

Abstract.

The goal of this investigation is to define Spanish composer Leonardo Balada (Barcelona, 1933) style and evolution through the analysis of four of his compositions.

From the moment he moved to New York in 1956 in order to study with eminent teachers such as Aaron Copland or Vincent Persichetti, Balada has composed more than 120 works of great beauty and personality, ranging all kinds of music genres. Since the early 60s, his music enjoyed international success and he received several commissions from a number of important European and American music institutions. Prestigious orchestras (such as the New York or the Los Angeles Philharmonic), conductors (L. Maazel), soloists (A. de Larrocha and G. Cassadó) have played his compositions, also recorded by labels like Deutsche Grammophon or Naxos.

Notwithstanding the relevance, quality and impact of Balada's work, an overall analysis of his musical language has never been attempted.

Four works are considered in the framework of this investigation: *Concert per Violoncello i 9 instrumentistes* (1962), *María Sabina* (1969), *Homage to Casals* (1975) and *Prague Sinfonietta* (2003). Each of these works represents a different phase of Balada compositional trajectory and contains those peculiar features that have influenced his music evolution. These features (i.e.: the use or suppression of elements as important as tonal harmony or melody) are common to most of the works composed in the same period and allow us an interpretation of Balada music.

Conversations with the composer as well as his classes (Balada is Composition Professor at the Carnegie Mellon University) were important sources of information. They resulted in greatly helping understanding his music and investigating the features of a very complex musical language that has evolved, with the passing of time and the use of different techniques, to eventually become the peculiar style defining the personality of this exceptional composer.