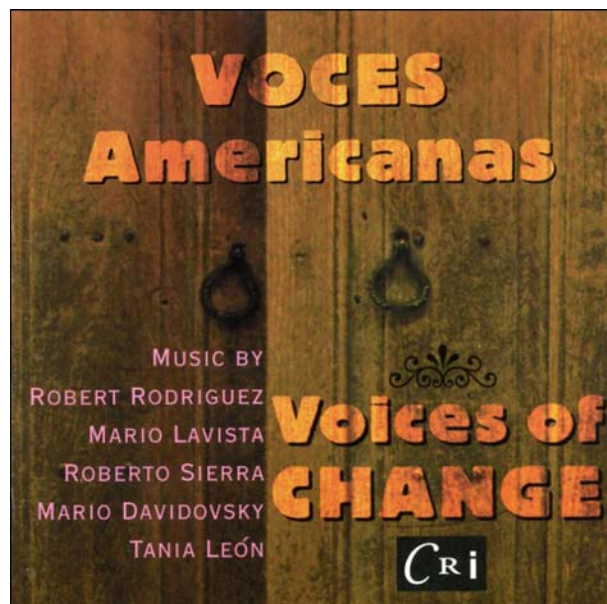


NWCR773

Voces Americanas

Voices of Changes



Robert Xavier Rodríguez (b.1946)
Les Niais Amoureux (1989) (13:59)

1. Larghetto Amoroso (3:38)
2. Allegro Cantabile (8:07)
3. Larghissimo Tranquillo (2:14)
Emanuel Borok, violin; Ross Powell, clarinet; Christopher Adkins, cello; Jo Boatright, piano

Mario Lavista (b. 1943)
4. *Quotations* (1979) (7:32)
Christopher Adkins, cello; Jo Boatright, piano

Roberto Sierra (b. 1953)
Trio Tropical (1991) (17:28)

5. En Do (6:13)

6. Habanera Nocturna (3:02)
7. Intermezzo Religioso y Movimiento Perpetuo (8:13)
Emanuel Borok, violin; Christopher Adkins, cello; Jo Boatright, piano

Mario Davidovsky (b. 1934)
Romancero (1983) (13:31)

8. I. Morenica a mi me Lllaman (3:47)
9. II. ¡Arriba Canes Arriba! (4:26)
10. III. Seguidillas (1:46)
11. IV. Triste Estaba el Rey David (3:32)
Christine Schadeberg, soprano; Harvey Boatright, flute; Ross Powell, clarinet; Maria Schleunning, violin; Christopher Adkins, cello; James Rives-Jones, conductor

Mario Lavista (b. 1943)
12. *Madrigal* (1985) (8:22)
Ross Powell, clarinet

Tania León (b. 1944)
Pueblo Mulato (1987) (6:24)

Three Songs on Poems by Nicolás Guillén

13. Canto Negro (2:04)
14. Organillo (2:54)
15. Quirino (1:26)
Virginia DuPuy, soprano; Rogene Howard, oboe; Enric Madriguera, guitar; Dwight Shambley, bass; Deborah Mashburn, percussion; Jo Boatright, piano; James Rives-Jones, conductor

Total playing time: 67:24

© & © 1998 Composers Recordings, Inc.
© 2007 Anthology of Recorded Music, Inc.

Notes

The Dallas-based ensemble **Voices of Change** is the Southwest's only professional chamber music organization dedicated to the performance of twentieth-century music. Now in its twenty-third season, Voices has played to enthusiastic audiences in many of the greatest music halls in the United States, Europe and Latin America, including New York's Merkin Hall and Miller Theater, Washington's Kennedy Center, Berlin's Staatsbibliothek, London's Wigmore Hall, Caracas's Sala Felix Rivas, and Dallas's Morton Meyerson Center. In the fall of 1993 Voices of Change performed at the Seventh Latin American Festival of Music in Caracas, Venezuela. Other international tours include the New Music "Arsenals" in Riga, Latvia, and the Cervantes Festival in Guanajuato and Mexico City, Mexico. In June 1991, 1992, 1993, and 1995 Voices of Change played in the Rockport Chamber Music Festival in Massachusetts.

Voices of Change and artistic director Jo Boatright have been honored five times with the ASCAP Award for Adventure-

some Programming: this prestigious award, presented by Chamber Music America, recognizes the ensemble's outstanding record for presenting the newest and most interesting music of our day.

A major facet Voices of Change's mission is to bring composers to Dallas to take part in the performance of their compositions. More than fifty composers including Henry Brant, John Cage, George Crumb, Mario Davidovsky, Anthony Davis, John Harbison, William Kraft, David Lang, Tania León, Robert Xavier Rodríguez, Roberto Sierra, Alvin Singleton, Toru Takemitsu, Tan Dun, and Ellen Taaffe Zwilich have participated in performances. These composers also presented workshops and seminars to students from elementary through college.

For its excellent roster of member artists Voices of Change draws on the superior musical resources of Greater Dallas/Fort Worth. These include the principal members of

both the Dallas and Fort Worth Symphony Orchestras, faculty from Southern Methodist University's Meadows School of the Arts and the University of North Texas College of Music, and nationally renowned freelance musicians.

Voices of Change was founded in 1974 by Jo Boatright and Ross Powell and is an ensemble-in-residence at Southern Methodist University's Meadow School of the Arts. It is supported by the National Endowment for the Arts, the Texas Commission on the Arts, the City of Dallas Office of Cultural Affairs, the Aaron Copland Fund for Music, Mid-America Arts Alliance, The 500 Inc., TACA, and numerous individual contributors, corporations and foundations.

After Dallas Symphony Orchestra conductor emeritus Eduardo Mata was killed in a tragic airplane crash in January 1995, Dallas's new music ensemble Voices of Change inaugurated a concert series in his memory at the Dallas Museum of Art. Mata also was a composer and an energetic advocate of new music, particularly Latin American music. This CD of works drawn from the memorial concert series is a further tribute to his legacy.

Hispanic heritage is the common denominator for the five composers whose music is recorded on this disc. While all but Lavista now live in the United States, they represent a broad geographical swath with roots in the Caribbean, Mexico, Central America, and South America. If we consider their teachers and the places they have lived, their collective sphere of influence proves ever more far-flung. Comprising chamber, solo and vocal works written over the past twenty years, this collection shows the depth and variety of Hispanic new music.

Les Niais Amoureux (1989)

Robert Xavier Rodríguez (b1946)

Robert Xavier Rodríguez, a native of San Antonio, is based in Dallas, where he teaches at the University of Texas at Dallas. He holds degrees from the University of Texas at Austin and USC, and boasts an impressive pedigree that includes study with Ingolf Dahl, Jacob Druckman, Bruno Maderna, Elliott Carter, and the legendary Nadia Boulanger. As his career and reputation have grown, two divergent stylistic strains have remained constant in his work. The first is lyrical atonality, which is an offshoot of his training, education and experience as a serial composer. The other is tonal populism, an area that has allowed Rodríguez to give vent to his lively wit, and also to compose music with broad appeal to a large audience. These two styles—lyrical atonality and tonal populism—may appear to be mutually exclusive, but Rodríguez enjoys the challenge of reconciling opposites. *Les niais amoureux*, a personal favorite of the composer, synthesizes these two apparent extremes.

The piece is a series of variations on two themes, one original, the other borrowed. The first one is a fragment from Rodríguez's first opera, *Le Diable Amoureux* ("The Devil in Love," 1979). The second, *Les niais de Sologne*, comes from a set of keyboard variations in D-major by Jean-Philippe Rameau, originally published in 1724. Rameau's title translates with difficulty. "Niais" is an adjective meaning silly, simple, or foolish; as a noun it means ninny or simpleton; a niaiserie is a trifle or silly thing. "Les niais de Sologne" would therefore mean "The fools of Sologne." Rodríguez's title for this quartet is thus a double entendre. His composite title, which means "Innocents in Love" (or "fools in love"), is reflected in his adaptation of two themes, which in turn makes *Les niais amoureux* a set of double variations.

By placing Rameau's and his own theme side by side at the start of *Les niais amoureux*, Rodríguez emphasizes the

obvious differences in musical language between the first half of the eighteenth century and the second half of the twentieth. At the same time, he proves how strong his own roots are in musical tradition and, in the broader sense, how all living composers are indebted to the rich heritage of western art music. Further, most of his variations ensue *attacca* [without pause]. This too serves a twofold purpose: blurring the structural boundaries between variations, and allowing for cross-pollination between elements of the two melodies that form the building blocks for *Les niais amoureux*. The two themes become so entwined that it is as if they, too, have fallen in love.

The composer's note in the score includes the following additional information:

The quartet begins with a seductive cello melody from a scene in *Le Diable Amoureux* in which a medieval baron, under the influence of the Devil's spell, makes amorous advances to his son's fiancé. The contour of this rising theme, with its simple hypnotic accompaniment of a trill and a repeated broken chord, figures prominently in the variations to come. The sprightly Rameau, which interrupts, is similarly replete with trills. The ensuing variations also draw from the frequent two-against-three accompaniment patterns and regular sectional divisions of the Rameau, each marked by a pronounced change of texture in the Baroque manner.

These two melodies collide at first, but their styles gradually merge into a synthesis as the colorful music of the Devil's spell serves to initiate (or "deniaiser") the Rameau into a richer chromatic vocabulary. [NB: *deniaiser* can also mean "to sharpen the wits of" or "to seduce," a further double entendre—LCS] The spell music is likewise transformed in the process, becoming more "innocent" through a quasi-tonal musical language in which vertical sonorities built in sixths and thirds resolve to simple triads.

Quotations (1976)

Mario Lavista (b 1943)

"Su corazón es un laúd suspendido, tan pronto se le toca, resueña." ["His heart is a suspended lute that resounds the moment it is touched."]

Mario Lavista places this quotation from Edgar Allan Poe's *The Fall of the House of Usher* at the head of the score to *Quotations*. "Resounds" is the key word to understanding the piece. American cellist David Tomatz, for whom *Quotations* was written, observes: "The resonance of sound and the silences between sounds become very important."

Born in Mexico City, Lavista began his musical studies as a pianist. He turned to composition in his teens, studying with Carlos Chávez and Rodolfo Halffter at Mexico's National Conservatory before earning a scholarship in 1967 to work in Paris under the tutelage of Nadia Boulanger, Henri Pousseur, and Jean-Etienne Marie. He later worked with Karlheinz Stockhausen, Iannis Xenakis, and György Ligeti in Germany. During the 1970s he composed in the field of electro-acoustic music.

Quotations was composed a couple of years after Lavista had abandoned his electronic experiments. He has written about his change in philosophy at that time: "'My 'error' consisted . . . in believing that what was important was the imperative to invent the discovery, rather than to rediscover the invention. After a while I realized that what was essential was not to forget, but to remember, to recover the memory. I learned then to look inside of myself, knowing that I owed much to the music of the past, and that I was living part of this inexhaustible

flow that is the history of music.” The cello part to *Quotations* is Lavista’s tribute to his musical heritage. He quotes isolated fragments from works by Debussy, Brahms, Ravel, Webern, Bartók, Crumb and others. So fleeting are the musical references that they are over with, an echo, when we have barely perceived them. The extreme brevity of each quotation lends the music a Webern-like flavor.

Both cello and piano have expressive and dynamic extremes that are carefully indicated in the score. For example, Lavista specifies echoes “like actual sounds,” and harmonics that “should ring like tiny bells.” The piano part is centered around the juxtaposed intervals of the tritone and the perfect fifth, allowing the cellist to be the principal spokesperson of the quotations. Lavista demands a full arsenal of Bartókian string techniques, including *sul ponticello*, harmonics, *col legno*, *con arco alla punta*, *sul tasto*, and very fast tremolo.

Trio Tropical (1991)

Roberto Sierra (b1953)

Puerto Rican-born **Roberto Sierra** teaches at Cornell University in upstate New York. He studied at San Juan’s Conservatory of Music and the University of Puerto Rico as well as at London’s Royal College of Music and the University of London; the Institute for Sonology in Utrecht, the Netherlands; and the Hamburg Hochschule für Musik, where he worked with György Ligeti. He has enjoyed considerable success with his orchestral compositions, boosted by his stint as composer-in-residence with the Milwaukee Symphony from 1989 to 1992.

Unlike much of the music that has established Sierra’s reputation—and despite its evocative title —*Trio tropical* does not emphasize his Latin American roots. The piece consists of four movements, the last two of which are played without pause. It is subtitled “En Do” (in C), and the opening statement firmly hammers home that pitch, immediately establishing an insistent, vigorous rhythmic profile that dominates the movement. Aggressive commentary, initially from the strings, emphasizes the tritone, an interval that will figure significantly throughout the Trio, providing a motivic unity that links its movements. Sierra’s pulse is firmly forward-moving. He balances his material nicely among the three players, often borrowing a ploy common to Shostakovich: using cello and violin in unison or parallel motion, with a response from the piano in widely-spaced octaves. The middle section of the movement is marked *Lento misterioso*; it is more lyrical, with sixths and tritones from the cello accompanied by delicate filigree work in the extreme registers of the piano.

The gentle, sensual sway of the habanera is never absent from the second movement, but Sierra is not glued to its pulse. This *Habanera nocturna* is a distant cousin of Debussy’s “La soirée dans Grenade” from *Estampes*. Sierra further explores the mysterious keyboard embroidery of the first movement’s *Lento misterioso*, contrasting it with parallel intervals, including parallel tritones that function as a motivic unifier. The movement ends with solo piano, almost losing the habanera pulse. Debussy’s influence is apparent again in the “Intermezzo Religioso.” A warm melody in the strings at the octave unison jars with blurred, sometimes dissonant piano commentary that implies bitonality, teasing at Ivesian memories. A brief passage in double stops provides transition to the closing perpetual motion. Here Sierra uses the piano in a guitar-like fashion similar to Albéniz’s *Asturias*, with the piano as background to a dialogue initially stressing cello, with exclamations from the violin.

Romancero for soprano and chamber ensemble (1983)

Mario Davidovsky (b. 1934)

Though he has composed in many genres, **Mario Davidovsky** is recognized especially as a pioneer in electronic music, earning the Pulitzer Prize for his *Synchronisms No. 6* for piano and tape in 1971. Argentinean by birth, he has a truly international background, and has continued to travel widely during the more than forty years that he has lived and taught in the United States. A product of the Second Viennese School and electronic era in music, Davidovsky has exerted a tremendous influence on the younger generation of composers, and even on his older contemporary, the German avant-garde leader Karlheinz Stockhausen. After many years teaching at Columbia University, he is now on the faculty of Harvard.

Romancero consists of four songs whose texts are based on popular Spanish romance poetry. As such, they call to mind Canteloube’s *Chansons d’Auvergne* and Berio’s *Folk Songs*, in their embracing of popular culture and unusual combination of traditional sounds with more arresting, modernistic musical language. Prior examples of musical settings of these poems extend as far back as four centuries.

Vocal music seems to elicit a different side of Davidovsky’s personality. While the intellectual elements and astringency of his style are still present, a lyricism and raw emotionality emerge when he deals with texts. Davidovsky is a chameleon in these songs, using music to explore the miniature dramas and rich imagery of each poem. The texts virtually cover the entire spectrum of human experience and emotion, ranging from the carefree flirtatiousness of “Morenica a mi me llaman” to the bleak and blinding grief of “Triste estaba el Rey David,” in which King David loses his favorite son, the rebellious Absalom.

“Growing up in Latin America, you know dozens of these by memory,” the composer says. “There is a huge literature, with roots extending back to the Middle Ages.” Davidovsky was also intrigued by the Sephardic origins of the Morenica and King David texts. His parents were Eastern European Jews, and he acknowledges the importance of the Jewish element in these first and last texts of *Romancero*.

Davidovsky has a gift for capturing the quicksilver shifts in mood and tone, as when the raging fury invoked against the dogs at the beginning of “¡Arriba canes arriba!” cedes to the ineffable sadness of the singer’s search for Julianesa. The pacing of the four songs also shows a keen sensitivity on the composer’s part. He opens lightly, with “Morenica,” and gives his listener a scherzo-like reprieve in the enigmatic “Seguidillas” before abandoning us to the woeful despair of King David.

Romancero was jointly commissioned by Speculum Musicae, The Contemporary Music Forum (Washington D.C.) and the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players through an NEA grant.

Madrigal (1985)

Mario Lavista

A virtuoso movement for solo clarinet, *Madrigal* explores the expressive possibilities of the instrument both in terms of its range and in the types of sounds the clarinet can produce. The piece varies between intensely rhythmic, driven sections and more lyrical, rhapsodic passages. Throughout the piece, an improvisatory character prevails. As in many of Lavista’s chamber works, he plumbs the possibilities of a traditional orchestral instrument to explore innovative sonorities and expressive contrasts—especially here, with multiphonics (sounding two pitches simultaneously) in the slower sections.

Madrigal was written for and is dedicated to clarinetist Luis Humberto Ramos.

Pueblo Mulato (1987)

Tania León (b 1944)

Tania León was born in Havana. Her polyglot ancestry includes French, African, Spanish, and Chinese genes in addition to Cuban ones. She began her education in Cuba, earning a degree in piano at Havana's National Conservatory. After coming to the USA in 1967 and completing a second degree at NYU, she helped found the Dance Theatre of Harlem in 1969, serving as its music director until 1980. Since the 1970s, León has also been active as a conductor. She recently completed a tenure as the composer-in-residence with the New York Philharmonic and currently teaches at Brooklyn College. León has recently undertaken an ambitious series of guest residencies lecturing about polyrhythmia and synchrotism at such prestigious institutions as Yale, Carnegie-Mellon, and Harvard. Her most recent major work is the opera *A Scourge of Hyacinthe* (1994) with a libretto by the Nigerian author Wole Soyinka.

Pueblo Mulato is a set of three songs on texts by the Cuban poet Nicolás Guillén (1902–1989) for soprano and chamber ensemble. The instrumentation bears a strong imprint of León's native Cuba: both percussion and guitar reflect her Latin origins. But to categorize her music via ethnic roots reduces it unfairly. She has something to say, with power and clear articulation; the Cuban elements in her musical background are but one aspect of this complex and gifted woman.

The songs demonstrate León's knack for bringing poetry to life with vivid, evocative sounds. *Pueblo Mulato* also reveals an admirable economy of means: she says much, in little time. "This cycle is like postcards for me," she notes. "Any time I try to make a statement in sounds tied to my memory of a place, I have to go back and relive the experience." Her

eloquent musical settings of Guillén's poetry, which depicts the lives of blacks living in poverty in Cuba, bear persuasive witness to the crisp images retained in her memory. She employs her chamber ensemble with imagination and daring, liberally mixing Latin and jazz elements—guitar, bass, conga drums, bongos, and guíro—and more traditional chamber music participants (oboe and piano).

In the first song, "Canto Negro," a black man dances, sings and drinks himself to the point where he tumbles over. León's accompaniment lurches forward, emulating the man's increasing inebriation. The soprano line tends to be more sustained, a not-quite-stable thread ultimately broken, as it falls prey to the sensual, propulsive rhythms of the instrumental ensemble. León and Guillén pose some probing questions in "Organillo," an eerie miniature addressing movement and stillness, illusion and reality, life and death. Solo piano presents the thoughtful introduction; a lengthy, sustained e-natural from the oboe evokes the leaden sun and the monotony of the hand-organ. When the soprano whispers the exhortation to "dance on," the piano breaks into a snatched phrase of Latin dance music. Ultimately, death is a stronger impulse than dance in this song. The set closes with "Quirino," a commentary on one of those people who becomes a caricature in any neighborhood. As the composer explains: "It's like the macho man who is a natty dresser, because that's what is attractive in his social community. He neglects more important things, such as his aging mother. The little guitar is one of his accessories. His mother has become an accessory, too." The mother is connected to the mother of "Organillo"; the common link is death. Strongly flavored by the exoticism of Caribbean music, "Quirino" is a virtuoso study in rhythm and ensemble.

—Laurie C. Shulman, © 1997

Production Notes

Producer: Alan Bise, Acoustic Digital, Inc., Dallas, Texas

Recording Engineer and Digital Editor: Alan Bise, Acoustic Digital

Executive Producer: Joseph R. Dalton

Recorded at Caruth Auditorium, Meadows School of the Arts, Southern Methodist University, Dallas, Texas, January 13-15, 1996

Publishing: Rodriguez: G. Schirmer (ASCAP); Lavista: Ediciones Mexicanas de Musica (SACM); Sierra: Subito Music Publishing, Inc. (ASCAP); Davidovsky: C. F. Peters Corp. (BMD); Leon: Southern Music Publishing Co., Inc. (ASCAP).

This compact disc has been made possible through the generous support of the Aaron Copland Fund for Music, Inc., the Alice M. Ditson Fund of Columbia University, and Eduardo Mata Memorial Fund, Voices of Change.