

## GETTING TO KNOW OUR NEIGHBOR: A PIANIST'S GUIDE TO PEDAGOGICAL REPERTOIRE BY MEXICAN COMPOSERS

WSMTA Conference 2023

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Mexican composers have produced a wealth of piano music of pedagogical value. As this music becomes more readily available outside Mexico, its use in the teaching studio can enrich the canon of established works, provide opportunities for discussion of cultural traditions, and help getting to know the music of our southern neighbor.

**A note about availability:** Like almost everything in our ever-shrinking and interconnected world, a lot of printed music that was formerly hard to obtain has become easily available. When the music has entered the public domain, IMSLP is a great way to find scores by Mexican composers of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, many of whom wrote a lot of piano music of different genres and difficulty levels.

### Some resources:

Peer Music Classical ([www.peermusicclassical.com](http://www.peermusicclassical.com)) has traditionally published a lot of music written by Latin American composers, including a fair share of Mexican ones. They are also the representative and distributor in the U.S. for *Ediciones Mexicanas de Música*, the most important publisher of Mexican classical music in that country. Generally, things in the Peer Music Classical catalog are available and can be purchased online or ordered through your local music store (sheetmusicplus.com sells almost all their publications. Other piano music by Mexican composers published by U.S.-based firms can also be found there).

<https://www.repertoriomac Dowell.com/> (in Spanish only) is the biggest distributor of sheet music in Mexico. They have some Mexican publications that are not possible to find elsewhere. They ship nationwide in Mexico. I am not sure about international shipping, but it might be worth inquiring.

*El Sótano* bookstores also sell sheet music. They ship internationally and accept PayPal. Their website is in Spanish only: [www.elsotano.com](http://www.elsotano.com)

Many of the scores listed here are owned by a university or major public library somewhere in the U.S. If you are affiliated with a higher-education institution, you can request the music through your library via Interlibrary Loan. Sometimes this resource is also available through your local public library. Worldcat.org is a great resource to find a score and a list of libraries that own the item.

<http://pianolatinoamerica.org/> This is a Japanese(!) website that offers an extensive database of works by Latin American composers including composer names, work titles and a list of available recordings, especially from the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The site is in Japanese but does offer a version in Spanish.

If the scores in this presentation have been made available by the composers themselves, or through open access, you can find them in this OneDrive folder: <https://1drv.ms/f/s!Al-QL0t1iEyCuBos5tMyjeZE6Ob7?e=bG7Wxh> or by following this QR code (the folder also contains a digital version of this handout):



The following list is not intended to be comprehensive. It is based on music that is relatively easy to get, and that offers clear musical and pianistic benefits to students and teachers looking for an alternative and/or supplement to the well-established works in the repertoire.

## LATE ELEMENTARY-EARLY INTERMEDIATE LEVEL:

**19<sup>th</sup> century:** Morales, Melesio (1838-1908): *El baile de los niños, La india frutera* (available in the OneDrive folder and IMSLP).

### 20<sup>th</sup> century:

Galindo, Blas (1910-1993): *Piezas infantiles* (Ediciones Mexicanas de Música)

García Renart, Marta (b. 1942): *20 rondas infantiles y una melodía cora* (20 Children's Songs and a Cora Melody) (Pentacordio Ediciones). Beautifully illustrated and laid out, a very pianistic setting of 20 folk songs and nursery rhymes from around Mexico plus one indigenous melody. Includes lyrics and comments by the composer. A second edition was published in 2019: <https://pentacordio.wordpress.com/catalogo/>

Ponce, Manuel (1882-1948): *20 Easy Pieces* (Peer Music). A favorite collection akin to Bartók's Mikrokosmos. Ponce harmonizes and arranges twenty traditional melodies.

Quintanar, Héctor (1936-2003): *Cinco piezas para niños* (Ediciones Mexicanas de Música)

Ruiz Armengol, Mario (1914-2002): *Piezas infantiles* vol. I and vol. II. (An edition was published by the composer's family, a facsimile was also published by Universidad Veracruzana).

### 21<sup>st</sup> century:

Agudelo, Graciela (1945-2018): *¡Feliz Navidad!* (Merry Christmas!) (Arla Music Publishing Co., Canada [out of print]). A set of arrangements for piano four-hands of 15 Christmas carols from around the Spanish-speaking world.

*Juegos al piano* (Games at the Piano) (Certosa Verlag. Available online from the publisher. The website is in German only). 15 short imaginative pieces. Most are originals, some are arrangements of popular tunes. Nicely illustrated, it explores a variety of skills and styles.

Álvarez, Lucía (b. 1948): *Viaje con veinte escalas. Piezas didácticas para estudiantes de piano* (Trip with Twenty Scales. Pedagogical Pieces for Piano Students) (Escuela Nacional de Música. Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México). A beautifully crafted collection that explores many styles including blues, boogie-woogie, Mexican and Latin American dance rhythms, contrapuntal pieces, small etudes, etc.

Coral, Leonardo (b. 1962): *Piezas infantiles*, (Children's Pieces. First Album) (Unpublished, available in the Drive folder). Nine very short pieces. A single idea is developed in each one. A second album has been recently completed and will be made available in the next few months as part of an open-access compilation of pedagogical pieces by Latin American composers commissioned by pianist Lark Powers.

## INTERMEDIATE-LATE INTERMEDIATE LEVEL:

### 20<sup>th</sup> century:

Bernal Jiménez, Miguel (1910-1956): *Antigua Valladolid* (Peer Music), *Carteles* (Peer Music).

Chávez, Carlos (1899-1978): *Ten Preludes* (Schirmer).

Moncayo, José Pablo (1912-1958): *Tres piezas* (Ediciones Mexicanas de Música).

Ponce, Manuel: *Scherzino mexicano* (IMSLP), *Intermezzo No. 1* (IMSLP, RCM Celebration Series, v.9), *Tema mexicano variado* (Peer Music).

Revueltas, Silvestre (1899-1940): *Allegro* (Carl Fischer), *Canción* (Carl Fischer).

Ruiz Armengol, Mario: *Las frías montañas* (Ediciones Mexicanas de Música).

Velázquez, Leonardo (1935-1904): *Micropiezas* (Ediciones Mexicanas de Música).

### 21<sup>st</sup> century:

Agudelo, Graciela: *Siete piezas latinas* (Seven Latin Pieces) (Certosa Verlag). An exploration of different styles of South American music. Evocative atmospheres, varied use of rhythm and syncopation.

Contreras, Juan Pablo (b. 1987) *Tres piezas para piano* (Three Piano Pieces) (Unpublished, available in the Drive folder). Composed while still a student, they show good understanding of the possibilities of the piano, which are explored in a traditional way.

Derbez, Georgina (b. 1968) *Cuatro piezas para jóvenes pianistas* (Four Pieces for Young Pianists) (Available in the Drive folder). With a slow-fast-slow-fast pattern. The fast pieces are particularly attractive. Her language combines power and refinement and is quite sophisticated.

Elizondo, José (b. 1972) The composer makes all his music available for free through his website:

<https://www.joseelizondo.com/scores.html>. Among his original piano pieces are:

*Imágenes en la niebla* (Images in the Fog). A deeply personal composition evoking the emotional journey of the composer facing adversity and seemingly undefeatable illness (ends joyfully).

*La sonrisa del céfiro* (Zephyr's Smile). Each of the three movements in this suite is named after a toy that requires the gentle action of the wind to function.

## ADVANCED LEVEL:

**19<sup>th</sup> century:** Castro, Ricardo: *Vals caprice, Op. 1* (IMSLP).

## **20<sup>th</sup> -21<sup>st</sup> century:**

Aranda, Alexis (b. 1974) *Estudio No. 1, Estudio No. 7* (Etudes 1 and 7) (Unpublished, available in the Drive folder). Despite the odd numbering, these are his only existing etudes. Very effective writing and use of idiomatic patterns for the instrument.

Hernández Moncada, Eduardo (1899-1995): *Costeña* (Ediciones Mexicanas de Música).

Ibarra, Federico (b. 1946). Ibarra has composed eight piano sonatas from the 1980s to recent years. The following ones are all published by Ediciones Mexicanas de Música. They use driving rhythms and fast, fleeting writing, in addition to big chords and pianistic devices derived from several 20<sup>th</sup>-century composer-pianists (Prokofiev, etc.). They can be effective competition pieces. *Sonata III*. It uses thematic material from one of his operas. In three movements.

*Sonata IV* In one movement.

*Sonata VI* In two contrasting movements.

Márquez, Arturo (b. 1950): *Días de mar y río* (Days of Sea and River) (Peer Music Classical). This is much more of what you would expect from the composer of *Danzón No. 2*. A very effective and very pianistic work that will result immediately appealing to most audiences.

Ortiz, Gabriela (b. 1964): *Estudios entre preludios* (Etudes between preludes) (Boosey and Hawkes, available as a special order through their website). An on-going series of sets of a prelude followed by an etude, Ortiz has composed four to date: Homages to Ligeti, Bartók, Jesusa Palancares (a fictional character in a novel), and John Cage.

*Suy-Muy-Key* (included in *Salsa Nueva*, a compilation by pianist Elena Riu. Boosey & Hawkes). Integrates evocations of salsa rhythms in a contemporary language.

Vidales, Jorge (b. 1969): *Estudios intervalicos* (Intervallic Etudes (Available from the composer: [jorgevidales\\_composition@hotmail.com](mailto:jorgevidales_composition@hotmail.com)). A set of three pieces that explore sonorities in thirds, sevenths and seconds, and fifths. Effective writing.

Zyman, Samuel (b. 1956): *Two Motions in One Movement* (Merion Music Inc./Theodore Presser). Commissioned in 1996 by the Music Teachers' Association of California, the piece is in three-part form and is extremely effective. Perfect for an early-advanced student seeking an exciting work suitable for a competition.

*Restless* (Theodore Presser). Description from the publisher: "...begins with a recitative-like *Misterioso*, building tension as if slowly pulling back a spring until it snaps. This recoil is supercharged, cycling through a series of dance rhythms inspired by the music of Zyman's native Mexico. Successive episodes bring the tempo gradually faster, with restless tension between folkloric harmonies and chromatically dramatic harmony."