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| Gramatges [Leyte Vidal], Harold (1918-2008) |
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| Harold Gramatges was a leading composer, pianist, conductor, and educator during the second half of the twentieth century in Cuba. He was a founding member of the experimental music circle *Grupo Renovacin Musical*, and an advocate of contemporary national expression based on the mastering of the classic forms. His extensive catalogue reflects the synthesis of various aesthetic tendencies with techniques of the musical avant-garde, and a compositional style frequently characterised by dissonant, contrapuntal procedures. He made important contributions to the country’s music education system. |
| Gramatges studied piano under Dulce Mara Serret (1898-1989) at the Conservatorio Provincial de Oriente in Santiago, Cuba, and composition with Amadeo Roldn (1900-1939) and Jose Ardvol (1911-1981) at the Conservatorio Municipal de La Habana in Havana. In 1942, the success of his *Sonata para clavichmbalo* awarded him with a grant to study with Aaron Copeland (1900-1990) and Serge Koussevitzky (1874-1951) at the Berkshire Music Centre in Tanglewood, Massachussetts. Returning to Havana later that year, he secured a faculty position in the Conservatorio Municipal, where he served as professor of composition, theory, and music history until 1958. The period between 1945 and 1957 is also marked by a series of concurrent conducting appointments, including the conservatory’s Orchesta Sinfnica Juvenil, which he established in 1945, the Orquesta de Cmara de La Habana, and the Orquesta Sinfnica de Radio CMQ.  His interests in developing new tendencies in Cuban art music establishes Gramatges as a founding member of Grupo Renovacin Musical, an artistic circle active between 1942 and 1948 that advocated an aesthetic more aligned with modern European currents. Reacting to the overt nationalism prevailing in Cuban concert music, he adopted a type of Hispanic Neoclassicism, while experimenting with all of the expressive resources of the mid-twentieth century. In 1943 his ballet *caro*, commissioned by famed ballerina Alicia Alonso (b. 1921), premiered, and Gramatges was awarded the Reichold del Caribe y merica Central prize for his Sinfona en mi.  Following the Cuban Revolution of 1959, Gramatges was appointed counsellor to the Departamento de Msica de la Direccin General de Cultura del Ministerio de Educacin, where he instituted a series of reforms in the national music education system. Endeavouring to promote and disseminate contemporary Cuban art music, he founded the Orquesta Sinfnica Nacional and programmed concert series in which he generally performed as conductor or pianist. From 1960-1964 he was appointed Cuban Ambassador to France.  In 1965 he established the music department at the cultural institution Casa de las mericas, which he directed until 1970. He became the chair (and subsequently Professor Emeritus) of composition at the Instituto Superior de Arte in 1976. Furthermore, he presided over the Asociacin de Msicos de la Unin de Escritores y Artistas de Cuba in 1993, and was named Honorary Member of the Consejo Iberoamericano de la Msica the following year.  Gramatges’ prolific compositional output, catalogued at over 130 works, encompasses virtually every genre, including symphonies, chamber and choral pieces, film scores, art songs, and incidental music for theatre. Within this vast catalogue, his pianistic production is particularly noteworthy; infused with driving rhythms and percussive technique, the compositions make full idiomatic use of the instrument, and occupy a prominent place in the national contemporary repertoire. While largely neo-classicist, his aesthetic ideas synthesised influences from traditional Cuban idioms — chiefly from his native province of Oriente — with a contemporary harmonic vocabulary, as exemplified by *Dos danzas cubanas* (1949) and *Suite cubana para nios* (1956). In order to express a modernist national identity, his works reveal daring extended harmonies, dissonant counterpoint, polytonality, and techniques associated with the avant-garde movement, such as serialism and aleatory.  Gramatges has been conferred numerous national and international honorific awards and composition prizes, such as the Premio Nacional de Msica de Cmara (1950), the Cuban state council’s Medalla de Alejo Carpentier (1982), the Orden Flix Varela (1988), conferred by the Ministry of Culture for his extraordinary contribution to the arts, and the Premio Nacional de Msica (2002). In 1996 he was the first recipient of the Premio Iberoamericano de la Msica ‘Toms Luis de Victoria’ (1548-1611), further positioning him as a leading figure in Cuban and Latin American art music. Selected list of works:Orchestral *Sinforna en mi* (1943)  *Mensaje al futuro* (1944)  *Serenata* (1947)  *Dos danzas cubanas* (1950)  *Sinfonietta* (1955)  *La muerte del guerillero* (1968-1969)  *Trptico* for soprano and orchestra (1972)  *Oda Martiana* (1978-1979)  *Discurso de la merica antigua* (1985) Ballet *caro* (1943) for piano and percussion Chamber *Sonata en sol sostenido* for piano (1942)  *caro* (ballet) for piano and percussion (1943)  *Petite suite* for piano (1943)  *Do en la bemol* for flute and piano (1944)  *Trio* for clarinet, violoncello, and piano (1944)  *Concertino* for piano and wind instruments (1945)  *Capriccio* for flute, clarinet, viola, and cello (1945)  *Serenata* for string quartet (1947)  *Homenaje a Ignacio Cervantes (Tres Danzas para Piano)* for piano (1947)  *Tres preludios en forma de tocata* for piano (1951)  *Divertimento* for brass quartet (1957)  *Sonatina hispnica* for harpsichord (1957).  *Quinteto de vientos* for woodwind quintet (1957)  *Tocata para bandonen* for concertina (1961)  *Mvil I* for piano (1969)  *Mvil II* for flute, horn, piano, and percussion (1970)  *Estudio de contrastes* for piano (1974)  *Diseos* for piano, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, and percussion (1976)  *Mvil III* for flute and piano (1977)  *Incidencias* for piano (1977)  *Mvil IV* for guitar (1980)  *Tro para cuatro* for piano, violin, cello, and horn (1981)  *Guirigay* for violin, viola, cello, clarinet, bassoon, and horn (1985)  *Seis danzas antiguas* for piano (1989)  *Paisajes de dos para cuatro* for piano (1996) Art Songs *Guitarra en duelo mayor* for soprano, baritone, and guitar (1967)  *Dos canciones* for soprano and tenor (1971)  *Tienes el don* for baritone (1982) Choral *Soneto* (1940)  *Romance de cazadores* (1941)  *Canción por la paz* (1959)  *Tierra de azules montañas* (1964)  *Cantata para Abel* (1973)  *La esencia de tu nombre* (1988)  *Amor en primavera* (1989) Film Music *La Vivienda* (1959)  *Rebeldes: Historias de la revolución* (1960)  *Carnet de viajes* (1962)  *David* (1967)  *Cimarrón* (1967) |
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