



CELIA TORRÁ  
(1884-1962)



LITA SPENA  
(1904-1989)

## TECHNICAL INFORMATION

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## Agradecimientos

Era el año 2013 cuando por primera vez descubrí el repertorio para piano solo de las compositoras Celia Torr  y Lita Spena. Como estudiante a pocos pasos de completar mi ciclo de grado, reconoc a en su escritura un perfil concert stico y un efectivo uso del instrumento. La escasez de grabaciones y el desaf o de recrear la interpretaci n en base a par metros muy acotados llam  inmediatamente mi atenci n, iniciando un proceso de estudio –art stico, intelectual, de investigaci n—de m s de una d cada. Creo firmemente que este repertorio merece un lugar en las salas de concierto y es mi sue o que este registro sonoro inspire a m s pianistas al estudio de estas obras. Esta publicaci n coincide con aniversarios de nacimiento de ambas compositoras (140 y 120 a os respectivamente). Doy mi agradecimiento especial a Silvina Luz Mansilla y Silvina Martino, co-directoras del equipo de investigaci n “Trayectorias II. Nuevos estudios en torno al Conservatorio Nacional de M sica” por su mentor a y colaboraci n a lo largo de todos estos a os. Tamb n agradezco a mi profesor y director de tesis en UNL, Paul Barnes, por su entusiasmo en este proyecto y su gui  desde el primer d a. Este proyecto fue posible, en parte, gracias al apoyo de la Universidad de Nebraska–Lincoln, en especial, al Fondo de Becas del Hixson–Lied College of Fine and Performing Arts.

Dedico este  lbum a mi familia, que con mucho cari o acompa a cada una de mis traves as musicales: a mis padres, Rosana, y Fernando; mis hermanas, Camila y Sabrina; y a mi querido esposo, Blake.

Florencia Zuloaga

## **Retratos de compositoras argentinas**

Celia Torr  (1884-1962) y Lita Spena (1904-1989) pertenecieron a un grupo de mujeres m sicas poco com n en la Buenos Aires de los a os treinta: el de las primeras compositoras profesionales, creadoras que vencieron el prejuicio y dejaron su huella en la historia de la m sica argentina. As , adem s de admiraci n, sus creaciones musicales causaron sorpresa y ellas alcanzaron acciones y reconocimientos excepcionales para el g nero femenino. Veinte a os mayor que Spena, Torr  fue adem s una indiscutida pionera. Con recorridos art sticos distintos, compartieron el talento como int rpretes prodigiosas –de viol n, Torr , y de piano, Spena–, la vocaci n docente –privada e institucional–, la modulaci n de una voz creadora para sus pensamientos musicales y un buen reconocimiento del nombre propio por la cultura de su tiempo. Ambas vivieron el sue o de hacer escuchar sus propias composiciones y de aportar su t cnica y su musicalidad a la obra de sus compositores predilectos.

La diferencia generacional entre ambas pone de manifiestas los cambios de la  poca en la formaci n musical. Celia Torr  naci  en 1884, en Concepci n del Uruguay, un pueblo en la provincia de Entre R os, a casi 300 kil metros de la ciudad de Buenos Aires, capital de la Rep blica Argentina. Perteneciente a una familia de clase media, cultivada pero sencilla –tesorero y contador municipal su padre, hija de un comerciante textil catal n su madre– Celia emprendi  un camino sin antecedentes familiares. Este gesto iniciador marcar  todas las instancias de su carrera musical. Aunque sus padres fueron aficionados al piano, ella eligi  el viol n; a fines de 1890 se traslad  a la capital para estudiar en el Conservatorio de M sica de Buenos Aires fundado hac a pocos a os por Alberto Williams, luego de su formaci n como compositor y pianista en el Conservatorio de Par s. Torr  fue la alumna m s



destacada de todos los cursos de violín y, en 1909, a sus veinticinco años, obtuvo por concurso el Gran Premio Europa, una beca estatal para perfeccionar su técnica violinística en el viejo continente. Su primer destino fueron las clases de César Thomson en el Real Conservatorio de Música de Bruselas y entre 1911 y 1913 continuó sus estudios con Jëno Hubay en la Real Academia Nacional de Música de Hungría, donde se inició en la composición con Zoltán Kodály. Cuando comenzó la Primera Guerra Mundial, se demoró largos años (hasta 1919) en Lyon participando asiduamente de la actividad concertística. A su regreso a la Argentina, recorrió pueblos y ciudades con su violín. Su Entre Ríos natal volvió a premiarla con una nueva estadía europea, que Torr  destin  a estudiar composici n con Vincent D'Indy y contrapunto con Paul Le Flem en la Schola Cantorum de Par s, durante 1920 y 1921.

 ngela Ana Spena naci  en Buenos Aires en 1904. Sus padres hab an venido a la capital argentina desde N poles en 1901,  poca de franco crecimiento de la inmigraci n italiana. Ambos eran m sicos con s lida formaci n como pianistas y su padre, adem s, compositor. En 1907, el matrimonio fund  el Conservatorio de M sica "Clementi" que se expandi  progresivamente por todo el pa s, a trav s de m s de treinta filiales. Esta empresa pedag gica familiar constituy  el hogar de Lita, fue tambi n su primera escuela musical y, m s tarde, uno de sus espacios de trabajo. Adem s de esta herencia familiar, que la diferencia de Torr , Spena perteneci  a la primera generaci n de m sicas y m sicos argentinos que pudo recibir la formaci n superior sin salir del pa s, gracias a la fundaci n del Conservatorio Nacional de M sica y Declamaci n, en 1924, entidad p blica y gratuita que permiti  – particularmente a las mujeres– hacer de su pasi n por la m sica una profesi n. All , Spena sigui  los cursos de piano y composici n y, a os despu s, se desempe   como docente de Armon a.

A pesar de haberse formado como intérpretes solistas, Torrá y Spena compartieron la particularidad de inclinarse por la práctica de conjunto. Si bien la interpretación solista, especialmente del piano, era un lugar común entre las mujeres de la época, la conformación de conjuntos estables resultaba menos frecuente, los tríos y cuartetos de desempeño profesional estaban comúnmente integrados por varones. Por ello, se destacan las actuaciones de Celia Torrá a dúo en las que, desde 1924, dio difusión a importantes sonatas para violín y piano de autores franceses –Franck, Fauré, d’Indy–, un repertorio que había transitado durante sus años en Lyon. De las actuaciones de Lita Spena en esa época, se observa su participación, como pianista, en el estreno porteño de *Les noces*, escenas coreográficas rusas, letra y música de Igor Stravinsky, en el Teatro Colón de Buenos Aires, en 1926. Mientras que Torrá se mantuvo principalmente apegada a los principales nombres de la tradición clásica y romántica, “los grandes maestros”, el gusto de Spena se expresó en favor de aquellos que representaban la modernidad musical. A pesar de sus diferencias, de edad y de inclinaciones estéticas, esta virtud para la concertación las reunió a fines de la década en el que se reconoce como el primer trío femenino de actuación profesional. El Trío Argentino de Música de Cámara –que se completó con Blanca Cattoi, en violonchelo– registra su debut en Buenos Aires en septiembre de 1929. La actividad proliferó durante el año siguiente con un repertorio que prevaleció clásico –*Trío* en Sol mayor de Mozart; *Trío* en Sib mayor de Beethoven– con bocanadas de espíritu moderno –*Trío* N.º 1, op. 35 de Joaquín Turina– y un lugar para la música argentina –*Trío* en Re menor, op. 25, de Constantino Gaito–.

Es posible que el contacto con otras mujeres músicas en Europa durante los años de la Primera Gran Guerra le haya dado a Celia Torrá el modelo del asociacionismo femenino que inició con el trío y que, desde 1937, expandió como directora de la Asociación Sinfónica Femenina y Coral Argentina. No es difícil advertir que, como

directora de coro y orquesta –actividad que desarrolló profesionalmente desde 1930–, Torr  fue tambi n pionera. Progresivamente se fue alejando del viol n y acercando de manera cada vez m s exclusiva a la composici n musical. Pese a que su primera obra fue compuesta en 1909 y se titula *Fleurs d'amour*, una romanza para voz y piano, el desarrollo en la creaci n musical se observa con continuidad desde su regreso de Europa y a partir de su desempe o docente. Se inicia con canciones escolares y de c mara, pero es la d cada de 1930 la que condensa sus obras m s valoradas por la cr tica y la historiograf a. Sus dos piezas para orquesta sinf nica, ambas premiadas y estrenadas bajo su batuta: *Rapsodia entrerriana* (1930) y *Suite para orquesta* (1937), y *Sonata para piano en La* (1933) que se incluye en este disco.

Esta sonata es un elemento exclusivo en el cat logo de Torr  y llama la atenci n que no la haya dedicado al viol n. Sin embargo, el car cter multifac tico de esta gran artista reconoce un refinado desempe o como pianista acompa ante (especialmente para la difusi n de sus propias canciones de c mara). *Sonata para piano en La* fue estrenada por Elvira Ochoa de Garbarini, el 7 de noviembre de 1933, en una audici n de la Sociedad Nacional de M sica. Esta instituci n agrupaba, desde 1915, a los compositores profesionales argentinos, en su mayor a varones notables como Carlos L pez Buchardo, Floro Ugarte o Felipe Boero, por lo que el ingreso de Torr  en 1929, ten a solo dos antecedentes femeninos: Montserrat Campmany y Mar a Isabel Curubeto Godoy. Poco antes de su fallecimiento en diciembre de 1962, Torr  acompa   en el estudio de *Sonata en La* a la pianista Olga Galper n, quien la interpret  en varias ocasiones en conciertos y audiciones radiales y realiz  el primer registro fonogr fico m s tarde. D cadas despu s, la fotocopia de aquel manuscrito que Galper n atesoraba por incluir las marcas del intercambio con Torr  (modificaciones de *tempo*, indicaciones de digitaci n y, en ocasiones, la reescritura de pasajes) result  la  nica copia capaz de permitir la continuidad de la obra.

Cuando Torrá estrenó su sonata, Spina promediaba sus estudios de composición en el Conservatorio Nacional y comenzó a difundir sus creaciones en las audiciones de estudiantes; en esos años también recibió los primeros premios por sus canciones escolares y publicó algunas de esas páginas. A pesar de estar en proceso de explorar la técnica compositiva, ya se advertía su inclinación hacia el impresionismo de los compositores franceses y hacia sus proyecciones en compositores de la escuela neoclásica italiana –como Castelnuovo Tedesco– y española –como Mompou o Falla–. Siempre fue una declarada adoradora de Debussy y Ravel, cuya *Sonatina* interpretó para graduarse en piano. El título en composición lo obtuvo a mediados de los años 30 con la música para escena del drama *El amor de Schahrazada*, de Arturo Capdevila, en cuya colorida y diáfana orquestación se observan las mismas influencias. A pesar de haberse dedicado a la interpretación pianística hasta el final de su vida, su producción compositiva, constituida en buena parte por canciones de cámara, incluye únicamente dos obras para piano solo, revisitadas por Zuloaga y contenidas en este disco: *Sonata*, de 1937, y *Preludios*, de 1938. Fieles representantes de sus preferencias estéticas, fueron su carta de presentación para engrosar la lista de mujeres integrantes de la mencionada Sociedad Nacional de Música. Los *Preludios*, exquisitas miniaturas de carácter conocidos con el adjetivo de “impresionistas”, fueron inmediatamente programados por la misma asociación y tuvieron el primer registro fonográfico a cargo de la afamada e internacional Lía Cimaglia Espinosa, en la década de 1970. En 1952, fueron editados por Ricordi y, a partir de allí, recibieron una difusión considerable en conciertos e integraron antologías de música argentina grabada. Muy diferente fue el devenir de *Sonata*, que no parece haber tenido otra interpretación pública más allá del estreno de sus dos primeros movimientos –por Livia Quintana– en 1937; un destino sorprendente si consideramos su distinción con el primer premio, en la categoría de obras para un instrumento solo, en el Primer Salón Nacional de Música Argentina. Tampoco tuvo



lugar la edición comercial de la partitura que suponía el premio sino que fue la propia Livia Quintana, amiga de la infancia e intérprete predilecta de Spena, quien donó la copia manuscrita original de *Sonata* a la biblioteca del Departamento de Artes Musicales y Sonoras de la Universidad de las Artes.

Ambas sonatas resultan piezas únicas dentro de los catálogos de estas primeras compositoras profesionales. El corpus inicial de sonatas producidas por músicos profesionales argentinos se dio principalmente durante la segunda década del siglo XX, como resultado de la formación en Europa de los primeros maestros. Luego de fundado el Conservatorio Nacional, hacia 1930 nos encontramos con una producción impulsada desde sus cátedras de composición, en las que las mujeres paradójicamente constituían buena parte del alumnado. Torrá, formada en Europa, y Spena, como una de las primeras egresadas del Conservatorio, vuelven a representar posiciones distintas en este panorama. Sin embargo, los puntos de encuentro entre ambas compositoras permiten ver funcionar las dos escenas más significativas de la cultura musical porteña de la época, de manera superpuesta e imbricada: el nacionalismo musical, esa corriente deudora del romanticismo europeo que a partir del centenario de la independencia en 1910 modeló la creación de todas las instituciones musicales locales, y la emergencia de un modernismo renovador desde mediados de la década de 1920. A pesar de sus diferencias estéticas, la *tradición* y la *renovación* compartían la hegemonía masculina del “genio creador” y se resistían a reconocer la legitimidad de una posición femenina para la composición musical. Para enfrentar aquella hegemonía, demostrando el conocimiento y el manejo de la técnica compositiva, pero sin abandonar sus preferencias estéticas y expresivas, Torrá y Spena compusieron sus sonatas.

En *Sonata para piano en La*, Torr  ensaya el nacionalismo musical de la Generaci n del 80 –esa puesta en pr ctica de la tradici n rom ntica europea apelando a algunos rasgos de los g neros vern culos locales–. La obra se inicia con una introducci n de expresi n indigenista, una melod a pentat nica en el estilo de las flautas andinas. El primer movimiento, “Andantino”, cumple con las convenciones de la forma sonata-allegro, dos temas de car cter contrastante con una relaci n de t nica (La menor) y dominante (Mi mayor), aunque se observa que son mayormente pentat nicos. Sin embargo, una desorientaci n de las expectativas se produce cuando el retorno del segundo tema en la recapitulaci n, en lugar de proceder en La menor, se realiza en La mayor y da cierre al movimiento con un cambio de modo. Para el segundo movimiento, “Adagio”, Torr  utiliza la melod a de una de sus canciones m s conocidas como tema de una sucesi n de variaciones. Valorada como “una de las joyas de nuestra canci n de c mara a la manera popular” e interpretadas por importantes sopranos de la  poca, *Cantar de arriero*, obra premiada en un certamen municipal de 1930, no solo proyecta la elaboraci n que Torr  hab a hecho del cancionero pampeano, sino que ejerce su v nculo afectivo con la audiencia. Un material contrastante se entromete inesperadamente en este segundo movimiento para adelantar lo que ser  el estribillo que articula la forma rond  del tercer movimiento. El contraste entre el car cter solemne del primer movimiento y el aire ligero y juguet n de “Rond  Allegretto” esconde la transformaci n tem tica que este estribillo hace del tema indigenista que inicia el primer movimiento. Se observa que la puesta en pr ctica de procedimientos c clicos en pos una subyacente unidad tem tica es la t cnica elegida por Torr  para proporcionar cohesi n a su sonata. Reconocemos entonces la herencia de C sar Franck elaborada por Torr  durante sus estudios en la Schola Cantorum de Par s as  como la influencia de sus posteriores estudios en Buenos Aires con Athos Palma –a quien est  dedicada esta sonata– importante difusor de esta escuela en la Argentina.

Palma tuvo a su cargo la cátedra de Armonía en el Conservatorio Nacional desde su fundación, por lo que influenció a varias generaciones de compositores y compositoras. A pesar de las diferencias en el material temático y el tratamiento armónico, *Sonata* de Lita Spena también busca proporcionar el fundamento estructural de los tres movimientos de la pieza a partir del desarrollo temático y los procedimientos cíclicos. La inclinación modernista de Spena la lleva a distanciarse del sentimentalismo romántico en pos de una mayor abstracción, que elabora mediante un estilo neoclásico. El primer movimiento “Allegro” cumple con el imperativo bitemático de la forma, pero elimina el conflicto armónico entre ellos presentando los dos temas en Fa# menor. Liberada de la reconciliación tonal que exige la recapitulación, Spena –como Torrá– mayoriza la tonalidad en la coda. Entre los procedimientos armónicos, que serán la marca de su estilo compositivo, se destacan en esta sonata la yuxtaposición de acordes con sentido colorístico y el uso de acordes expandidos cuya horizontalización devela el trabajo con escalas modales. El movimiento pendular caracteriza el contorno melódico de ambos temas, calidad que no se pierda en las elaboraciones, basadas fundamentalmente en transformaciones rítmicas y texturales. El carácter cíclico hay que buscarlo en las reapariciones del material del tema B del primer movimiento, cuyo rasgo más pregnante es la presencia del intervalo de segunda descendente. Regresa en la sección B del segundo movimiento “Allegretto” (de forma ABA) y es innegable su similitud con el tema principal del tercer movimiento “Toccata”, el momento de mayor virtuosismo instrumental. En evidente alusión al neoclasicismo de las primeras décadas del siglo XX, “Toccata” recuerda los ejemplos en la obra de Debussy y Ravel, pero resulta un género poco transitado en esos años en el ámbito local, singularidad que confirma la apuesta de Spena en favor de las tendencias modernizadoras.

El redescubrimiento que hace Florencia Zuloaga de ambas sonatas se debe al atesoramiento que hicieron sus intérpretes históricas, un gesto de preservación afectiva que posibilitó la edición crítica y publicación a cargo de un equipo del Departamento de Artes Musicales y Sonoras de la Universidad de las Artes. Estos *retratos argentinos* nos revelan un paisaje cultural en el que no solamente es posible apreciar las distintas tendencias estéticas que lo componen sino que también nos permite ver, tomando parte en ellas, a las mujeres que empezaron a moldear una posición femenina para la composición musical, una profesión de innegable y largamente indiscutida tradición masculina.

Romina Dezillio



## **Acknowledgments**

I was a senior undergraduate student when I first came across the solo piano repertoire by Celia Torrá and Lita Spena in 2013. I recognized that these scores were meant for the advanced performer, with writing full of virtuosic flair and effective use of the instrument. The lack of recordings and the challenge of crafting my interpretation based on very limited information immediately caught my attention, starting a process of artistic, intellectual, and scholarly research that lasted more than a decade. I firmly believe that the works in this album belong to the concert hall, and I dream that this recording will inspire other pianists to perform their music. The publication of this album coincides with two major birth anniversaries (140 and 120 years respectively). I want to express my gratitude to Silvina Luz Mansilla and Silvina Martino, co-directors of the research project “Trajectories II. New studies about the National Conservatory of Music”, for their mentorship and collaboration during all these years. I am thankful to Paul Barnes, my piano professor and thesis advisor at UNL, who was enthusiastic since day one, providing critical guidance. This project was made possible, in part, with support from the University of Nebraska–Lincoln Hixson-Lied College of Fine and Performing Arts' Endowment Fund.

I dedicate this album to my loving family who has walked alongside every step of my musical journey. To my parents, Fernando and Rosana; my sisters, Camila and Sabrina; and my dear husband, Blake.

Florencia Zuloaga

## **Portraits of Argentine female composers**

Celia Torr  (1884–1962) and Lita Spena (1904–1989) belonged to a group of female musicians that was unusual for their time. They were among Argentina’s first women professional composers and creative artists, overcoming prejudice and leaving their mark on their country’s music history. Through their actions and musical creations, these composers garnered admiration and surprise from their peers as they reached exceptional acclaim as artists of the female gender. Being twenty years younger than Spena, Torr  was a true pioneer in her field. While each fulfilled an individual, distinctive artistic journey, both had in common a prodigious talent as performers of their instruments, either on the violin (Torr ) or at the piano (Spena). These women shared a calling for public and private music education, a gift for channeling their creative voice into life through music composition, and favorable cultural recognition for their names. Both Torr  and Spena succeeded in realizing their dreams of listening to live performances of their works. Lastly, as instrumentalists, they made performative contributions to the technical and artistic advancements of the works written by their favorite composers.

Between Torr  and Spena was a generational gap, manifested in the cultural shifts and differences in their musical education. Celia Torr  was born in 1884 in Concepci n del Uruguay, a town in the Province of Entre R os, almost 300 kilometers away from Buenos Aires City (the capital of the Argentine Republic). Torr  belonged to a middle-class family of modest means but culturally literate: her father worked as a treasurer and municipal accountant, while her mother was the daughter of a textile tradesman of Catalan descent. From here on, Celia began her artistic journey without any family background, an event that marked every step of her musical career. Although her parents were amateur pianists, she chose to study violin instead,

moving to Buenos Aires City by the end of the 1890s to study at the Buenos Aires Music Conservatory. This institution had been founded a few years prior by Argentine composer and pedagogue Alberto Williams following his composition and piano studies at the Paris Conservatory. At the Buenos Aires Music Conservatory, Torrá was the most outstanding student, excelling in every violin course she attended. By 1909, twenty-five-year-old Celia was awarded the "Gran Premio Europa," a state grant funding violin studies to advance her education on the Old Continent. Her first destination was the Royal Conservatory of Music in Brussels, where she studied violin with César Thomson. This was followed by her training with Jëno Hubay at the National Academy of Music in Hungary between 1911 and 1913, where she also began composition studies with Zoltán Kodály. The start of the First World War delayed her return to her homeland until 1919; for the duration of the war, she resided in Lyon and was frequently engaged in the city's music performance scene. Upon her return to Argentina, she toured towns and cities of all sizes, playing the violin. Her home province, Entre Ríos, awarded her with funds for a second trip to Europe, which Torrá utilized to study composition with Vincent D'Indy as well as counterpoint with Paul Le Flem at the Schola Cantorum in Paris during the years of 1920 and 1921.

Ángela Ana Spena was born in Buenos Aires in 1904. Her parents arrived in the Argentine capital from Naples in 1901, during a period of growing Italian immigration. They were both musicians with a solid background as professional pianists; her father was also a composer. In 1907, the married couple founded the "Clementi" Music Conservatory, which expanded progressively to the point of opening over thirty branches around the rest of the country. This was a family business and pedagogical venture at the center of Lita's home growing up. The conservatory founded by her parents provided her with initial musical training; later,

it was one of her sources of employment. In addition to having a strong musical heritage in her family, Spena's trajectory differed from Torr  in that her generation of Argentine musicians was the first to receive post-secondary education without the need to study abroad. The foundation of the National Conservatory of Music Recitation in 1924, a public and free-access institution, allowed many young artists to turn their musical passion into a professional career. Like other women, Spena studied at the conservatory, taking courses in piano and composition. She was later appointed as a faculty member, teaching courses in Harmony.

In addition to their training as solo performers, Torr  and Spena shared a particular inclination for performing chamber music. The practice of solo performances (most notably in piano) was quite common for women in this period, and the formation of chamber ensembles was seen less frequently. Male performers made most of the chamber trios and quartets at the time. In this regard, it is worth noting Celia Torr 's duo presentations starting in 1924, in which she promoted major sonatas for violin and piano by French composers such as Franck, Faur , and D'Indy. This was a repertoire that she had studied during her years in Lyon. In the case of Spena, she was one of the four pianists in the Buenos Aires premiere of Stravinsky's *Les Noces*, a ballet piece with Russian choreography and music by the celebrated European composer. The performance took place at the Col n Theater in 1926. While Torr  gravitated towards the major works written in the Classical and Romantic eras, Spena, in turn, was inclined towards music by those composers that were representative of the Modern style. Despite their differences in age and their aesthetic preferences, they were both accomplished chamber musicians who eventually started playing together. Their ensemble is now considered the country's first professional trio made entirely by women. Named "Trio Argentino de M sica de C mara," its third member was violoncellist Blanca Cattoi. Their debut was registered in the year 1929 in the city



of Buenos Aires. The trio had prolific activity the following year, with performances where Classical works prevailed. Some of their performances included the Trio in G major by Mozart, the Trio No. 1, Op. 35 by Joaquín Turina, and the Trio in D minor, Op. 25, by Argentine composer Constantino Gaito.

While in Europe, Celia Torrá came in contact with other female musicians. This likely inspired the artist to adopt a certain associative model by regularly performing with fellow female artists. This manifested in the formation of her chamber trio upon her return to her homeland. A similar venture, albeit more expansive, was evident in Torrá's role as conductor for the Argentine Symphonic and Choral Women Association. As a choir and orchestral conductor, her pioneering work during the 1930s should not go unnoticed. Torrá was progressively turning away from her performative career as a violinist and becoming more exclusively involved in musical composition. Her first work, an art song titled *Fleurs d'amour*, was composed in 1909. From this point forward, and especially after her definite return from Europe, Torrá's compositional practice continued to develop as well as her pedagogical career. What began as the creation of school songs and chamber music turned into the creation of larger works during the 1930s. The repertoire stemming from this decade garnered the most attention and renown from critics and historians alike. During the 1930s, Torrá wrote two pieces for the symphony orchestra: the *Rapsodia Entrerriana* (1930) and the *Suite para orquesta* (1937). They were award-winning works that saw their premieres under the composer's baton. Her *Sonata para piano en La* (1933) was written in this period, a solo piece included in this record.

Torrá's Piano Sonata has an exclusive place in her catalog, surprisingly, she wrote it for piano rather than violin. However, one should note her multifaceted profile and refined knowledge as a collaborative pianist, as she was often seen playing piano for

the performance of her chamber compositions. Pianist Elvira Ochoa de Garbarini premiered her Sonata para piano en La on November 7, 1933, during a concert organized by the National Music Society. The National Music Society gathered Argentine professional composers of major renown (who were, as it is worth noting, predominantly male). Some included Carlos López Buchardo, Floro Ugarte, and Felipe Boero. Before Torrá's induction into society in 1929, there had been only two female composers. Their names were Montserrat Campmany and María Isabel Curubeto Godoy. Shortly before Torrá's passing in December of 1962, the composer worked with pianist Olga Galperín, who performed her Piano Sonata on multiple occasions, including concerts and radio broadcasts. Additionally, it was Galperín who made the first phonograph recording shortly later. During the following years, Galperín treasured her copy of the manuscript, which included pencil marks made during her exchange with the composer: changes of tempi, fingering marks, and rearrangements of certain sections. It turned out to be the only existing copy of the Sonata, and the missing link that allowed continuity in future performances of the musical piece.

Concurrently with Torrá's premiere of her Piano Sonata, Spena finished her composition studies at the National Conservatory and began to promote her works at student auditions. During these years, she received the first music awards to her name. These were specifically given for her children's school songs, and she published a selection of these compositions. Despite going through a period of exploration in her compositional technique, Spena's interest in the Impressionism of the French composers was evident from an early stage, as was her interest in the Neoclassicism represented by Italian composer Castelnuovo Tedesco and Spanish composers Mompou and Falla. Spena always spoke of her admiration for the music of Debussy and Ravel, having played the Sonatina by Ravel in her piano graduation

recital. She received her degree in composition during the middle 1930s by writing scene music for the text by Arturo Capdevila, *El Amor de Scharazada*. Her musical rendition, which showcases a coloristic and translucent orchestration, depicts such influences. A major segment of her musical catalog is made of art songs. Despite having spent much of her artistic career as a piano performer (something that she continued to do until the end of her life), Spena only wrote a total of two solo piano pieces, both revisited by Zuloaga in this album: the Sonata (1937) and the set of Preludios (1938). Being a faithful representation of Spena's aesthetic preferences, these pieces were included in the composer's membership application for the National Music Society, thus enlarging the number of female members of the organization. Spena's Preludios, exquisite miniature character pieces often regarded as "impressionists," were immediately added to the society's concert programming, receiving their first phonograph record by internationally renowned pianist Lía Cimaglia Espinosa in the decade of 1970. By the year 1952, this programmatic set was published by Ricordi, garnering significant attention through regular performances as well as inclusion in Argentine record anthologies. Much different was the outcome of her Sonata. There are no records of this abstract work outside of its premiere in 1937 by pianist Livia Quintana, where only the first and second movements were heard. This is a surprising fact considering that the piece was awarded first place at a famous competition, the Primer Salón Nacional de Música Argentina. While the award included a live performance and commercial publication of the piece, the edition itself never took place. Quintana, a childhood friend and favorite performer of Spena, donated the manuscript to the National University of the Arts—Musical and Sonorous Arts Department Library.

The piano sonatas by Torrá and Spena occupy a special place in the catalog of the first professional female composers. The return of Argentine pedagogues from their

European training occurred during the second decade of the twentieth century; their return was followed by the foundation of the National Conservatory in 1924. By the decade of the 1930s, the Conservatory's composition classes had propelled new musical creations. Music composition was still a predominantly male field. Paradoxically, women constituted most of the student body in these classes. Within this context, Torrá and Spena represented different artistic positions, one being trained in Europe and the other being among the first to graduate from the National Conservatory. However, the intersection of their careers reveals two significant musical scenes of their times in an interwoven and overlapping manner. Music Nationalism, a trend associated with European Romanticism that modeled the creation of all local musical institutions, had gained a strong following after the centenary of Argentina's independence in 1910. Concurrently, a new movement emerged, closer to modernism and stylistic renovation, which began in the 1920s. Despite the difference in their aesthetic traits, during this time, both styles were predominantly male. Similarly, the idea of a "creative genius" was usually associated with men, and female composers struggled to find recognition in their field. Torrá and Spena wrote their sonatas without abandoning their expressive and aesthetic inclinations to prove their knowledge and understanding of compositional techniques.

In her Sonata para piano en La, Torrá is inspired by the musical Nationalism that permeated the works of the "1880s Generation," namely, the practice of Romantic European traditions that appeal to vernacular genres. The opening begins with an introduction of Indigenous flair, a pentatonic melody that resembles the style of the Andean flute. The first movement, "Andantino," follows the blueprint of the sonata-allegro form, with its primary and secondary themes in the tonic (A minor) and dominant (E major), respectively. It is worth noting a striking pentatonicism in both



themes and one major departure from the conventional form: the return of the secondary theme in the recapitulation does not return in A minor but in A major instead, closing the movement with a mode shift. In the second movement, "Adagio," Torrá utilizes a melody extracted from one of her most celebrated art songs, transforming it into the theme that forms the basis for subsequent variations. The main theme stems from her famous art song, *Cantar de Arriero*. Known as "one of the jewels from our art song tradition—that of popular inspiration," *Cantar de Arriero* was a well-received piece in her catalog, often performed by major sopranos during this period. After being awarded in a municipal competition in 1930, the original vocal chamber piece projected Torrá's imagination of the Pampas (plains) songbook, creating a meaningful emotional bond with the audience. The contrasting material that suddenly interrupts this second movement foreshadows the refrain of the third movement, which is, in turn, written in the rondo form. There is an eminent contrast between the solemn nature of the first movement and the playful mood in the closing movement, titled "Rondó Allegretto." The use of a cyclical approach to musical form and the Sonata's thematic unity set forth by Torrá bring cohesion to the work. The legacy of César Franck is apparent, as Torrá became familiar with his musical style during her studies at the Schola Cantorum in Paris. Such influence was also facilitated by Athos Palma, a composer and pedagogue who also played an important role in promoting such a compositional school in Argentina, to whom this Sonata is dedicated.

Athos Palma has been a professor of Harmony at the National Conservatory since the institution's foundation, and his influence reached across multiple generations of Argentine composers. Setting aside the differences in their motivic material and harmonic approaches, Lita Spina's Sonata shared common ground with Torrá's Sonata as it also unifies the fundamental structure of its three movements by using

thematic development and cyclical procedures. Spena's stylistic inclination, which was closer to the Modern compositional trends, is manifested in a search for abstraction that distanced herself from the sentimentality of her predecessors, who, in turn, had been rooted in the Romantic era. She elaborated on her musical materials in a Neoclassical manner. The Sonata's first movement, "Allegro," follows the obligatory contrast of primary and secondary themes. One major departure from the sonata-allegro form is that it eliminates the harmonic conflict in the exposition. Instead, both themes are presented in F-sharp minor. Released from the tonal reconciliation one would typically expect in the recapitulation, Spena closes the coda with a shift to the major mode, similar to Torrá's approach. Spena demonstrates some of the harmonic procedures that became her stylistic trademarks. These include the utilization of chord juxtaposition for coloristic purposes as well as the use of expanded chords that feature upper harmonics. The linear approach of these chords indicates the use of modality. The melodic contour of both primary and secondary themes features a pendular movement, which continues in its subsequent elaborations, which are essentially rhythmical and textural. The first movement's secondary theme forms the basis for the Sonata's cyclical approach, and a descending second is its most striking feature. The musical material that this theme is based on reappears throughout the piece. One instance is during the contrasting section of the second movement (written in ABA form). Later on, it reappears on the third movement's primary theme, as its use—yet again—of the descending seconds cannot go unnoticed. The third movement is titled "Toccata" and represents the most significant display of instrumental virtuosity. The title choice hints at major examples from the Neoclassical era, such as earlier works by Debussy and Ravel. However, few local composers ventured into this particular genre, proving Spena's daring position in favor of modernizing musical trends.

The conservation of critical materials made Florencia Zuloaga's rediscovery of these Sonatas possible. The original performers kept the scores in their possession as a gesture of affection towards the composers; recently, these scores became the basis for new critical editions compiled and published by a research team endorsed by the National University of the Arts—Music Department. These Argentine portraits reveal a cultural landscape with a variety of aesthetic trends. In addition, they allow us to see the women who created a space for female artists in music composition, a profession that had an unequivocally long masculine tradition.

Romina Dezillio

Translated by Florencia Zuloaga



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Nacida en Argentina, la pianista Florencia Zuloaga se ha presentado como solista, con grupos de cámara y junto a orquestas de nivel internacional. Ha estrenado obras de compositoras argentinas en los Estados Unidos y Europa. Sus presentaciones recientes incluyen eventos como el National Conference of Keyboard Pedagogy (EE. UU. 2023, 2021), VII Encuentro de Pianistas (Costa Rica, 2022), el Festival Piano Plus en Xanthi (Grecia, 2022), y el Segundo Congreso Internacional de Piano (Argentina, 2014). Es Profesora de Piano en el Conservatorio de Omaha, llevando una intensa actividad pedagógica enseñando clínicas, clases magistrales y como miembro de jurados para distintas instituciones en el estado de Nebraska. Es Doctora en Artes Musicales por la Universidad de Nebraska-Lincoln, donde estudió bajo la guía del pianista Paul Barnes, y Magíster en Música por la Universidad de Arkansas estudiando junto al reconocido maestro Jura Margulis. Allí también completó una Diplomatura Artística con la maestra Tomoko Kashiwagi. Recibió el título de Profesora Nacional e Intérprete Superior en Piano por el Conservatorio Superior “Manuel de Falla” con Mención Especial por su alto desempeño artístico, como así también su Licenciatura en Piano por la Universidad Nacional de Artes. Sus maestros en Argentina incluyen a Alfredo Corral, Eduardo Páez y Marcela Fiorillo.

Native of Argentina, pianist Florencia Zuloaga has appeared as a soloist, with chamber groups, and with orchestras of international renown. She has premiered works by Argentine women composers in the United States and Europe. Recent presentations include events such as the National Conference of Keyboard Pedagogy (U.S.A. 2023, 2021), VII Encuentro de Pianistas (Costa Rica, 2022), Piano Plus Festival (Greece, 2022), and the Second International Conference of Piano (Argentina, 2014). She is an Artist-Faculty at the Omaha Conservatory of Music, maintaining an active teaching schedule of clinics, masterclasses, and adjudications in the state of Nebraska. Florencia holds a D.M.A. from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, where she studied under the guidance of pianist Paul Barnes, and a M.M. in Piano Performance from the University of Arkansas, where she studied with acclaimed pedagogue Jura Margulis. In Arkansas, Florencia also completed her Artist Diploma under the guidance of Tomoko Kashiwagi. Florencia graduated with honors from the Manuel de Falla Music Conservatory in Buenos Aires and holds a Bachelor of Music in Piano Performance from the National University of Arts. In Argentina, she studied under the mentorship of Alfredo Corral, Eduardo Páez, and Marcela Fiorillo.