DEVELOPMENT OF THE PERCUSSION ENSEMBLE THROUGH THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE LATIN AMERICAN COMPOSERS AMADEO ROLDÁN, JOSÉ ARDÉVOL, CARLOS CHÁVEZ, AND ALBERTO GINASTERA

D.M.A. DOCUMENT

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Doctor of Musical Arts Degree in the Graduate School at The Ohio State University

By

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* * * * *

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ABSTRACT

Four Latin American composers – Amadeo Roldán, José Ardévol, Carlos Chávez and Alberto Ginastera – made significant contributions to the development of the percussion ensemble during the years 1930 to 1964. Roldán’s *Rítmicas No. 5* and *No. 6* (1930) are the first compositions for percussion ensemble and created the percussion ensemble genre. Ardévol’s three percussion ensemble compositions – *Estudio en forma de preludio y fuga* (1933), *Suite para instrumentos de percusión* (1934) and *Preludio a 11* (1942) – are among the earliest of the genre. Chávez’s *Toccata para instrumentos de percusión* (1942) is one of the most frequently performed and recorded works for percussion ensemble, and his *Tambuco* (1964) has also been successful. Ginastera’s *Cantata para América mágica* for dramatic soprano and percussion orchestra (1960) pushes the boundaries of percussion ensemble compositional techniques with its immense instrumentation of 53 percussion instruments. The strong influence these compositions had on the developing percussion ensemble genre is evident in the instrumentation and compositional techniques employed by other composers of the genre, including Edgard Varèse, Henry Cowell, Lou Harrison and John Cage. This influence has been overlooked by current music scholarship, and in the case of Roldán, scholars have marginalized or criticized his achievements. In addressing the criticisms of Roldán and presenting overlooked information concerning Ardévol, Chávez, and Ginastera, this document will outline the contributions of these four composers.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Finally, a special thank you to my beautiful wife Amy and to my two children, Johnny and Evie. I could not have made it through school without their patience, love, and support.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Music has always been a global phenomenon. Various cultures have found ways to develop unique and distinct musical traditions, but there has always been some level of borrowing and sharing of musical ideas between cultures. With recent trends toward increased globalization in world politics and commerce and with modern advances in communication technology, the boundaries between cultures are more porous than they have ever been. Though there are those who fight these trends, Western musicians and scholars are beginning to demonstrate an increased interest in the music of other cultures.

The field of percussion has been especially influenced by this trend toward globalization. In the 1990s, percussionists demonstrated a notable increase of interest in the percussion instruments and styles of world cultures, and this trend continues to the present day. Ironically, despite this renewed interest in world music, most musicians and scholars have failed to notice or acknowledge that the performance medium most associated with percussion, the percussion ensemble, began as a globally influenced creation. The percussion ensemble is a relatively new performance medium in the Western music tradition. Percussion instruments, instruments that are struck or shaken to produce sound, gained increasing prominence in the orchestral and chamber music literature of the 19th and 20th centuries. In 1930, with Cuban composer Amadeo
Roldán’s *Rítmicas* No. 5 and No. 6, the percussion section broke away from the orchestra to appear for the first time in a solo capacity. Other works written exclusively for percussion soon followed, and a new class of compositions was born. The term *percussion ensemble* is now used in reference to these compositions written exclusively for percussion instruments and to the groups of musicians that perform these works.

Roldán, together with a number of other Latin American composers, pioneered the development of this new genre. These composers include fellow Cuban José Ardévol, Mexican composer Carlos Chávez, and Argentine composer Alberto Ginastera. Ardévol followed Roldán’s *Rítmicas* with three percussion ensemble compositions, *Estudio en forma de preludio y fuga* (1933), *Suite para instrumentos de percusión* (1934) and *Preludio a 11* (1942). Chávez composed two percussion ensembles, *Toccata para instrumentos de percusión* (1942), which is one of the most frequently performed and recorded of the genre, and *Tambuco* (1964). Ginastera composed his *Cantata para América mágica* for dramatic soprano and percussion orchestra in 1960. These compositions played an essential role in the percussion ensemble’s early development by creating the genre and by influencing the composers of the percussion ensemble works that followed. The influence of these compositions is evident in the instrumentation and compositional techniques employed by other composers of the genre, including Edgard Varèse, Henry Cowell, Lou Harrison, and John Cage.

The contributions of Roldán, Ardévol, Chávez, and Ginastera have been marginalized in Western music scholarship. That Latin American composers continue to be marginalized and their contributions unrecognized is of particular interest to the author.
of this document. My grandfather is a retired professor of Spanish, and my father is a
professor of Spanish. They have studied, worked, and lived abroad, and their respect for
other cultures was a part of my upbringing. Following their example, I lived and worked
in local communities in the Dominican Republic for two years where I gained advanced
proficiency in the Spanish language and a deep respect for the Dominican people. I
minored in Spanish during my undergraduate studies, I have studied Portuguese, and I
continue to perform volunteer work in Spanish-speaking communities. My background
leads me to take a particular interest in the marginalization of Latin American composers,
and the topic of this document was selected with the intent of addressing this issue.

**Statement of Problem and Need for Study**

The contributions by Latin American composers to the development of the
percussion ensemble have been overlooked by current music scholarship. The discussion
of how the pioneering use of percussion in orchestral and chamber compositions paved
the way toward the percussion ensemble medium has focused on the works of European
composers. Much has been written concerning the complex percussion parts of Igor
Stravinsky’s *Le Sacre du Printemps* (1913),¹ *L’Histoire du Soldat* (1918),² and the

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percussion-only section of his *Les Noces* (1923);\(^3\) of Darius Milhaud’s *La Création du Monde* (1923) and *Concerto pour batterie et petit orchestre* (1929).\(^4\) The scholarship has largely ignored orchestral compositions by Latin American composers, such as Roldán’s *Obertura sobre temas cubanos* (1925), which similar to *Les Noces*, features a percussion-only section.

In discussing the early compositions for percussion ensemble, scholars have focused on Edgard Varèse’s *Ionisation* (1931)\(^5\) and other percussion ensembles composed in the first half of the 20th century by North American composers such as Lou Harrison\(^6\) and John Cage.\(^7\) Latin American composers receive some mention in the scholarship, but there is a need for a concise, clear statement of their contributions. In the case of Roldán, scholars have especially marginalized or strongly criticized his achievements,\(^8\) and persistent errors and incorrect perceptions concerning the *Rítmicas* continue in even the most current scholarship. In addressing the criticisms of Roldán and presenting overlooked information concerning Ardévol, Chávez, and Ginastera, this


\(^{4}\) Alyssa Smith, “An Examination of Notation in Selected Repertoire for Multiple Percussion” (D.M.A. doc., The Ohio State University, 2005), 39-49.


document will outline reasons that these composers deserve acknowledgement for their significant contributions.

Scope and Limitations of Study

This study details the ways in which Latin American composers contributed to the development of the percussion ensemble between 1930 and 1964. The percussion ensemble compositions of four composers – Roldán, Ardévol, Chávez, and Ginastera – were chosen for analysis. These composers represent a chronological development from the first percussion ensemble works in 1930 to later works of the mid-20th century, and they represent three different geographical regions of Latin America – Cuba, Mexico, and Argentina. A detailed analysis of the use of percussion in the orchestral works of Latin American composers prior to 1930 and the continued contributions of Latin American composers to the percussion ensemble repertoire after 1964 are beyond the scope of this document.

Procedures and Methods Used

This project began with a search of all the published dissertations and research documents to determine the amount of research that had been done to date on the topic of Latin American percussion ensemble compositions. It was discovered that there was a definite need for more research in this area. The hypothesis that Latin American composers have made significant yet under-recognized contributions to the development of the percussion ensemble was formed.
The research process began with the selection of composers and compositions to be studied. The original intent was to select Latin American composers representing a chronology from 1930 to the present and several geographical areas of Latin America, including Spanish-speaking countries and Brazil, a Portuguese-speaking country. A search of scores and recordings was conducted, and it became evident that there were far too many percussion ensemble works by Latin American composers to be reasonably covered in a single study. The scope of this document was narrowed to cover the chronological period between 1930 to the mid-20th century and the Latin American composers who composed major percussion ensemble works during this period.

Once the composers and compositions had been selected, the scores for each composition were analyzed and a search for all available scholarly writings on the composers and compositions was conducted. Biographical information for each composer and historical information pertaining to the selected compositions were considered.

In the case of Ardévol, there was difficulty in obtaining scores. None of his three percussion ensemble compositions is published. The Fleischer Collection at the Free Library of Philadelphia holds copies of the manuscripts for Estudio and Suite, but they are non-circulating and can only be viewed on site in Philadelphia. The score for Preludio a 11 is not held by any known library, not even the archives of the Cuban National Library. Excerpts of the scores for Estudio and Suite were studied for this document, but no primary sources for Preludio a 11 were obtained.

Many of the sources researched for this study are Spanish language sources, and all translations of Spanish materials are by the author of this study. In some instances,
information from Spanish materials is paraphrased, and at other times, portions of the sources are directly quoted. When direct quotes from a Spanish source appear in this document, the translator is credited in the footnote.

**Document Organization**

This document is organized by composer and composition in chronological order. Each composer is assigned a chapter, beginning with Roldán (*Rítmicas*, 1930) and ending with Ginastera (*Cantata para América màgica*, 1960). Each chapter contains four subsections: biographical information about the composer, detail of the treatment the composer has received by current music scholarship, a description and analysis of the composer’s percussion ensemble works, and detail of the composer’s influence on percussion ensemble development.

In cases where a single composer has written percussion ensembles in different years, all of the composer’s percussion ensemble works are included in the chapter devoted to that composer. Thus, the Chávez chapter precedes the Ginastera chapter because Chávez’s *Toccata* (1942) precedes Ginastera’s *Cantata* (1960).

A discography of the compositions researched for this study is included at the end of this document. The discography contains all of the published recordings of the studied compositions. It is not a listing of all performances and does not include unpublished concert recordings that are privately held by university libraries.
CHAPTER 2

AMADEO ROLDÁN

Biography

Amadeo Roldán Gardes⁹ (1900-1939) is one of Cuba’s most celebrated musicians. The Cuban national theater – the Teatro Amadeo Roldán – and high school for the performing arts – the Escuela Amadeo Roldán – are named in his honor. He was a classically trained composer of considerable originality and brilliance, and he enjoyed a successful career as a violinist, conductor, and educator. Together with his contemporary, Alejandro García Caturla, Roldán fostered a dynamic form of Cuban musical nationalism that turned to local music traditions for inspiration.¹⁰ The notable Cuban journalist and arts critic Jesús Risquet Bueno writes that Roldán “was one of the most important creators, interpreters, and directors of symphonic music of our island.”¹¹

Roldán, a mulato of mixed-blood ancestry, was born in Paris while his parents were attending the Exposition Universelle of 1900. Roldán’s father, Moisés Roldán, was a Spanish merchant, and his mother, Albertina Gardes, was a Cuban mulata santiaguera.

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⁹ His full name includes his father’s family name, Roldán, and his mother’s family name, Gardes. In Hispanic-American cultures, full names include the father’s last name followed by the mother’s last name, but the mother’s name is optional. Roldán went by his father’s name rather than by his full name.


[mixed-blood faith healer]. Moisés and Albertina were married in Madrid, where Amadeo spent his infancy and childhood. Albertina, who was well educated, taught Amadeo at home and introduced him to music. Albertina played the piano and listened to the music of classical composers, especially Mozart, and to the music of her native Cuba. She enjoyed the danzas and contradanzas of the Cuban composers Manuel Saumell Robredo (1817 – 1870) and Ignacio Cervantes (1847 – 1905). She also sang the popular songs of the cocuyé oriental, a santiaguera religious tradition that originated in mulato and black communities in Santiago. Thanks to his mother, young Amadeo gained an appreciation for Western art music and the music of his homeland.12

Roldán entered the Madrid Conservatory at the age of 5, and at 15 won the conservatory’s first prize in violin and the highly competitive Sarasate Prize.13 He studied theory and composition with Conrado del Campo, and in 1917 became a founding member of the Orquesta Filarmónica de Madrid. In 1919, Roldán appeared as a violin soloist in recitals throughout Spain. Later that same year, at the age of 19, Roldán arrived in Cuba intent on pursuing his music career. He struggled financially during his first years in Cuba, performing wherever he could. He played violin in the small cabaret El Infierno [Hell] and in a small orchestra that accompanied silent films at the hotel Inglaterra [England].14

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13 The Sarasate Prize, named for the Spanish violin virtuoso Pablo Sarasate, is awarded annually at an international competition in Madrid.

In 1922, Roldán joined the Orquesta Sinfónica de la Habana [Havana Symphonic Orchestra] as first viola, and in 1923, he joined the newly formed Orquesta Filarmónica de la Habana [Havana Philharmonic Orchestra] as concertmaster. The founder of the Havana Philharmonic, Spanish maestro Pedro Sanjuán Nortes, was devoted to Cuban premieres of works by European composers such as Debussy and Ravel, and he was a skillful composer in his own right. His experience with Sanjuán and the Havana Philharmonic rounded out Roldán’s technical training.\footnote{Zoila Gómez, Amadeo Roldán (La Habana, Cuba: Editorial Arte y Literatura, 1977), 41-42.} In 1932, Roldán became music director and conductor of the Havana Philharmonic, a position he held until his untimely death at the age of 38. As director, Roldán championed contemporary music without slighting classical or Romantic masterworks. Under his direction, Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony was heard in Cuba for the first time with the collaboration of the Choral Society of Havana.\footnote{Alejo Carpentier, La música en Cuba (D.F., México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1946), 317.} Roldán led the Havana Philharmonic to become one of the most distinguished organizations in Latin America.\footnote{Gerard Béhague, Music in Latin America: An Introduction (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1979), 148.}

As an educator, Roldán began teaching violin at the Conservatorio Sicardó in 1920. From 1924 to 1932, he taught violin, viola, mandolin, guitar, theory, history, and composition at the Conservatorio Iranzo, where he became assistant director in 1929. In 1935, Roldán began teaching theory and composition at the Conservatorio Municipal de La Habana, which now bears his name. He later became director of the Conservatory and served in that position until 6 months before his death when he was forced to leave due to
illness. His students included Rafael Cabrera, who became professor of violin at the Conservatorio Nacional de Caracas in Venezuela and Rafael Druian, who received a degree from the Curtis Institute in Philadelphia. Roldán delivered several papers at conventions of musical societies, and he served as the leader of the West Indies section of the Pan American Association.¹⁸

Roldán also found time to raise a family. He was married to Rita Robaina in 1926, and they had three children. By all accounts, they were a happy family.¹⁹

Roldán’s early compositions were heavily influenced by the Impressionist movement. In 1923, Roldán composed his Fiestas galantes for voice and piano, based on poetry by Verlaine, and he began work on an opera titled Deirdre. Though the opera has clear similarities to the works of Debussy and Dukas, it also shows Roldán already leaning toward a certain rhythmic intensity, a “primitive violence that broke with Impressionist blandness.”²⁰

Two years later in 1925, Roldán had found his own style inspired by Cuban nationalism and the rhythms and instruments of Afro-Cuban music with his Obertura sobre temas cubanos [Overture on Cuban Themes]. The Cuban novelist Alejo Carpentier declared that the premier of the Obertura by the Havana Philharmonic constituted the most important event in Cuban musical history of the 20th Century.²¹ Roldán uniquely

¹⁸ Zoila Gómez, Amadeo Roldán (La Habana, Cuba: Editorial Arte y Literatura, 1977), 87-95, 104-105.
¹⁹ ibid., 56.
²¹ ibid., 310.
incorporated Cuban folkloric expression into a serious score, and in what was a sensational innovation for the time, the section that prepares the *Obertura*’s coda features only percussion, including several Afro-Cuban instruments. Roldán’s symphonic work of the following year, *Tres pequeños poemas* [Three Little Poems] (1926) was inspired by the rhythms and melodies of the *cocoyé* tradition. The noted conductor Nicoái Sokolof included *Tres pequeños poemas* on a 1928 concert of the Cleveland Orchestra.\(^\text{22}\)

Cuban instruments are also used in Roldán’s *Danza negra* (1928) for voice, 2 clarinets, 2 violas, bongos, maracas, and cowbell with lyrics based on the poetry of Puerto Rican poet Luis Palés Matos. As evidence of Roldán’s estimation by European musical circles of the time, *Danza negra* was performed on a program with Milhaud’s *Concerto for Percussion* and Varèse’s *Integrales* in a 1929 concert in Paris. The performance was conducted by the notable French composer/conductor Marius-François Gaillard and sung by the Cuban soprano Lydia de Rivera. The notable composers in Paris at the time, such as Varèse and Villa-Lobos, showed an interest in Roldán’s music.\(^\text{23}\)

Percussion instruments and Afro-Cuban rhythms are an integral part of what may be Roldán’s most celebrated work, the ballet *La rebambaramba* (1928). Worldwide performances of *La rebambaramba* include Orquesta Sinfónica de México in 1929, Straram Orchestra in Paris in 1931, the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra in 1932, the Hollywood Bowl Orchestra in California in 1933, and the Symphonic Orchestra of


\(^{23}\) ibid., 68-70.
Colombia in 1938. Based on a story by Alejo Carpentier, the ballet evokes the celebration of King’s Day by the common people of Havana, and includes a *contradanza*, a rhythmically unique *lucumí comparsa*, the *juego de culebra* [snake game], and a *comparsa ñáñiga* from the street music of festival celebrations. Another ballet based on a Carpentier story, *El milagro de Anaquillé* (1929), uses the *décima* and *zapateo*, a Cuban folk song and dance, and Abakuá initiation ceremonial music. These folk themes are mixed with advanced harmony and orchestration.

In 1930, Roldán turned his attention to chamber music compositions, beginning with the *Rítmicas*, a suite of six short pieces. The first four are scored for flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, horn, and piano, while the last two are for percussion. Roldán’s other major chamber works include *Curujey* (1931), for chorus, two pianos, and two percussion instruments and *Motivos de son* (1934), eight songs for voice and chamber ensemble, both based on texts by the Cuban poet Nicolás Guillén.

Roldán began suffering from a painful cancer in 1932 that became critical in 1937. The disease slowly deformed his body, but Roldán never stopped working. When he died at the age of 38, Roldán was sketching out future compositions and notating a series of songs from Cuba’s eastern provinces that were then unknown to most of his

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26 ibid., 149.
contemporaries. He remained devoted to composition and the support of his native Cuban music until his death in 1939.

**Treatment of Roldán in Music Scholarship**

*Rítmicas* No. 5 and No. 6 were completed in 1930 and are scored for only percussion instruments. No known works prior to the *Rítmicas* are so clearly stand-alone, percussion-only compositions. Yet, in the early half of the 20th century, the San Francisco art critic Alfred Frankenstein was the only voice to give credit to Roldán for his accomplishment, and few in current scholarship have joined Frankenstein. In their D.M.A. documents, Don Russell Baker and Don Nigel Parker briefly acknowledge Roldán as the composer of the first percussion ensemble. The musicologist Peter Manuel mentions in a footnote that “[a]lthough Edgar Varèse’s 1931 *Ionisation* is invariably cited as being the first serious piece for percussion ensemble, Roldán’s percussion pieces *Rítmicas V-VI* precede that work by a year.” No one has given a detailed challenge to the persistent incorrect perception that *Ionisation* was the first percussion ensemble composition.

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There are several possible reasons for the persistent misunderstanding surrounding the question of who composed the first percussion ensemble compositions. The scholarship may be influenced by ignorance of percussion literature, a lack of scholars willing to challenge incorrect information, a desire to champion the works of Edgard Varèse, and a Euro-centric world view that marginalizes the works of non-Euro-American composers.

While some scholars champion the *Rítmicas*, their lack of knowledge or interest in the percussion ensemble medium blinds them to Roldán’s achievement. Alejo Carpentier, who collaborated with Roldán on many occasions and was an enthusiastic supporter of Roldán’s music, mentions that *Rítmicas No. 5* and *No. 6* are scored for percussion only, but fails to recognize their place in the development of the percussion ensemble medium.31 The notable musicologist Gerard Béhague also provides a positive analysis of the *Rítmicas*, mentioning that the last two are “exclusive for typical Cuban percussion instruments,” but never using the words “first” or “percussion ensemble.”32

Many scholars recognize that there may be inaccuracies concerning Roldán in the accepted history of percussion ensemble development, but they do not challenge these inaccuracies. In his well-known history of the percussion ensemble, Larry Dean Vanlandingham writes that *Rítmicas No. 5* and *No. 6* “are possibly the earliest extant works written for an ensemble of percussion instruments. It is believed by many

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historians that Edgar [sic] Varèse’s \textit{Ionisation} (1931) was the first ensemble.”\textsuperscript{33} In his thesis, Jack W. Smith writes that the \textit{Rítmicas} are “possibly” the earliest works for percussion ensemble.\textsuperscript{34} Karl Reiss states in his dissertation that there is “a lack of consensus as to who composed the first percussion ensemble” and that “[w]hy Roldán’s \textit{Rítmicas} Numbers Five and Six [sic] (1930) are not generally recognized as the first writing for percussion ensemble is unclear,”\textsuperscript{35} but he goes no further in exploring the issue.

Other sources ignore the questions concerning who composed the first percussion ensemble or do not include Roldán in the discussion. The discussion of percussion ensemble development in the “percussion” entry of the renowned \textit{New Grove Dictionary} omits Roldán entirely.\textsuperscript{36} The \textit{Dictionary}’s biographical entry for Roldán subtly slights his percussion ensemble achievement, saying, “Other major compositions include \textit{Rítmicas V} and \textit{VI} (1930), which, with Varèse’s \textit{Ionisation}, were among the first Western works for percussion ensemble.”\textsuperscript{37} Not only does the \textit{Dictionary} fail to specifically mention that the \textit{Rítmicas} preceded \textit{Ionisation}, but it also fails to list the date of


\textsuperscript{34} Jack W. Smith, “The Development of the Percussion Ensemble as Influenced by Symphonic Repertoire” (M.A. thes., San Jose State University, 1980), 45.


composition for *Ionisation*, so it is impossible to tell from the entry which composition was composed first.

Some scholars erroneously put forward other compositions as the first percussion ensemble. John Boudler suggests in the introduction of his dissertation that the second movement of Alexander Tcherepnin’s *First Symphony* is the first concert work for percussion ensemble.\(^{38}\) The second movement of Tcherepnin’s symphony does feature the percussion section, but it is not a stand-alone composition, and it is not scored solely for percussion. It includes strings tapping the bodies of their instruments with reverse bow.\(^ {39}\)

In his D.M.A. document, Gregory Patrick Byrne puts forward a discussion of whether Varèse’s *Ionisation* (1931) or George Antheil’s *Ballet Mécanique* (1924) is the first percussion ensemble. Byrne writes:

> Because Antheil treated the piano percussively, with a mechanistic style and exuberant percussion, many believe *Ballet Mecanique* [sic] to be the first percussion ensemble piece of Western art. Those opposing this view believe Antheil’s piano writing is too melodic to fall in the percussion category. Opponents believe Varèse’s *Ionisation* is the first work of Western art music scored solely for percussion instruments. *Ionisation* requires only one piano (with 40 other percussion instruments) playing a no-melodic passage for just a few measures.\(^ {40}\)

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\(^{38}\) Boudler also incorrectly identifies the percussion movements of the *Rítmicas* as movements IV and V instead of V and VI.  

\(^{39}\) The second movement of Tcherepnin’s *First Symphony* is available as a separate publication from the complete symphony for ensembles that wish to perform only the percussion parts. See: Alexander Tcherepnin, *Percussion Movement from Symphony No. 1*, Bryn Mawr, PA: Theodore Presser, 1929, 1973.

\(^{40}\) Gregory Patrick Byrne, “Musical and Cultural Influences that Contributed to the Evolution of the Percussion Ensemble in Western Art Music” (D.M.A. doc., University of Alabama, 1999), 38.
This discussion of the “melodic” nature of the piano parts is irrelevant to the determination of what composition is the first percussion ensemble. In the case of Ionisation, the non-melodic nature of the piano part does not change the fact that Ionisation was composed after the Rítmicas. This fact, completely ignored by those participating in the argument mentioned by Byrne, precludes Ionisation from being the first percussion ensemble.

Participants in the above argument have failed to consider another essential piece of information that disqualifies Ballet Mécanique from being placed in the percussion ensemble category and thus removing it from consideration as the first percussion ensemble. While discussing the rhythmic and melodic quality of the piano parts, they fail to consider that Ballet Mécanique calls for 16 player pianos (later versions call for eight pianos and a player piano or four pianos). \(^{41}\) It is not the rhythmic or tonal quality of the piano parts that excludes Ballet Mécanique from consideration as a percussion ensemble. Ballet Mécanique is not a percussion ensemble because there are 16 piano parts. In writing his chamber music score to accompany the silent film Ballet Mécanique, Antheil clearly replaced the strings and winds of a pit orchestra with several pianos, giving the pianos the material that would have been played by the strings and winds. The piano has never been considered a member of the percussion section of orchestral instruments, and a large group of pianos, no matter how dissonant or rhythmic the parts, does not constitute what has been traditionally considered to be percussion writing. In their widely accepted and influential attempt to classify the various orchestral instruments in 1914,

Hornbostel and Sachs listed the piano as a stringed instrument, or chordophone, under the subcategory “struck board.” While acknowledging the percussive nature of the piano with the “struck” subcategory, Hornbostel and Sachs gave priority to the piano’s string qualities. The reluctance on the part of Hornbostel and Sachs to place the piano in the percussion classification continues to this day. In modern performance practice, the piano is considered to be of such importance that it has its own category. When programs list the performers for orchestral compositions that include the piano as part of the orchestra, the piano is listed in a separate category and not as part of the string or percussion sections. Music programs at institutions of higher learning throughout the world give the piano its own administrative area apart from the other orchestral instruments, and university percussion programs do not teach piano. In modern terminology, a pianist is a performer who specifically plays the piano and is not expected to have proficiency on other instruments. The variety of instruments that a percussionist is expected to play proficiently does not include the piano. The instrumentation for Ballet Mécanique is a modified pit orchestra with a vastly augmented and creatively used percussion section, making it a groundbreaking work that did much to increase awareness of the possibilities of percussion, but it is not a percussion ensemble.

Some scholars, still unwilling to credit Roldán for his accomplishment even after finally being forced to admit that the Rítmicas chronologically come first, turn to direct criticism against Roldán. These criticisms, both subtle and overt, show prejudices against

Roldán’s Afro-Cuban influences. While acknowledging that the writing of a percussion ensemble in 1930 was an innovation, Vanlandingham subtly criticizes Roldán by writing that “there was little revolutionary about the instrumentation of Ritmica [sic] No. 5. Only two of the instruments employed, the timpani and bass drum, were commonly used in the orchestra, but all of the others were indigenous to Latin American music.”43 These sentiments are echoed by Jack W. Smith.44 Vanlandingham and Smith imply that the instrumentation of the Ritmicas is not revolutionary because it includes mostly indigenous Latin American instruments and only two orchestral ones. In creating the first compositions for percussion ensemble, Roldán introduced several instruments that were little known to the Western world at the time. It is difficult to see how the use of familiar orchestral instruments already known to the Western world would somehow be more “revolutionary” than introducing lesser-known Latin American instruments. In a similar criticism, Matthew George makes the implication in his D.M.A. document that Roldán’s use of rhythm is inferior, writing that the rhythms in the Ritmicas “are not difficult.”45 Analysis of the Ritmicas’ complex rhythms later in this document will demonstrate that this charge is unfounded. These are clear examples of judgments that are influenced by a


44 Jack W. Smith, “The Development of the Percussion Ensemble as Influenced by Symphonic Repertoire” (M.A. thes., San Jose State University, 1980), 45.

prejudice that classical European instruments and rhythms are somehow superior to indigenous Latin American ones.

This prejudice is especially evident in the writings of certain scholars who champion the works of Edgard Varèse over those of Roldán. A common criticism is to suggest that even though the *Rítmicas* were composed first, they are inferior to Varèse’s *Ionisation* because of their “folkloric” nature. The French scholar Georges Charbonnier writes that “[The *Rítmicas*] are quite primitive pieces on folkloric rhythms. *Ionisation* is of course the first piece of pure music for solo percussion born in the West and not referring to any folklore.”

Odile Vivier, one of Varèse’s biographers, writes that “the *Concerto for Percussion and Orchestra* by Milhaud was written in the year 1930, the same year in which Amadeo Roldán produced his purely folkloric *Rítmicas*; in the meantime, Varèse had been working for months on *Ionisation*.”

The French scholar Fernand Ouellette gives a particularly lengthy criticism. He begins by assailing the Afro-Cuban influence and instrumentation of the *Rítmicas* as inferior. He writes:

But is [*Ionisation*] the first work to employ only percussive instruments, as was once thought? Alfred Frankenstein, writing of Amadeo Roldán’s [sic] *Rítmicas* [sic], states that these pieces were composed in 1930, and therefore claims that Roldan [sic], not Varèse, was the first composer to use only percussion in a work. Whether this is so or not, the Roldan [sic] work is, of course, a very slight one, based on Cuban folk rhythms, and scored for only very few instruments.

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48 Note that Ouellette spells Varèse’s name correctly, but fails to do so for Roldán. This misspelling of Roldán’s name in the same passage containing correct spellings for other names derived from languages that require accents is prevalent throughout the body of scholarship.
No. 6 of the series, for example, is based on a rhumba [sic] rhythm. So that one can say that *Ionisation* is, in any case, the first Western work for percussion alone which has no basis in folklore.\footnote{Fernand Ouellette, *Edgard Varèse*, trans. Derek Coltman (New York: Da Capo Press, 1981), 107-108.}

Ouellette continues by offering the argument that the question of who was first is really immaterial anyway because percussion music existed in other parts of the world centuries before either Roldán or Varèse was born. Ouellette writes, “Needless to say, long before either Roldán [sic] or Varèse, there were compositions for percussion alone in China, in India, in Japan, or in Java. Balinese music is percussion music, after all….

This is why, when Varèse conceived a work for percussion instruments alone, he was returning to an age-old tradition.”\footnote{ibid.} In his list of world locations with percussion music, Ouellette omits Africa and Latin America. Varèse was aware of and influenced by Asian music traditions, but either unknown or ignored by Ouellette, Varèse showed a great interest in Afro-American music traditions.\footnote{Graciela Paraskevaidis, “Edgard Varèse y su relación con músicos e intelectuales latinoamericanos de su tiempo: Algunas historias en Redondo,” *Revista musical chilena* 56, no. 198 (December 2002): 7-20. Accessed at http://www.latinomerica-musica.net/compositores/varese/paras-es.html.}

Ouellette finishes his argument by praising *Ionisation* as a “universal” masterpiece that combines world influences with skillfully used Western compositional techniques,\footnote{Fernand Ouellette, *Edgard Varèse*, trans. Derek Coltman (New York: Da Capo Press, 1981), 107-108.} the same thing for which Roldán is condemned.
Description and Analysis

Rítmica No. 5

*Rítmica No. 5* (1930) is based on the Cuban *son* (pronounced “sewn”) with a *montuno* section. This is evident in the overall form, instrumentation, and rhythmic complexity of the work. The Cuban *son* originated as a rural song and dance style, and it was performed in a duple meter at a moderate to rapid tempo. The tempo marking for *Rítmica No. 5* is “In the tempo of a son,” and all of the instruments except for the timpani are traditional Cuban instruments.

The overall structure of *Rítmica No. 5* is in symmetrical two-part form. The composition is 109 measures in length and takes approximately 2 minutes 30 seconds to perform. The *son* section is from measures 1 to 50, and the *montuno* section is from measures 51 to the end. Both sections are of similar lengths, and there are introduction (measures 1-10) and coda (measures 95-109) sections of similar lengths that also round out the symmetrical form. The majority of *No. 5* is in 2/4 meter with interjections of 3/8 or 2/8 meters. The coda is in 6/8.

*Rítmica No. 5* is scored for nine performers who play the following:

I. Clave 1 (muy aguda) [pair, very high pitched]
   Clave 4 (muy grave) [pair, very low pitched]
II. Cenerros [cowbells, 2 distinct pitches]
   Clave 3 (grave) [pair, low pitched]
III. Maracas [1 pair]
IV. Quijada [jawbone]
   Clave 2 (aguda) [pair, high pitched]
   Güiro
V. Bongo [1 set, 2 distinct pitches]

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VI. Timbales cubanos [1 set, 2 distinct pitches]
VII. Timbales de orquesta [timpani, 3 drums]
VIII. Bombo [large double-headed drum]
IX. Marímbula \[^\text{54}\] [wooden box with pitched metal plates that are struck with the fingers]

The score divides the instruments into three groups, with the idiophones, membranophones, and the marímbula on their own staves.

The claves, cowbells, maracas, güiro, bongos, and timbales have become well-recognized percussion instruments and should be familiar and readily available to any percussion ensemble. If a quijada, bombo, or marímbula are not available, performers may substitute a vibra-slap for the quijada and a bass drum for the bombo. The marímbula part may be played by a variety of substitutes, including log drums, bass marimba, pizzicato string bass, or a combination of these instruments.

Roldán makes use of the full range of timbrel possibilities for each instrument and provides practical notation and methods for the creation of these sounds. Different note heads in the bongo, timbale, bombo, and timpani parts indicate different performance methods: playing on the edge of the head, playing in the natural position of the head, and playing in the center of the head. The bongos are also asked at times to rub the head with the index and middle fingers from the edge toward the center of the head. Easily understood note heads and roll notation on the note stems indicate when the güiro, maracas, and quijada are to be played rhythmically or shaken. Paired instruments, such as the maracas, timbales, and bongos, are notated as separate pitches on the same staff.

\[^\text{54}\] “Marímbula,” “bombo,” “bongo,” and “Rítmica” are misspelled in the 1967 score published by Southern Music. They appear here with their correct spellings.
In general, the bongos and timbales have a soloistic role while the other instruments have a variety of fixed rhythms in complex patterns that create an accompaniment texture. One of the main rhythmic figures is the *son clave* pattern. The piece begins with fragments of the *clave* rhythm being passed between instruments, and fragments appear throughout the work. The rhythm first appears in its complete form in the clave I part (top line of the score) in measures 35 and 36, and it then appears in clave parts II, III, and IV.

Figure 1. *Rítmica No. 5*, measures 30-45. © Copyright 1967 Southern Music Publishing Co., Inc. International Copyright Secured. Used by Permission.
The *montuno* section is characterized by a repeating four-measure phrase in the marímbula. This bass line provides a steady underpinning for the overlapping textures and solo lines that appear in the other instruments. Figure 2 demonstrates the marímbula bass line (bottom line of the score) at the beginning of the *montuno* section that starts in measure 51.

Figure 2. *Rítmica No. 5*, measures 46-61. © Copyright 1967 Southern Music Publishing Co., Inc. International Copyright Secured. Used by Permission.
**Rítmica No. 6**

*Rítmica No. 6* is “in the tempo of a rumba.” It is approximately 91 measures and two minutes in length, requires the same number of performers as *Rítmica No. 5*, and the instrumentation is nearly identical. The only difference is that No. 6 has two sets of claves (aguda and grave) rather than the four sets of No. 5. The score for No. 6 contains the exact same notation and performance directions as No. 5.

The Cuban *rumba* is highly improvisational. Fixed rhythms associated with the *rumba*, including the *son clave*, interact in complex relationships to form varying accompaniment. At times, some instruments, such as the timbales, will take a soloistic nature and play against the accompaniment figures.

*Rítmica No. 6* begins with a variant of the *clave* pattern seen earlier in *Rítmica No. 5*. Individual notes that are passed from instrument to instrument form a repeating composite pattern that is two measures in length. The first measure of the composite rhythm is the exact first half of the *clave* pattern. The second measure of the composite pattern varies slightly from the *clave* rhythm, with notes on beats 1 and 2 instead of the and of 1 and beat 2. Figure 3 demonstrates how individual notes from the composite rhythm are passed between the instruments of the ensemble.

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The meter is more varied in No. 6, with continuous changes between duple meters (usually 2/4) and odd meters, including 3/8 and 5/8. The rhythms also increase in complexity. As shown in figure 4, the bongos and timbales have quarter-note triplet rhythms against duple rhythms in the other instruments, and the triplet rhythms cross bar lines.

Figure 5 demonstrates how the bongos are given quintuplet eighth-note rhythms that go against the rhythms of the other instruments.

Figure 5. *Rítmica No. 6*, measures 41-45. © Copyright 1967 Southern Music Publishing Co., Inc. International Copyright Secured. Used by Permission.
As shown in figure 6, there is another example of polyrhythmic relationships. In this example, septuplet rhythms are set against duple rhythms. The septuplets begin in the bongo part in measure 81.

When the complex interactions between rhythms and timbres are executed correctly, the Rítmicas sparkle with a lively intensity. Rítmicas No.5 and No. 6 are masterful examples of percussion writing. They deserve their place as standards of the percussion ensemble genre not only because they are the first percussion ensemble compositions, but also because they represent percussion writing at its best.
Roldán’s Influence on Percussion Ensemble Development

The slogan of the Afro-Cuban school of musicians was “Abajo la lira! Viva el bongo!” [Down with the lyre! Long live the bongo!]. This interest in championing the native percussion instruments and rhythms of Cuba became an important voice in the Pan American Association of Composers that was active in the first half of the 20th century. As president of the West Indies section of the Association, Roldán worked closely with other Association members, including several who figure prominently in the early development of the percussion ensemble – Edgard Varèse, Henry Cowell, Lou Harrison, and John Cage.

Though he was a string player by training, Roldán was familiar with percussion instruments and became adept at their orchestration, notation, and performance. As evidence of his performance capabilities, Roldán played the Chinese blocks part in a 1933 performance of Ionisation in Havana. Roldán was the first composer to notate the rhythms of Cuban percussion instruments with precision, revealing all of their technical possibilities and obtainable sounds. Cuban and foreign composers have since followed Roldán’s method of transcription. Without any of the vitriol that his later supporters displayed toward Roldán, Varèse asserted in 1931 that Roldán was “the preeminent composer you have at the present time. We cannot but fully trust in a musician who

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orchestrates with so few outer influences, who handles percussion with amazing skill and who gives such proofs of temperament."59

The French-American composer Edgard Varèse was significantly influenced by the native percussion music of Latin America. He received an introduction to Latin American percussion instruments from Heitor Villa-Lobos, whom he visited often at his apartment to participate in improvisation sessions.60 Roldán proved to be especially influential as Varèse continued his study of Latin American music.

A letter that Roldán wrote to Varèse demonstrates that Roldán was considerably influential while Varèse was composing Ionisation, which was completed on November 13, 1931. The letter states:

Havana, February 3, 1931 [9 months before Ionisation was completed]

Dear friend [Varèse]:

I am sending you enclosed the score and parts of the new orchestration for three numbers from “Motivos de son.”

I am also sending you today an express mailing with a güiro, a pair of maracas, two claves and a cowbell.

Sincerely yours,

Amadeo Roldán61

59 Zoila Gómez, Amadeo Roldán (La Habana, Cuba: Editorial Arte y Literatura, 1977), 85. Translated by John Hall.


The letter makes clear that Varèse was aware of Roldán’s method of notation and orchestration, and that Varèse had access to Cuban instruments through his association with Roldán.

It is reasonable to conclude that Varèse’s friendship and association with Roldán influenced the orchestration of *Ionisation*. The Cuban instruments found in the completed *Ionisation* include cencerros (cowbells), güíro, claves, maracas, and bongos. The following examples demonstrate striking similarities in the notation and rhythmic contours of the maracas parts found in *Ionisation* and *Ritmica No. 5*.

![Figure 7. Ritmica No. 5, measures 17-21, maracas. © Copyright 1967 Southern Music Publishing Co., Inc. International Copyright Secured. Used by Permission.](image)

![Figure 8. Ionisation, rehearsal 8, measures 2-4, maracas. © Copyright 2000 Universal Music Publishing Ricordi. All rights reserved. Used by Permission.](image)

Roldán also influenced the American composer Henry Cowell. Cowell visited Cuba in 1929 as the soloist in a performance of his *Piano Concerto* in Havana, and he became familiar with the music of Roldán, Alejandro Caturla, and José Ardévol. In a 1933 letter addressed to Cowell, Roldán states that the use of native instruments is not simply an easy way to achieve local color. Though with pride Roldán notes that Afro-
Cuban instruments like the güiro and clave have unique timbres and rhythmic crispness that can not be reproduced by any European instruments, he also states that “the rhythm of a güiro should not always evoke the rumba nor the sound of a banjo have to remind of us of jazz.”⁶² Roldán wanted the unique sounds of Afro-Cuban instruments to be added to the palette of sounds available to all composers. Cowell’s landmark percussion ensemble composition *Ostinato Pianissimo* (1934), which was completed one year after Roldán’s letter, calls for güiro and bongos within an eclectic instrumentation that includes sounds from around the world.⁶³

American composer Lou Harrison was another notable percussion composer who was influenced by Roldán. Harrison stated in an interview that “Through Henry Cowell, I think, most Americans did have some conception of what was going on in Cuba. Because they were very active, and those three composers [Roldán, Catural, and Ardévol] were well known here. And I think fairly influential, too.” In the same interview, Harrison said, “The *Rítmicas* are marvelous.”⁶⁴

American composer John Cage was also quite familiar with Roldán’s works. Cage conducted the *Rítmicas* in two important concerts of the 1940s. While Cage and Harrison were serving as instructors during the 1940 summer session at Mills College, they put on a percussion concert that included *Rítmicas No. 5* and *No. 6*. The concert received a favorable review from *Time* magazine. In 1943, Cage conducted a League of Composers

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concert at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City that received immediate notoriety among critics and established Cage as a leading exponent of experimental music. The concert featured percussion works by Cage, Cowell, Harrison, Ardévol, and Roldán’s *Rítmicas*.  

The percussion ensemble music of John Cage is well known for its complex rhythms, especially the use of cross rhythms between overlapping triplet, quadruplet, quintuplet, sextuplet, and septuplet rhythms. Such elements appear in the *Rítmicas* years before Cage had composed his first percussion ensemble. Cage also used Afro-Cuban instruments extensively in his compositions. One of Cage’s most popular works, *Third Construction* (1941), which was composed one year after he performed Roldán’s music at the Mills College concerts, calls for claves, maracas, cowbells, and quiijada (jawbone).  

The American West Coast composer Gerald Strang used maracas in his 1935 composition *Percussion Music for Three Players*. John Cage conducted Strang’s piece on a concert circa 1938. Another West Coast composer, William Russell, references Cuban musical styles and uses Cuban instruments in his *Percussion Studies in Cuban Rhythms* (1939). The instrumentation includes bongos, cencerros (cowbells), güiro, maracas, claves, quiijada (jawbone), and marimbula. It was premiered in 1939 with John Cage conducting.  

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66 ibid., 76.

67 ibid., 74.
When Paul Price started the first university program of percussion instruction at the University of Illinois in the 1950s, the percussion ensemble’s repertoire included Roldán’s *Rítmicas* along with standard works by Harrison, Cage, Strang, and others. *Rítmicas No. 5* and *No. 6* were also recorded by the University of Illinois Percussion Ensemble. In the 1960s and 1970s, the *Rítmicas* were among the most often performed works for percussion ensemble. In a survey of percussion ensemble performances of the late 1970s, *Rítmica No. 5* is 18 and *Rítmica No. 6* is 39 on the list of most often performed percussion ensemble compositions. More recently, the *Rítmicas* have continued to enjoy popular performances, including a performance of *No. 5* and *No. 6* by The Ohio State University Percussion Ensemble in a Showcase performance at the Percussive Arts Society International Convention in 2005.

The evidence of Roldán’s influence on percussion ensemble development is substantial. The scholars, such as Fernand Ouellette, who champion *Ionisation* while dismissing the *Rítmicas* might be surprised to learn that many of the Latin American elements for which they dismiss the *Rítmicas* are found in *Ionisation*. Elements of Roldán’s notation, rhythm, and instrumentation are used in *Ionisation* as well as other early percussion ensemble works of Henry Cowell, Lou Harrison, and John Cage. The continued performance and recording of the *Rítmicas* in more recent times indicates that

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Roldán’s influence is likely to endure as the percussion ensemble medium continues to evolve.
CHAPTER 3

JOSÉ ARDÉVOL

Biography

José Ardévol (1911-1981) is considered to be the leader of modern Cuban composition. After the deaths of Roldán and Alejandro García Caturla, Ardévol led the Cuban art-music scene in the 1940s and 1950s. Ardévol was a prolific composer and produced over 90 works in all genres except opera. As a composer, conductor, educator, and administrator, Ardévol had a tremendous influence on Cuban musical development.

Ardévol was born in Barcelona, Spain, to a musical family. He studied piano, conducting, and composition with his father, Fernando Ardévol, and he appeared in concert as a pianist at a young age. He later studied liberal arts and conducting at the University of Barcelona, where he was a student of the German conductor Hermann Scherchen. Ardévol settled in Havana in 1930 at the age of 19, where he quickly became a prominent figure in Cuban musical life.


71 ibid., 56, 257.

72 Robert Falvo, “Uncovering a Historical Treasure: José Ardévol’s ‘Study in the Form of a Prelude and Fugue’ (1933),” Percussive Notes 37, no. 6 (December 1999): 54.
As an educator, Ardévol taught privately and at many institutions, including the Havana Conservatory, the University of Havana, the University of the Orient, the Amadeo Roldán Conservatory, and the National School of Music. In 1942, he founded the Grupo de Renovación Musical, a school of composers dedicated to furthering the enhancement of compositional techniques. He wrote two books – *Música y revolución* (1964) and *Introducción a Cuba: la música* (1969), and he edited the music journal *Revolución*.

Ardévol was a successful conductor. He founded the Orquesta de Cámara de La Habana [Chamber Orchestra of Havana] in 1934, which he directed for 18 years. During those 18 years, the Havana Chamber Orchestra performed every available chamber music composition by a Cuban composer. From 1959 to 1965, Ardévol also conducted the orchestras of the Ministry of Education Radio Network.

Ardévol held many administrative positions and played a significant role in reorganizing the musical establishment during the Cuban Revolution. From 1958 to 1959, he directed the National Music committee, and in 1965 he was named National Director of Music. Under Ardévol’s direction, Cuba enjoyed artistic freedom, and new musical thought flourished. Like Roldán, Ardévol was also a musical ambassador who looked beyond the boundaries of his own country. He was an influential member of the Pan

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73 Robert Falvo, “Uncovering a Historical Treasure: José Ardévol’s ‘Study in the Form of a Prelude and Fugue’ (1933),” *Percussive Notes* 37, no. 6 (December 1999): 54.


American Association of Composers and worked closely with the other members of the Association.  

Ardévol’s early compositions for chamber and piano music show diverse European influences, from Scarlatti to Debussy to Stravinsky. After settling in Havana, Ardévol experimented with an atonal style. In 1936, Ardévol abandoned atonality and pursued a neo-classical style infused with rhythmic elements from Cuba and Spain. This style dominated his works throughout the 1930s and 1940s. His *Música de cámara*, for flute, clarinet, bassoon, trumpet, violin, and cello in five short movements is a well-known work from this period. In his final years, Ardévol began to show a renewed interest in atonal techniques and serialism.

Though he was a pianist by training, Ardévol was familiar with the native percussion music of Cuba. He composed three pieces for percussion ensemble between the years 1933 and 1942 – some of the earliest percussion ensembles of the newly developing genre – that were heavily influenced by the instruments and rhythms of Afro-Cuban music. These percussion ensemble compositions include *Estudio en forma de preludio y fuga* (1933), *Suite para instrumentos de percusión* (1934), and *Preludio a 11* (1942).

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Treatment of Ardévol in Music Scholarship

Though highly regarded in Cuba, Ardévol has not received much attention from outside his adopted country. There is little written about his percussion music in the current body of scholarship, but what has been written is generally neutral or positive. Richard Kent Levan briefly mentions Ardévol and the Estudio en forma de preludio y fuga and Suite para instrumentos de percusión in his summary of percussion ensemble history.78 Don Russell Baker also briefly mentions Ardévol, the Estudio, and the Suite in his summary.79 Robert Falvo gives the Estudio a detailed analysis in a 1999 Percussive Notes article.80

One possible reason for the lack of attention paid to Ardévol’s percussion compositions might be the difficulty in obtaining scores for study or performance. The scores for all three of Ardévol’s percussion compositions are unpublished. The only library outside of Cuba that maintains copies of the manuscripts for Estudio and Suite – the Free Library of Philadelphia – does not make the scores available for circulation, and no known library holds the score for Preludio a 11.

80 Robert Falvo, “Uncovering a Historical Treasure: José Ardévol’s ‘Study in the Form of a Prelude and Fugue’ (1933),” Percussive Notes 37, no. 6 (December 1999): 54-57.
Description and Analysis

*Estudio en forma de preludio y fuga*

*Estudio* (1933) is scored for the largest number of performers of any of the early percussion ensembles. The complete title of the work is *Estudio en forma de preludio y fuga* para 37 instrumentos de percusión, fricción y silbido [Study in the form of a Prelude and Fugue for 37 instruments of percussion, friction and ringing or whistling]. The Spanish term “silbido” refers to both ringing and whistling. *Estudio* requires 31 performers to play the 35 percussion instruments and two pianos. As the title indicates, the many percussion instruments include instruments that are struck (*percusión*), instruments that are rubbed (*fricción*), and instruments that ring or whistle (*silbido*). There are also Afro-Cuban, traditional orchestral, and sound effect instruments. Afro-Cuban instruments include claves, güiros, maracas, bongos, cowbells, and African drums. Orchestral instruments include crash and suspended cymbals, triangle, gong, tam-tam, small military drum, snare drums, timpani, and bass drums. Sound effects instruments include police whistle, sirens, whips, anvils, and hand claps.

The score is organized into four categories from top to bottom: hand percussion, metal percussion, membranophones (skin head instruments), and pianos. The unpublished score is in manuscript version only and can be difficult to read. The parts are legible, but they contain some rhythmic errors. The parts were hand copied during the Depression with money from the Works Progress Administration.81

81 Robert Falvo, “Uncovering a Historical Treasure: José Ardévol’s ‘Study in the Form of a Prelude and Fugue,’” *Percussive Notes* 37, no. 6 (December 1999): 57.
Estudio is divided into two movements. The first, "Preludio," is marked lento and requires approximately three minutes to perform. It is in sonata form, with an exposition (measures 1-8), development (measures 9-35), and a recapitulation (measures 36-39). The time signatures are also standard, including 3/4, 4/4, 5/8, 3/8, and 2/4, with the majority of the movement being in 3/4. The rhythms, however, are complex. Duple, triplet, quintuplet, sextuplet, and septuplet rhythms all occur simultaneously. The final seven measures of the first movement, shown in figure 9, demonstrate this rhythmic complexity.


The second movement, "Fuga," is marked allegro, and is about 5 minutes 30 seconds in length. The structure is in fugue form, though the subject is rhythmic rather than pitched. The subject is introduced in the first measure by the snare drum. In measure
7, subject I is restated in other instruments, including African drum 1 and small timpano, while the snare drum plays an accompaniment figure. This pattern continues, with the subject appearing in a new instrument while the previous instruments begin to play accompaniment figures. The second development of subject I begins in measure 57, and subject II appears in measure 76. Subject I appears in counterpoint with subject II beginning in measure 89. Subject III is introduced in measure 106. Measures 141-146 provide a climactic conclusion. Most of the movement is in duple meter (6/8 and 2/4), with all three subjects appearing in 6/8. Irregular meters (3/4 and 5/8) appear in transition sections.

**Suite para 30 instrumentos de percusión, fricción y silbido**

Suite (1934) is a three movement work, with movements marked “allegro,” “adagio,” and “Fuga: allegro.” It requires 14 performers. Like the Estudio, it calls for Cuban instruments such as claves, maracas, güiros, and bongos, as well as orchestral instruments such as snare drum, bass drum, and cymbals. It also calls for sirens, bells, clapping hands, police whistle, and tambor Africano [African drum]. The Suite is approximately 6 minutes 30 seconds in length.

**Preludio a 11**

Preludio a 11 was commissioned by John Cage. Cage wrote a letter to Ardévol dated October 26, 1942, requesting that Ardévol send him a new piece for percussion to be performed at his Museum of Modern Art percussion concert in New York. Cage
explained in the letter that while he was fond of Ardévol’s *Estudio* and *Suite*, he could not perform either of them at the concert because they require sirens, which were prohibited during the war. Cage also asked that the new piece require no more than 11 performers.\(^{82}\)

Ardévol obliged Cage by sending him his *Preludio a 11* [*Prelude to 11*] (1942) scored for 11 performers. The instrumentation calls for several Afro-Cuban instruments, including claves, güiro, maracas, bongos, and African drum, as well as orchestral instruments such as triangle, anvil, cymbals, snare drum, and bass drum. There is also a piano part.\(^{83}\)

**Ardévol’s Influence on Percussion Ensemble Development**

Ardévol composed three compositions for percussion ensemble at a time when the genre was newly developing. Several composers who were important to the further development of the genre, including Cowell, Harrison, and Cage, were influenced by Ardévol’s music. They worked closely with him as members of the Pan American Association and performed his music in the United States. Ardévol’s influence helped spread awareness of Cuban rhythms and instrumentation, and Cuban elements are present in the later works of many percussion ensemble composers.

\(^{82}\) Clara Díaz, *José Ardévol: Correspondencia cruzada* (La Habana, Cuba: Editorial Letras Cubanas, 2004), 72-73.

John Cage conducted Ardévol’s percussion compositions on several occasions. *Estudio en forma de preludio y fuga* and *Suite para instrumentos de percusión* received premieres under Cage’s direction at Mills College in 1940.\(^{84}\) *Preludio a 11* was also premiered by Cage, which he conducted at the previously mentioned 1943 League of Composers concert in New York that received widespread media attention and established Cage as a leading proponent of experimental music.\(^{85}\)

Henry Cowell became familiar with Ardévol’s music during his trip to Cuba, and as previously mentioned, Cuban influences are evident in Cowell’s early percussion works, such as his *Ostinato Pianissimo*. In a letter dated May 22, 1933, Cowell wrote to Ardévol requesting that he send him copies of his music.\(^{86}\) Lou Harrison, who studied with Cowell, was a great admirer of Ardévol’s music. According to Harrison, it was Cowell who introduced him to the idea of writing for percussion, and “through Henry Cowell, I think, most Americans did have some conception of what was going on in Cuba.”\(^{87}\) Cuba was a center for modern music development in the early 20th century, and many works were recorded and distributed in the U.S. by Columbia Records.


this time, Ardévol, Roldán, and Caturla were the leading and most influential Cuban composers.  

Ardévol’s percussion compositions were performed and well known by influential composers during the crucial early years of percussion ensemble development, but the number of performances decreased significantly after the 1940s. Though the number of performances decreased, performances did continue. Estudio was performed by the University of Illinois Percussion Ensemble in the 1960s and 1970s, and it was performed at least three times in the 1990s by members of the Appalachian State University and UNC-Asheville percussion ensembles. More recently, Estudio was performed at the Percussive Arts Society International Convention in 2002 by members of the University of Akron Percussion Ensemble, Cincinnati College Conservatory of Music Percussion Ensemble, and the Oberlin Percussion Group. Current performances of Ardévol’s percussion ensembles are hindered by the difficulty in obtaining scores and parts. It is quite possible that if Ardévol’s percussion music were to be published that performances would increase significantly.

Though the level of Ardévol’s continued influence may be in doubt due to less frequent performances of his percussion compositions, his influence on other composers of early percussion works is substantial and well documented. Henry Cowell, Lou

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89 ibid.

90 Robert Falvo, “Uncovering a Historical Treasure: José Ardévol’s ‘Study in the Form of a Prelude and Fugue’ (1933),” Percussive Notes 37, no. 6 (December 1999): 57.

91 Percussive Arts Society International Convention, Schedule of Events (Columbus, OH, 2002), 33.
Harrison, and John Cage worked closely with Ardévol and included elements of Ardévol’s compositional techniques in their compositions. Thus, Ardévol was an important voice in the development of the percussion ensemble medium during its infancy.
CHAPTER 4

CARLOS CHÁVEZ

Biography

Carlos Chávez Ramirez\textsuperscript{92} (1899-1978) is Mexico’s foremost composer and conductor. The San Francisco art critic Alfred Frankenstein wrote that thanks to Chávez, “Mexico and all of Latin America have been placed on the musical map of the world.”\textsuperscript{93} With the worldwide popularity of his music and his musical statesmanship, Chávez became an international figure and artistic ambassador for his country.

Chávez was born in Mexico City to a mestizo family; his mother was Native American. He first studied music with his older brother, Manuel, and later took lessons in piano and composition with Manuel Ponce, a prominent French-trained Mexican composer. Chávez was 15 years old when he composed his first piano pieces. He went to Europe in 1922, and later spent several years in New York. He familiarized himself with abstract musical techniques and cultivated friendships with other musicians, including

\textsuperscript{92} Chávez’s early piano pieces are published under his full name - Carlos Chávez Ramirez - but he went by his father’s name for most of his life. The majority of his compositions are published under the name Carlos Chávez.

\textsuperscript{93} Robert Parker, \textit{Carlos Chávez: Mexico’s Modern-day Orpheus} (Boston: Twayne, 1983), 121.
Varèse, Copland, and Cowell, with whom he was active in the Pan American Association of Composers and the International Composers Guild.\textsuperscript{94}

As an educator, Chávez championed native Mexican music as well as modern compositional techniques. He was the director of the Mexican National Conservatory from 1928 to 1934, where he instituted a new curriculum that included the study of folk and popular music, music history and bibliography, and “new musical possibilities.”\textsuperscript{95}

Under his direction, the Conservatory quickly became one of the most progressive in all of Latin America. Chávez directed a \textit{Taller de Composición} [Composition Workshop] that produced many of Mexico’s most successful composers, including Mario Lavista, Eduardo Mata, Manuel de Elías, and Héctor Quintanar.\textsuperscript{96} As Mexico’s Director of Fine Arts, Chávez undertook extensive research of native Mexican music, published a book on pre-Cortesian percussion instruments, and instituted a public school curriculum that included native music education and performance.\textsuperscript{97} Chávez used his considerable influence to place Mexican composition on a forward-looking stance and encourage the rise of Mexican musical nationalism.

In 1928, Chávez founded the \textit{Orquesta Sinfónica de México} [Symphony Orchestra of Mexico] and became the permanent conductor. During the 21 years he


directed the OSM, Chávez conducted the Mexican premieres of 155 works from the contemporary repertory, 82 of them by Mexican composers. The OSM regularly toured Mexican provinces, bringing art music to a majority of the people. Chávez helped make Mexico City an important musical center by inviting conductors and composers to Mexico.⁹⁸

Chávez came onto the Mexican music scene at a time when Mexico was ready for artistic growth – the end of the Mexican Revolution of 1910. The Revolution of 1910 liberated Mexico from Spanish control, and a movement for musical nationalism as part of a new Mexican identity quickly developed and continued into the 20th century. Like Roldán and Ardévol, Chávez was inspired by the native music of his country and combined those native elements with classical techniques. From the time Chávez was 5 or 6, he regularly vacationed with his family in the region of Tlaxcala, and he made later trips to Puebla, Jalisco, Nayarit, Michoacán, Guanajuato, and Oaxaca, where he became familiar with the native music.⁹⁹ He carefully studied pre-Columbian instruments, including archaeological artifacts and the colonial documentation concerning Aztec music of the 16th century.¹⁰⁰ Mexican rhythms and melodic figures permeate most of his


music, and Chávez combines the native elements with modern compositional techniques to create a unique style.

In one of his first compositions, the set of piano pieces *Cantos Mexicanos* [Mexican Songs] (1914), Chávez begins to show his native Mexican influences. The work includes arrangements of revolutionary Mexican songs, one of which is the famous *La cucaracha*. In 1921, Chávez’s unique style was well on its way with his first ballet, *El Fuego Nuevo* [The New Fire]. The ballet is based on themes from ancient Aztec culture and uses so many indigenous percussion instruments that 13 percussionists are needed to cover the percussion parts. Perhaps the most popular of Chávez’s orchestral works, the *Sinfonia India* [Indian Symphony] (1936) uses three recurring melodies based on native Mexican tunes and also uses an extensive array of native percussion instruments.

For his *Xochipilli Macuilxóchitl* (1940), Chávez conducted extensive research into the ancient instruments and culture of the Aztecs. Named for the Aztec god of music and dance, *Xochipilli* pays homage to ancient sacred festivals. The piece is scored for four winds and six percussionists who play instruments of Aztec origin, including teponaztli, huehuetl, rattles, bells, and rasping stick. The Aztec teponaztli is a wooden drum with an H-shaped slit carved horizontally on the top of the drum and played with rubber-tipped mallets. The different sides of the H-shaped surface produce different pitches. Modern versions of this ancient drum, referred to as “log drums” and “slit drums” have become common. The huehuetl is an upright, cylindrical drum covered with a deerskin or jaguar hide and played with the hands and fingers. Because it can be difficult to obtain indigenous instruments, Chávez scored the winds for piccolo, flute, E-flat clarinet and
trombone, standing in for Aztec flute, ocarina, whistle and sea-snail shell.\textsuperscript{101} \textit{Xochipilli} was performed and well received in New York at the Museum of Modern Art’s Mexican concert series in 1940,\textsuperscript{102} and the success of \textit{Xochipilli} may have helped engender Chávez’s two percussion ensemble compositions: \textit{Toccata} (1942) and \textit{Tambuco} (1964).

\textbf{Treatment of Chávez in Music Scholarship}

Unlike Roldán and Ardévol, Chávez has received a considerable amount of attention in music scholarship and media coverage, most of it overwhelmingly positive. The amount of coverage that Chávez received from various media sources spans 50 years and vies with the top European and American luminaries of his generation. Chávez’s enormous and widespread popularity had already begun before he was 30. The lead article in the September 1928 issue of \textit{Musical America} hails Chávez as Mexico’s “musical messiah.”\textsuperscript{103} In the decade 1950-1959, there are 58 journal articles on Chávez that appear in the \textit{Music Index}. Positive reviews and articles appeared in several newspapers, including the New York Times and the Los Angeles Times. At the age of 34, Chávez was the sole Mexican composer profiled in the influential \textit{American Composers}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{101} Dorothy Conklin, “Carlos Chávez and Musical Nationalism in Mexico,” \textit{Percussive Notes} 32, no. 6 (December 1994): 72-73.
\end{itemize}
on American Music (1933) compiled by Aaron Copland, and Time Magazine declared Chávez to be “one of the world’s important composers.”

In his later years, Chávez was an internationally recognized conductor who reached near celebrity status in popularity. He was in high demand as a guest conductor and was in constant travel between Mexico and the United States. Under a blaze of publicity, Chávez conducted the 1954 Hollywood Bowl Orchestra to rave reviews. Chávez also received the honor of being invited to lecture at Harvard University as the Charles Eliot Norton appointee from 1958-1959, an honor shared with other great composers such as Schoenberg and Stravinsky. His six Harvard lectures can be found in his Musical Thought, which with Chávez’s Toward a New Music, were published in the United States.

Though they have not been ignored, Chávez’s percussion ensemble compositions have not received nearly the amount of attention as his other major works. Toccata para instrumentos de percusión has received a considerable amount of analysis, usually positive. Tambuco, however, has received little attention.

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105 ibid., 129.
Description and Analysis

**Toccata: para instrumentos de percusión**

The title’s reference to classical forms is not deceptive. *Toccata: for percussion instruments* (1942) is a three-movement work with elements of sonata form and standard contrapuntal techniques. The piece is scored for sextet, and the instrumentation calls for mostly standard orchestral instruments rather than the indigenous Mexican instruments used previously in *Xochipilli*. The score has directions for each performer in Spanish and English, including specific tuning relationships between the various non-pitched drums.

The only Latin American instruments required for *Toccata* are Indian drums, claves, and one maraca. The “bombo” in the score is marked “bass drum” in the English translation and should not be confused with the Afro-Cuban *bombo* called for in the *Rítmicas*. Other instruments required include glockenspiel, xylophone, chimes, side drums, tenor drums, timpani, suspended cymbals, and gongs.

The three movements – *Allegro*, *Largo*, and *Allegro* – are performed attacca, and each contains contrasting timbres. The first movement is dominated by the drums. Chávez skillfully uses the timbrel possibilities of the individual drums in various combinations to produce unique ensemble timbres. The passage shown in figure 10 demonstrates the use of the following timbres: open non-pitched sounds in the Indian drum, snare drum with snares off, and tenor drum; open pitched sounds in the timpani; and crisp sounds from the snare drum with snares on. The composite texture has a full range of open, mellow sounds that also have a defined beginning.
Toccata also has passages in which the drums are played “coperto,” with the drum heads covered by a light cloth to deaden the sound.

The form of the first movement is standard sonata form. Theme I has two motives, the first appearing in measures 2 and 3, the second in measures 8 and 9. Theme II appears at rehearsal 6, followed by development of the two themes. The recapitulation begins in the fourth measure of rehearsal 22, and a coda begins at rehearsal 28.

The Largo’s texture features the metal instruments and xylophone, with the glockenspiel playing the melody for the majority of the movement. With the exception of four secco sixteenth notes, the instruments are allowed to ring their full duration. There are examples of contrapuntal imitation. Figure 11 demonstrates imitation between the glockenspiel (top line of the score) and xylophone (third line).
In the third movement, the drums return to prominence, while the glockenspiel interjects short melodic moments. The form is again in sonata form. The first theme begins in the first measure, and theme II begins at rehearsal 43. During the development, there is a section that seems to be inspired by Latin American rhythms that begins in the fourth bar of rehearsal 47. There is a recapitulation at rehearsal 61. There are also further examples of contrapuntal imitation. At rehearsal 47, the theme is passed between player 2’s three drums and the timpani.

While the rhythms in the individual parts of Toccata are not particularly complex, they do require a great deal of care when performed within the ensemble. Careful
attention must be paid to the performance of the rhythms in order to achieve correct composite ensemble rhythms and to create the proper balance between voices.

**Tambuco: for six percussion players**

The title of *Tambuco* (1964) is a word that Chávez created because he wanted a new percussive-sounding word to title his composition. Tambuco shares many similarities with *Toccata*. They are both sextets and require approximately the same amount of time to perform (13-15 minutes). Though *Tambuco* is a single movement work, it has three distinct sections that are similar to the three attacca movements of *Toccata*. Tambuco also has unique characteristics, including enhanced instrumentation and innovative compositional procedures.

Each of the six players in *Tambuco* is given a large array of instruments that includes a variety of orchestral and non-traditional instruments. The score includes descriptions and diagrams of the non-traditional instruments and suggests alternatives for instruments that are not available. Some of the more unusual instruments include water gourds (gourds floating upside down in water and played with mallets), rasping sticks (long, flat sticks with perforations that are scraped), and a tap-a-tap (square hand cymbals made of wood). More traditional Latin American instruments include claves, bongos, congas, güiro, and maracas. Orchestral instruments include glockenspiel, triangle, crash cymbals, wood block, snare drum, and bass drum.

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Tambuco was composed using an innovative compositional design. Chávez states in the score that “The music of this work develops in a constant process of consequent evolution. That is to say, an initial idea serves as ‘antecedent’ to a ‘consequent,’ which in turn immediately becomes an antecedent to a new consequent, and so on until the end of the piece. Also, a minimum of repetitive and symmetric elements are present.” Chávez deliberately avoids any use of contrapuntal procedures, classical development, or serial techniques.

Though there is no thematic repetition throughout the work, there is an overall 3-part form in which certain instruments are prominent. The first section (measures 1-158) is characterized by bursts of sound from the rasps, rattles, and blocks. In the second section (159-207), the definite pitch instruments are prominent, including glockenspiel, celesta, vibraphone, chimes, and marimba. A transition (measures 208-215) with the xylophone leads to the third section (measures 216-283). The third section is dominated by timpani, bongos, congas, and bass drum. A coda (beginning in measure 284) features the gradual reentry of the pitched instruments, leading to an abrupt ending.

In addition to larger more difficult set-ups for each player than are present in Toccata, the rhythms of each part in Tambuco are more complex. The performers must pay attention to the correct alignment of the rhythms and to each section’s timbre and texture. In figure 12, duple, triplet, quintuplet, and sextuplet rhythms are all juxtaposed.

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Chávez’s Influence on Percussion Ensemble Development

According to Wilfrid Mellers, the international success of the percussion revolution of the mid-20th century was due mostly to five composers: Henry Cowell, John Cage, Lou Harrison, Harry Partch, and Carlos Chávez. There is a great deal of evidence to support the inclusion of Chávez in the list of most influential percussion composers. He researched and recreated Aztec instruments that have now become standard percussion instruments. He worked with other influential composers, including Cage and Harrison. Chávez was an extremely successful musician who reached near-celebrity status, making his use of percussion extremely influential. Throughout the 20th century, his Toccata was one of his most popular works, second only to his Sinfonia India.

Toccata may very well be the most performed percussion ensemble of the 20th century. As evidence of the esteem that other significant composers of percussion music had for Chávez, it was John Cage that commissioned Toccata. Unfortunately, it proved too difficult for Cage’s group to perform, and Toccata was premiered in 1948 by the Orquesta Sinfónica Nacional in Mexico under the direction of Eduardo Hernández Moncada. The United States premiere was in 1953 by the Los Angeles Symphony


Orchestra with Chávez conducting.\textsuperscript{110} Toccata is also one of the most frequently recorded percussion ensembles, appearing on over 20 recordings.\textsuperscript{111}

Though it has not enjoyed the same amount of popularity as the Toccata, Tambuco has also enjoyed many performances. It was premiered in 1965 by the Los Angeles Percussion Ensemble with William Kraft conducting.\textsuperscript{112} It is one of the standard works performed by the University of Illinois Percussion Ensemble.\textsuperscript{113} Tambuco has also been consistently recorded and re-issued since its composition.\textsuperscript{114}

John Cage used Mexican-inspired instruments extensively in his compositions. His Third Construction (1941) calls for teponaztli (Aztec log drums) and North West Indian rattles.

In addition to John Cage, Chávez worked with Lou Harrison. Harrison stated that he and Chávez “became very close friends. Again, I love his Toccata.”\textsuperscript{115} As evidence of the closeness of their friendship, Harrison composed his Threnody for viola and gamelan in honor of Chávez after his death. Two of Harrison’s most frequently performed and


\textsuperscript{111} See the discography section of this document.


\textsuperscript{113} Tom Siwe, “Lou Harrison at the University of Illinois with Tom Siwe,” Percussive Notes 18, no. 2 (Winter 1980): 33.

\textsuperscript{114} See the discography section of this document.

recorded percussion works, *Canticle #3* (1966) and *Song of Queztecoatl* (1941), show a strong Mexican influence. Both are scored for a mix of orchestral, non-traditional, and indigenous Latin American instruments. *Canticle #3* includes teponaztli and cowbells, and *Song of Queztecoatl* includes five cowbells and güiro. According to Harrison, the melodic material in *Song of Queztecoatl* is not directly quoted from ancient Aztec melodies as some have claimed, but he acknowledges that there is a definite Mexican influence. Harrison said that the *Song of Queztecoatl* “was done under the direct visual impact by a book on codices of Mexico. Most of them had to do with Quetzacoatl [the chief deity of the Aztecs].”\(^{116}\)

Chávez not only played an important leadership role in the influential Pan American Association, but he was one of the founders. When he returned to Mexico after a stay in New York, Chávez kept in contact with his U.S. colleagues. In December of 1924, Chávez was elected to the advisory board of the International Composers Guild. The mission of the Guild, begun by Varèse, was to give premiere performances only and to present the greatest amount of new music in the shortest period of time. This organization proved effective in launching the careers of many European and American composers, but Chávez saw a need for a new organization. He approached Varèse in 1928 with the idea of creating an organization similar to the Guild, but one that would include composers from Latin America. With Varèse as president and Chávez as one of the vice presidents, the Pan American Association of Composers was born. The

Association became an important force in increasing awareness of the ethnic percussion instruments and music of Latin America.¹¹⁷ The increased communication between composers of the Pan American Association that Chávez helped to bring about was one of the reasons that the percussion ensemble increased in prominence and became the viable medium that it is today.

CHAPTER 5
ALBERTO GINASTERA

Biography

Alberto Ginastera (1916-1983) is one of Argentina’s most celebrated composers. Together with Chávez and Villa-Lobos, Ginastera is a member of the Latin American triumvirate that is frequently cited by music historians as the great Latin American composers of the 20th century. Like Chávez, Ginastera was well known outside his home country. He participated in several international festivals, received numerous commissions, and his works have been performed often by orchestras throughout the world.118

Ginastera was born in Buenos Aires, Argentina. His parents were Argentine, but his grandparents were Italian and Catalonian (region of northeastern Spain). He graduated in 1938 from the Conservatorio Nacional de Música [National Conservatory of Music], where he studied with Athos Palma, José Gil, and José André. Ginastera had begun a successful career even before he finished school. In 1937, one year before his graduation from the National Conservatory, Ginastera completed the ballet Panambi. In that same year, a performance of a suite from Panambi was conducted by the distinguished Argentine composer/conductor Juan José Castro. The success of the performance led to

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118 Rodolfo Arizaga and Pompeyo Camps, Historia de la música en la Argentina (Buenos Aires: Ricordí Americana, 1990), 77.
the production of the complete ballet in 1940, the same year that Ginastera was awarded the national prize for music.

Ginastera held numerous positions in educational and cultural institutions. He taught at the Conservatorio Nacional de Música, the Universidad Nacional de La Plata [National University of La Plata], and the Universidad Católica Argentina [Catholic University of Argentina]. He was a member of the Academia Nacional de Bellas Artes [National Academy of Fine Arts]. He was one of the founders of the Centro Latinoamericano de Altos Estudios Musicales [Latin American Center for Advanced Musical Studies] of the Instituto Torcuato Di Tella [Torcuato Di Tella Institute], which he directed until 1970. Enrollment at the Latin American Center for Advanced Musical Studies was limited to 12 students every two years, chosen by an international jury. Ginastera was joined on the teaching faculty by a rotation of guest instructors that included Oliver Messiaen, Iannis Xenakis, Luigi Nono, and Aaron Copland, among others. Ginastera was also one of the maestros of the Argentine Orquesta Sinfónica Nacional [National Symphony Orchestra].

As a composer, Ginastera’s most profound influence may be the *gauchesco* tradition of his native Argentina. The *gaucho*, a roving cattle rancher and horseman of the open plains, became a symbol of Argentine identity. At the onset of his musical career, Ginastera inherited the *gauchesco* legacy that previous Argentine composers had used to represent their national identity, including a system of melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic

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traditions. Ginastera embraced these Argentine musical traditions, but he combined them with other influences to create his own unique compositional style. Ginastera’s earliest compositions borrow materials directly from *gauchesco* tradition and use them in a tonal framework that is influenced by Stravinsky, Prokofiev, and Bartók. In his later years, roughly from 1958 to 1983, Ginastera became interested in vanguard techniques such as indeterminacy and serialism.120

The human voice is another of Ginastera’s chief influences. He composed several works for voice, including operas, cantatas, and chamber works that include voice. He also composed two symphonies and several other symphonic works, three piano concertos, a violin concerto, two cello concertos, and many chamber and solo works for various instruments. Ginastera’s *Cantata para América mágica* (1960) for dramatic soprano and percussion orchestra is an excellent representation of Ginastera’s style and various influences. It represents his skillful writing for voice, and the text refers to ancient Argentine traditions.

**Treatment of Ginastera in Music Scholarship**

Ginastera was the subject of one of the first serious attempts to analyze the works of Latin American composers in an English-language publication. According to Deborah Schwartz-Kates, Gilbert Chase pioneered the study of Latin American music with his article on Ginastera and the *gauchesco* tradition that appeared in the October 1957 issue

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This article fostered increased acceptance of Latin American music during a time when it was being marginalized in the European and North American repertory.

Since 1957, Ginastera has continued to receive attention in music journals, including the article by Schwartz-Kates, but the *Cantata para América mágica* has not been one of Ginastera’s compositions to receive a great deal of attention. The scholarship on the *Cantata* is limited. An article by David P. Eyler provides a brief analysis, and Matthew George mentions the *Cantata* in a brief history of significant percussion ensembles and an examination of performance aspects.

### Description and Analysis

*Cantata para América mágica: para soprano dramática y orquesta de percusión, op. 27* [Cantata for Magical America: for dramatic soprano and percussion orchestra, op. 27] (1960) is one of the most ambitious and massive works written for percussion ensemble. It is extremely complex and is approximately 26 minutes in length. It calls for 17 performers: the soprano soloist, 13 percussionists to play 53 different instruments, two pianos, and a celesta. The percussion includes a variety of orchestral instruments, Latin

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American instruments, primitive instruments, and pitched and non-pitched instruments. Pitched instruments include chimes, xylophone, marimba, glockenspiel, and six timpani (two players). Non-pitched instruments include several drums of various sizes, cymbals, tam-tams, triangles, maracas, claves, güiro, cowbells, and a pair of rocks, among others. Ginastera exploits the full range of possibilities for each instrument. For example, the entire ranges of the marimba (of the standard size available at the time), xylophone, and pianos are used, and the timpani have several pitch changes and glissandos.

The score contains a detailed list of the orchestration that includes ranges required for the pitched instruments and tuning relationships between the many drums. Native Latin American instruments that may not be familiar to performers are explained and substitute instruments are suggested in the event that authentic instruments are not available. The score also includes the complete text in poetic format. Most of the score, including the poetry, is in Spanish with English translations, but the list of instruments is in Italian and English. There are several spelling and grammatical errors in the Spanish and in the English translations.

The text of Cantata is poetry by Mercedes de Toro based on ancient pre-Columbian writings. The word “magic” is used in its primitive sense, referring to the pagan rituals and traditions of the ancient native inhabitants of Latin America. The work is divided into six sections: Preludio y canto a la aurora [Prelude and Song to the Dawn], Nocturno y canto de amor [Nocurne and Love Song], Canto para la partida de


Prelude and Song to the Dawn begins with a pianissimo instrumental prelude that gradually builds in intensity. When the soprano enters to begin the Song, she implores protection from the pagan gods, calling upon each of them by name. At the rising of the sun, the music evokes the frightening power of this deity worshipped by primitive man.

In Nocturne and Love Song, a lover compares his loved one to the most beautiful things in nature. When the text mentions a “golden bird,” it is heard in the orchestra.

The Song of the Warriors’ Departure is a violent ritual dance. The images evoked by the text include flutes made from bones and drum heads made from human skin. Near the end, the soprano releases a terrifying cry of desperation supported by the full sound of the orchestra.

The Fantastic Interlude is scored for orchestra only and serves as a bridge to the next section. It is piano throughout and creates an unsettling atmosphere that dissipates the energy from the previous section and prepares the listener for the forlorn mood of the next section.

In Song of Agony and Desolation, the soprano sings with despair of her impending death. The contrast between the strongly emotional agony and the quiet

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125 “Canto a la Aurora” is incorrectly translated in the score as “song of dawn.” The correct translation “song to the dawn” better illustrates the text’s description of the nature of primitive man’s worship of the Dawn as a god and man’s pleading for the sunrise to come.
despair of desolation are strikingly depicted by contrasts in the music. The soprano has violently lyrical passages and recitative sections that call for the sprechstimme technique of half-speaking and half-singing the words. The orchestra explores the extremes of rhythmic and dynamic ranges.

The sense of fatality from *Song of Agony and Desolation* continues in the final movement, *Song of Prophecy*. There is an outburst in the middle of the movement that symbolizes the collapse of the primitive empire. According to Ginastera, this violent collapse is “the culminating point of the whole work. The walls of the auditorium should shake with violence.”126 After the climax, the last sounds of the fallen empire slowly fade away. The soprano gradually changes from sung to spoken word, as if speaking the final bars with her last breath.

The following is a translation of the complete text.127

I. *Prelude and Song to the Dawn*

Oh thou, Tzacol, Bitol,
look on us, hear us!
Do not leave us, do not forsake us,
heart of the sky, heart of the earth!
Protect our children, our descendants,
while the sun walks and there is light!
Let day come, let dawn arrive!

II. *Nocturne and Love Song*

Your love was like a rain of perfumed flowers.
Your song was as beautiful as that of a golden bird.
The moon and the sun shone on your forehead.
You have gone.

Creator of the sun, creator of light!
Let day come, let dawn arrive!

Long and sorrowful will be my lonely nights.

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127 Translation by John Hall.
III. *Song for the Warriors’ Departure*

Earth trembles.
The songs of the warriors begin.
Eagles and tigers
begin to dance.
On the mountain
the roar of beasts;
in the prairie
the drum of war.
Earth trembles.
Behold: These are the warriors.
Admire their courage.
They were born in the fire.
Rival spears
forged their courage.
See their ornaments.
On their heads sit helmets with
feathers of forest birds.
The teeth of their enemies
adorn their breasts;
They use bones for flutes
and human skin stretches across the drums.
Earth trembles.
Now are heard the screams
of those who go to combat.
Red like blood,
the warriors make the sun rise.

IV. *Fantastic Interlude* (Orchestra only)

V. *Song of Agony and Desolation*

Farewell, O sky!
Farewell, O earth!
I must die, here I must disappear,
under the sun, upon the earth.
Oh, point of my spear!
Oh, strength of my shield!
Go to our mountains, to our valleys.
I only await my death,
under the sky, upon the earth.
Farewell, O sky!
Farewell, O earth!

VI. *Song of Prophecy*

When the days without name arrive,
when the sign of Kauil appears,
on the eleventh Ahau,
when the brothers of the East come,
the timbrel will sound, the drum will sound!
At dawn the earth will burn;
fans will fall from the sky,
on the eleventh Ahau,
with the green rain of Yaxalchac.
The timbrel will sound, The drum will sound!
In the katun that is about to come
all will change;
defeated will be the men that sing,
in the eleventh Ahau.
Silent will be the timbrel, silent will be the drum!
Silent....! Silent....!
Silent....!
One of the most striking features about the *Cantata* is Ginastera’s combination of ancient texts and inspiration with modern compositional techniques. The melodic material, including the soprano part, is atonal. Ginastera employs a variety of serial techniques, including 12-tone rows in horizontal and vertical relationships. He also uses series of intensity, dynamics, rhythm, and orchestral density. Series use appears in the pitched instruments, the six timpani, six tambours, three cymbals, and three tam-tams. The rhythms of each part are complex and rarely line up easily with other parts, and there is extensive use of asymmetric meters.

*Prelude and Song to the Dawn* begins with a series of rhythmic crescendos in which note values increase from quarter to eighth to sixteenth to thirty-second notes. This may be a representation of the gradual emergence of the sun over the horizon. The timpani present opening pitches that will be important later in the work, F# – C and B – F, which are adjacent tri-tones. The athletic demands of the atonal soprano part are extremely difficult, and may represent the imploring nature of the text. Figure 13 demonstrates the pleading nature of the soprano part and the difficulty of the accompanying rhythms.
Figure 13. Cantata para América mágica, Mvt. I: Preludio y canto a la aurora, measures 34-42. © Copyright 1961 Boosey & Hawkes, Inc. Used by permission.
The pitch material in the *Nocturne and Love Song* is taken from a 12-tone row. One row is used for an 18-measure introduction. When the soprano enters after the introduction, a new row is introduced. For the last line of the text, “Long and sorrowful will be my lonely nights,” the original row returns, but with increasing gaps of time between the pitches.

The structure of *Song for the Warriors’ Departure* is a rhythmic variation that constantly grows louder. In both pitch and rhythm, this movement displays a complex conflict between groups of twos and threes. Almost all of the melodic material is generated from major and minor seconds and thirds. Dyads are set against triads, and duple and triple rhythms are juxtaposed. The final section of the movement is derived from the adjacent tri-tones presented in the first movement. This recalling of elements from the *Song to the Dawn* coincides with the last line of the text, “Red like blood, the warriors make the sun rise,” which also hearkens back to the first movement. Ginastera includes cohesive elements in his 26-minute work that draw the six movements together.

The *Fantastic Interlude* is a palindrome, with the second half being the exact retrograde of the first half. In the middle where the two halves meet, there is a tutti chord that includes all 12 pitches. The beginning has minimal activity that slowly builds toward the tutti chord in pitch activity, but there is no dynamic crescendo. The movement remains pianissimo throughout.

In *Song of Prophecy*, Ginastera uses several compositional techniques to depict the decay of the empire in the text. A single tam-tam plays steady and monotonous eighth notes, and the soprano responds in strict time. The other orchestra members play
fragments as quickly as possible within approximate time references, perhaps representing the chipping away of the empire’s structure. As the movement progresses, Ginastera directs the soprano to sing either a quarter-tone sharp or flat. The steady decay of the pitch center also symbolizes the fall of the empire.

*Cantata para América mágica* is a remarkable work. The dramatic nature of the text and soprano part move the listener to feel the violence and despair of an awesome yet ultimately doomed civilization. The percussion writing is nothing short of masterful. The orchestration demonstrates the viability of a percussion-only “orchestra” beautifully combining with the text and soprano to illustrate the message of the text. It is likely that Ginastera’s *Cantata* will stand as one of the great masterpieces of the percussion ensemble genre for years to come.

**Ginastera’s Influence on Percussion Ensemble Development**

*Cantata para América mágica* may have been the most ambitious and demanding percussion ensemble at the time it was composed. The mammoth and creative instrumentation, rhythmic complexity, and performance difficulty all pushed the boundaries of the percussion ensemble medium to new heights. The *Cantata* was commissioned by the Fromm Music Foundation and immediately received several performances. It was premiered at the Inter-American Music Festival in Washington, D.C., in 1961 by the National Symphony Orchestra conducted by Howard Mitchell with Raquel Adonaylo as soprano soloist. *Cantata* was performed in 1962 in Los Angeles conducted by Henri Temianka with Adonaylo again as soloist. Temianka and Adonaylo
also made a recording of the *Cantata* that same year for Colombia Records. The *Cantata* was also performed in Buenos Aires in 1962.\textsuperscript{128}

More recently, the *Cantata* has been performed and recorded by the Lawrence University Percussion Ensemble with Dane Maxim Richeson conducting and Patrice Michaels Bedi as soprano soloist. It has also been recorded by the McGill Percussion Ensemble with Pierre Béluse conducting and Elise Bédard as soprano soloist.\textsuperscript{129} Though the *Cantata* has not enjoyed the same exposure as some of the more often performed works, such as Chávez’s *Toccata*, it has been performed and recorded often enough to be quite influential.

Though previous percussion works, such as Ardévol’s *Estudio* (1933), called for large numbers of performers and instruments, Ginastera’s *Cantata* (1960) demonstrates the first use of solo percussion in a symphonic setting. The use of the term “percussion orchestra” in the title, the dramatic forms, and the 26-minute length contribute to the symphonic nature of the work. After Ginastera demonstrated the viable use of a large orchestration and dramatic form, other composers began to experiment with similar techniques. Peter Schat’s *Signalement* (1961), written for the Percussion Group of Strasbourg, is a 20-minute work for over 70 instruments. The orchestration is similar to Ginastera’s *Cantata* and includes several Latin American instruments (congas, bongos, seven cowbells, claves, and maracas). More recent works for percussion orchestra include Eric Ewazen’s 20-minute *The Palace of Nine Perfections* (2000) for 10 performers,

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\textsuperscript{128} David P. Eyler, “Cantata para América mágica Composed by Alberto Ginastera,” *Percussive Notes* 17, no. 1 (Fall 1978): 30.

\textsuperscript{129} See the discography included with this document.

In its infancy, the percussion ensemble medium was comprised mostly of short works for small groups of performers. With Ginastera’s influence, the medium has evolved to include many successful works for large-scale instrumentation and forms. Ginastera’s *Cantata* is an example of the continued versatility of the percussion ensemble repertoire.
CHAPTER 6
CONCLUSION

Summary

Amadeo Roldán, José Ardévol, Carlos Chávez, and Alberto Ginastera were classically trained composers who were deeply inspired by the culture of their native countries. They each combined Western compositional techniques with elements from the music of their cultures to create unique percussion ensemble compositions. These compositions significantly affected the development of the entire percussion ensemble genre.

The now common use and notation of Latin American instruments such as claves, maracas, and slit drums in percussion ensemble literature can be traced to Roldán, Ardévol, and Chávez. Roldán’s *Rítmicas No. 5* and *No. 6* (1930) and Ardévol’s *Estudio* (1933), *Suite* (1934), and *Preludio a 11* (1942) introduced the use and notation of Cuban instruments in the percussion ensemble. Chávez recreated several ancient Aztec instruments for modern use that have now become common. His celebrity-like status as an internationally renowned musician and the success of his *Toccata* (1942) helped to legitimize the percussion ensemble as a viable genre with a future of continued development. Cuban and Mexican instruments appeared in the percussion works of other influential composers, including Edgard Varèse, Henry Cowell, Lou Harrison, and John
Cage. Ginastera’s *Cantata para América mágica* (1960) and Chávez’s *Tambuco* (1964) demonstrated the use of Latin American instruments within extremely large instrumentations and with the use of the most advanced modern compositional techniques.

**Conclusions**

Though it is largely unrecognized, the influence of Latin American composers has helped make the percussion ensemble medium what it is today. In many cases, the same scholars and musicians who in writing about percussion ensembles use words like “standard” and “conventional” to describe instruments of Latin American origin are the same scholars who slight the compositions of Latin American composers. They accept what they know as a standard instrumentation without acknowledging or understanding its origins.

There is a distinctly Latin American imprint on what we know today as the “percussion ensemble.” The rhythms, musical structures, and percussion instruments of Latin America are common features of the percussion ensemble repertoire. It is important to understand this Latin American influence on percussion ensemble history and to acknowledge the deserving composers who contributed to percussion ensemble development. An understanding of the origins of the rhythms, musical structures, and percussion instruments of Latin American traditions will lead to more accurate performances of the many compositions that are influenced by these traditions. Better understanding of the rhythms and musical structures will lead to more appropriate
musical interpretations, and better understanding of the percussion instruments will lead to better performance techniques.

The persistent lack of acknowledgment concerning Roldán as the first composer of percussion ensemble compositions is especially notable. There is a documented exclusion of Roldán’s achievement in even the most current scholarship. The omission of Roldán from the discussion of percussion ensemble development in the *New Grove Dictionary*[^130] is a mistake akin to omitting Beethoven from the history of the symphony, and the way the *Dictionary* slights Roldán in his biographical entry[^131] is unwarranted.

The attitudes held by scholars who attempt to dismiss Roldán as too “folkloric” might be dismissed as outdated, but they continue to be as present as ever in current music scholarship. If one honestly considers these arguments, many celebrated European compositions would have to be disqualified along with the *Rítmicas*. Scholars celebrate the way in which Stravinsky’s *Le Sacre du Printemps* draws on pagan Russian rituals for inspiration and the use of Balkan rhythms in the music of Béla Bartók. Schönberg’s *Opus 23, No. 5* combines a waltz from his Viennese tradition with 12-tone row compositional techniques. Milhaud is praised for incorporating Brazilian popular music into his *Saudades do Brazil*. At the same time, skillful Latin American composers are ignored or disdained for turning to their native cultures for inspiration. The argument does not bear logical scrutiny. How else to explain this argument except to say that for scholars like


Ouellette, the use of “folkloric” elements is only acceptable if used in the hands of a Euro-American.

Such an attitude will not serve the music community well as it attempts to find its 21st century identity. It will be a struggle for the music community to find relevance in a society that is becoming increasingly uninterested in the fine arts. In finding new ways to inspire audiences as they have done for centuries, musicians must embrace the world of music in all its varieties. The percussion ensemble is one of the most dynamic creations of Western music, uniquely suited to play an immense array of instruments and styles from everywhere in the world. Embracing all of these influences will be essential if the percussion ensemble is to continue its vitality in the years to come, a vitality that may well prove to be essential to maintaining the continued relevance of Western art music.

**Suggestions for Further Research**

Latin American composers have written hundreds of percussion ensemble compositions. Further research into the output of certain composers or geographical regions would be beneficial. The Mexican percussion ensemble *Tambuco* has recorded and is currently recording many of the percussion ensemble compositions by Mexican composers from a variety of time periods. Analysis of these compositions is a possible project.

There has been little analysis of the use of percussion in the chamber and orchestral works of Cuban composers or how they affected percussion ensemble development. The orchestral works of Roldán offer many excellent examples, including
Obertura sobre temas cubanos (1925), Danza Negra (1928), and La rebambaramba (1928).

Though much is known about the historical origins of some Latin American percussion instruments, further study into these origins would be beneficial. There is much research that can be done on the history, cultural significance, and performance techniques of many Latin American instruments.

Further research and performance of José Ardévol’s three percussion ensembles would be facilitated by improved access to the scores for these compositions. A project to prepare the manuscript scores and parts of Estudio en forma de preludio y fuga and Suite para instrumentos de percusión for publication would be beneficial, as would a project to locate the lost score for Preludio a 11.
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**Amadeo Roldán, *Rítmicas No. 5 and No. 6***

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<td>1961</td>
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<td>Tangazo: Muic of Latin America (<em>Rítmica No. 5 only</em>)</td>
<td>New World Symphony, Michael Tilson Thomas, conductor</td>
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<td>Rítmicas</td>
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**Carlos Chávez, *Tambuco***

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### Carlos Chávez, *Toccata para instrumentos de percusión*

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<td>Percussion!</td>
<td>Concert Arts Orchestra, Felix Slatkin, conductor</td>
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### Alberto Ginastera, *Cantata para América mágica*

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