

**CULTURAL COUNTERPOINTS:  
Examining the Musical Interactions between the U.S. and Latin America**



**Schwartz-Kates, Deborah (University of Miami):  
“Ginastera in Washington: Correspondence with Copland and Spivacke at  
the Library of Congress”**

**Abstract:**

The city of Washington held a special place in the creative life of Alberto Ginastera (1916-1983). It was there that the Argentine composer achieved some of his distinguished successes, beginning with the premiere of his Second String Quartet (1958), which was commissioned by the Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge Foundation and performed in the Library of Congress. Given these achievements, it is no surprise that Ginastera considered Washington his lucky city. Yet, the U.S. capital also proves providential for researchers, since many of the sources that document the composer’s U.S. activities reside in the Library of Congress.

This paper explores the highlights of the Ginastera correspondence that is housed at the LC—a resource that yields fresh perspectives into the composer’s transnational connections with music and musicians in the United States. Ginastera’s letters to Aaron Copland offer a fascinating window into the relationship that the composer shared with a valued teacher, mentor, and friend. His two-way correspondence with Harold Spivacke, the former Chief of the Music Division at the LC, played a formative role in shaping his career. As a whole, the correspondence reveals the way that the Argentine musician upheld the Library of Congress as a model for Latin American nations. He drew deeply on the resources of the LC for a variety of purposes that exemplify his association with the iconic Washington institution.

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**Editorial Disclaimer:**

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# GINASTERA IN WASHINGTON: CORRESPONDENCE WITH COPLAND AND SPIVACKE AT THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS<sup>1</sup>

**Deborah Schwartz-Kates**

It is an honor to be here. I am grateful to Carmen Tellez for organizing this event. I am especially thankful to one special person in the room, Juan Orrego-Salas, who directed my master's research at the Latin American Music Center at Indiana University. It was his course on the music of Ginastera that started me on this lifelong path. For this, I will always be grateful. And now for the paper:

The creative contribution of Alberto Ginastera has received growing international recognition. Over the past 25 years, scholars have produced an impressive body of new Ginastera research that has engaged with contemporary issues of reception, analysis, and context. A growing sense of achievement marks plans for the upcoming Centenary of the composer's birth in 2016, at the same time that the occasion raises future challenges. One of the biggest issues that confronts Ginastera researchers is the lack of a full-length critical biography. Although the Argentine scholar, Pola Suárez Urtubey, authored two life-and-works studies of the composer during the late 1960s and early 1970s, they focused primarily on Ginastera's compositional aesthetics, as mediated by his own perspectives.<sup>2</sup> No other full-length biography has appeared in print for almost forty years.

The most serious obstacle to creating a critical biography is the fragmentary state of the sources. Even though Ginastera was an avid correspondent and a meticulous

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<sup>1</sup> A longer version of this paper, titled "The Correspondence of Alberto Ginastera at the Library of Congress," was originally published in *Notes: Quarterly Journal of the Music Library Association* 68, no. 2 (December 2011): 284-312. I thank the journal editor, Jane Gottlieb, for her kind permission to reproduce a shorter version of the article here.

<sup>2</sup> *Alberto Ginastera*, Serie Argentinos en las artes (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Culturales Argentinas, 1967); *Alberto Ginastera en cinco movimientos*, Colección "La Música y los músicos" (Buenos Aires: Victor Lerú, 1972).

record-keeper, in 1971, he left most of his papers behind him when he departed suddenly from Buenos Aires, Argentina, for Geneva, Switzerland, where he remained until his death in 1983. When Ginastera later attempted to retrieve his papers he was unable to find them.<sup>3</sup> The only collection of Ginastera's correspondence that survives in Argentina is a focused but limited compilation of the composer's letters, dating from 1962-71 that is housed at the Universidad di Tella in Buenos Aires.<sup>4</sup> Outside Argentina, the Paul Sacher Stiftung in Basel, Switzerland holds an extensive Ginastera collection that includes over twenty boxes of the composer's letters. Yet, the Sacher materials date primarily from the last twelve years of the composer's life, when he resided in Switzerland. They provide only a limited window into the full range of the activities that characterized the period 1941-1971, when Ginastera worked as a composer, teacher, and founder of music institutions in Argentina. For this reason, scholars must investigate other sources to illuminate Ginastera's most fertile years. An important documentary resource that sheds light on this period can be found at the Library of Congress.

The city of Washington held a special place in the life of the composer. It was there that he achieved many eminent successes, beginning with the premiere of his Second String Quartet, commissioned by the Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge Foundation for

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<sup>3</sup> Ginastera explained to Jack Bornoff (Executive Secretary of the International Music Council) that he had left most of his papers in Argentina. In a letter to Pola Suárez Urtubey, he mentioned that he had stored these materials in a Buenos Aires apartment on Suipacha Street. Alberto Ginastera, correspondence with Jack Bornoff, 1971-84, Ginastera Collection, box 3, Paul Sacher Stiftung, Basel, Switzerland (hereinafter PSS); Alberto Ginastera, letter to Pola Suárez Urtubey, 28 December 1980, Ginastera Collection, box 17, PSS. For additional information about Ginastera's move to Switzerland, see Deborah Schwartz-Kates, *Alberto Ginastera: A Research and Information Guide* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 17.

<sup>4</sup> This collection emphasizes the composer's activities as director of the Centro Latinoamericano de Altos Estudios Musicales (CLAEM). Laura Novoa has edited the Di Tella correspondence in her book, *Ginastera en el Di Tella: correspondencia* (Buenos Aires: Biblioteca Nacional, 2011).

the First Inter-American Music Festival at the Library of Congress. Given these achievements, it is no surprise that Ginastera considered Washington his lucky city.<sup>5</sup> The U.S. capital also proves providential for Ginastera researchers, since much of the documentation about the composer’s U.S. activities resides at the Library of Congress.

Ginastera’s letters appear in thirteen LC collections. They date from 1941-1983 and emphasize the 1941-71 period. These materials include correspondence with Leonard Bernstein, Aaron Copland, Irving Fine, Serge and Olga Koussevitzky, Charles Seeger, Nicolas Slonimsky and other notable personalities that Ginastera met in the United States. Table 1 lists the names of the collections, the dates, the numbers of letters, and the languages of the correspondence. It also summarizes the contents of each LC collection.

**TABLE 1. GINASTERA CORRESPONDENCE AT THE LC**

<b>Collection</b>	<b>Box/ Folder</b>	<b>Dates</b>	<b>Contents</b>	<b>Language</b>	<b>Remarks</b>
Bernstein, Leonard	23/52	1946- 71	5 letters plus additional materials	English	One-way correspondence from Ginastera to Bernstein, with handwritten notes in the margins by Bernstein’s secretary. A major topic is Ginastera’s Violin Concerto, dedicated to Bernstein and the New York Philharmonic.

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<sup>5</sup> In a 1978 interview, Ginastera described Washington as “the city that brought me luck.” Susana Salgado, “Ginastera,” *The Americas* 30, no. 4 (April 1978): 31.

Collection	Box/ Folder	Dates	Contents	Language	Remarks
Copland, Aaron	255/ 10-11	1941- 79	44 letters plus additional materials	English (32), Spanish (11), and French (1)	Major collection that chronicles the composers' relationship. Contains mainly correspondence from Ginastera to Copland. Also includes greeting cards and a biographical sketch of the Argentine musician.
De la Vega, Aurelio	1/33	1962- 63	2 letters	Spanish	One-way correspondence from Ginastera to the Cuban-born composer. Discusses Ginastera's activities at CLAEM.
Ficher, Jacobo	58/20	1973- 75	3 cards	Spanish	Holiday cards from Aurora Nátola-Ginastera <sup>6</sup> and Alberto Ginastera to the Argentine composer Jacobo Ficher and his family.
Fine, Irving	7/10	1946- 56	6 letters plus additional materials	English	Brief correspondence from Alberto and Mercedes Ginastera <sup>7</sup> to Irving and Verna Fine.
Goldberg, Albert		1959	2 letters	English	Minor two-way correspondence between Ginastera and a Los Angeles music critic.

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<sup>6</sup> Aurora Nátola-Ginastera was an Argentine-born cellist and the composer's second wife, who resided with him in Geneva, Switzerland from 1971-1983.

<sup>7</sup> Mercedes Ginastera was an Argentine-born pianist and the composer's first wife, who lived with him in Buenos Aires, Argentina from 1941-1969.

Collection	Box/ Folder	Dates	Contents	Language	Remarks
Koussevitzky Archive	22/24	1946-71	2 letters plus additional materials	English	One-way correspondence from Ginastera consisting of letters, postcards, holiday cards, and a telegram of congratulations.
Modern Music	1/11 (Letters of Regret)	1947	1 letter	English	A letter to Minna Lederman, founding editor of <i>Modern Music</i> , expressing regret for the end of the journal.
Music Division, Old Correspondence		1950-1983	125 letters plus additional materials <sup>8</sup>	English	Two-way correspondence between Alberto Ginastera and Harold Spivacke. Other materials include telegrams, greeting cards, newspaper articles, program notes, press releases, invitations, and Ginastera's death announcement. <sup>9</sup>
Schneider, Alexander		1976	1 letter <sup>10</sup>	English	Schneider offers his impression of the <i>Glosses</i> for strings, op. 46, after conducting the premiere.

<sup>8</sup> Three letters from this collection (dated 28 August 1957, 19 September 1957, and 8 March 1958) were missing from their folders during the author's visit to the LC in March 2011.

<sup>9</sup> This collection also includes correspondence with Paul Fromm (Fromm Foundation), Jean Golden (Boosey & Hawkes), Walter Hendl (Eastman School of Music), Donald Leavitt (LC), James Mathias (Guggenheim Foundation), Carlos Mosely (New York Philharmonic), Gertrude Smith (Boosey & Hawkes), and Edward N. Waters (LC).

<sup>10</sup> This letter was originally housed in the Alexander Schneider collection, but has since been moved to the Budapest String Quartet Collection.

Collection	Box/ Folder	Dates	Contents	Language	Remarks
Seeger, Charles		1953-58	7 letters	English	Two-way correspondence. Includes letters from Vanett Lawler, Executive Secretary of the MENC.
Slonimsky, Nicolas	141/29	1946-83	4 letters plus additional materials	English (2) and Spanish (2)	Ginastera provides updates to Slonimsky's <i>Music of Latin America</i> ; also includes greeting cards from Aurora Nátola-Ginastera.
Spivacke, Harold	7/23-24	1959-83	6 letters	English	Features two-way personal correspondence involving Alberto Ginastera, Mercedes Ginastera, Aurora Nátola Ginastera, Rose Marie Spivacke, <sup>11</sup> and Harold Spivacke. Includes a few duplicate copies of business letters housed in the Music Division Old Correspondence collection. Also contains an unpublished Ginastera speech, a catalogue of the composer's works, concert programs, business cards, telegrams, holiday cards, and condolence messages.

It is impossible to explore all of these materials during a 40-minute presentation. For this reason, I will limit myself to Ginastera's correspondence with two prominent musical figures. First, I examine his letters to Aaron Copland, which open a window into

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<sup>11</sup> Rose Marie Spivacke was a music educator and conductor, who married Harold Spivacke in 1955.

the composer's relationship with his teacher, mentor, and friend. Next, I explore his correspondence with Harold Spivacke, Former Head of the Music Division at the LC, who played a pivotal role in his career. Together, these collections offer a fascinating glimpse into the interior world of a musician whose written thoughts and words were little known. They illuminate key moments from his life, reveal insights into his creative process, and call into question traditional assumptions about his compositional development—all themes I will highlight in today's presentation.

### **The Copland Letters**

Ginastera's lifelong association with Copland began in September 1941. That year, the U.S. composer traveled to South America under the auspices of the Office of Inter-American Affairs and the Guggenheim Foundation. One of Copland's main objectives was to identify young Latin American composers who would qualify for funding to study in the United States. Copland encouraged the twenty-five-year-old Ginastera to apply for a Guggenheim Fellowship, which he received the following year. Although Ginastera was forced to delay his acceptance of this award until World War II had ended, he corresponded regularly with Copland during the intervening years.<sup>12</sup>

In his Guggenheim grant application, Ginastera proposed to study music for the cinema, theater, and radio under Copland, whom he considered one of the leading contemporary authorities on the subject. Not surprisingly, film music figured prominently

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<sup>12</sup> Emily Abrams Ansari, "Masters of the President's Music: Cold War Composers and the United States Government" (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 2010), 22–27, 129–33, and 148–49; Jennifer Campbell, "Shaping Solidarity: Music, Diplomacy, and Inter-American Relations, 1936-1946" (Ph.D. diss., University of Connecticut, 2010), 1–2, 54–61, 64–66, and 93–96; Copland and Vivian Perlis, *Copland: 1900 through 1942* (New York: St. Martin's, 1984), 323–25; Howard Pollack, *Aaron Copland: The Life and Work of an Uncommon Man* (New York: Henry Holt, 1999; reprint, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 228–30; Alberto Ginastera, letters to Aaron Copland, 20 November 1942, 26 February 1944, and 2 September 1944, Aaron Copland Collection, box 255, Library of Congress.



in the early correspondence of the two musicians. In 1942, Ginastera wrote to Copland with the following details about his musical activities: “I have been very busy lately because I finished my *Sinfonía Porteña* and then I wrote the music for an Argentine film called *Malambo*; if you can see it in New York, please send me your commentary.” Copland, in turn, reported on cinematic projects of his own.<sup>13</sup>

Once World War II had ended, Ginastera took advantage of the Guggenheim Fellowship to study in the United States. In late November of 1945, as he set sail for New York, he wrote eagerly to Copland: “I am traveling in the Río Jachal to the United States to enter upon my fellowship in the Guggenheim Foundation. I intend to spend one year there, so I hope I shall have the pleasure of meeting you there and spend lovely moments with you.”<sup>14</sup>

Unfortunately, Copland did not have many moments to spend with the impressionable Ginastera. Faced with an immanent deadline for the premiere of his Third Symphony, he had withdrawn into a life of relative seclusion until the work was complete. Ginastera must have been disappointed by the relatively scant amount of time that Copland had available to spend with him. The two musicians got together when Copland traveled to New York City, but these meetings did not take place as often as Ginastera would have liked. On 21 March 1946 the Argentine musician wrote to Copland and asked if he wanted to come down to the city to examine his latest orchestral compositions. He also requested information about the summer festival at Tanglewood. One month later, after receiving no reply, Ginastera added a gastronomic incentive, inviting Copland to “eat some scallops together.” When by early May, Copland had still not responded, Ginastera entreated: “When you are in town, will you please call me so, if I may see you [for] five minutes, you can tell me which hotel [in Tanglewood] is more convenient for me?”<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Ginastera, “Proyectos de estudio” [Guggenheim grant application]. Ginastera, letters to Copland, 20 November 1942 and 2 September 1944.

<sup>14</sup> Ginastera, letter to Copland, 30 November 1945.

<sup>15</sup> Aaron Copland and Vivian Perlis, *Copland since 1943* (New York: St. Martin’s, 1989), 64–65; Pollack, *Aaron Copland*, 178–79; Ginastera, letters to Copland, 21 January

Eventually, Ginastera received the information he needed and made plans to travel to the 1946 Berkshire Festival in Tanglewood. There he attended Copland's orchestration and composition classes and forged a lifelong connection with a circle of Latin American composers, among them Juan Orrego-Salas, Julián Orbón, Roque Cordero, and Héctor Tosar. For the young Ginastera, that summer at Tanglewood was transformational. As he recalled six years later in a letter to Copland: "Now you are almost on the way to Tanglewood. Wonderful place! I will always keep the best souvenirs of the six weeks I spent there! At that time I remember I was writing my *Lamentations* and could work with such peace!"<sup>16</sup>

In time, Ginastera and Copland came to regard each other as equals. By 1949, the Argentine musician had stopped calling his former teacher "Maestro" or "Mr. Copland" and began to address him as "Dear friend Copland" or "Dear Aaron." In these letters, Ginastera shared news of his latest triumphs, such as the successful completion of his First String Quartet. He reported on founding the Conservatorio de Música y Arte Escénico in La Plata, which Argentines upheld as a pedagogical model of the period.<sup>17</sup>

Yet, Ginastera also turned to Copland in times of despair. He struggled with repressive conditions during the first two Perón presidencies, particularly in 1952, when the Argentine government removed him from his directorship at La Plata. He confided to Copland: "This was a terrible blow in my economic life, and, I must confess ... in my spiritual life too, because I understood that all my efforts of four years were lost." Fortunately, Ginastera had just received a commission to write his First Piano Sonata, which sustained him in those economically lean years. As he recounted to Copland:

The work which I had to write for this special date made me forget the bitter events of the Conservatory. Now, thinking more calmly [about] the whole affair, it seems to me a favourable change and a real luck in my composer's life, because

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1946, 21 March 1946, 23 April 1946 ("para tener el agrado de invitarlo a comer unos 'scallops'"), and 1 May 1946.

<sup>16</sup> Schwartz-Kates, *Ginastera: Research and Information Guide*, 7; Ginastera, letter to Copland, 29 April 1952.

<sup>17</sup> Ginastera, letter to Copland, 6 September 1949.

... I was so overworked that I could hardly write during the last two years. Now I am writing very enthusiastically ... [and] I am happy because I am composing again.<sup>18</sup>

Ginastera compensated for his lost income by accepting new commissions, by hosting a weekly radio show, and by retaining the one composition course at the Conservatorio Nacional that he was allowed to keep.<sup>19</sup> Additionally, he composed film scores, several of which had ideological subtexts that upheld the values of the Perón regime that had just ousted him. In 1952, the composer confided to Copland:

I have written very little since the [First] String Quartet. Life is very difficult for composers in our country. We have to teach, make film music, [and] give lectures ... and time passes without producing the most important thing: music.<sup>20</sup>

Because the Peronist government subsidized and controlled the Argentine motion picture industry, Ginastera now perceived writing film scores and “composing” as two antithetical and mutually exclusive activities.

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<sup>18</sup> Ginastera, letter to Copland, 11 December 1952; Schwartz-Kates, *Ginastera: Research and Information Guide*, 8, 61.

<sup>19</sup> It is unclear why the Perón government allowed Ginastera to keep his composition course at the Conservatorio Nacional, while dismissing him from his directorship at La Plata. No coherent policy regulated the relationship between artists and the government during the Perón years. There was no central office that blacklisted specific individuals; much depended on the attitude of local party bosses. Since the conservatories were located in two different cities, government functionaries responded in different ways. Another factor is that Ginastera had different responsibilities in the two positions. The directorate at the conservatory in La Plata was a public position that the Peronist party would have viewed as a political appointment. In contrast, his work on the composition faculty in Buenos Aires was less visible, and therefore more secure. I would like to thank the Argentine scholars Clara Kriger and Silvina Mansilla for their valuable insights into this complex issue. More information on how Ginastera earned a living can be found in a letter to Charles Seeger, 8 October 1953, Charles Seeger Collection, LC.

<sup>20</sup> Ginastera, letter to Copland, 29 April 1952.

He channeled his lifelong interest in combining music, narrative, and scenic action into a new fascination with opera. Here, as with film scores, Copland set the precedent. By 1950, the North American composer had finished writing for the Hollywood film industry and, in 1954, premiered his second opera, *The Tender Land*.<sup>21</sup> Ginastera, who had once conspicuously avoided opera, suddenly found the subject irresistible. As he exclaimed to Copland: “It must be exciting to write an opera and I understand the interest of American composers in this old and revived medium. Three days before the premiere, he urged Copland: “I hope you will tell me your impressions of the performance. I should like to know more about it because the performance of your first opera has aroused the interest of many people throughout the world.”<sup>22</sup>

After the fall of the Perón government, Ginastera re-evaluated his aesthetics, and, in 1963, accepted a commission for his first opera, *Don Rodrigo*, based on the legend of the last Visigothic King of Spain. Although the sound and style of this work differed markedly from *The Tender Land*, we can safely assume that one of the catalysts that moved Ginastera toward opera was Copland.<sup>23</sup>

As the years passed, contact between the two composers faded, as their lives moved in different directions. It is possible that Ginastera never saw his friend Aaron again after he moved to Switzerland. Yet, Copland’s musical representations of the Americas left a powerful impression on him, as he aimed to create a distinctive sound and

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<sup>21</sup> Copland’s last Hollywood film score was *The Heiress* (1949). His motion picture music for *Something Wild* (1961)—created for the independent director and producer Jack Garfein—was not a large studio production. Pollack, *Aaron Copland*, 469–78, 492–96.

<sup>22</sup> Ginastera, letters to Copland, 28 January 1953 and 29 March 1954.

<sup>23</sup> It took several years after the 1955 ouster of Perón for the country to enter into a new phase of artistic renovation. Ginastera produced his last film scores in 1958 and then fell silent until 1960. When he started to compose again, he cultivated a non-folkloric idiom with a tendency toward dodecaphonic serialism. His shift toward a more dissonant atonal language with a free use of serialism may have paralleled tendencies in Copland’s music of the 1950s.

style that captured the contemporary spirit of Argentina. After listening to recordings of Copland's Clarinet Concerto and Piano Quintet, Ginastera wrote to him:

I think I told you this before but I cannot help thinking of it when I listen to some of your new works: your music is not only the expression of a strong personality, but it represents the deep and real sense of your country. This is what I would like to do myself. To be not a voice, but the condensed voices of a whole country.<sup>24</sup>

Nonetheless, it would be simplistic to assume that the Copland-Ginastera influence extended in only one direction. Striking parallels between the two composers' works suggest that ideas flowed freely between them. For example, the two ballets—Ginastera's *Estancia* (1941) and Copland's *Rodeo* (1942)—both take place on the open range, use stories that parallel one another, and employ kinetically charged finales based on vernacular dance rhythms. Likewise, Ginastera's *Lamentations* (1946) and Copland's *In the Beginning* (1947) are *a cappella* choral works that use Biblical texts and non-folkloric styles that stand apart from the composer's normative music of the period. Ginastera and Copland both wrote pastoral duos that include woodwind instruments. The Argentine composer created a neoclassical Duo for flute and oboe (1946), whereas Copland produced a retrospective chamber piece for flute and piano (1971) that harked back to his earlier sketches of a trio for clarinet, flute, and bassoon (1943).<sup>25</sup>

The relationship between these and similar clusters of works suggests inter-relationships that merit further exploration. Because the LC correspondence clarifies which pieces the two composers owned and knew at various stages of their careers, it establishes a chronology that supports future studies of influence.<sup>26</sup> Rather than assuming that compositional models flowed from North to South and from teacher to

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<sup>24</sup> Ginastera, letter to Copland, 28 January 1953.

<sup>25</sup> Pollack, *Aaron Copland*, 363–74, 421–23; Copland and Perlis, *Copland since 1943*, 449–50.

<sup>26</sup> Other sources that shed light on this issue are Copland's South American diaries (box 243, Copland Collection, LC), and William Owen's transcribed interview with Ginastera, 23 November 1981 (Aaron Copland Oral History Collection, interview no. Cop 946b, Yale University Oral History of American Music).

student, the LC correspondence opens the possibility of exploring intercultural influences in a way that accounts for both North and South American perspectives.

### **The Spivacke Correspondence**

Harold Spivacke was best known as Chief of the Music Division at the Library of Congress—a position he held from 1937 until his retirement in 1972. In addition, Spivacke served as President of the Music Library Association. He was a Founding Member of the American Musicological Society and Vice President of the American Society for Comparative Musicology. He held positions with the Fulbright Advisory Selection Committee, the Pan American Union, and UNESCO. He championed the work of contemporary composers through his leadership in the Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge Foundation and the Serge Koussevitzky Music Foundation, both of which fell under the auspices of the LC. In this capacity, he played a vital role in promoting Ginastera’s international career.<sup>27</sup>

Ginastera first met Spivacke during his Guggenheim Years when he visited the Library of Congress. He recalled that: “I kept a wonderful remembrance of my visit to the Library of Congress, which impressed me, not only by the importance in number and quality of its books and music, but also by its splendid organization.” In 1956, ten years after his first visit to the library, Ginastera received a commission from the Coolidge Foundation for his Second String Quartet. The terms of his contract stipulated that he deposit the autograph score of the work in the LC. The composer was deeply moved by this request and expressed his gratitude in a letter to Spivacke:

When I visited the Music Division of the Library of Congress ten years ago and you showed me the manuscripts of the great masters of the past and present I could not even dream that one day a manuscript of mine would also belong to this magnificent collection. In fact, I must confess, that your offer of

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<sup>27</sup> Carlton Sprague Smith, “Harold Spivacke (1904–1977),” *Musical Quarterly* 63, no. 3 ( July 1977): 425–27; Philip Tacka, “*Appalachian Spring*’s ‘Catalytic Agent’: Harold Spivacke’s Role in the Evolution of an American Classic,” *International Journal of Musicology* 8 (1999): 321–46.

a commission from the Coolidge Foundation touched me very deeply because this is a great honour shared only with the leading composers of contemporary music.<sup>28</sup>

Of all the aspects of this prestigious commission that Ginastera could have emphasized, the one that mattered most to him was the honor of having his work preserved at the LC.

Ginastera's contact with the Library of Congress coincided with his activity as a founder and director of Argentine music institutions. Throughout his career, he instituted three music schools, beginning in 1948 with the conservatory in La Plata. Ten years later, he inaugurated the music faculty at the Universidad Católica Argentina (UCA). Finally, in 1962, he established a third institution, the Centro Latinoamericano de Altos Estudios Musicales (CLAEM) at the Instituto Torcuato di Tella. In all three cases, before founding each institution, Ginastera connected with the LC.

The first two times, he visited the library in person. The third time, he was unable to travel to Washington and instead wrote to the unsuspecting Spivacke, requesting that the LC librarian send him: "all the information, publications, booklets, magazines, or books in connection with the Library of Congress." We have no record of how Spivacke responded or how much material he sent, but we do know that he mailed Ginastera several publications, including the Music Library Association journal *Notes*, to which the composer had requested a subscription.<sup>29</sup>

Ginastera also called on Spivacke for help with reference questions. In his second opera *Bomarzo*, he created a scene known as the "Erotic Ballet," with a text based on the word "love" in many languages. Imagine Spivacke's surprise when the composer asked him to help research this lexicon of international meanings! Ginastera's request arrived on Spivacke's desk only six weeks before the opera opened, prompting the LC librarian to call upon the help of his wife and staff in a weekend marathon of research activity.

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<sup>28</sup> Ginastera, letters to Harold Spivacke, 16 December 1950, 2 March 1956, and 14 March 1956, Music Division Old Correspondence Collection, LC.

<sup>29</sup> Ginastera, letters to Spivacke, 5 November 1962 and 30 January 1963; Spivacke, letter to Ginastera, 19 November 1962.

Spivacke's desperate search for "love" began on Friday at 5:15 p.m., just as the library was about to close for the evening. A telephone message from an LC staff member read:

Dr. Spivacke (Chief, Music Div.) has asked Mr. Land for word LOVE in 26 languages. He already has English, French, Spanish, Italian, German, Russian, Polish, Hungarian. Needs 18 more. If necessary, call Orientalia Saturday and African Section Monday A.M. Call Mr. Ulrich Monday A.M. so list can be prepared.<sup>30</sup>

On Saturday, the Orientalia Division provided translations in Indonesian, Malay, Japanese, Korean, Chinese, Vietnamese, Arabic, Turkish, Armenian, Lithuanian, Latvian, and Greek. Words in Afrikaans, Swahili, and other languages were added later. These materials were stapled to a cover memorandum with a subject line that read: "Dr. Spivacke's request for word 'love' in 26 languages."<sup>31</sup>

Ginastera responded gratefully to the Spivackes:

Thank you for the list of words—love in so many languages, some of them very peculiar and with beautiful and strange sounds! They were very useful for the scene called The Eros Garden, which is really a fantastic dream the Duke of Bomarzo has. The words will be whispered or shouted by the chorus and they will be mixed with other sounds like sighs, breaths, moans, laughs. A very strange and fascinating part.<sup>32</sup>

Musically, this scene builds to a huge climax in a thinly veiled reference to the sexual act. Amid the ecstatic cries, the chorus shouts the word "love" in the world's many languages. This was how Spivacke's assiduous research ended!

In addition to moonlighting as Ginastera's research assistant, Spivacke played a proactive role in shaping his career. He promoted the type of music that he himself liked

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<sup>30</sup> BAB [initials of staff member], telephone services record received from Mr. Ulrich, Library of Congress, 31 March 1967, Music Division Old Correspondence, LC.

<sup>31</sup> J[effie] B. S[mith], telephone service record received from Mr. Land, 1 April 1967, Music Division Old Correspondence, LC; Jeffie B. Smith, memo to Mrs. Gervehr, 3 April 1967, Music Division Old Correspondence, LC.

<sup>32</sup> Ginastera, letter to the Spivackes, 28 April 1967.



by offering Ginastera artistic and financial incentives. On the other hand, he discouraged those projects that he found less appealing by withdrawing his support from them.

In 1946, when Ginastera and Spivacke first met, Spivacke asked the young composer if he had a string quartet to perform on an upcoming concert series at the LC. At the time, Ginastera did not, but he began to contemplate Spivacke's idea. Two years later, he mailed Spivacke his First String Quartet, noting that it was Spivacke's suggestion that inspired his idea for the piece. The LC librarian secured a Washington performance of the work by the Budapest String Quartet at the Library of Congress. Meanwhile, he offered Ginastera a Coolidge Foundation Commission for a new piece of chamber music and strongly encouraged him to produce a second string quartet.<sup>33</sup>

From this point forward, Spivacke wielded his influence to promote Ginastera's career. He recommended the composer to the Koussevitzky Music Foundation. He secured commissions from the Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge Foundation. As head of the Music Division, he organized and coordinated the activities of these two foundations, so his endorsements of composers carried great weight. Moreover, as manager of the annual Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge Foundation Festival, he negotiated artists' contracts and established the terms of their financial agreements, thus exerting control over the music they created.

Meanwhile, Spivacke did everything in his power to prevent Ginastera from composing a cantata based on the prose poem *Platero y yo*, by the Spanish writer, Juan Ramón Jiménez. At first Ginastera refused to accept no for an answer. He urged Spivacke to reconsider the work on two separate occasions. The LC librarian remained tactful, but firm. Although he never said no to Ginastera directly, he came up with every conceivable reason to oppose the idea. In addition, Spivacke quashed plans for another vocal composition based on *The Diary of Anne Frank*. Faced with Spivacke's continued resistance, Ginastera had no choice but to concede. Instead, he focused attention on those

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<sup>33</sup> Ginastera, letter to Spivacke, 16 December 1950; Spivacke, letters to Ginastera, 2 March 1956 and 22 March 1956.

projects that were sure to win his influential mentor's approval and for which he could readily obtain commissions.<sup>34</sup>

In general, Spivacke supported Ginastera's endeavors. Yet, the composer's extreme perfectionism and his slow speed of composition created tensions in the relationship. As Ginastera confessed to Spivacke:

As you know, the problem with me is that creation is always for me a painful and slow process. I cannot write quickly, as other composers do, and I am never satisfied with my first ideas. I am always struggling with my own self and trying to attain perfection although I know that this ideal is ... unattainable. That is why I dislike promising fixed dates, because in many cases it would be almost impossible to keep my word.<sup>35</sup>

With the Second String Quartet, Spivacke took a sympathetic approach and reassured Ginastera: "We know that the creative activity of a composer is something that cannot be geared to a clock. ... I shall continue to hope that the work will be ready on time. But, if it is not, I shall not hold it against you." Indeed, Ginastera took almost two additional years to complete his Second String Quartet. Yet, Spivacke understood, and, in gratitude, Ginastera dedicated the piece to him.<sup>36</sup>

Yet, during a second Coolidge Foundation commission—this time for the *Cantata Bomarzo*—the collaboration did not go smoothly. Although Spivacke contracted the piece almost a year before the performance, Ginastera barely completed the work in time to fulfill his commitment. Six weeks before the concert, Spivacke reached the point of

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<sup>34</sup> Ginastera, letters to Spivacke, 7 July 1961, 2 October 1961, 22 December 1961, and 1 April 1962; Spivacke, letters to Ginastera, 22 March 1956, 18 July 1961, 13 October 1961, and 17 April 1962.

<sup>35</sup> Ginastera, letter to Spivacke, 28 August 1957.

<sup>36</sup> Ginastera, letters to Spivacke, 18 January 1958 and 8 March 1958; Spivacke, letter to Ginastera, 20 April 1956.

desperation. He cabled Ginastera, anxiously requesting that he rush the conductor's score immediately.<sup>37</sup>

Ginastera attempted to reassure Spivacke by describing all aspects of the performance—all aspects, that is, except the music. From his description, it was impossible to determine whether he had started—much less completed—the work. He enclosed the texts for the singer and narrator, the titles of the movements, a list of the instruments, and the names of all the people on his guest list. He even attempted to ingratiate Spivacke by offering him the dedication of the work.<sup>38</sup> Yet, in spite of these assurances, the score did not materialize until eight days before the premiere.<sup>39</sup>

After the Festival ended, Spivacke sent Ginastera a letter in the style of a Harry Potter “howler,” in which he vented his frustrations with the last-minute state of affairs.<sup>40</sup> In the end, however, Spivacke remained one of Ginastera's most devoted supporters and loyal friends. When the composer applied for a second Guggenheim Fellowship, he asked Spivacke to write a letter of recommendation. This is what the LC librarian had to say:

I consider Alberto Ginastera to be one of the leading composers in the world. I have never heard a work of his that I did not enjoy. I can say that many of his works have thrilled me on first hearing. He is a very gifted man with great imagination. He is very sincere, and when he undertakes to write a composition, he really works at it day and night. I must confess that when he first told me he

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<sup>37</sup> Spivacke, letter to Ginastera, 9 December 1963; Spivacke, telegram to Ginastera, 18 September 1964.

<sup>38</sup> Ginastera, letter to Spivacke, 21 September 1964.

<sup>39</sup> A last-minute postal strike prevented Ginastera from mailing the *Cantata Bomarzo* score to Washington. The Argentine musician asked Luigi Dallapiccola, who was traveling from Buenos Aires to New York, to hand-carry the manuscript. In an eleventh-hour telefax, Ginastera instructed Spivacke to send a courier to the Great Northern Hotel in New York where Dallapiccola would be staying. Even though the composer agreed to cover the expense, this news must have come as an unhappy surprise to Spivacke at such a late date. Ginastera, telefax to Spivacke, [ca. 21–23 October 1964].

<sup>40</sup> Spivacke, letter to Ginastera, 19 November 1964.

was going to write an opera, I was a little worried because he had not written any. He has now written two, and they have both proved enormously successful. I feel certain that this third one will be equally important. I am also delighted to learn that he is going to write a string quartet because his first two are excellent. I recommend him without the slightest reservation and sincerely hope that you will give favorable consideration to his application.<sup>41</sup>

Until now, the debt that Ginastera owed Harold Spivacke has escaped the notice of scholars. Yet, the composer expressed no doubt about the role that the LC Librarian played in shaping his career. After receiving Spivacke's death announcement, Ginastera expressed his gratitude with the following words:

[Howard Spivacke] represented ... my international consecration. He let doors be opened for me—by means of the performances at the Library of Congress and the commissions for the Festivals which he organized—not only vis-à-vis the American public but also the international critics. And those unforgettable premieres of the Piano Concerto no. 1 and the *Cantata para América mágica* also contributed to modify the course of Latin American music, since, because of that extraordinary success, the Rockefeller Foundation chose me to create and organize ... [CLAEM], from which came the new generation of Latin American composers. ... Harold's work has had an unbelievable transcendency in all sectors of music and his action has reached all continents.<sup>42</sup>

To understand this tribute, it is critical to highlight the reference to CLAEM—the third Argentine music school that Ginastera founded. Like the Latin American Music Center at IU, which the Rockefeller Foundation concurrently established in the United States, CLAEM was a major musical center that attracted composers, scholars, and teachers throughout the Americas. Ginastera believed that Spivacke's endorsement gave him the requisite prestige to win the support of the Rockefeller Foundation. Thus, from his perspective, Spivacke's support had a global transcendence since it nurtured his own

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<sup>41</sup> Spivacke, Guggenheim Fellowship recommendation, 28 March 1969.

<sup>42</sup> Ginastera, letter to Rose Marie Spivacke, 22 August 1977.

creative development and, by extension, led to the formation of a new generation of Latin American musicians.

To conclude, the LC correspondence brings to light an intriguing set of relationships. It reveals fresh details about the Ginastera-Copland connection. This relationship has remained unknown, in large part because the two composers' music sounds so different. Yet, a strong bond existed—one that operated at a deep aesthetic level and that cannot easily be translated into tangible sonic terms. The U. S. composer Jacob Druckman described his relationship with Copland this way: “Aaron’s influence on my music was not direct: I don’t think my music ever sounds like Aaron Copland’s music. The influence was more as an example.”<sup>43</sup> For Ginastera, the Copland “example” led him to discover his own original voice that expressed the musical consciousness of his nation. His success, in turn, animated Copland, who shared his goal of fostering a contemporary musical culture of the Americas.

The case of Spivacke is more complex. It is a story about agency—the agency of a single remarkable individual who was neither a composer nor a performer, but who indelibly shaped Ginastera’s career. This body of correspondence proves significant in the way that it causes us to re-think traditional assumptions about the composer’s development. Ginastera’s early creative production centered around songs, piano character pieces, ballets, choral works, incidental music, and film scores—genres tied to explicit narrative texts. Beginning in the late-1940s, the composer began to change his focus, turning to sonatas, string quartets, concertos, and large-scale orchestral music that adhered to an abstract formalist conception. Even though Ginastera may have come by these changes naturally, according to his own creative disposition, the LC correspondence suggests that Spivacke provided strong financial and artistic incentives to compose in the genres he did. As the letters show, Ginastera tried unsuccessfully several times to negotiate LC contracts for vocal compositions. He had strong aspirations to create music for the human voice that extended throughout his career. The extent to which he was able to realize these aspirations, however, depended more on the contractual terms of his commissions with the LC, as mediated by Spivacke, than on any

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<sup>43</sup> Copland and Perlis, *Copland after 1943*, 130.

organic sense of progression. The Spivacke correspondence thus offers an important example of the way that music institutions and their leaders play powerful roles in shaping composer's careers.

Viewed as a whole, the LC correspondence situates Ginastera at the crossroads of a rich inter-cultural exchange—an appropriate space for a composer who focused his career in both Argentina and the United States. The LC correspondence chronicles this experience and attests to its significance. At times such as the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Latin American Music Center, when we as scholars engage in transnational dialogues that extend across the Americas, Ginastera's voice contributes richly to the conversation.

Miami, Florida

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