

The Recorder in Argentina

by Gonzalo Ariel Juan

In Argentina, as in most countries of the world, the recorder is closely linked to teaching in primary schools. However, in addition to its educational role, in this country there is a fairly significant number of works written for this instrument. There are about 150 works for recorder, in which it is combined with other instruments or as unaccompanied solo. This research is based on interviews I've done over two years to the most important players and teachers in my country.

The recorder has three different pathways for entry into Argentina: through Filóstetes Martorella, through the Collegium Musicum of Buenos Aires and through the renowned composer Alberto Ginastera.

Thanks to Martorella, the recorder was introduced in the introductory courses at the National Conservatory in the early 1970s. It was the first time that this instrument came in an academic field. Near 1977 was introduced as first career Municipal Conservatory and then at the National, but the complete career (with 10 years of schooling) was not implemented until about '90.

Returning to the theme Martorella, in the late 40s a 'curious' concert was held at the Museum of Decorative Arts. I say "curious" because it was a recorder concert! They played some dances of the Renaissance, which, in a very primitive way, came at the hands of the performers at that time (it should be located in the reality of the time, which is very different from the one we live in today).

According to Alberto Devoto, the instruments of that time in Argentina seemed "broomsticks". "They were very ungrateful instruments to play".

Martorella was originally a clarinet teacher. But paradoxically it was one of the pioneers in the field of the recorder. He was self-taught, because where would you find a recorder teacher? At that time, he was one of the first masters of the instrument.

The second way (the Collegium) was through Susana Graetzer. She (wife of Guillermo Graetzer, founder of the Collegium Musicum) studied recorder in Europe with one of the daughters of the Trap family. This must have occurred around 1948. The first things with recorder for children were made at this time. Later I will talk about this topic.

The third and final way (Ginastera), was at the time he became director of the *Conservatorio de La Plata*. At that time he traveled to Europe and on his return brought an

instrument that he didn't know what it was, and put it in the hands of a teacher who was teaching at the Catholic University, well known and trusted by Ginastera. Obviously, this unknown instrument was nothing more and nothing less than a recorder. But this way is nothing more than an anecdotal question, since for this way the recorder would not make any kind of progress.

However, so far we have seen the three ways of entry of this instrument to Argentina, but then what's happened? According to the interviews I did, the first musician that began to study recorder was Ricardo Graetzer. He started at age 10 in the Collegium Musicum (this was more or less in 1953). So, We can say that the first institution dedicated to teaching the instrument was the Collegium. He tells us that in his teens he formed a group called *ARS Antiqua*, where there were recorder, harpsichord and violin among other instruments. From that group have been many famous names today in my country, for example, Andrés Spiller, Antonio Sergio Siminovich and Antonio Spiller. Some years later, Mr. Graetzer would be the recorder player at the *Camerata Bariloche* (conducted at that time by Alberto Lisy). But following with the theme of the Collegium, another student who has come from there is Mario Videla. He began his studies, like Mr. Graetzer, with Susana Graetzer. He told me that at the time he was a student of Guillermo Graetzer at composition and, the same Graetzer suggested to him to study recorder. "I had no idea what it was," he says. But he finally agreed. He says that "Over the months, I made little progress working to have a certain ability to communicate the basics of the recorder. Then, I did the assistantship in the Collegium Musicum. After this first experience with the recorder, I became professor at the Collegium, children teacher". With the passage of time in the institution a department Adult opened, and there also began the idea of introductory courses with recorder. That was about the year 1964,

In 1969 appears one of the most important groups of recorders in Argentina. It's the year of the creation of the *Conjunto Pro-Arte de Flautas Dulces*. They target only to play repertoire for recorders. The players were: Mario Videla; Gustavo Samela; Ezequiel Recondo and Gabriel Garrido. After Recondo left and Ricardo Graetzer came. Then Garrido also left and Andrés Spiller entered. There was also a time that Denis Alpert and Héctor Rodríguez were playing. This group made several recordings, for example: *The Recorder: story and music; The recorder in France; The Recorder in England; The Recorder in Italy and The Recorder in Spain*. The group was active approximately 20 years. Following the theme of the ensembles, there were plenty in Argentina who used the recorder. I've named *ARS Antiqua*, the *Camerata Bariloche* and the *Conjunto Pro-Arte*, but there were many more, such as: *Recorder Ensemble; Promúsica de Rosario; Conjunto In Nomine; GEIM* (Experimentation Group and Musical Improvisation) *Conjunto de Música*

Antigua del Collegium Musicum; Argentino Instrumental Ensemble, Musica Nova; Levare; Belgrano's Chamber Ensemble; Vocal and Instrumental Ensemble; Quadro Barroco; Aulodia; Recorder Ensemble of Conservatorio Municipal Manuel de Falla and, more contemporary *Antiquus; Música Imaginaria, La Nada, Zerphiro; Autistas-Fl;* among the most prominent.

Now, one of the most important events that have happened in Argentina has been the coming of Hans-Martin Linde to our country. This happened in 1965. After that, he returned two or three times. But it was not only the presence of the "great teacher" that captivated the interest of the present, but their "recorders". It was the first time that the people saw a recorder of ivory. Linde established a great relationship with the Collegium Musicum, and through him, the firsts hand made recorders came into the country (until then only serial recorders like Moeck were available). Finally we can say that the sound of the recorder would be "sweet" (argentinian name for recorder is "Flauta dulce").

But not only the great Swiss recorder player visited Argentina. In 1967/68 also came Ferdinand Conrad (Alberto Devoto, a year later would travel to study with him in Hannover, Germany). But undoubtedly the "shock" was produced by Linde. Mario Videla told me that he learned to "choose" the editions, in which the continuo was well done or how it could eventually change by the *cifrado*. Things that at the time were not taken into consideration by the Argentinian musicians.

As we have seen, the recorder is not too much time between the argentinians. However, there are something over 150 works for the instrument. This has much to do with the composer and recorder player Alberto Devoto. He was one of the pioneers of the "professional recorder" in our country and thus has a lot of dedicated work (about 14). Also, by having contact with composers, he tells us that he insisted to be composed to this "new" instrument. Another great incentive was the *Conjunto Pro-Arte*. They also have some works especially written to them.

Among the most important composers we highlight Eduardo Alemann (which has nine works for recorder), Carlos Roqué Alsina, Roque de Pedro, Gerardo Gandini, Roberto García Morillo; Marta Lambertini, Carlos Guastavino, Salvador Ranieri, Patricia Martínez and many others.

The earliest work of which we have knowledge is Honorio Siccardi's *Títere Sabio* (Puppet Wise). This work dates from 1936(!). Originally for clarinet in B flat, but a recording of February 10th, 1943 appears a version for recorder. The work is dedicated "to the virtuoso performer Filotteto Martorella" (the name of Martorella never knew quite well, sometimes appears as in this case or, Filóstetes).

But the first original work for recorder is Eduardo Alemann's *Sonatina Francesa*, for

recorder and guitar. This work is published in 1956, which suggests that it corresponds to the beginning of the decade. It is built in a neoclassical-tonal language. It is not a "vanguard" work. Is rather in a conservative style. The first vanguard work is Carlos Roque Alsina's *Tres Movimientos para Flauta dulce*. This work is published in 1962 and is supposed to be the end of '50. These movements "rub" minimalism style at times and other times have "encounters" with the New York School (Cage, Brown, Feldman, etc..). It is the first work that "shows" a little more the possibilities of the instrument.

The first work for recorder and tape made by an Argentinian composer appears in 1973. It is Salvador Ranieri's *Variantes del Ser*. The tape is made with the same sounds of the recorder but processed. No sounds are created. It works with repetitions, reductions and augmentations of rhythmic and melodic formulas. It is a very interesting thing that you can reach from the combination of these two elements. We had to wait 25 years for a new work with mixed media. It's María of the Angels Esteves's *Chambre 40* (1998), dedicated to the me.

It would be interesting to note that about 1970 the Argentina Association Recorder born. It is the first partnership with legal personality in the country. And in 1978, through this, on National Radio, a program is created, dedicated to this instrument. The program was called "The recorder in Argentina and in the world" and had a continuity of about 5 years.

Marcelo Birman told me that the program was in the name of Alberto Devoto and he appeared as a collaborator.

Regard to the books and other publications, the first book of soprano recorder method appears in 1968. It was called *Iniciación a la flauta dulce* and was written by Mario Videla and Judith Akoschky. In 1970 came the second volume in 1972 and the third and last. The book present a progressive teaching soprano recorder, with interesting musical examples. First it was intended for children, but eventually was used (and still remains) for everyone. But Mario Videla published other books: around 1975 *Fantasias & Variations of seventeenth-century Dutch masters*. This was the first book to "professionals recorder players" because the content was not for students of initiation. Later came (always written or supervised by Mario Videla) *Dances of the Renaissance* (three volumes and ensemble of recorders) *Greensleeves with variations; instrumental forms of the Renaissance; Examples of ornamentation of the Renaissance*, and then small arrangements for two or three recordes of different authors, from Telemann to Mozart. Later came the *Method for alto recorder* (two volumes). Ricardo Graetzer also published several books, including: *Dances of the eighteenth century; Dance ancient Indian and Dances Indo-American*. Alberto Devoto published a method book for the soprano recorder and a text book on the recorder in general (that's where a catalog of Argentine works for recorder appears for the first

time). There are other "minor" methods for soprano recorder.

Regarding publications, on May 1st, 1988 appears *Encuentro de Flautadulcistas*. It lasted about 2 or 3 years. It arose from the first visits of Gabriel Garrido. It was a bulletin that come out every three months and spoke in general about the recorder (concerts, courses, articles, etc..). But unfortunately it was short-lived.

Speaking of Garrido, he and other argentinians have had great impact on the outside. Garrido currently teaches in Switzerland. Pedro Memelsdorff teaches at Civica Scuola di Musica in Milan. Another argentinian, perhaps less known is Manfred Zimmerman, who has published a method for children on the recorder (teaches in Germany).

Turning to the composers, we can see a wide range in the organics. There are pieces for recorder alone, for recorder and piano, recorder and guitar, for two, three or four recorders, for recorder and recited, for recorder and harpsichord, for recorder and violin, there are works that include amplification: for recorder and orchestra, for recorder and percussion, for recorder and electric bass and recorder and tape. The material is really diverse. However, there are few composers who have entered the field of experimentation instrument. I think a lot has to do the same Alberto Devoto who doesn't really agree with this kind of music. There are also works that border this area, as the work of Ranieri or more actually the works of María de los Angeles Esteves and Mariano García Berardi, but are the least.

In Argentina there is only one luthier for recorders. His name is Marcelo Gurovich. He tells us how he got started in this art: "Someone brought me a recorder from Germany, from a luthier named Melherz, and, it didn't sound well. I tried to connect with him, I tried to see who could help me here, and nothing. (...) Then I had that recorder, I put it in a drawer because it didn't work, the guy never answered me, until Garrido came and gave a course, 3-4 classes, and after the courses he showed that we can open the recorder, you could disarm it, and he gave a very rough idea of what could be done with minimal things, clean it; the block is very high; things like that, and things you can get to do, and well, then I do something, so I started to investigate." Well, as we can see, all the starts in Argentina have been self-taught. Currently, Gurovich lives of the recorder construction (though also dedicated to other wind instruments). The prices of their flutes are highly variable and depend, as always , according to the wood type and model.

To finish, I attach, so, the catalog of works for recorder made by Argentinian composers. Some names of the works have not been achieved, but it is certain that they exist. Many composers are no longer in the country, and some have died. Of the currently residing here I tried to have as much information as I could. Unfortunately not all composers have "collaborated" to provide that information.

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