The piano music of Juan Francisco Garcia

Helen Ninoska Thrall

University of Iowa

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THE PIANO MUSIC OF JUAN FRANCISCO GARCÍA

by

Helen Ninoska Thrall

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Musical Arts degree in Music in the Graduate College of The University of Iowa

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Thesis Supervisor: Professor Ksenia Nosikova
The final product of this thesis is a high-quality recording of selected piano works by Juan Francisco García. Juan Francisco García (1892-1974), a Dominican composer, was a prominent figure in the classical music scene of the Dominican Republic during the first half of the twentieth century. As a pioneer who fostered the nationalistic musical movement in the Dominican Republic, García sought to create compositions that sounded authentically Dominican. García accomplished this goal through his piano works, which are distinctly expressive, and abridged compositions exhibiting beautiful lyrical melodies and attractive rhythmic qualities.

García’s piano music displays a rich variety of compositional approaches. In his early works he employed a traditional classical language, followed by impressionist and modern techniques in his later compositions. Regardless of compositional style, his piano compositions integrate various elements of Dominican folk music and dances; their programmatic and dancing nature call for an imaginative and expressive playing.

The chosen pieces for this project are fine examples of García’s style and show the journey of his development as a composer. This recording includes the following three piano suites: Fantasia Indígena para Piano, Suite de Impresiones para Piano and Suite para Piano, as well as seven shorter pieces: Capricho Criollo no. 1, Capricho Criollo no. 2, Quisqueyana: Capricho, Recuerdo Grato: Danza Criolla, Yo me Enceleré: Danza- Merengue, Sambumbia and Ruego: Vals al Estilo Criollo. This recording is the first consisting entirely of piano compositions by García. As a Dominican pianist, I aspire to advance and revive the interest in García’s piano works as well as to present Dominican piano music to both musicians and audiences worldwide.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES ........................................................................................................................................................................ iv  

I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION ............................................................................................................................................................................. 1  
   I. Statement of Purpose .................................................................................................................................................................................... 1  
   II. Repertoire Listing .................................................................................................................................................................................... 4  
   III. Introduction to the Works ...................................................................................................................................................................... 6  
       Capricho Criollo no. 1 and no. 2 (Dominican Capriccio no. 1 and no. 2) ................................................................. 6  
       Capricho Criollo no. 2 (Dominican Capriccio no. 2) .......................................................................................................................... 6  
       Quisqueyana: Capricho (Capriccio) ......................................................................................................................................................... 8  
       Recuerdo Grato: Danza Criolla (Pleasant Memory: Dominican Dance) ................................................................. 9  
       Yo me Enceleré: Merengue-Danza (It Gets On my Nerves: Merengue-Dance) .................................................. 10  
       Ruego: Vals al Estilo Criollo (Plea: Dominican Waltz) .................................................................................................................. 12  
       Sambumbia (Dominican Rhapsody) .................................................................................................................................................... 12  
       Fantasía Indígena Para Piano (Indigenous Fantasy for Piano) ............................................................................................. 14  
       Suite de Impresiones Para Piano (Suite of Impressions for Piano) .................................................................................. 20  
       Suite Para Piano (Suite for Piano) .................................................................................................................................................... 25  

II. RECORDING PROCESS ................................................................................................................................................................................. 30  
   I. Learning and Performing the Repertoire ........................................................................................................................................... 30  
   II. Recording Timeline ................................................................................................................................................................................ 30  

III. TRACK LISTING ......................................................................................................................................................................................... 31  

IV. LINER NOTES .......................................................................................................................................................................................... 33  

V. IMPACTS AND OUTCOMES ................................................................................................................................................................. 36  

REFERENCES ............................................................................................................................................................................................. 37
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. *Capricho Criollo no.1*, mm.1-11 ........................................................................... 7
Figure 2. *Capricho Criollo no. 2*, mm. 1-7 ........................................................................ 7
Figure 3. *Quisqueyana*, mm. 1-10 .................................................................................... 8
Figure 4. *Quisqueyana*, mm. 34-43 .................................................................................. 9
Figure 5. *Recuerdo Grato*, mm. 17-23 ........................................................................... 10
Figure 6. *Tambora Rhythmic Patterns 1 and 2 and Yo me Enceleré*, mm. 17-24 ............... 11
Figure 7. *Tambora Drum* ............................................................................................... 11
Figure 8. *Ruego*, mm. 34-43 .......................................................................................... 12
Figure 9. *Sambumbia*, mm. 142-154 .............................................................................. 13
Figure 10. *Fantasía Indígena: I. Invocación a Louquo*, mm. 1-3 ......................................... 15
Figure 11. *Fantasía Indígena: I. Invocación a Louquo*, mm. 7-13 ....................................... 15
Figure 12. *Fantasía Indígena: II. Elogios a Atabex*, section A, mm. 1-9.............................. 16
Figure 13. *Fantasía Indígena: II. Elogios a Atabex*, section B, mm. 24-30 ....................... 16
Figure 14. *Fantasía Indígena: II. Elogios a Atabex*, section C, mm. 44-54 ....................... 17
Figure 15. *Fantasía Indígena: III. Gesta de Caciques*, mm. 65-68 and I. *Invocación a Louquo*, mm. 18-23 ................................................................. 18
Figure 16. *Fantasía Indígena: IV. Areito*, mm. 33-42 ........................................................ 19
Figure 17. *Fantasía Indígena: IV. Areito*, mm. 209-220 and I. *Invocación a Louquo*, mm. 1-3 ....19
Figure 18. *Suite de Impresiones: I. Preludio*, section C, mm. 29-34 ................................. 20
Figure 19. *Suite de Impresiones: II. Incoherencia*, mm. 1-16 ........................................... 21
Figure 20. *Suite de Impresiones: III. Solaz*, mm. 1-17 ....................................................... 22
Figure 21. *Suite de Impresiones: IV. Scherzo*, mm. 60-76 ............................................... 23
Figure 22. *Suite de Impresiones: V. Obsesión*, mm. 10-19 ............................................... 24
Figure 23. *Suite de Impresiones*: V. *Obsesión*, mm. 1-5 ................................................................. 24

Figure 24. *Suite de Impresiones*: VI. *Merengue*, mm. 10-21 ................................................................. 25

Figure 25. *Suite para Piano*: I. *Asenso*, mm. 1-16 .................................................................................. 26

Figure 26. *Suite para Piano*: II. *Humorada*, mm. 1-8 ........................................................................... 27

Figure 27. *Suite para Piano*: III. *Lasitud*, mm. 1-6 .............................................................................. 28

Figure 28. *Suite para Piano*: IV. *Regocijo*, mm. 50-66 ........................................................................... 29
I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

I. Statement of Purpose

The final product of this thesis is a high-quality recording of selected piano works by the prominent Dominican composer Juan Francisco García (1892-1974). It includes the following three piano suites: *Fantasía Indígena para Piano*, *Suite de Impresiones para Piano* and *Suite para Piano*, as well as seven shorter pieces: *Capricho Criollo no. 1*, *Capricho Criollo no. 2*, *Quisqueyana: Capricho*, *Recuerdo Grato: Danza Criolla*, *Yo me Enceleré: Danza- Merengue*, *Sambumbia* and *Ruego: Vals al Estilo Criollo*. This is the first recording consisting entirely of piano compositions by García.

Juan Francisco García lived through one of the Dominican Republic’s most interesting periods. During the first half of the twentieth century, many political, social and cultural changes occurred, resulting in a rising nationalistic trend that helped define the Dominican Republic’s identity. These changes heavily affected García’s career, and his compositions reflect the evolution of this new Dominican voice.

In the early 1900’s, the Dominican Republic endured civil wars and disorder while developing as a nation. In an effort to stabilize the political unrest, the United States occupied the Dominican Republic as it had done in other Latin American countries. This intervention lasted from 1916 to 1924. Although the US may have had good intentions, Dominicans resented the occupation and considered it an attack on their national sovereignty. To counteract this sense of loss, they clung to their Dominican roots and all culturally pertinent things, especially their music.¹ Juan Francisco García was not an exception. In his autobiography, while explaining his

¹ Monica Nyvlt, “Merengue and Bachata: A Study of Two Musical Styles in the Dominican Republic” (Master’s thesis, Carleton University, 2001), 44.
first attempts to compose, he stated: “this is the time [1912-1920] that I decided to do something for the benefit of what could be called Dominican music and dedicated myself to the study of composition.” García’s main intention as a composer was to contribute to the rising nationalistic spirit by creating works that exemplified an original Dominican identity.

Following this period, the classical music scene in the Dominican Republic benefited from favorable policies and financial contributions. During his dictatorship (1930-1961), president Rafael Trujillo purposefully started economic and cultural developments, inaugurating many important artistic institutions such as the National Symphony Orchestra (1941), the National Conservatory of Music (1942), the National Choir (1955) and others. According to the Dominican musicologist Pérez de Cuello, prior to the foundation of the National Conservatory of Music in 1942, many musicians and composers such as García were exposed to music by learning to read scores and playing a woodwind or brass instrument in local municipal bands. With the establishment of the National Conservatory of Music, musical education became normalized and possible for musicians. Garcia actively took part in this new cultural advancement. In addition to composing, he helped create and conduct other large ensembles including municipal orchestras and bands. He also was an eminent pedagogue in many organizations including the National Conservatory of Music, where he taught and directed for many years.

While the music scene was flourishing with the establishment of many musical institutions, composers such as Garcia also drew inspirations from various Dominican dances

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3 Catana Pérez de Cuello, El Universo de la Música (Dominican Republic: Taller, 1993), 507.
4 Pérez de Cuello, El Universo de la Música, 502.
5 García, Canciones Dominicanas, 41.
and most importantly merengue. During Trujillo’s government merengue became highly popular and recognized as the national music, increasing the Dominicans’ sense of nationalism.⁶ According to many historians, merengue was present as early as the foundation of the country in 1844.⁷ Due to its long history, merengue experienced many transformations:

“Originally, merengue was played with a guitar ensemble, the güira (resembling a cheese grater), the tambora drum, and the marimba (a bass instrument). In the 1870's, German immigrants introduced the accordion, which later replaced string instruments. The latter style, played with güira, tambora and accordion, is known as perico ripiao, or merengue típico. Today, the modern style of merengue típico incorporates the saxophone, and the electric bass has replaced the marimba.”⁸

The distinctive rhythm that the tambora drum and the güira create together is the essential character of this dance. García became the first composer to incorporate this dance in a classical composition as used in Symphony No. 1 as well as in various piano works.⁹ In addition to merengue, García used other Dominican dances such as mangulina, sarandunga, carabiné and criollas into his works. Although these dances are not as popular as merengue, they are part of the Dominican folk and popular music.¹⁰

It was not until recently that I gained a deep interest in Juan Francisco García’s piano music. While preparing for my comprehensive exams concerning Dominican piano music, I discovered García’s extensive effort to study Dominican folk music and promote it by

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⁹ García, Canciones Dominicanas, 8.
incorporating it into his classical compositions. Although García is recognized in the Dominican Republic as one of the most relevant figures of classical music in the country, his piano music is not performed very often and not too well-known. Perhaps this is due to the limited resources available, such as a lack of scores and recordings featuring his piano compositions. This recording aims to fill the void and revive the interest in García’s piano works as well as to present Dominican piano music to both musicians and audiences worldwide. Additionally, liner notes that include thorough historical and analytical research of the pieces recorded create a resource for pianists, musicians and audiences who desire to familiarize themselves with Juan Francisco García’s piano compositions and his style.

II. Repertoire Listing

The repertoire that I have chosen for this project covers a great portion of García’s piano works. To the best of my knowledge, I recorded all of García’s accessible piano compositions. During my Dominican childhood, I was familiar with only two of García’s piano pieces: Sambumbia and Capricho Criollo no. 1. However, after discovering the rest of his piano works, I began to realize its immeasurable value. Collecting his works was a challenge. Some scores were printed by the National Public University publisher (1948; 1975), while others by private houses such as Salon de Estudio Mozart (1955), and international publishers such as Alpha Music (1940; 1942). I was able to collect about half of García’s piano works through the Interlibrary Loan service of the University of Iowa. I intended to collect the rest from the National Music Archive in the Dominican Republic, but after inquiry at the National Conservatory of Music, I learned that a fire had destroyed a large part of the archive, including García’s works. Fortunately, my
father possessed several scores in his own personal collection. Looking at what is available, the
selected piano works are fine examples of García’s style and show the journey of his
development as a composer. This recording features:

*Capricho Criollo no. 1* (Dominican Capriccio no. 1) 2:50

*Capricho Criollo no. 2* (Dominican Capriccio no. 2) 2:54

*Quisqueyana: Capricho* (Capriccio) 3:31

*Recuerdo Grato: Danza Criolla* (Pleasant Memory: Dominican Dance) 2:40

*Yo me Enceleré: Danza-Merengue* (It Gets On My Nerves: Merengue Dance) 3:26

*Ruego: Vals al Estilo Criollo* (Plea: Dominican Waltz) 3:28

*Sambumbia* (Dominican Rhapsody) 9:11

*Fantasia Indígena para Piano* (Indigenous Fantasy for Piano)

I. *Invocación a Louquo* (Invocation to Louquo) 3:18
II. *Elogios a Atabex* (Praises to Atabex) 3:40
III. *Gesta de Caciques* (The Feat of the Chiefs) 3:20
IV. *Areito* (Dance and Song) 3:48

*Suite de Impresiones para Piano* (Suite of Impressions for Piano)

I. *Preludio* (Prelude) 3:03
II. *Incoherência* (Incoherence) 1:15
III. *Soláž* (Solace) 1:52
IV. *Scherzo* 1:47
V. *Obsesión* (Obsession) 2:20
VI. *Merengue* 4:25

*Suite para Piano* (Suite for Piano)

I. *Asenso* (Assent) 1:26
II. *Humorada* (Humoreske) 0:49
III. *Lasitúd* (Lassitude) 1:42
IV. *Regocijo* (Joy) 1:15

Total: 62 minutes
III. Introduction to the Works

This recording explores García’s compositional styles and shows his development as a composer. García stated that his “progress in composition was acquired by studying and composing at the same time.” Three distinctive periods are evident in García’s output.

a. First Period

The first period (1933-1940) covers most of his shorter pieces, including Capricho Criollo no. 1 and no. 2, Recuerdo Grato: Danza Criolla and Yo me Enceleré: Merengue-Danza. These works display a traditional harmonic language and form.

*Capricho Criollo no. 1 and no. 2* (Dominican *Capriccio no. 1 and no. 2*)

In Latin America, the term *criollo* often is defined as something that has a native quality. García added the word *criollo*, best translated as “Dominican,” to many of his compositions with the purpose of transforming long-established western forms, such as the *capriccio*, into a more popularized and Dominican version. García’s *Capricho Criollo no. 1* and *no. 2* display various syncopations and changes of rhythm that bring together the whimsical and fantastic character of these pieces (Figure 1).

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Despite the title of capriccio, which is often associated with spontaneousness and irregularity, the ostinato accompaniment in the left-hand in both capriccios creates a sense of stability and a fixed character (Figure 2).
**Quisqueyana: Capricho (Capriccio)**

*Quisqueya* was one name the indigenous people, the *Tainos*, used for the island of Haiti and the Dominican Republic. Although García does not state the specific traditional dances that this piece incorporates, this capriccio could have been inspired by the *sarandunga* and *mangulina*. Both dances are in 6/8, however *sarandunga* has a slower character and employs hemiolas, while *mangulina* is generally more energetic. *Quisqueyana* is written in the ABA ternary form. Section A has a *sarandunga*-like quality with the *andantino cantabile* and hemiolas (Figure 3). The faster tempo and accents in section B highlights a *mangulina*-like character (Figures 4). The interaction between both dances creates an amusing contrast. Overall, this *capricho* is more romantic than *Capricho no. 1* and *no. 2*.

Figure 3. *Quisqueyana*, mm. 1-10.
Figure 4. *Quisqueyana*, mm. 34-43.

*Recuerdo Grato: Danza Criolla* (Grateful Memory: Dominican Dance)

According to García, the term “dance” that has been applied to many piano compositions is in a certain way “improper” since they are not intended for dancing purposes.\(^\text{13}\) In his writings García mentioned that he added the word *criollo* in order to distinguish his stylized dance compositions from actual dancing music.\(^\text{14}\) In total, García composed eight *Danzas Criollas* (Dominican Dances). *Recuerdo Grato* resembles *Caprichos No. 1* and *No. 2* with the use of syncopated rhythms and a steady accompaniment in the left hand (Figure 5).

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\(^{13}\) García, *Canciones Dominicana*, 62.

\(^{14}\) Ibid, 63.
Yo me Enceleré: Danza-Merengue (It gets on My Nerves: Dance-Merengue)

The form of this piece closely resembles the *merengue* dance structure. Traditional *merengue* has three parts: the *paseo* (the walk), which is a slow section that serves as an introduction in which couples walk to the stage; *el cuerpo* or *merengue* (the body), which is when the couples dance to an upbeat and syncopated rhythm; and *jaleo*, which serves as an ending or coda to conclude the dance and in which syncopations are further displayed. Besides using the structure of *merengue*, this piece also mimics some rhythmic elements from the *tambora* drum (Figures 6 and 7).\(^\text{15}\)

Overall, in his *Yo me Enceleré*, García’s style displays highly developed pianistic writing. The use of double sixths, octaves, and different layers make this work more elaborate and challenging. Instead of using lyrical melodies, García relies on motivic arrays to construct his musical ideas.
b. Second period

García’s second period (1940-45) is exemplified in his compositions *Ruego: Vals al Estilo Criollo* and *Sambumbia*. Both pieces show an advanced use of dissonances, modal harmonies and form.

*Ruego: Vals al Estilo Criollo* (Plea: Dominican Waltz)

Similar to *Quisqueyana*, *Ruego* has a romantic character. The gestures are reminiscent of Chopin’s waltzes. In this piece, García ventures to use chromaticism and dissonance resulting in highly expressive harmonies (Figure 8). Although inspired by western waltzes, García brings this piece to Dominican grounds by adding syncopated rhythms (Figure 8).

Figure 8. *Ruego*, mm. 34-43.

*Sambumbia* (Dominican Rhapsody)

In the Dominican Republic, “sambumbia” refers to dishes in which the ingredients do not necessarily go together and can create unique or unpleasant taste. In his piece *Sambumbia No. 1,*
García depicts this idea by combining several Dominican dance forms that may not usually be combined into one piece. *Sambumbia* is not only the title of this composition, but it is also a new musical form that García created. “In order to combine effectively the several dance-forms, he [García] originated a new form, known as the *Sambumbia*.” The loose form of this piece enhances the rhapsodic character and effectively integrates the various themes, sections and dances. In contrast to the previous pieces, *Sambumbia* has a more impressionistic quality. It features modal harmonies and added-tone chords such as quartal, secundal and other sonorities (Figure 9). Moreover, throughout this piece, the meter changes constantly. This landmark piece displays García’s advanced and modern compositional techniques of his second period.

Figure 9. *Sambumbia*, mm. 142-154.

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c. Third period

The third period (1945 and following) is reflected in Fantasía Indígena para Piano, Suite de Impresiones and Suite para Piano. In these works, García abandoned tonality and ventured to a more complex modern language. Moving away from the traditional use of harmony and form, García created interesting sonorities and textures by exploring and juxtaposing the piano’s extreme registers, employing a different approach to texture and incorporating irregular rhythms. Regardless of the compositional style he adopted, García remained faithful to his Dominican roots: “Based on the acquired knowledge of more formal and recent studies, I left aside the dances and waltzes to approach compositions of a higher degree without forgetting the purpose of giving a preferential place to the national or folk music.”

**Fantasía Indígena para Piano** (Indigenous Fantasy for Piano)

**Fantasía Indígena para Piano** is a suite of four movements inspired by the Taínos, the natives that once lived in the Dominican Republic. Although there is very little surviving evidence of what their lives were like, it has been speculated that their music shared certain qualities with other indigenous peoples of the Americas and of Asia. These musical characteristics include the use of pentatonic scales and chromaticism. In addition to those musical elements, the titles of each movement, which are based on the Taínos culture, enhance its programmatic overtone.

I. *Invocación a Louquo* (Invocation to Louquo) serves as a prelude to this suite. In this movement, García depicts the image of Taínos invoking their god Louquo. The tempo, adagio

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18 Ibid, 30.
19 Ibid, 30.
misterioso, combined with the reverent pentatonic motif of the left hand, creates a ritualistic and solemn atmosphere (Figure 10). García introduces many chromatic and modal harmonies that will be present in the other movements of the suite (Figure 11).

Figure 10. Fantasia Indígena: I. Invocación a Louquo, mm. 1-3

II. Elogios a Atabex (Praises to Atabex) is written in a rondo form in which each section has a contrasting character. Section A displays a warm expressive melody made of parallel chords and accompanied by a barcarolle figuration in the left hand (Figure 12). Combined with
the lydian mode (measures 1-7), this section has an impressionistic Debussy-like quality.

Sections B and C are made up of highly chromatic melodies and harmonies (Figures 13-14). These features stand out against section A since they create a more moving and intense nature.

Figure 12. Fantasia Indígena: II. Elogios a Atabex, section A, mm. 1-9.

Figure 13. Fantasia Indígena: II. Elogios a Atabex, section B, mm. 24-30.
III. *Gesta de Caciques* (The Feat of the Chiefs) closely resembles a military march. The grandiose chords and the strong, regular rhythm contribute to its militant style. During the coda, García quotes the second theme of the first movement, *Invocación a Louquo* (Figure 15). The use of this lyrical and expressive passage ends the movement in an unconventional way.
IV. *Areito*. *Areitos* were the dances and songs of the *Taínos* and were used for ceremonial acts to recount important events or feasting.\(^{20}\) The fast tempo and climatic points contribute to the aliveness and ritualistic character of this dance. With the numerous accents, *sforzandi*, and *marcato* indications, this movement is reminiscent of Bartok’s music, especially his *Allegro*

Barbaro (Figure 16). Areito quotes two excerpts from the first movement Invocación a Louquo and ends with the opening passage of the suite.

Figure 16. Fantasia Indígena: IV. Areito, mm. 33-42.

![Fantasia Indígena: IV. Areito, mm. 33-42.]

Figure 17. Fantasia Indígena: IV. Areito, mm. 209-220 and I. Invocación a Louquo, mm. 1-3.

IV. Areito

![Fantasia Indígena: IV. Areito, mm. 209-220 and I. Invocación a Louquo, mm. 1-3.]

I. Invocación a Louquo
Suite de Impresiones (Suite of Impressions)

A six-movement suite, Suite de Impresiones is one of the most advanced and modern works of García, displaying a rich and complex harmonic language away from the traditional use of harmony and form. García creates interesting textures and sonorities by exploring the different registers of the piano as well as using various types of articulation to produce different effects.

I. Preludio (Prelude) utilizes some of the most advanced harmonies in this suite. As displayed in section C, García uses different augmented and altered chords to create various melodic lines and chromatic progression (Figure 18). Throughout this movement, the tempo and dynamics change constantly, creating interesting and contrasting sections.

Figure 18. Suite de Impresiones: I. Preludio, section C, mm. 29-34.
II. *Incoherencia* (Incoherence) is a short movement that contains intriguing phrases and motifs that together create its frantic character. The interplay between *legato* and *staccato* articulation as well as the sudden *rallentandos*, exemplified in the opening phrase, also contribute to the eccentric quality of this movement (Figure 19).

![Figure 19. Suite de Impresiones: II. Incoherencia, mm. 1-16.](image)

III. *Solaz* (Solace) is another movement that has contrasting and captivating passages. The harmonic makeup of this piece is based on altered chords, polychords and added tone chords. García continues to diversify this movement by playing around with texture, articulation, tempos and dynamics (Figure 20).

21
IV. *Scherzo*, playful and light in character, is one of the two movements written in a specific key, G major. Although it starts and ends in the key of G major, within the piece García uses chromatic and colorful harmonic progressions as displayed in section B (Figure 21).
V. *Obsesió n* (Obsession) is an expressive movement with many climatic moments resulting from prolonged crescendo phrases (Figure 22). Written in 5/4, the rhythmic pattern in measure 1 is the unifying element of this composition (Figure 23).
VI. Merengue. Similar to the merengue dance *Yo me Enceleré*, García uses the three-part structure of the traditional merengue dance: the *paseo* (the walk), *cuerpo* (body) and *jaleo* as a
form for this movement. He also borrows some of the rhythmic patterns from the *tambora* drum of the *merengue* (Figure 24). Combined with quartal and quintal sonorities, polychords, and added tone chords, García creates an unconventional and unique presentation of this dance.

*Figure 24. Suite de Impresiones: VI. Merengue, mm. 10-21.*

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*Suite para Piano* (Suite for Piano)

Written between 1946-1950, *Suite para Piano* is one of the last works that García composed for piano. Dedicated to the Dominican pianist Vicente Grisolia (1924-2011), this cycle represents García’s final style in which he consciously abandons tonality and embraces a free atonal language. These four short movements alternate between slow-fast-slow-fast.
I. *Asenso* (Assent) is constructed with phrases that start soft and grow to reach a culminating arrival. This design makes this movement emotional and intense. The entire piece consists of 40 measures; according to a golden ratio calculator, the climatic points of this movement align with the golden mean proportions of A in measure 25 and B in measure 15 (Figure 25).

Figure 25. *Suite para Piano: I. Asenso*, mm. 1-16.
II. *Humorada* (Humoreske) is the counter response of *Asenso*. It has a light-hearted and humorous character. Many of the phrases have short motifs and gestures displaying hocket-like textures such as the opening passage (Figure 26). The different tempos in each section shape the structure of this movement.

Figure 26. *Suite para Piano*: II. *Humorada*, mm. 1-8.

III. *Lasitud* (Lassitude)’s most interesting feature is its rhythm. During the first section, mm. 1-6, García uses some rhythmic elements of the *merengue* dance (Figure 27). The movement’s character changes toward the middle, ending in a faster tempo and in more uplifting note.
IV. *Regocijo* (Joy), composed in 6/8, displays a distinctive *mangulina*-like character. The use of hemiolas and syncopations, as displayed towards the coda, enhances its dancing quality (Figure 28). By using the *mangulina* dance in this modern composition, Garcia remains true to his commitment to utilize traditional Dominican musical components.
Figure 28. *Suite para Piano*: IV. *Regocigo*, mm. 50-66.
II. RECORDING PROCESS

I. Learning and Performing the Repertoire

In preparation for the recording process, I learned the pieces and publicly performed them in various venues such as my third DMA recital on November 3rd, 2017, at the University of Iowa School of Music, piano seminar and off-campus opportunities.

II. Recording Timeline

My recording of García’s music for piano took place at the University of Iowa during the summer and fall of 2018. James Edel, the director of UI recording studios, and his team provided all the technical support and services related to this recording. The details of each session are listed below:

SESSION I: April - May 2018

Voxman Concert Hall, University of Iowa School of Music

Repertoire: *Suite de Impresiones para Piano* and *Fantasía Indígena para Piano*, *Sambumbia* and *Recuerdo Grato: Danza Criolla*.

Duration: ca. 41 minutes

SESSION II: September 2018

Voxman Concert Hall, University of Iowa School of Music

Repertoire: *Capricho Criollo* no. 1 and no. 2, *Yo me Enceleré: Danza-Merengue*, *Ruego: Vals al Estilo Criollo*, *Quisqueyana (Capricho)* and *Suite para Piano*.

Duration: ca. 21 minutes

EDITING, MIXING, AND MASTERING: The post production portion of this recording project took place during the summer and fall of 2018.
III. TRACK LISTING WITH DOIs

01 Capricho Criollo no. 1
   DOI: https://doi.org/10.25820/e65v-x073

02 Capricho Criollo no. 2
   DOI: https://doi.org/10.25820/sms3-vs25

03 Quisqueyana: Capricho
   DOI: https://doi.org/10.25820/dean-ke46

04 Recuerdo Grato: Danza Criolla
   DOI: https://doi.org/10.25820/8qwp-zc03

05 Yo me Enceleré: Danza-Merengue
   DOI: https://doi.org/10.25820/7tja-nr40

06 Ruego: Vals al Estilo Criollo
   DOI: https://doi.org/10.25820/mzvz-nk37

07 Sambumbia
   DOI: https://doi.org/10.25820/74tw-xn06

Fantasia Indígena para Piano

08 I. Invocación a Louquo
   DOI: https://doi.org/10.25820/3g8f-t669

09 II. Elogios a Atabex
   DOI: https://doi.org/10.25820/xpp0-r312

10 III. Gesta de Caciques
   DOI: https://doi.org/10.25820/p3dc-8882

11 IV. Areito
   DOI: https://doi.org/10.25820/tj87-c792

Suite de Impresiones para Piano

12 I. Preludio
   DOI: https://doi.org/10.25820/ws3h-pd20
13 II. Incoherência
    DOI: https://doi.org/10.25820/b9pn-0310

14 III. Soláž
    DOI: https://doi.org/10.25820/2ytx-p469

15 IV. Scherzo
    DOI: https://doi.org/10.25820/g140-4v24

16 V. Obsesión
    DOI: https://doi.org/10.25820/f292-sc12

17 VI. Merengue
    DOI: https://doi.org/10.25820/bath-kh57

Suite para Piano

18 I. Asenso
    DOI: https://doi.org/10.25820/r9gm-4909

19 II. Humorada
    DOI: https://doi.org/10.25820/x92y-kh79

20 III. Lasitúd
    DOI: https://doi.org/10.25820/2bfa-hj35

21 IV. Regocijo
    DOI: https://doi.org/10.25820/vph8-ev98
IV. LINER NOTES

**Capricho Criollo no. 1 and no. 2** (Dominican *Capriccio* no. 1 and no. 2)

In Latin America, the term *criollo* often is defined as something that has a native quality. García added the word *criollo* to many compositions, representing their Dominican origin and distinguishing them from the long-established western forms. In these first two *capriccios*, the syncopated rhythms accentuate the *criollo* facet.

**Quisqueyana: Capricho** (Capriccio)

*Quisqueya* was one name the indigenous people, the *Tainos*, used for the island of Haiti and the Dominican Republic. This piece could have been inspired from the traditional folk dances *sarandunga* and *mangulina*. Although both dances are in 6/8, *sarandunga* has a slower character, while *mangulina* is more energetic. The interaction between both dances creates an engaging contrast.

**Recuerdo Grato: Danza Criolla** (Grateful Memory: Dominican Dance)

According to García, the term “dance” that has been applied to many piano compositions is in a certain way improper since they are not intended for dancing purposes. In his writings he expressed that in order to distinguish his stylized dance compositions from actual dancing music, García added the word *criollo*. *Recuerdo Grato* resembles *Caprichos No. 1 and No. 2* with the use of syncopated rhythms and a steady accompaniment in the left hand.
**Yo me Enceleré: Danza-Merengue** (It gets on My Nerves: Dance-Merengue)

The form of this piece closely mimics the traditional three-part structure of the merengue dance: the *paseo* (the walk), which is a slow section that serves as an introduction in which couples walk to the stage; *el cuerpo* or *merengue* (the body), which is when the couples dance to an upbeat and syncopated rhythm; and *jaleo*, which serves as an ending or coda to conclude the dance and in which syncopations are further displayed. Overall, this elaborate, challenging and exciting work borrows rhythmic patterns from the merengue dance and displays a more developed pianistic writing.

**Ruego: Vals al Estilo Criollo** (Plea: Dominican Waltz)

This romantic piece, reminiscent of Chopin’s waltzes, displays highly expressive harmonies by using dissonances and chromatic passages. Although inspired by western waltzes, García brings this piece to Dominican grounds by adding syncopated rhythms.

**Sambumbia** (Dominican Rhapsody)

*Sambumbia* is the pivotal piece in which García uses impressionistic harmonies and a looser form. In the Dominican Republic, “sambumbia” refers to dishes with ingredients that do not necessarily go together and can create unique or unpleasant combinations. In his rhapsodic piece, García depicts this idea by combining several Dominican dance-forms.

**Fantasía Indígena para Piano** (Indigenous Fantasy for Piano)

*Fantasía Indígena para Piano* is a suite of four movements inspired by the Tainos, the natives that once lived in the Dominican Republic. Although there is very little surviving evidence of what
their lives were like, it has been speculated that their music included the use of pentatonic scales and chromaticism. In addition to those musical elements, the titles of each movement, which are based on the Taínos culture, enhance its programmatic overtone.

**Suite de Impresiones** (Suite of Impressions)

A six-movement suite, *Suite de Impresiones* is one of the most advanced and modern works of García, displaying a rich and complex harmonic language. García creates interesting textures and sonorities by exploring the different registers of the piano as well as using various types of articulation to create different effects. The suite’s unifying element is that the note B appears in the last chord of each movement.

**Suite para Piano** (Suite for Piano)

Written between 1946-1950, *Suite para Piano* is one of the last works that García composed for piano. Dedicated to the Dominican pianist Vicente Grisolía (1924-2011), this cycle represents García’s final style in which he consciously abandons tonality and embraces a free atonal language. The four short movements alternate between slow-fast-slow-fast.
V. IMPACTS AND OUTCOMES

As a Dominican-born pianist, I believe it is my obligation to uphold Dominican classical music for audiences worldwide. This project calls for the attention of both musicians and audiences to the piano works of Juan Francisco García. This recording positions me as an active advocate and interpreter of his piano music both in the United States and also in the Dominican Republic.

Following this project, I will continue my efforts to discover and promote Dominican piano music, featuring it in solo and lecture recitals in my home country and the United States. I also intend to create critical editions of unpublished Dominican piano works and make subsequent recordings of other Dominican composers whose music has not been recorded.
REFERENCES


