

[October 14, 2019 Music Notes](#)

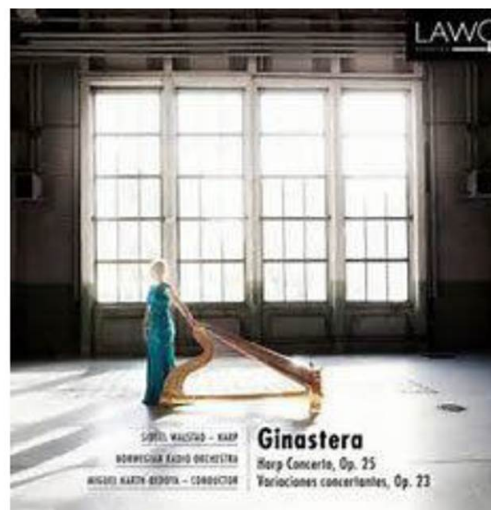
GINASTERA – LAWØ (www.lawo.no) (LWC 1182)

Sidsel Walstad, harp Norwegian Radio Orchestra, Miguel Harth-Bedoya, conductor

Alberto Ginastera (1916-1983) Harp Concerto. Op. 25 *Variaciones Concertantes*, Op. 23

The music of the Argentine master Alberto Ginastera never ceases to surprise. It did me when I first sat down to listen to the superb **LAWØ** recording of the Harp Concerto and the *Variaciones Concertantes* vividly brought to life by the Peruvian maestro Miguel Harth-Bedoya.

In this new release Harth-Bedoya leads the Norwegian Radio Orchestra with the harpist Sidsel Walstad as soloist in Ginastera's Harp Concerto.



Having first become acquainted with Ginastera's music in the seventies when both his operas *Don Rodrigo* and *Beatrix Cenci* received their American premieres at the New York City Opera, I was expecting more of the dodecaphonic Ginastera I first learned to like and later understand a little but with some difficulty.

There was something impenetrable to the music of the Argentine maverick. And yet it fascinated many of us.

Now fifty years later, we encounter two mid-career works, with opus numbers near each other and both with music that, especially in the harp concerto, premiered after a long gestation period in 1965 and later revised by the late harpist Nicanor Zableta is evocative of *Gaucha* folklore, infused as it is in its first movement with the dance rhythms of the denizens of the Pampas.

Through and through sui generis, Ginastera's harp concerto mixes the use of exotic scales reminiscent of Debussy and Ravel with the exhilaratingly driving rhythms of the Argentine *malambo*.

The work asks much of the soloist: rhythmic tapping on the instrument, intricate pizzicato patterns in the upper range of the instrument, insanely difficult pedaling, the use of both nails and fingertips on the strings of the instrument, glissandi played against alternate figurations on the opposite hand. All this occurs against a background that alternates restlessly active moments with the utter quiet of the second movement.

Norwegian harpist Sidsel Walstad is technically and musically a force of nature, holding her own against the massive orchestration of the harp concerto, and protean in her ability to spin a long legato line with an instrument notoriously hard to master. But master she does deliver a memorable performance that will surely become a standard against which to judge future attempts at this musical minefield.

The fifteen variations that make up the *Variaciones Concertantes* are a superbly effective tour de force for the cello, the string section, the flute, the clarinet, the viola, the oboe and bassoon together, the trumpet and trombone as a pair, the violin, the French horn, the woodwind section, the bass, and, as a finale the amassed rank and file tutti.

Throughout Walstad provides accompaniment and mano a mano partnering, with Harth-Bedoya keeping the extraordinarily gifted members of the Norwegian Radio Orchestra coherently musical as both soloists and ensemble players throughout an intricately scored work. Throughout we hear a unifying theme and infinite variations in a variety of tempi that range from moments of stasis that Ginastera turns into virtue to a full-steam ahead rondo finale.

Aside from praising the mere value of representing the genius of Alberto Ginastera in this perfectly engineered compact disc, perfectly played, perfectly produced, perfectly packaged (and annotated by Jan Hedrick Hayerdahl) we salute the **LAWØ** label for its enterprise and hope that the future will bring more interesting releases.

***** Extraordinary

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