



GUITAR COMPOSER LEO BROUWER: THE CONCEPT OF A ‘UNIVERSAL LANGUAGE’

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In the realm of art music, Leo Brouwer (1939-) is widely considered as the most significant living composer for the guitar.¹ Since the latter part of the 20th century, students of the guitar at most, if not all, recognized music institutions have increasingly sought to perform Brouwer's works. Correspondingly, at the South African College of Music (University of Cape Town) respected instructors like Elspeth Jack, Neefa van der Schyff, and others, have over many years consistently and devotedly incorporated Brouwer's guitar literature into their teaching programmes. Cape Town's prized composer-conductor Alan Stephenson has similarly developed a keen interest in Brouwer's large-scale works, inspiring in 1998 a memorable rendition of Brouwer's acclaimed *Elegiaco Concerto*, performed by the talented soloist Christiaan Van der Vyver and the University of Cape Town Orchestra. In line with this, one of Brouwer's underlying goals has been to create works that are accessible to players of varying standards of performance. As a consequence, young, inexperienced, moderate, advanced as well as top internationally-acclaimed virtuosic players have all found some measure of contentment in performing Brouwer's guitar works.

In his home country, Cuba, Leo Brouwer has gained additional distinction as writer, principal conductor, leading advisor to the country's culture ministry, composer of numerous film scores, operas and large-scale orchestral works, director of national arts festivals, and Distinguished Professor of musical theory.² In 1980 Brouwer was appointed as Cuba's Representative to UNESCO's Caribbean section. This achievement was crowned in 1987 with his being named a 'Member of Honour' of UNESCO – a rare accomplishment only bestowed upon an elite group of international artists such as Herbert von Karajan, Isaac Stern, Joan Sutherland, Yehudi Menuhin and Ravi Shankar.³

One of the larger islands of the Caribbean and a former outpost of Spanish colonial rule, Cuba served from the 16th until the 19th century as destination for hundreds of thousands of African subjects brought there through the slave trade. Hence, modern Cuban culture and arts by and large portray strong influences rooted in both Spanish and African cultural traditions, a phenomenon likewise embodied in Brouwer's creative output.⁴ An inspection of the composer's guitar works, espe-

¹ See Walters 1984; Suzuki 1988; Augustine 1988; Cooper C 1985, 1986, 1987, 1988, 1996; McKenna 1986, 1987, 1988a & 1988b. A full Bibliography will be found at the end of the article.

² Kronenberg 2005a, Havana Field Research: hereafter referred to as K-HFR. Field research was conducted in Havana, Cuba during March 2005 as part of the author's doctoral studies.

³ McKenna 1988b, 10.

⁴ Besides the presence of elements from the *flamenco* guitar in Brouwer's works, the Spanish influence in his works generally is more acquiescent, illustrating rather trends from the European art music tradition as a whole.

cially, reveals the presence of elements of African sacramental song and ritual music, features he regards as 'something absolutely abstract' and 'fundamental' that can 'only be distinguished in the deepest way'.⁵ Notwithstanding the customary presence of such traditional elements in his works, Brouwer's artistic goal, however, has been to create *universal art forms*. This goal he has sought to realize by cultivating in-depth awareness and knowledge of advanced compositional techniques, styles, and formal structures prevalent in art-music traditions from beyond his national boundaries.

Due to the isolation and subsequent obscurity of his country of birth,⁶ for many years Leo Brouwer has not received widespread recognition in Western musicological circles. It is over the last two decades or so that guitar magazines in the English-speaking world like *Classical Guitar* and *Guitar Review* provided more detailed background information of both the artist and his works.⁷ Paul Century and Dean Suzuki's early scholarly efforts, especially, initiated in-depth analyses of Brouwer's solo guitar literature in the English-speaking world. A significant aim of the present article, which draws mainly on findings of the author's masters' study,⁸ is to present a preliminary, yet broad musicological framework that offers insight into Leo Brouwer's artistic development and goals, his broader cultural milieu, as well as works for solo guitar.⁹ It is trusted this approach will both launch further interest in, and enhance existing awareness of, a universally-acclaimed yet still somewhat secluded creative figure. I draw attention to, on the one hand, the presence of traditional African features in Brouwer's works, and on the other, the composer's use of contemporary compositional techniques: aspects which, I would argue, collectively constitute his conception of a universal musical language.

ARTISTIC DEVELOPMENT

Leo Brouwer was born in 1939 in Havana, the capital city of Cuba, and emanates from humble circumstances. His somewhat atypical Cuban surname stems from his grandfather, who was of Dutch origin, but had lived most of his life in the country. In contrast to many outstanding artists, in his early childhood Brouwer had little or no exposure to a fertile cultural environment. As he indicates, 'in my early years I had no contact with paintings or painters or music'.

He was too young at the time to fully understand this, but later in his life he came to realise that the social conditions of the era were not conducive to the cultural growth of the country. The dictatorial rule of the time caused much of the 'mutilation of the Cuban roots of cul-

⁵ Mc Kenna 1988b, 10–16.

⁶ Cuba's socialist political system and the ensuing nationalization since the early 1960s of American-controlled industries, resulted in the US imposing an economic blockade of the island. This measure has been strictly enforced by a succession of US administrations until the present day.

⁷ In the scholarly domain academics such as Paul Century, Dean Suzuki, Constance Mc Kenna, Roberto Pincirolli, and more recently Marie-Madeleine Doherty, Arun Sethi and Kim Tran, have embarked on large-scale research projects concerned with Brouwer as artist, his broader cultural domain, and works for guitar.

⁸ Kronenberg 2000 Masters Dissertation, 'Cuban artist Leo Brouwer and his solo guitar works – from *Pieza sin titulo* to *Elogio de la danza*: a contextual-analytical study', University of Cape Town. The study contains data collected from (1) personal interviews and general discussions with Brouwer and (2) his composition lectures at the 1998 Nürtingen Guitar Festival, Germany. These are designated here as K-NGF 1998. Unless otherwise noted, all quotations in this article are from these encounters.

⁹ While works from the mid-1950s to the late 1990s are discussed, the article particularly focusses on and analyses the composer's first period style works (1956–1964).

ture, Cuban painters, writers and musicians', he notes.¹⁰ When he was about nine years old he was 'deeply touched' by Yoruban ritual music, the West African religious tradition that over time became an integral part of the island's national heritage. This experience stayed with him throughout his life, influencing the character of most of the works he would compose and gain fame for later in his life.¹¹

From the age of about 12, Brouwer started informal guitar lessons with his father, an admirer and amateur player of the music of Villa-Lobos, Tárrega and Granados, among others. Through his father's inspiration he became skilled at playing the guitar by ear. Within several months the young, yet gifted, learner could count among his first performing works *Chóros* and *Preludes*, some of Villa Lobos's most memorable contributions to guitar repertoire. So intense was his concentration that some years later Brouwer could still perform these and other works, near-perfect as written, without ever having seen the scores. During this time Brouwer also became strongly attracted to the *flamenco* guitar, contemplating rather to pursue this playing style on the instrument. After his initial learning episode with his father, Brouwer, then aged about 14, went on to receive his only formal guitar instruction from Cuba's noted guitar master, Isaac Nicola (1916–1998).

Nicola stemmed from an established artistic environment where the classical guitar in particular occupied a central place. This renowned instructor could offer his student much authentic knowledge, as his own training was rooted in the Aguado-Tárrega Spanish guitar schools. Through Nicola's influence Brouwer was exposed to Renaissance and Baroque music for the first time,¹² styles that Emilio Pujol – Tarrega's heir and most prominent student – sought to bring into the guitar fold during his lifetime. Nicola's tutorship introduced Brouwer, for the first time also, to some of the major guitar works from the 19th century. 'Overwhelmed' by these novel musical idioms, Brouwer was prompted to 'abandon' the *flamenco* playing style and entirely devote himself to the concert guitar.¹³ Some years later the mature Brouwer affirmed, 'these revelations that Nicola gave me were my future. My dream!'¹⁴

After remaining with Nicola for about two years, Brouwer succeeded in mastering a sizeable portion of the existing guitar repertoire, a rare accomplishment by all standards that customarily requires all but a decade of rigorous training. The youthful artist also acquainted himself with detailed knowledge of the piano, double bass, cello, clarinet, flute and various brass instruments. This wide acquaintance stood him in good stead when he later started to compose for orchestra, chamber ensembles, and solo instruments other than the guitar.

It was in effect the mastering of the guitar that led the then 16-year-old to perceive that historically great composers had hardly considered the guitar in their works. He reasoned that since they did not compose for the guitar, he himself would fill those openings:

¹⁰ Like many territories of the Caribbean and Latin America, during the 20th century Cuba was governed by a hugely oppressive dictatorship (see Walterio 1961; Nicole 1965; Fagan 1969; Wright 1991).

¹¹ Extracts following are, with editorial changes, from Kronenberg 2004, *Guitarra Magazine*, Issue 15, 2004.

¹² The positive impact of these styles is present in Brouwer's solo guitar works *Pieza sin título*, *Preludio* and *Tres Apuntes* (see Kronenberg 2000).

¹³ The influence and thus, character features of the *flamenco* guitar are present in some of Brouwer's works; notable examples are *Tres apuntes* and *Elogio de la danza* (see Kronenberg 2000).

¹⁴ Dausend 1990, 10.

[after] learning the so-called great repertoire, the grand repertoire ... I realized that there were a lot of gaps. We didn't have *L'Histoire du Soldat* by Stravinsky, we didn't have the chamber music by Hindemith, we didn't have any sonatas by Bartók. So, as I was young and ambitious and crazy, I told myself that if Bartók didn't write any sonatas, maybe I could do it. What a beautiful thing it would be if Brahms had written a guitar concerto! But he didn't, so maybe I can. This was the beginning of composing for me.¹⁵

The mid-1950s marks the start of Leo Brouwer's formal entry into the domain of composition. During this time a significant segment of Cuban artists had endeavoured for some years already to promote Afro-Cuban culture, which through historical and political circumstances had largely been disregarded. The goal amongst artists to endorse national cultural elements within their works was not considered an end in itself as artists simultaneously undertook to create universal art forms. This philosophy was advanced by prominent Cuban arts movements and honoured by Leo Brouwer, who put it thus:

One of my questions is, how can I link or connect the historical values, which I respect and adore, part of my Cuban heritage, how can they be connected with the universal.¹⁶

Brouwer came into contact with the philosophies particularly of two established Cuban arts movements. The *Grupo Minorista* (1923) and the *Grupo de Renovación Musical* (1942) feature significantly in 20th-century Cuban art music and determined the philosophical basis from which he launched his initial style of writing.

Fernando Ortiz and the *Grupo Minorista*¹⁷

During the early stage of his career, Brouwer's primary goal was to incorporate national elements into his works. This notion has much of its origin in the philosophies of Fernando Ortiz (1881–1969), Cuba's major anthropologist and early campaigner of Afro-Cuban culture. Most of Ortiz's numerous publications – dating from the first decades of the 20th century and continuing until the mid-1960s – deal with topics relating to Afro-Cuban history, organology, dance, theatre, and African ritual music. His volume *La Africana de la Música Folklórica de Cuba* (1965)¹⁸ illustrates copious examples of African ritual music he had researched, collected, and transcribed throughout his life.

Through much of his scholarly research Ortiz advanced increased recognition and awareness of African traditions within greater Cuban culture. In terms of music, he promoted not the mechanical sanction of Afro-Cuban music as such, but rather the formation of new musical compositions firmly within the Western European tradition that would reflect some stylistic elements from the Afro-Cuban heritage as well.¹⁹ As a result of this perspective the *Grupo Minorista* came into being. This association consisted of young poets, writers, and musicians, and had among its driving forces noted composers like Amadeo Roldán (1900–1939) and Alejandro García Caturla (1906–1940).

¹⁵ McKenna 1988b, 11.

¹⁶ Century 1991, 7.

¹⁷ The passages on Ortiz are, with slight changes, from Kronenberg 2004, *UNISA Latin American Report*, Vol. 20, No.2.

¹⁸ A copy of this collection can be found in the music library of the University of Cape Town.

¹⁹ Ortiz cited in Moore 1994, 46.

Among the many Afro-Cuban rhythms Ortiz collected and transcribed, two in particular warrant closer inspection. They are (1) a group of three syncopated notes, known as the *tresillo*, and (2) a group of five notes, likewise syncopated, labelled the *cinquillo*. A cursory inspection of Brouwer's guitar literature clearly illustrates the presence of these elements.

Tresillo



Cinquillo



Example 1:
Afro-Cuban Rhythmic Figures,
After Ortiz, 1965

Jose Ardevol and the *Grupo de Renovación Musical*

After the premature deaths of Roldán and Caturla (in 1939 and 1940 respectively), the Spanish-born composer Jose Ardevol, who settled in Havana in 1930, has been considered as the leader of modern Cuban composition. Ardevol taught composition at the Municipal Conservatory (later renamed the Roldán Conservatory) and established the Chamber Orchestra of Havana in 1934. In 1942, together with some of his best students, he founded the *Grupo de Renovación Musical*. His purpose was to create a Cuban school of composers that could reach the same degree of universality as found in other countries. Through his influence as spiritual leader of this group, Cuban compositional styles started to reflect contemporary idioms like neo-classicism, atonality and polytonality. Included in the group were accomplished composers like Harold Gramatges, Edgardo Martín, Algeliers León and Julian Orbon. The philosophy of the *Grupo de Renovación Musical* emphasized the following basic tenets:

1. Cultivation of the great musical forms and their employment in new works, and
2. The mastering of musical techniques found in the more advanced countries

According to Ardevol, nationalism was still a necessary stage in Cuba with its rich popular music; the ideal, however, was to be able to achieve a universal expression without losing the innate qualities of Cuban culture (see Century 1991).

In the mid-1950s a group of younger composers joined the ranks of the *Grupo de Renovación Musical*. Among them were Natalio Galán, Juan Blanco, Roberto Valera, Sergio Fernández, as well as the youthful Leo Brouwer.

Personal study

Brouwer's training in the art of composition saw him initially undertaking an intensive self-study course. Guided by the goal to achieve a universal musical expression, he set out to analyse comprehensively a diverse selection of music scores of a variety of composers from both

different nationalities and historical periods. His attention during this time was captivated mainly by the styles and techniques of recognised 20th-century composers, Béla Bartók, Claude Debussy, Igor Stravinsky and Manuel de Falla. It was above all these composers' works that from the outset impacted on and influenced Brouwer's technical approach to composition.

The Juilliard School

In his endeavour to cultivate more accurately his creative skills, during 1959–60 Brouwer took up formal studies in composition and conducting at the Juilliard School in New York. Here he came into contact with the artistry of Darius Milhaud, Lukas Foss and Paul Hindemith, some of the leading contemporary composers of the era. Among the many powerful experiences there were the teachings of Vincent Persichetti, whom Brouwer found to be a 'true Kapellmeister' like 'Handel and Bach'.²⁰ On occasion the famed American composer-conductor advised his auspicious student, 'you do not need to study composition; compose!'²¹

1961 Polish Festival

Brouwer's awareness of, and erudition in, contemporary musical arts were particularly boosted during a visit to the momentous 1961 Polish Warsaw Autumn Festival. At the event he gained awareness of some of the most advanced contemporary works on the European continent. Attracting Brouwer's interest were reputedly revolutionary composers – Tadeusz Baird, Kazimierz Serocki, Ernest Bloch, Luigi Nono and Hans Werner Henze.²² The première of Penderecki's orchestral masterpiece *Threnody in memory of the victims of Hiroshima* (1960) counts among the many innovative experiences that won Brouwer's deep interest and admiration. The overall consequence of this visit was that Brouwer gained deep-rooted knowledge of prevailing musical developments such as serialism, aleatoric and electro-acoustic music. Such were their sway that when he returned to Cuba, the youthful artist organized an official conference for the country's principal artists to discuss these ground-breaking trends, known in some circles as the *avant-garde*. Following on this he created *Sonograma I*, a piece for prepared piano that was premiered at the establishment in 1961 of the Union of Cuban Writers and Artists. The piece is pioneering in that it represents Cuba's first aleatoric work and the initiation into the country of this contemporary musical style.

Some of the more significant works that followed in this mode are *Sonograma II* (1964), an orchestral work, *Sonograma III* (?) for two pianos, and *Sonata pian'e forte* (1970), written for prepared piano and tape. Portraying a distinctive *avant-garde* style, the latter work incorporates quotations from works of a diverse range of composers, Beethoven, Skryabin, Gabrieli and Szymanowski. It was from about 1968 that Brouwer quite demonstrably sought to incorporate into his guitar works some of the styles and techniques displayed at the 1961 Warsaw Festival.²³

²⁰ Dumond & Denis 1988, 13. The help of Michael Tuffin, retired senior lecturer at the South African College of Music in translating this article from French, is kindly acknowledged.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² It was Henze especially who enhanced Brouwer's exposure to as well as recognition in European art circles. Furthermore, during Henze's visit to Cuba in the late 1960s Brouwer collaborated with him on *El Cimarrón*, a piece for voice, flute, guitar and percussion that honours a historical Cuban figure (K-NGF 1998).

²³ K-NGF 1998.

Persuasions from the 'non-musical' domain

In addition to the above and other musical experiences, Brouwer also set out to acquire in-depth knowledge of various influential writers, poets, painters, philosophers, choreographers, mathematicians, astronomers, etc., from different worlds and cultures, many of whom impacted decisively on his own creative imagination.²⁴ Hence many of Brouwer's compositions similarly are inspired by a number of diverse persuasions from the 'non-musical' domain. Of special interest and value to the composer are aspects such as,

- mathematical formulae; for example, the Fibonacci series and the 'golden section', configurations employed also by Bartók and other modern composers;
- spiral structures found in star galaxies, seashells, flowers, etc.;
- structural idioms prevalent in contemporary art works, particularly those of Paul Klee;
- traditional cultural traits from Hindu and Indian ritual practices

Besides his close involvement in Cuba's ballet and film industries, Brouwer himself took up painting in his earlier years. This wide awareness, combined with his added interest in cultural theory and philosophy, culminated in his becoming an accomplished writer, one imbued with a broad, universal outlook.

International functions

Due to an impaired right hand, in recent years Brouwer has come to devote more time to conducting, composing, and international arts projects. As a recognized guitar figure he is in demand as jury member at international guitar competitions. He also is required world-wide to conduct guitar master classes, composition classes, and performance workshops. Guitar festivals graced by his presence include those held in Tokyo, Helsinki, Rome, Martinique, Toronto, Athens, Nürtingen, across much of Latin America as well as in Spain. Guitarists of the highest order and from across the world congregate every two years in the country's capital to participate in the Havana International Guitar Festival and Competition, presented under Brouwer's direction.

SOLO GUITAR WORKS

First Period Style (1956–1964)

Embedded in Brouwer's initial works for the guitar is a range of thematic and rhythmic elements inspired by traditional African ritual music. The melodic material of these works, however, routinely is submerged into a more composite harmonic structure. The composer's contemporary harmonic expression, though principally tonal, is determined by the use of conflicting intervals like minor-second dyads, tritone formations, and chromatic colourings. *Pieza sin titulo* (1956) and *Preludio* (1956), particularly, employ two distinctive Afro-Cuban syncopated rhythms – the *tresillo* and *cinquillo* (mentioned above) – which at times are creatively obscured and manipulated.

²⁴ K-NGF 1998; K-HFR 2005.

Pieza sin titulo

Pieza sin titulo is one of Brouwer's earliest known pieces and the first of three separate works (composed at different times) collectively entitled *Tres piezas sin titulo*. *Pieza sin titulo* was written in 1956, at a time 'when Cuba was a country without an identity'. Brouwer's title (*Three pieces without name*) therefore does induce a symbolic meaning on the one hand. The composer, however, coined the title as he wished to convey that the works are 'not preludes, nor studies, nor variations, nor dances'. As he elaborates, 'these are evocations, short works using precise elements as points of departure; one of these pieces, ['No. 1'] written in 7/4, is based upon African ritual rhythms'.²⁵

One can immediately detect Brouwer's devotion to his roots, revealed in his passion for the two African-derived rhythmic elements. These are incorporated throughout *Pieza sin titulo* but concealed imaginatively at times. The composer's choice of an unstable 7/4 meter periodically is expressed as a subdivision of '3/4' and '4/4'. Repeated bars (or very similar bars) incorporate the same division. The 7/4 meter likewise supports the masked appearance of African syncopated rhythms. One of these, the *cinquillo*, appears more prominently, being announced in the opening melodic pitches. At the inception of the piece the *tresillo* already surfaces but, as stated, it emerges somewhat disguised. In subsequent bars stress-markings highlight this feature more pronouncedly, with successive chordal announcements reiterating a variant of the *tresillo*, sounded at times by three voices in rhythmic unison. The *tresillo* emerges throughout the work; and, following the development section, the initial *cinquillo* makes its reappearance. This feature also appears towards the close of the work where it constitutes the rhythm of the seconds and thirds of the inner voices of the 4/4 metric division.

Although the themes of Brouwer's works are predominantly his own invention, he emphasizes that they have been 'tremendously influenced by African ritual music'. His aim was to project this kind of expression from the very first moment he started composing. The theme of *Pieza sin titulo* is announced in the opening of the piece and though it is set in a natural minor mode, it immediately induces some ambiguities. Arguably either the initial pitch B (part of the chordal announcement) or the opening F# could signify the commencement of the thematic phrase. Further, the principal statement could conclude on the root note B (upper pitch of the three-note chord) of the second bar, or again, it may be cyclic, extending to the repeated C#s of the bar.

It is appropriate to refer to Ortiz's collection of African folk song in order to perceive Brouwer's theme with greater clarity. Viewed outwardly it becomes apparent that the Afro-Cuban chant *O ya ya Lumba lumba* is established from the initial three bars up to and including the first pitch of the fourth bar, after which it undergoes some development. It is detectable that a similar process appears in Brouwer's theme. It is clear, furthermore, that the traditional chant's introductory melodic and rhythmic activity returns to calm following the opening measure. At this point the sounding of the dominant note, G, induces some harmonic tension, calling for a resolution onto the tonic.

²⁵ Dumond 1988, 7.

Example 2:
Canto mayombe "O ya ya
Lumbe lumbe"
After Ortiz, 1965

In *Pieza sin titulo* Brouwer likewise introduces the dotted eighth note C# in the opening, sounding the fifth degree of V. He thereafter concludes this thematic segment on the root note B. Compared to the African chant from Ortiz's collection it becomes visible that Brouwer sought to evoke an African nuance in the construction of his theme. Furthermore, other similarities between Brouwer's work and Ortiz's transcription immediately point to various syncopated features and the *tresillo* in particular, which is used throughout *O ya ya lumbe lumbe*.

Example 3:
Pieza sin titulo

Preludio

Preludio is another early work dating from 1956. According to Brouwer, although he was 'almost illiterate' when he started to compose, he nonetheless considers this work to be something 'good and mysterious', a confirmation of his 'special taste for the original elements'. 'Mysterious' is used perhaps prematurely as this theme has an explicit popular – and more so, lighthearted – character, rather distinct to the one used in *Pieza sin titulo*. Its construction suggests a simple harmonic structure based on the uncomplicated alternation of primary chords I and V, set moreover in C major. The composer reiterates that this theme, too, is not an *existing* Afro-Cuban theme as such, but that it is 'tremendously influenced by the nuance of the African language'.

The rhythmic framework of the piece accordingly takes on a characteristic Afro-Cuban syncopated texture, a feature that can be detected immediately. This is prevalent likewise in *Pieza sin título* and permeates many of the composer's later works as well. The metric indication of *Preludio* is 6/8 but in the second bar already a duplet appears. In subsequent bars this trait is emphasized in a two-voice texture which also reappears later on. At times in the piece 2/4 is implied while 3/4 also features periodically. The lower voice sounds this triple meter with some imitation occurring in the higher register. The triple meter recurs more pronouncedly towards the close of the piece, where it is articulated by four-note chords.

As the piece commences the upper voice announces the theme which, as noted, suggests the alternation of I and V, constituted in each alternate bar. As the eight-bar theme concludes the implied V at this point is strongly suggestive of a cyclic structure, as the melody can comfortably repeat itself time and again. In isolation, the tonality of the theme implies C major, with the intervals of the major second and third being prominent. In this instance, too, it is suitable to inspect comparable examples from Fernando Ortiz's collection towards authenticating the African quality of Brouwer's theme.

The traditional Afro-Cuban piece *Rumba popular* derives its dance rhythm from the accompaniment with the right hand playing syncopated chords against the *tresillo* in the bass. The tune is set in a clear G major tonality, similarly extending eight bars in length. Its rhythm, however, is set in regular meter, thus distinguishing itself noticeably from the accompaniment. Of importance is the piece's 'light-hearted' temperament, which likewise typifies Brouwer's tune. Moreover, *Rumba popular* is structured on I and V(7) only. In the first four bars the tune is constructed on just three pitches, the tonic, mediant and supertonic, another character trait comparable to *Preludio*. As can be observed, furthermore, the intervals of the major second and third form an integral component of the song from the Afro-Cuban tradition.

Example 4:
Afro-Cuban *Rumba popular*
After Ortiz, 1965

Similarly, the ritual chant from the African *abakuá* tradition (transcribed in D major), also suggests the simple harmonies of I and V. (However, IV is additionally suggested in the opening bar, constructed on the *tresillo* rhythmic figure). At the inception of the chant the ascending major second extends to a major third, followed by the announcement of an emblematic triadic figure: palpable features that equally distinguish Brouwer's *Preludio*.

Example 5:
Preludio

Fuga No.1

Fuga No.1 (1957) is a multifaceted contrapuntal work for three voices, sustained likewise by rhythmic contours of African origin. The work is a clear expression of the young artist's growing awareness and fondness for formal structures and techniques from the polyphonic tradition. Thus, besides *Fuga*, later guitar works' developmental sections often take on contrapuntal textures. As one might reasonably predict, *Fuga No.1* employs Afro-Cuban melodic and rhythmic elements which are set within a formal structure of polyphonic music. Whereas the fugue's first theme is '19th-century Afro-Cuban', the closing one, so the composer asserts, is 'absolute African ritual music from the 16th century or so'. Moreover these themes are the composer's own creation, but are based upon the inflections generated by the spoken African language. For Brouwer, *Fuga No.1* illustrates a clear example of a 'mixture of cultures, as we say in Spanish, *mestisaje*'. He considers *ragtime*, for instance, as also employing a 'fusion of white and 'black', i.e., European and African: while the *polka* is sounded in the left hand, the right hand plays African syncopated lines (on the piano, that is). Equally for him, the Cuban dance form *danzon* is based on the same principle, since the African *cinquillo* alternates with *polka* rhythms derived from Europe.²⁶

Fuga is written for three voices, with the alto announcing the first theme in the opening four bars. The initial melodic phrase suggests the Dorian mode²⁷ based on the four-note sub-structure, D-G-F-E. The thematic pitch D is prominent in the opening and establishes itself as a pedal point. The opening thematic statement embodies some of the structural elements of the fugue, namely distinctive fourths and thirds. The perfect fourth is employed in the opening leap (D-G), and further integrated within the unfolding thematic material.

As indicated by the composer, the work incorporates the alternation of African syncopation with regular rhythmic activity. With the sounding of the answer against the countersubject, this objective is taken further, as the answer (African *cinquillo* in the bass) is juxtaposed against rhythmic regularity in the soprano, a process which also reverses. In subsequent bars the voices articulate both customs simultaneously, i.e., against each other.

Towards the close of the piece, where the melodic material becomes displaced in higher register, the accented beats emulate the sounds of

²⁶ K-NGF 1998.

²⁷ If however bar 1 as a whole is taken in isolation of the thematic statement (bars 1–4) the outcome is enormously uncertain and points to both C major and D minor/Dorian mode. Taken within the context of the theme as a whole, the Dorian mode is the more realistic option.

traditional African ritual drummings which infiltrated Cuban culture several hundred years before.

Tres Apuntes (1959)²⁸

Brouwer's intellectual growth in the use of advanced techniques perhaps is most clearly illustrated in *Tres Apuntes*, at that time his most skilled and developed solo guitar work. Set in three parts, it serves as tributes to the aforementioned influential composers: Stravinsky, Bartók, Falla, and Debussy.²⁹ The movements respectively bring into prominence specific techniques and styles closely associated with these artists.³⁰ The initial part, 'Del el Homenaje a Falla', illustrates the composer's admiration not only of Falla, but also Debussy. In honouring Falla, Brouwer portrays his deep awareness and reverence of the Spanish guitar through an in-depth exploration of the instrument's multifarious timbral faculties. The piece also draws attention to chant elements set in the Phrygian mode, emblematic of the Moorish cultural influence on Spain. The same piece incorporates the theme from Debussy's piano prelude *La Soirée dans Grenade*. Brouwer's tribute has the *Soirée* melody making its first appearance in the bass line of the opening bars, with some transformation occurring in later bars. The inception of the B-section of 'Del el Homenaje a Falla' recalls the *Soirée* theme, where it is offered periodically and in fragmentary manner, interrupted by altered minor third figurations from earlier in the piece. Of note too, is that Debussy's theme is constructed on the whole-tone scale, elements of which similarly characterize Brouwer's homage. Brouwer's perception of Debussy's impressionistic style furthermore is mirrored in the fusion of major and minor harmonies, parallel chordal progressions, and pedal effects, all of which are character traits of *Soirée*.

The second part of *Tres Apuntes* 'De un fragmento instrumental' honours Stravinsky through the use and manipulation of an *ostinato* figure. The compositional device undergoes stringent rhythmic, metrical, and melodic alterations, strongly suggestive of the Russian composer's unique percussive styles. Written in praise of Bartók (Hakes 1982), the third and final tribute, 'Sobre un canto Bulgaria', employs as its structural element a tune symptomatic of Bulgarian folk song, a distinguishing feature of many of the Hungarian composer's works.

Though characterized by changing rhythmic activities, *Tres Apuntes* incorporates a basic arrangement of the Cuban-Spanish folk dance rhythm the *guajiro*, with its alteration of 6/8 and 3/4. The *regular* alternation of 6/8 and 3/4 of the *guajira* dance is however not engaged but occurs sporadically. Apart from the composer's manipulation of metric changes, individual pitched are assigned accentuations both on and off the beat. Furthermore, melodic lines start in one metre and continue in another, features which contribute to both a precision and a displacement of a variety of rhythms the composer derived from his cultural roots. In sum, of special relevance is the fact that the grouping of two (or more) regular pulse figures, known commonly as polyrhythm or polymeter, is prominent throughout West and Central Africa, something that over time became a notable attribute of Afro-Cuban folk culture.

²⁸ See Brouwer 1972 a-h; 1973 a & b; 1977; 1983 and 1991.

²⁹ Though none of the titles of the three parts alludes to Debussy, there nonetheless is a direct reference to Debussy in the theme of 'Del el Homenaje a Falla', the first part of *Tres Apuntes*.

³⁰ Credit is given to Hakes for initiating scrutiny of specific works of Stravinsky, Bartók, Falla and Debussy that greatly influenced Brouwer's choice of techniques and styles employed in his guitar works (see Hakes 1982, 129–131). Kronenberg (2000) particularly explores and analyses comprehensively influential trends from the European art music tradition in Brouwer's early guitar works.

Elogio de la Danza (1964)

According to Brouwer, *Elogio de la danza* is the culmination of his 'mission of structuring a more rigorous work'.³¹ Composed in 1964, this work represents the final, most mature and acclaimed solo guitar piece of Brouwer's first stylistic phase.

Elogio de la danza employs an extensive range of advanced techniques yet it preserves some semblance of a tonal system. Quite prominent is the composer's inventive manipulation of conflicting harmonies, which are often reinforced by non-tonal strands, chromatic embellishments, and clashing major/minor combinations. The work's embryonic ideas are announced from the inception of the first movement, spanning a wide compass. Reaching into the high register of the instrument, the opening notes establish the tranquil, spacious mood that pervades throughout. These motivic ideas are consistently developed through prominent use of minor seconds, tritones, and chordal structures built on fourths and sevenths. As indicated by the composer, the work strongly alludes to the world of ballet. Accordingly it incorporates a range of delicate expression markings and timbral effects that both initiate and sustain the calming tone of the movement overall.

The second movement employs an authoritative rhythmic structure which is underpinned by fairly brusque and defined guitar sounds. Contrasting markedly from the first movement, it is reminiscent of Stravinsky's customary use of driving off-beat patterns. The movement's robust aura is buttressed at times by *rasguado* and *golpe* sounds,³² character features of the *flamenco* guitar. Amidst sounds of conflict, untainted E major chords periodically ring out in frank contrast – yet a further instance of 'the law of contraries' at play.³³

The image shows a musical score extract for the second movement of 'Elogio de la danza'. It consists of six staves of music. The first staff begins with a 'f ritmico' marking. The second staff has a circled '1' above it. The third staff includes 'Arzuel' and 'ritico' markings. The fourth staff features 'C#', 'rasguado', and 'piza' markings. The fifth staff has 'sul pont' and 'metalico' markings. The sixth staff includes 'rall.' and 'a tempo' markings. The score is written in a complex, rhythmic style characteristic of Brouwer's work.

Example 6:
Elogio de la danza
Extract from second movement

³¹ Dumond 1988, 8.

³² The somewhat peculiar arrangement of these techniques in *Elogio de la danza* has caused some difficulty amongst guitarists both of moderate and advanced standards. In this regard, Kilvington (1989, 14–15) offers helpful advice towards successfully executing this section of the work.

³³ A detailed analysis is being prepared for future publication. To my knowledge no in-depth scholarly scrutiny of *Elogio de la danza* has yet been published. Special thanks and recognition go to James May who pointed out many intervallic and harmonic figurations submerged in the work.

Instances within the *Vivace* section of the *Obtinato* (second movement) noticeably mark the composer's close bond with African culture. This section recalls the familiar rhythmic figure, the *tresillo*, in the lower voices. While this feature reappears again and again, the proverbial *cinquillo* makes its presence known in the upper four voices.

Apart from the emergence of both the *tresillo* and the *cinquillo*, this pioneering work employs a more definitive syncopated texture on the whole. The skilful use and manipulation of syncopated rhythms greatly characterize Brouwer's works overall; its use here furthermore underscores the composer's close association with the African roots of Cuba's national heritage.

Second and Third Period Works (1968–)

Brouwer's guitar works from his second period (1968–1979) take on definitive styles from the international *avant-garde*, revealing the great impact of the 1961 Polish Festival on his artistic development. Ground-breaking works like *Canticum* (1968), *La espiral eterna* (1970), *Per Suonare a due* (1972), *Parabola* (1973–74) and *Tarantos* (1973–74) are designed to expose the performer and listener to successive chromatic clusters, strident non-tonal clashes, imprecise note-durations and numerous novel percussive sounds not commonly encountered on this scale on the concert guitar before. The style of this period similarly illustrates the inspiration from diverse sources, such as Paul Klee's art work, mathematical formulae, spiral structures, and the like.

Though the composer was predominantly concerned with structural and technical innovations during this period, his last and current period (1980 to the present) has seen a return to the tonal idiom with limited *avant-garde* techniques combined with traditional African idioms. *Variations sur un theme de Reinhardt* (1984) marks Brouwer's first major example of theme and variations, serving also as tribute to the renowned musical personalities Robert Vidal and Django Reinhardt. In recognition of the English guitar virtuoso Julian Bream's appeal for more 'substantial' and 'complex' guitar works, Brouwer responded with *Sonata* (1990), his most extensive guitar work at the time. *El rito de los Orishas* (1993) is written in honour of the Uruguayan guitar maestro Alvaro Pierri. In a similar manner to many of his earlier works, the piece is motivated by Yoruban ritual music. The work employs recurring notes in the bottom register, one of the composer's trademarks, which, in this instance recreate the 'intensity inherent in Yoruban ceremonial rites'.

El Decameron negro (1980), a programmatic work structured as a sonata, is perhaps one of Brouwer's most memorable from the latest period. Based on African mythology, it is considered by the composer as a 'good example of an art steeped in universality'. *El Decameron negro* is interesting in the sense that it was inspired by a collection of West African folktales collected by the German anthropologist Leo Frobenius in 1910.³⁴ The three movements of the piece, *La arpa del guerrero* (The harp of the warrior), *La huida de los amantes por el valle de los ecos* (The flight of the lovers through the valley of echoes) and *Ballada de la doncella enamorada* (Ballad of the love-sick maiden) provide enduring and musically engaging depictions of both ancient, traditional folklore and the geographical panorama of the African continent.

To conclude: in his desire to compose for the guitar, to 'fill the gaps' of historical circumstance, Leo Brouwer in effect creates a contemporary eloquence previously neglected in the sphere of the instrument.

³⁴ K-NGF 1998.

In his desire to create a 'universal language', he brings to fruition his aspiration to draw stimulus from both the time-honoured African tradition, implanted since the 1500s in the New World, *and* from fêted styles and techniques from far beyond his regional precincts. In this sense Brouwer endeavours to eliminate the contradiction which usually exists between the 'high arts', centred on structural complexity, and 'the popular' which, in his words, 'are easily recognised so as not to disturb the intellectual faculties of the listener'.³⁵ Through this universal undertaking, Leo Brouwer remains accessible to the general listening audience, embracing and promoting aspects of 'people's culture' while at the same time raising their critical dimensions.

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³⁵ Cited in Tran 2007.

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