned artists including Lionel Cottet, Solange Merdinian, Pablo Woiz, Emilio Teubal, Pablo Lanouguere, Miguel Bereilles, among others. Federico completed the Master of Arts program at the University Mozarteum Salzburg. He received his Bachelor Degree (summa cum laude) from the National University of Cuyo. His former teachers include Cristina Cuitiño in Argentina, as well as Eliot Fisk and Ricardo Gallén in Austria. In 2015, he moved to New York City to continue his studies with David Starobin at the prestigious Manhattan School of Music. Currently, Federico is finishing a Doctor's Degree in Performance, a highly selective program from the Graduate Center CUNY., under the guidance of the world renowned guitarist and educator Frederic Hand.

Spring 2021 Online Events

March

- 8 Ari Livne, piano
- 12 Han Chen, piano

April

- 7 Kirsten Jermé, cello
- 16 Audrey Chen, cello
- 23 Carrie Frey, viola
- 26 Federico Diaz, guitar
- 28 Antonio Valentin, piano
- 30 Austin Lewellen, double bass

May

- 3 Thapelo Masita, cello
- 5 Clare Monfredo, cello
- 7 GC Composers
- 12 Julia Danitz, violin
- 14 GC Composers
- 17 Isabel Fairbanks, cello
- 19 Jeremy Kienbaum, viola
- 21 Fifi Zhang, piano

All events begin at 1:00pm and will be live-streamed free of charge at this link:

<https://gc-cuny.zoom.us/j/95813229159>

For detailed concert information, please visit our website at: <http://gcmusic.commonsgc.cuny.edu>