



CHAMBER MUSIC REVIEW

Dalí Quartet's Elon Concert Explores Classical and Latin American Repertoire

By [William Thomas Walker](#)

February 27, 2014 - Elon, NC:

[Elon University](#)'s intimate Whitley Auditorium welcomed a lot of new listeners for the [Dalí Quartet](#)'s imaginative program. Two core quartet repertoire works, a late Mozart and a middle Brahms quartet, occupied the first half of the concert while a selection of Latin-American pieces were presented after intermission. I anticipated the later with caution because of a dislike of lots of small works (too much research!); my first impressions of Latin-American works were formed by listening to complex and intensive percussive pieces such as Carlos Chávez's *Sinfonia india* and Silvestre Revueltas' *Sensemaya*. Educational outreach is a major component of the Dalí Quartet's mission along with advocating the music of Latin America. The members of the ensemble are first violinist Simon Gollo, second violinist Carlos Rubio, violist Adriana Linares, and cellist Jesus Morales.

Having just reviewed Borromeo Quartet's [performance](#) of the last of the three Prussian Quartets of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-91), the Dalí's choice of the first, Quartet in D, K.575, was most welcome to me. It is in four movements, and the cello was given extra prominence to please the cello-playing King Frederick of Prussia for whom the three were commissioned. Mozart emphasizes the parts of the two inner voices, the second violin and the viola, to compensate.

The Dalí Quartet gave a beautifully judged performance from the unrushed opening Allegretto through to the vivacious and contrapuntal pleasures of the rondo of the concluding Allegretto. They gave the music time to breath; and while each player made the most of the solo turns Mozart gave them, they balanced and blended well as an ensemble.

Brahms' Quartet in A Minor, Op. 51, No. 2, had a long genesis, having begun in the 1850s, only to be finished and published in 1873 after countless revisions. The spirit of Bach haunted Brahms as he labored over this work. It abounds in polyphonic devices, especially canons, but their musical effect helps hide the craft that went into them. Brahms also paid homage to his close friend Joseph Joachim by using the latter's motto, F-A-E, *Frei aber einsam* ("Free, but lonely") as the second, third, and fourth notes of the first movement's main theme. Brahms also wove the notes of his own motto, F-A-F, *Frei, aber froh* ("Free but glad"), into the musical texture. It is in four movements. The Dalí Quartet wove a full, rich instrumental texture for this Romantic work.

A highlight of the many glories of the first movement was at the beginning of the recapitulation when the violist Linares played Brahms' F-A-F followed, just before the coda, by the second violinist Rubio playing this F-A-F overlapped with Joachim's F-A-E. The deep, plush sound of the viola and cello supported a gorgeous, singing first violin melody in the second movement. Their playing of the third movement brought out its sparkling quality as well as the special tone generated by canonic writing. The Dalí players made the most of the vivid rhythm of the *czardas* dance Brahms used in the finale.

After intermission, violist Adriana Linares announced the quartet would modify the order of the Latin American selections. The first selection was "Danzón Almendra" (Dance, 1938) by Cuban composer [Abelardo Valdés](#) (1911-58) in a quartet arrangement by N. Aponte. This lively and intricately scored piece was followed by "Fuga Romántica" ("Romantic Fugue") (1950) by the Venezuelan composer [Juan Bautista Plaza](#) (1898-1965). Second violinist Carlos Rubio announced this piece and dedicated it to the current violent unrest in Venezuela. Plaza left the study of music to devote himself to composing classical music. His studies included a period in Rome (1920-23), and he composed notable religious music besides teaching music in Caracas. His "Romantic Fugue" is beautifully crafted with elegant lines but possessing great warmth. Every ensemble ought to check out this piece as an alternate to Barber's Adagio for solemn occasions. Plaza's "Fuga Criolla" ("Creole Fugue," 1931) is lighter in spirit, being playful, but nonetheless tightly scored. So was his "Wapango" which followed.

The songful qualities of the next two selections were unmistakable, and their melodies frequently soared from the bow of first violinist Simon Gollo. "El día que me quieras" ("The Day You Love Me") (1935) is a sensual tango by Argentinian composer [Carlos Gardel](#) (1890-1935) in an intricate arrangement by N. Aponte. Familiarity with Ravel's "Bolero" was not very useful for the following "La Historia de un Amor" ("The Story of Love"), a bolero from 1956 by Panamanian composer [Carlos Eleta Almarán](#) in an arrangement by Javier Montiel. A very lively piece, "El Cumbanchero," by Puerto Rican composer [Rafael Hernández](#) (1892-1965) in an arrangement by N. Aponter ended the program. The ingenious and intricate application of string technique, both bowings and pizzicatos, along with expressive use of color, dynamics, and rhythm made for a constant source of interest and pleasure.

EVENT INFORMATION

Elon -- (*Thu., Feb. 27, 2014*)

[Elon University: Dalí String Quartet, "Classic Romance – Latin Passion"](#)

\$13 or *Elon ID* -- Whitley Auditorium , (336)278-5600 ,

<http://www.elon.edu/e-web/academic> -- 7:30 PM

In response to prolonged and enthusiastic applause, the Dalí Quartet pulled out all the technical arrows in their quivers for "La Cumpaisita" by [Gerardo Matos Rodriguez](#) (1897-1948)! One of the players told me after the concert "You don't learn to play like that in the conservatory!" What a plethora of bowing and plucked strings! What rhythms! In addition to bowing very close to the violin's bridge, a harsh rasping sound was produced by bowing between the tailpiece and the bridge. This wild mélange provided a clear hit and a wonderful finish to a selection of finely crafted works from a too little sampled repertoire.



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