The Emergence of Leo Brouwer's Compositional Periods: The Guitar, Experimental Leanings, and New Simplicity

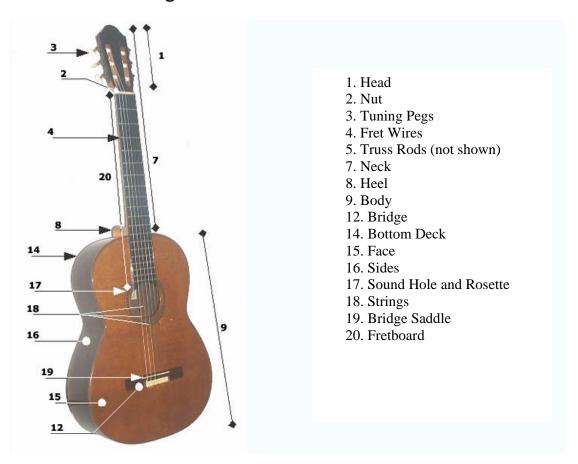
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Diagram of Modern Classical Guitar



Introduction

Leo Brouwer has taken on many roles in his musical career—composer, conductor, teacher, essayist—but his career began as a guitarist. Regarded today as one of the foremost living composer-guitarists, Brouwer has contributed an essential body of work to the classical guitar repertoire. His *Estudios Sencillos* are a part of the basic guitar technique method (heavy-metal guitarist Randy Rhoads even quoted *Estudio VI* while recording with Ozzy Osbourne) and his solo guitar piece *El Decameron Negro* is a standard in the contemporary repertory. Apart from his contributions to guitar repertory, he is regarded as one of the most important living figures in contemporary Cuban music and culture. A prolific composer, he has written in many genres including orchestral and chamber works, ballet scores, instrumental concerti, popular jazz-rock idioms, and over eighty film scores. Although Brouwer's music spans many musical styles, his Cuban roots are undeniably present in his works.

It is generally accepted by scholars of Brouwer's music that his compositions fall into three general stylistic periods, although opinions on start and end dates vary. The first period includes his early song arrangements and original solo pieces, both written for and at the guitar. Cuban folk music had a strong influence on the works from this first period. In his middle period, Brouwer showed leanings toward the avant-garde, using aleatoric elements. He also experimented with extended technique and unconventional timbres. The third period began in the 80's, when Brouwer described finding a "new simplicity." In these latest works, he returned to tonality and modality, incorporated minimalist elements, and often included a programmatic

component. What prompted these broad stylistic changes in Brouwer's music? This paper explores the changing political, social, and cultural climate in Cuba as Brouwer developed his music. Despite his frequent traveling abroad to perform, conduct, and teach, Brouwer has always returned to his native Cuba, making clear that Cuba is his home and base. This paper seeks to follow Brouwer as he navigated through his experiences in Cuba and abroad, both rejecting and synthesizing the new ideas that he encountered into his own musical language.

I. "The Beginning of it All": The Guitar

Leo Brouwer (Leovigilido Brouwer-Mesquida) was born on March 1, 1937 in Havana Cuba. Brouwer comes from a line of great Cuban pianists—his grandmother Ernestina Lecouna and her brother Ernesto Lecuona are both considered great virtuosos, and Ernesto was also a composer. The piano and its music were a constant presence in Brouwer's childhood. In an interview with John M. Kirk, a scholar of Cuban history and culture during the Revolution, Brouwer explained why he chose to play the guitar:

In my home, it [the piano] had a daily, visible presence and always seemed so familiar. The guitar, however, was somewhat different. I still remember, therefore, when my father—who was a doctor but a great admirer of the guitar—used to sit down and play it. It had an immediate spellbinding effect on me. I think that was the beginning of it all. (Kirk 94)

At that time, Brouwer lived in the Santos Suárez neighborhood of Havana.

When his parents divorced, he moved to the corner of Infanta and Carlos III

closer to the center of the city. It was then, at the rather late age of 12 that he decided to study the guitar.

Brouwer has said that he began composing in order to "fill in the gaps" of the guitar repertoire. There is not much music written specifically for the guitar before the 20th century, since the physical instrument in its 6-course form has only existed since the early 18th century. Early guitar repertoire focuses primarily on transcribed pieces written for the guitar's predecessors, the lute and vihuela. Even the Spanish pieces known as classical guitar standards, such as *Ma Maja de Goya* by Enrique Granados and *Asturias* by Issac Albeniz, both written in the late 18th century, were originally composed for piano. There are a few exceptions, such as Mauro Giuliani and Fernando Sor, who wrote specifically for the guitar, but both these composers were avid guitarists

themselves. It is not until the 20th century that the guitarist-composer tradition began to be broken, in large part due to the urging of guitarist Andrés Segovia, who aimed to bring the guitar into classical concert halls by developing its technique, physical body, and repertoire. In the 20th century the guitar finally found its place in the classical world, as non-guitarists such as Falla, Ponce, Rodrigo, Britten, Krenek, Babbitt and Carter begin to compose pieces specifically for the guitar. The guitarist-composer tradition has continued, however, and Brouwer is a part of this tradition.

Brouwer recalls that at the time he began playing the guitar, he received a daily allowance equivalent to 25 cents for the bus fare to school and a snack. Rather than using this money, Brouwer would walk six kilometers to school and go without eating the snack and save his 25 cents each day. After eight months of saving this allowance money, Brouwer bought his first guitar. Brouwer described his first guitar to Kirk: "As you can imagine, it was of very poor quality, and instead of proper strings it had nylon fishing line. For me, however, it was a real treasure." (Kirk 94) This was in 1952, the same year that Fulgencio Batista staged his second military coup.

Background of Political Chaos

The years in which Brouwer grew up as a child and adolescent in Cuba were a time of political upheaval. Collective memories of Cuba in the 1940s and 1950s vary widely, representing a point of tension between those sympathetic to the socialist revolution and others ambivalent or opposed to it. Supporters of socialist Cuba generally characterize this "pseudo-republic" as one of the darkest periods of the country's history. To supporters, mid-century life was

marred by the effects of corruption and political violence, as well as the widespread social ills of racism, class division, organized crime, gambling, prostitution and unemployment. On the other hand, Cubans in exile often ignore and downplay the period's problems. They instead emphasize the many positive features of the time, including a large professional class, cosmopolitanism, nightlife, media stars, and world-renowned performers. Cuba was undeniably one of the most affluent Latin American countries in the 1950s and was called the "Paris of the Caribbean." By 1958, the island boasted three television channels, 145 radio stations, and had more TV sets per capita than any other Latin American country. Cuban music became astoundingly popular during this decade at home and abroad, generating tremendous revenue (Moore 27). The years of the bloodiest clashes with Batista's forces in the late 1950s curiously coincide with the peak of domestic musical entertainment in Cuba (Moore 28). For this reason Batista's final years in power are associated with "pleasure and political repression, hedonism and terror." (Rojas 68)

Cuba of the 1950s cannot be understood without considering political developments on the island since the onset of the Wars of Independence (1895-98). Although ostensible independence from Spain was achieved in 1902, Cuba continued to struggle with frustrated attempts to gain autonomy in the face of a Spanish colonial and North American neocolonial presence through the middle of the century. Grievances against Spain before 1898 had been plentiful, but grievances resulting from the presence of the United States caused considerable anger as well (Moore 28).

Following four years of United States military occupation that many

Cubans fiercely opposed, there was a series of additional humiliations. During

the transfer of power back to Cuba, the McKinley administration refused to allow Cubans to choose their own political leaders, insisting on the election of candidates viewed as friendly to the United States investments. The new government was forced to adopt the Platt Amendment before the United States relinquished control. This addition to the constitution was in effect until 1934, fundamentally compromising local autonomy by allowing American military bases on Cuban soil and allowing the United States to intervene at any time it believed its interests were jeopardized. There was also a massive campaign of capital investment beginning in 1902 that placed control of most agricultural and business revenues in the hands of the United States. The importance of the American ambassador to Cuba increased to such an extent that virtually no important decision could be made without authorization from his office. The United States presence did have some positive effects, including improvements in public sanitation, education, and reform of legal practices. However, many Cubans felt humiliated by what they perceived as Washington's inability to treat them with the respect due to a sovereign people (Moore 29).

In 1934, Fulgencio Batista, the figure who dominated Cuban politics in the decades before 1959, successfully staged a coup against Ramón Grau San Martín, who was considered by Batista as too nationalistic and independent, with the help of the US State Department. The early years of Batista's rule witnessed the imposition of martial law and the repression of opposition leaders. Later however, he relaxed political restrictions and supported progressive legislation related to health insurance, education, and women's suffrage. He reconciled himself with the Communist Party and presided over the

ratification of a new and progressive constitution. At the end of the decade, he won a fair election against Grau and served as president from 1940-1944.

The period from 1944-1952 is often described as a lost opportunity in Cuban politics when campaigns against government corruption and frustrating attempts to instigate the social reforms mandated by the new constitution did not lead to substantial changes. When Grau was reelected and in office from 1944-1948, he betrayed the public trust to the extent that his administration has been described as "an orgy of theft, ill-disguised by emotional nationalistic speeches" (Thomas 738). The following administration of Carlos Prío Socarrás (1948-1952) was also known for misuse of public funds, although it managed to pass some progressive legislation and historians have characterized it as relatively capable (Moore 29).

It is in this context that Batista declared his candidacy for president again in the elections of 1952. With his opponents favored to win, Batista staged a second military coup before elections could be held. The public was outraged over Batista's blatant disrespect for constitutional law. A year later, groups vying for power abandoned political discussion in favor of violence. This spirit of anarchy is what fueled the famous attack organized by Castro on the Moncada garrison in Santiago on July 26th, 1953. Castro's 26th of July movement failed in these initial attempts, but gained national attention. The public showed their support of the movement by singing songs associated with Castro's *barbudos* (bearded soliders), one of which Batista eventually banned from the radio (*Son de la loma*) because of its associations with the insurgents (Smith 38).

By 1957, random bombings and sabotage were commonplace across the island. Several of Batista's military leaders gained notoriety for their bloody tactics, including several chiefs of the Secret Police. Perceiving that Batista was absolutely discredited among Cubans of every political affiliation and class, the United States finally imposed an arms embargo against him. In May 1958, his army failed in a final offensive against the guerillas and began losing territory. On New Years Eve, 1958, Batista fled the country, leaving revolutionary forces free to take control of Havana.

II. Social and Musical Life before the Revolution

By the mid-1950s, American visitors spent about 30 million dollars a year in Cuba, with over 70 flights a week scheduled from Miami to Havana. Politicians who played golf (Nixon, Ford and Kennedy) as well as performers such as Josephine Baker, Nat "King" Cole, Sarah Vaughn and Cab Calloway, and other celebrities such as Marlon Brando, Winston Churchill and Ernest Hemingway who frequented the island, all kept Cuba in the North American media. However, in the classical music world, the 1950s are often seen as a cultural vacuum in Cuba. When asked about this vacuum by Kirk, Brouwer noted: "In my opinion there was indeed that vacuum, despite everything that was done. What happened during those years was that there was a far greater interest in universal culture, and as a result local cultural pursuits were largely ignored." (Kirk 96) Musical education and performance faced financial limitations, especially musicians who wished to promote early music and twentieth-century composition in addition to the more standard European repertoire. Although the Philharmonic Orchestra of Havana was one of the three best orchestras in Latin America, little if any music by twentieth-century Cuban composers was played by the orchestra within Cuba before 1959. In general, salaries offered to performers in the symphony were meager, averaging about 100 pesos a month and paid only half the year (Moore 35). Nevertheless, the number of formally trained performers continued to grow. In a 1957 UNECSO study, Cuba is recognized to be "in proportion to its population, the country with the largest number of musical conservatories and academies" in all of Latin America (Gramatges 39).

In the classical world, there are two important schools of composition to be considered in pre-revolutionary Cuba: the Grupo Minorista, formed in 1923, and the Grupo de Renovación Musical, formed in 1942. Amadeo Roldán and Fredrico García Caturla were the leading forces in the *Grupo Minorista*, which was also influenced by the ethnological studies of Fernando Ortiz. It was Ortiz, a Cuban essayist, ethnomusicologist and scholar of Afro-Cuban culture, who brought to attention the African contribution to Cuban culture and saw a need to maintain this contribution as an integral part of Cuban culture. Ortiz contributed significantly to a wide array of fields dedicated to exploring, recording, and understanding all aspects of indigenous Cuban culture. He was also a liberal member of the House of Representatives in Cuba from 1917-1922 and in 1955 was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in recognition of his "love for culture and humankind." It was Ortiz who coined the term "transculturation," or the converging of cultures. The Grupo Minorista saw Stravinksy's Rite of Spring as a parallel to their music which used "primitive" Cuban rhythms and dances of African origins. The group also expressed a need to understand art and music without the cultural domination of Europe and sought to create a genuinely Cuban music. Frederico García Caturla felt this music could be achieved by developing and manipulating the "raw" qualities of the Cuban rumba and danza into new forms (Century 15).

The *Grupo de Renovación Musical*, formed in 1942 by José Ardévol, continued this search for a genuine Cuban music, but had aims of achieving a greater universality in Cuban music without losing innate Cuban characteristics. Study of formal compositional techniques of existing forms and creating a greater "universal meaning" was important. *Renovación* sought to

create a Cubanism that was less picturesque and localized. Brouwer began composing his earliest compositions in the wake of these two schools of Cuban composition and sought to find a significant and true Cuban voice in music (Century 12).

Early Song Arrangements and Solo Guitar Compositions

At the age of 17, Brouwer gave his first concert and began composing that same year. Many of these early pieces are overtly nationalistic song arrangements for guitar of Cuban folk songs. Some examples of pieces during this period are *Drume Negrita*, based on a popular tune of the same title by Ernesto Grenet, *Guajira Criolla*, based on *El arroyo que murmura* for voice and piano by Jorge Anckermann, *Ojos Brujos*, based on a piece for piano and voice of the same name by Gonzalo Roig, and *Zapateo*, an anonymous zapateo from the early 19th century. In all four of these pieces, Brouwer provided new material in the introductions, transitions, and endings of the guitar arrangements as well as some re-harmonizations while maintaining the basic integrity of the original melody.

Both Brouwer's *Guajira Criolla*, written in 1955, and Anckermann's original song *El arroyo que murmura* are based on the *Guajira*, a Cuban song named after the *Guajiros*, rural peasants among whom the form is popular. The *Guajira* shows Spanish influence and likely has roots in the *contradanzas* of Spain. Characteristics of the *Guajira* include orchestration for high voice, tiple (guitar with 12 strings in 4 sets), *bandurria* (guitar with 12 strings in 6 sets), and *guiro* (hollow gourd with notches played by dragging wooden stick across side), an 8-measure introduction in 6/8 meter with a light rhythm and a

hemiola superimposition of 3/4 meter on 6/8 time. The first section is traditionally in the minor mode, and the second in the major mode. Harmony is generally centered on V⁷, and the final cadence is dominant. In Brouwer's arrangement, there is an alteration between 6/8 and 3/4 meter, which changes the accentuation of the original melody line. The re-harmonization is fairly conventional, almost entirely dominant-tonic progressions, but colored with added ninths, elevenths, and sixths (Suzuki 26). Brouwer also made use of timbre changes and other guitaristic idioms. The introduction of the arrangement uses muted pizzicato punctuated with bell-like harmonics. The harmonization in D minor/major calls for the sixth string to be lowered from E to D (scordatura), which is very idiomatic for the guitar. Parallel chord fingerings and open strings make awkward shifts and reaches unnecessary for the performer. Transparently simple and clear, Drume Negrita, Guajira Criolla, Ojos Brujos and Zapateo have been published and recorded around the world. Brouwer's unerring understanding and craftsmanship for the guitar idiom have allowed these short, innocuous pieces to become a standard part of the guitar repertoire. When questioned about the popularity of his earliest music, Brouwer said that it "is a matter of real luck and perhaps even a miracle." (Kirk 95)



Example 1. Jorge Anckermann, El arroyo que murmura



In 1957, Brouwer enrolled in the National Roldán Conservatory in Havana, continuing his study of the guitar and composition. His first original guitar solos were written during this time. These original pieces were still nationalistic and essentially tonal or tonally oriented, but tend to favor sevenths, diminished and augmented octaves, and ninths. Interest in these

dissonances, particularly the adjacent seconds, anticipates the clusters found later in Brouwer's middle period of experimentation. *Danza Caracteristica*, written in 1957, is a representative example of work during this period. The form of the piece is similar to the Cuban *danzón*. Brouwer conforms to the *danzón's* 2/4 meter and ternary form, but reduces the traditional eightmeasure introduction, which serves as a ritornello, to four measures. The Conga rhythm is the basis of the slow central movement and is also used in a series of *rasgueado* chords in the outer sections. *Son, tresillo*, and *cinquillo* rhythms related to the Conga are also present (Suzuki 55).

III. Musical and Social Change after the Revolution

The sudden departure of Batista in the final days of 1958 represented an important event to Cubans in several respects. Those who had fought against the dictator had done so without significant external assistance, which bolstered faith in the country's ability to manage its own affairs. The revolutionary victory brought an end to a period of undeniable political oppression and suggested that responsible constitutional rule would soon be restored. The battle had overtly been against Batista, but this struggle represented the culmination of Cuba's many attempts to achieve complete autonomy, including autonomy from the United States.

Although the years following Batista's second coup gave rise to a politically illegitimate government, a vibrant artistic life still managed to thrive. By contrast, the period immediately after Batista's departure witnessed the emergence of a less corrupt government and a more egalitarian society, yet musical performance and recording decreased over time. Several factors contributed to this, including the militarized state of the country, the onset of the United States embargo, the decline of the national economy, and Cuba's increasing isolation. Overall, the early revolutionary period was characterized by fundamental social, political and economic change that disrupted the infrastructure supporting the arts. Nonetheless, many artists and intellectuals living through the first years of the revolution describe the environment as exhilarating, with a great deal of room for experimentation and creativity. Cuban playwright and poet Anton Arrufat remembers the period as decidedly idealistic:

What had been important before no longer was. Morals began to change. People started to support each other, at least in human terms. The mental structures changed, and people began to lose interest in money... [they] also lost interest in the clothes they wore. It was enough to have one pair of pants, a shirt, and a pair of boots. And people liked these changes. (Fuentes 27)

Testimonies from musicians suggest that working conditions improved for them in the early years of the revolution. Classical composers received significantly more financial support from the new government. Visibility of modern classical performance increased in the media, with support from the government. Amadeo Roldán and Alejo Carpentier's ballet *La rembambaramba* was aired on national television in March 1960, José Ardévol and Harold Gramatges hosted broadcasts on radio station CMZ, and many composers from neighboring Latin American countries were invited to Cuba to discuss their works at the *Casa de las Américas* (Moore 64). The government even took symphony orchestras and virtuoso cellists out into the countryside to play for campesinos (Ardévol 142).

It was in this musical environment that Brouwer was awarded a scholarship in 1959 from the People's Revolutionary Government of Cuba to study at Juilliard and the Hartt School at the University of Connecticut. This represented the opening of a new window of materials and information that were impossible for him to obtain as an individual in Cuba. Brouwer described his experience at Juilliard:

They had lots of material on the history of music around the world: western music (even before the Middle Ages), as well as ancient religious pieces from India, Japanese kabuki music... Everything was there. There was also an exceptional professor, Vincent Persichetti, who gave a lecture that I heard seated next to Leonard Bernstein, Lucas Foss, and Paul Hindemith, who at the time was teaching at Yale. I also took classes with a professor as talented as Stephan Wolpe... With musical experiences like that, it was not difficult to become inspired. (Kirk)

After a year of studying composition at Juilliard and Hartt, Brouwer was offered a position as professor of guitar at Hartt upon completion of his degree.

Columbia Artists Management also offered him sponsorship to tour the United States. Brouwer easily could have stayed in the US and developed his musical career abroad. Yet, in 1960, he returned to Cuba. Brouwer explained his choice: "My decision to return was, however, totally political... I also made my decision at a time when relations were broken between the United States and Cuba, which of course complicated any decision. Let me point out, though, that I never regretted my decision, and I don't regret it now." (Kirk 98) Brouwer was not alone—other musicians such as Aurelio de la Vega, Gilberto Valdés, Pucho Escalante, along with writers Alejo Carpentier, Heberto Padilla, and Pablo Armando Fernández, who had been living abroad, returned to Cuba in order to partake in the new cultural environment. (Moore 64). Upon his return, Brouwer became musical assistant at Radio Havana and director of the music department at the Instituto de Arte Industria Cinematográficos (IAIC) and in 1961 was appointed a professor of harmony and counterpoint at the Roldán Conservatory.

The period immediately following the Revolution was not, however, without major political controversy. Castro remained overwhelmingly popular, yet his close ties with Communist groups began to generate concern. In July of 1959, Castro forced President Urrutia to resign because of his anti-Communist statements and replaced him with a more compliant Osvaldo Dorticós. On the eve of the revolution, Cuba boasted many independently-owned newspapers, radio stations, and television stations. By 1960, all presses and radio and television stations had either been placed under government control or ceased operation. Privately-owned newspapers began to close not because they were forced to, but because the independent businesses that supported them no

longer existed. Major theatres and concert halls also passed into government hands, with the populist motivation of giving the masses direct access to all forms of art that had once been only for the bourgeoisie. (Moore 67)

Appropriations of private lands and properties and movement toward closer ties with the Soviet Union led to counterrevolutionary activity by mid-1960. This activity was limited primarily to the professional and elite classes, as well as Catholics, but by October of 1960, approximately ten thousand political prisoners filled Cuba's jails. Counterrevolutionaries (some of whom had previously been members of the 26th of July movement) began to commit acts of sabotage, including arson fires in department stores. In March of 1960, President Eisenhower began covertly funding this sort of domestic agitation as well as arming Cuban exile groups. On October 13, Washington cut off all normal diplomatic relations with Cuba, and on February 7, 1962 initiated a total trade embargo. This increasingly tense political context in Cuba soon led to an exodus of the general population and artists, including Brouwer's own grand-uncle Ernesto Lecuona. Between 1960 and 1974, Cuba lost an average of about 30,000 citizens a year to exile (Moore 68).

In the midst of this political tension in Cuba, Brouwer continued composing comfortably and productively. It seems that being an artist who decided to stay in Cuba had its rewards if one were loyal to the Revolution from the very beginning. Brouwer was given grants from the Cuban government to perform classical guitar from 1961-1967 and to compose from 1967 to the present time. When asked how the political and cultural environment in 1960s Cuba influenced him, Brouwer says:

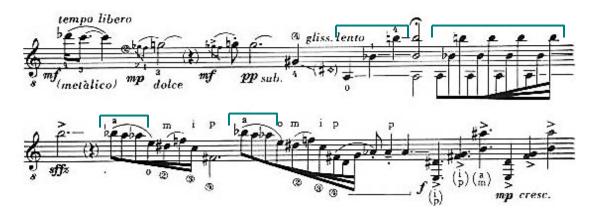
I have always said that period was one of unforgettable catharsis. Until that moment, artists involved in cultural pursuits had been struggling to reaffirm a nationality that

Batista had denied, a deeply rooted nationality led by figures like Carpentier, Ponce, Abelia, Peláez. When the revolution took place, this need to define ourselves and defend ourselves took on a new meaning, and it now became one of collective spirit, of love, of pledging ourselves to build something new... The revolution was a sort of utopia in which I have believed ever since. (Kirk 98-99)

IV. Experimental Leanings

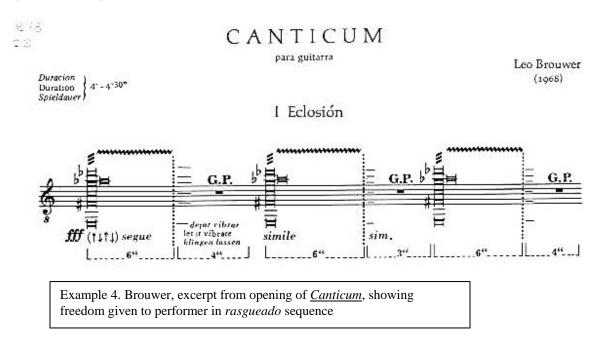
A significant event in Brouwer's musical development was his attendance at the Warsaw Autumn Musical Festival in 1961. It was here that he heard performances of Lutoslawki's *Jeux Venitien*, Stockhausen's *Zyklus*, and Penderecki's *Threnody to the Victims of Hiroshima*. Although Brouwer had access to recordings of Stockhausen, Boulez, and Feldman in Cuba, the festival allowed direct and continuous contact with "avante-garde" music, musicians, and composers. The festival was a turning point for many Cuban composers, especially in light of the United States embargo, which limited the movement of musical and cultural ideas. In 1963, Brouwer was the first Cuban to publish an aleatoric work, *Sonograma I* for prepared piano (Suzuki 12). In this same year he was appointed a composition professor at the Roldán Conservatory and continued teaching there until 1967.

Canticum (1968), the Latin term for incantation, is the first solo guitar piece written in this middle period. It is relatively conservative in its experimentation, designed to acquaint student guitarists with modern techniques, sounds, and notations. A 3-note chromatic cluster forms the basis of the piece.

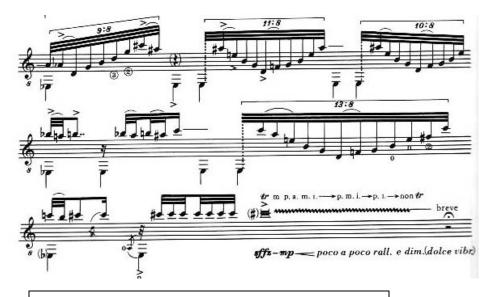


Example 3. Brouwer, excerpt from *Canticum I. Eclosion* showing 3-note chromatic clusters bracketed in blue

Although there are some suggestions of aleatoric features in the opening and ending *rasgueado* sequences, the rest of the piece is essentially written out for the performer. Brouwer describes the piece as "at the door of the avante-garde." (Suzuki 126)



The first movement's name, "Eclosión," is defined as "the emergence of an adult insect from its pupal case, or a larva from an egg." The basic tone cluster could be described as hatching, as new harmonic and melodic elements emerge in addition to the new timbral resources on the guitar that develop in the piece. The second movement, titled "Ditirambo," is equivalent to dithyramb, which is a song to honor the god Dionysus, sung by a chorus in a dramatic manner. There are many sudden outbursts and sweeping flourishes in this movement, which build continuously in intensity with a crescendo throughout until the climactic tremolo c-sharp.



Example 5. Brouwer, excerpt from *Canticum*, *II. Ditirambo*

Although experimentation often implies abstraction, formalism and elitism, Brouwer was able to use experimentation for nationalistic purposes. His support of the political, social, and economic goals of the revolution are clear in his *Homenaje a Lenin (Al alsalto del cielo)*, written in 1970. The work is an electronic piece written to commemorate the 100th birthday of Lenin. It included, among other things, pop music used in the background of a recorded speech of Lenin, symbolizing Lenin's continuing influence on the young people of Cuba (Suzuki 13). It was played in the central square of Havana every night for a one-week celebration of Lenin, and also at an exhibit in the public library dedicated to Lenin. In this same year, Brouwer was invited by Benjamin Britten to attend the Aldeburgh music festival in the United Kingdom. After performing on guitar there, Brouwer was subsequently invited to give recitals in several European countries in the following year. Deutsche Grammophon soon offered him a contract as a guitarist and composer, and he recorded three albums with them, followed by another three with Erato. He was also offered a scholarship

from the Ford Foundation in 1971, which he refused. Instead, he spent 1972-1973 in West Berlin on a DAAD grant from the German government. It was here that he wrote his "tetralogy" of works, which uses the same basic compositional material cast in four different settings, each involving the guitar. The four works are *La Espiral Eterna* for solo guitar (see appendix), *Per Suonare a Due* for two guitars or guitar and tape, *Per Suonare a A Tre* for flute, viola, and guitar, and the concerto for guitar and small orchestra (fifteen instruments). The German government offered to make him a "major musical figure" if he moved to Germany, but Brouwer refused, returning to Cuba and giving up the opportunity to become a marketable commodity in Europe. When asked by Kirk about refusing this offer, Brouwer says,

I truly don't think that this was so important, since the possibility to become a 'major musical figure' was all completely hypothetical. By contrast, what is real is that we humans live just once, and I believe that what we always need to do is what is asked of us by our culture, our training, and our environment.

Financially in Cuba, Brouwer was doing quite well. After 1968, the salaries of professional musicians remained consistent for decades. Salary ranges were small, with those in the lowest brackets receiving approximately 128 pesos a month and those in the highest, approximately 450. By Cuban standards, this represented a respectable sum, since other fields averaged 180 pesos (Moore 92). The best-known classical composers, Brouwer included, as well as Carlos Fariñas, Harold Gramatages, and Roberto Valera, received even higher pay—as much as 700 pesos a month because of their simultaneous roles as institutional directors or teachers and creative artists. (Moore 92) In a 1997 interview at the *Festival Internacional de Agosto* in Caracas Venezuela, Brouwer hinted that he felt an obligation to return to Cuba after his successes in Europe during the 1970s. "The Cuban Revolution lived a moment of cathartic birth of

vanguardism and creative freedom. These European musicians, concerned with cultural and social development, found Leo Brouwer in Cuba and they took his music to Europe. That was a big lucky strike that I had thanks to the Revolution." In this same interview, Brouwer described his frustrations during his middle period of experimentation and its limitations:

What happened was that the atomized, crisp and tension-filled language of this kind suffered, and still suffers today, a defect related to the essence of compositional balance, a concept that is present in history: Movement, tension, with its consequent rest, relaxation... The avant-garde lacked the relaxation of tensions... In this way, I made a kind of regression that moves toward the simplification of compositional materials. That is what I consider my last period which I call "New Simplicity."

V. New Simplicity

Brouwer has said the third period of his works encompasses elements drawn from popular music, classical music, and avant-garde styles. Elements of minimalism are also very present in his later works. In the *Festival de Agosto* interview, Brouwer explained his affinity for minimalism:

The term minimalism was coined during the 1970s with the thesis of Steve Reich and Phillip Glass... I took minimalism as a very important compositional element because it is inherent to my cultural roots from the 'third world.' Africa, Asia, manifest themselves in a minimalist way. These marvelous creators of North American minimalism discovered that fact, perhaps late.

There is also a more visceral and immediate quality to his later works, which are often programmatic and contain mimetic elements, as well as a marked lyricism.

Two works that typify Brouwer's late period are the solo guitar work *El Decameron Negro* (1981), and *Paisaje Cubano con Lluvia* (1984), written for four guitars. *El Decameron Negro* is especially interesting because it was inspired by a collection of West African folktales collected and recorded by German anthropologist Leo Frobenius in 1910, which he called "Das Schwarze Dekameron" because of the likeness he saw between them and Bocaccio's Decameron. The piece is written in three movements, titled *El Arpa del Guerrero* (The Harp of the Warrior), *La Huida de los Amantes por el Valle de los Ecos* (The Flight of the Lovers through the Valley of the Echoes), and *Ballada de la Doncella Enamorada* (Ballad of the Love-sick Maiden). Although all three to some extent have narrative elements, only in the first movement has Brouwer admitted to being directly inspired by Frobenius's collected folktales. In a December 2006 interview with KMFA Classical Guitar Live, Brouwer recounted the folktale, which is about the bravest and strongest warrior in a village who decides to become a musician. He begins to play the West African harp, the

kora. At that time and place, musicians and artists were on the lowest-level stratum of society. Therefore, the warrior was banished from his village for choosing the life of a musician, and moved up to the mountains alone with his kora. However, with the warrior gone, his tribe began to lose all their wars and battles without him. They begged him to come back to the village to help them fight. Together, they won all the wars and battles and the tribe was triumphant. However, once the fighting had settled, the warrior chose to return to the mountains in solitude with his kora. This author could not find the reference to this folktale in the 1971 Sphere Books Limited Edition of Leo Frobenius's collected tales entitled *The Black Decameron*. However, another edition may contain the folktale to which Brouwer made reference. Brouwer also said in the KMFA interview that to him, the story represents the revenge of the arts, and this is what moved him to write *El Arpa del Guererro*.

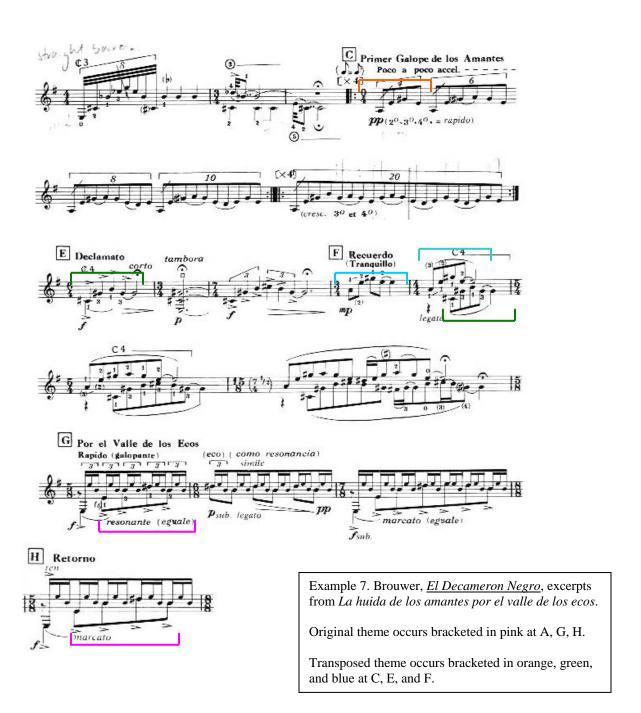
The second movement of *El Decameron Negro*, *La Huida de los Amantes por el Valle de los Ecos*, is especially narrative in comparison to the two outer movements. There are programmatic markings at the beginning of each of the nine sections, A) *Declamato pesante* (Heavy Declaration), B) *Presage* (Omen), C) *Primer Galope de los Amantes* (First Gallop of the Lovers), D) *Presagio* (Premonition), E) *Declamato* (Declaration), F) *Recuerdo, Tranquilo*, (Memory, Tranquil), G) *Por el Valle de los Ecos, Rapido galopante*, (Through the Valley of the Echoes, Rapid Galloping), H) *Retorno* (Return) and I) *Epilogo, lentamente* (Epilogue, slowly). The first section A) *Declamato pesante* introduces the fournote theme over a pedal-tone E that is used throughout the rest of the piece:

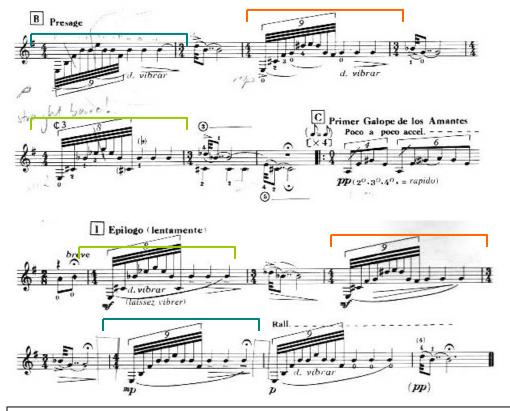


Example 6. Brouwer, *El Decameron Negro*, opening theme of *La huida de los amantes por el valle de los ecos* bracketed in pink

This intervallic sequence of an upward perfect fifth, upward major third, and downward major third, is used again in the bass notes of G) *Por el Valle de los Ecos* and at H) *Retorno*. At C) *Primer Galope de los Amantes*, the same intervals are maintained, but transposed up a perfect fourth to the key of A.

Transposition occurs again at E) *Declamato* (see ex. 7) starting on C#, however the major third is replaced with a minor third. At F) *Recuerdo*, transposition occurs again starting on A with the original intervals intact. In the next measure, this straight transposition with the root A is repeated with the previously heard altered transposition at E) *Declamato* (containing a minor third with root C#) below it and staggered by a quarter note. The intervals return to their original pitches at the beginning of G) *Por el Valle de los Ecos* and again at H) *Retorno*. Another interesting feature in the structure of the piece is the use of a sequence of 3 chords at B) *Presage* and I) *Epilogo* in opposite order of each other that creates a palindrome affect (see ex. 8).

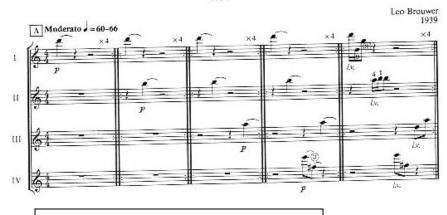




Example 8. Brouwer, <u>El Decameron Negro</u>, excerpts from <u>La huida de los amantes por el valle de los ecos</u>. Palindromic sequence of 3 chords bracketed in blue, orange and green respectively at B, and green, orange, and blue respectively at I.

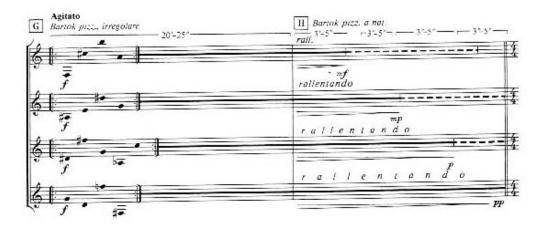
Brouwer's *Paisaje Cubano con Lluvia* is another representative example of his third period. In this piece, Brouwer uses some experimental sounds and extended technique as well as giving some rhythmic freedom and pitch choices to the performer. The onomatopoeic, mimetic, elements of the work are undeniable. The repeated, high-pitched single notes at the opening of the piece quite literally and unequivocally represent the sound of the first raindrops falling in a rainstorm.

CUBAN LANDSCAPE WITH RAIN



Example 9. Brouwer, *Paisaje Cubano con Lluvia*. Opening notes suggesting raindrops.

Just as the rain falls spontaneously and unpredictably, so do the notes fall in the closing of the piece before the Coda, where Brouwer simply puts pitches with undetermined note values and writes *Bartok Pizz, irregolare* with a *rallentando* at varying degrees of duration for each guitar. Brouwer is again synthesizing all his many musical preferences, using indeterminate and minimalist elements, but always with a marked lyricism and precision of craftsmanship, along with an understanding of the capabilities of the guitar idiom that perhaps only a guitar-player would have.



Example 10. Brouwer, *Paisaje Cubano con Lluvia*. Closing with indeterminate rhythm and tempo.

Conclusion

Leo Brouwer is constantly changing and evolving his musical style.

Although this paper focuses on his works for guitar, even in this small selection of works we see the broad stylistic changes that happen over the course of three decades. It should be noted that this paper did not address the significant portion of his compositional oeuvre that includes over eighty film scores, orchestral and chamber works, ballet scores, instrumental concerti, and popular jazz-rock idioms. What allowed Brouwer to span such differing styles in his music while staying at heart such a true Cuban who loyally supported the Revolution?

Throughout Brouwer's three stylistic periods, he has always remained conscious of his audience and of the border between art music and popular music. He has also been acutely aware of the political role that music can assume. When asked by Kirk what he saw the responsibility of artists in Cuba to be, Brouwer responded:

For some time now we have heard talk about artists as people with political interests. I have always understood this political role, and I still accept that challenge. That fundamental principle does not mean, however, that artists have to depend upon any particular ideology. Rather, they have a historic responsibility, namely, to participate fully in the society that surrounds them. If this does not occur, then their art has no political value, no matter how they seek to explain themselves with demagoguery and shows of dissidence, real or pretend. If they do not have influence of society, historically and politically assumed and inserted in their work, and vice versa, they are guilty of demagoguery.

Brouwer refuses to be guilty of this "demagoguery." His music has always remained accessible to the general public, even during his experimental period. Brouwer's struggle to maintain social relevance in his music may reflect the tension found in the contradictory goals of post-revolutionary Cuba with regard to the arts: promoting the cultures of marginalized groups within society while at the same time manifesting a desire to "raise" the standards of these same

groups, which are seen as socially down-trodden. Brouwer acknowledged this contradiction in his book *La música*, *lo cubano y la innovación*:

High or erudite music refers to music elaborated with a sense of structural complexity and with sonorous traditions of multiple historical roots... Popular music, which poses no engagement with eternity, is founded on few elements which are easily recognized, so as not to disturb the intellectual faculties of the listener. (translation by Miller)

Brouwer's success in Socialist Cuba may be attributed to his ability to delicately balance his music between these two idioms of high and popular music, if such a distinction truly exists.

Acknowledgments

This paper could not have been possible without the support of my many teachers and advisors. First and foremost, thank you so much to Professors Ted Levin and Larry Polansky for their ever helpful advice, guidance, and encouragement. Thank you to my guitar teachers Peter Lorenço of Phillips Academy, Gary Ryan of the Royal College of Music, and especially John Muratore at Dartmouth, who helped me formulate the original thesis proposal and spent so much time and energy with me this term to prepare for my recital. Lastly, I would like to thank my friends for their constant support and encouragement of my music-making, no matter where or when it may be, and my dad for being the one who let me pull his dusty old guitar from out of our basement eight or so years ago to play with for the first time.

Many Thanks.

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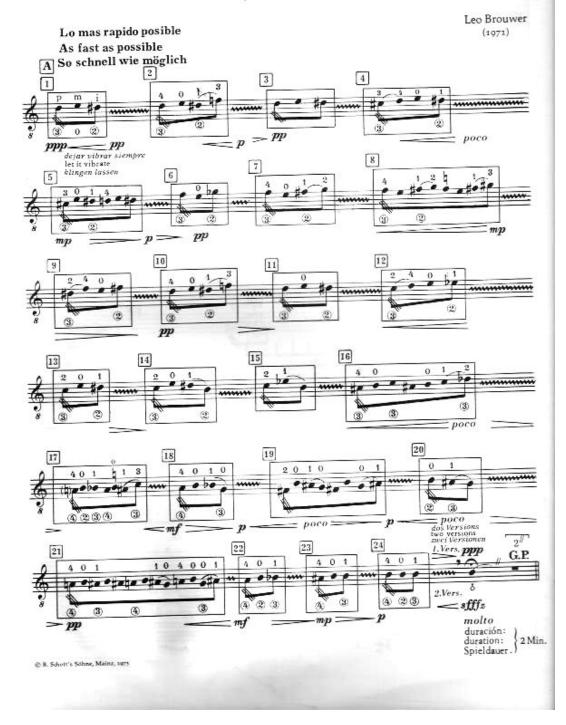
Appendix: Works for Guitar



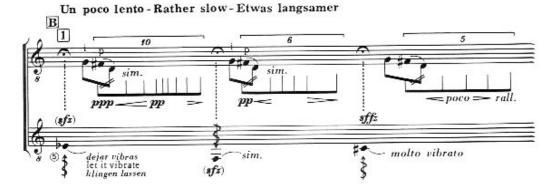


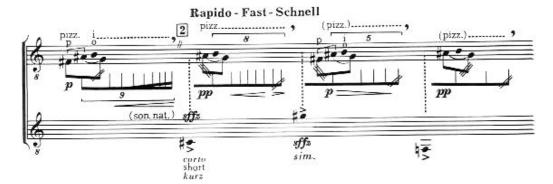


La Espiral Eterna

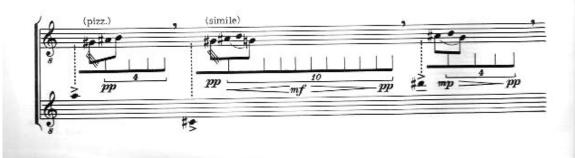




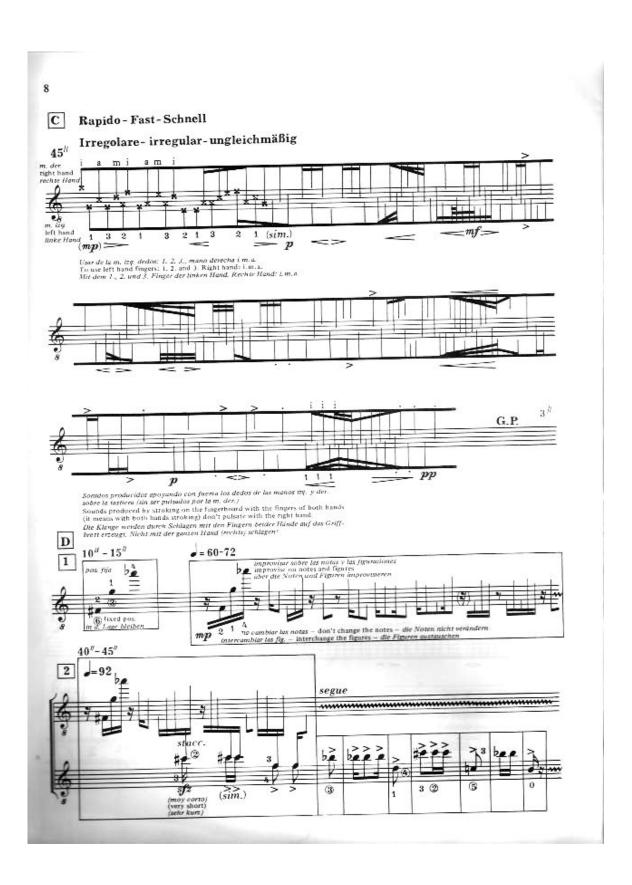


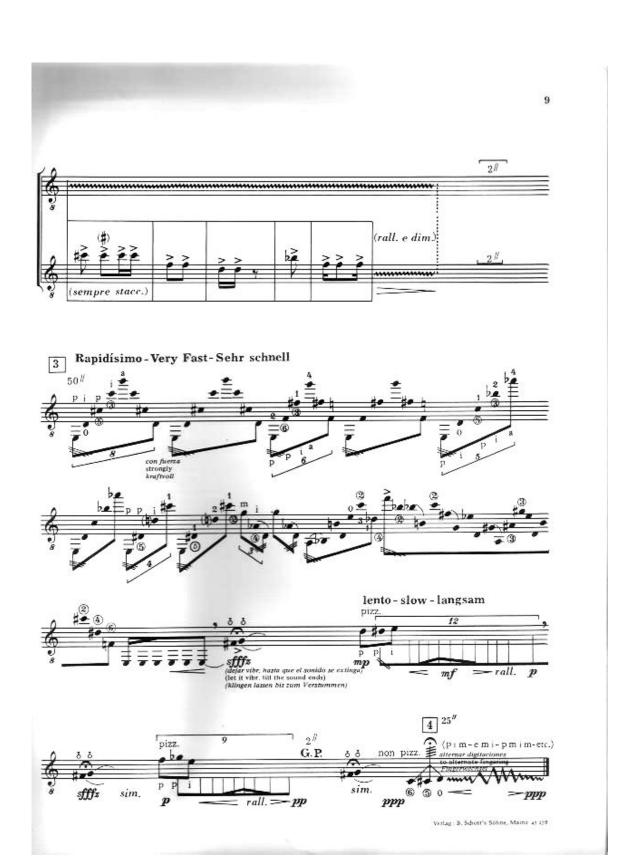












1000 F000 Rev

Pour Sharon Isbin

LE DECAMERON NOIR

POUR GUITARE

1.

LEO BROUWER (1981)

I. La Harpe du Guerrier



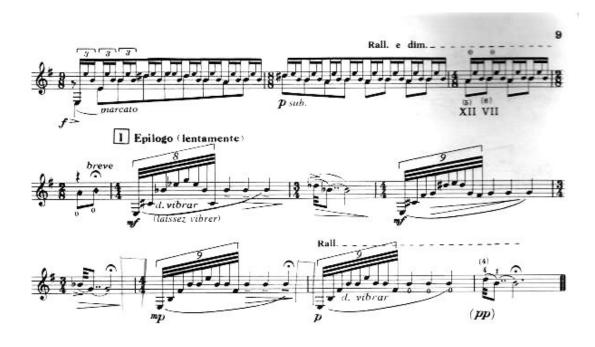




6 II. La Fuite des Amants par la Vallée des Échos LA HUIDA DE LOS AMANTES POR EL VALLE DE LOS ECOS LEO BROUWER A Declamato pesante B Presage d. vibrar Primer Galope de los Amantes
Poco a poco accel. - - - poco dim. fmolto E.M.T .1704















CUBAN LANDSCAPE WITH RAIN

September 1





