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Music as an Instrument of Negotiation between Cultural Identities: The Case of Native American Music According to Louis W. Ballard and Alberto E. Ginastera

As an Italian citizen, I experience the paradox of belonging to a country that exports its culture worldwide and nevertheless does not invest enough money to support the cultural environment, schools, universities, museums, and theaters inside its boundaries. There is a certain attitude of living off the interest. When I put this argument in non-musical contexts, not so rarely people answer that the financial demand cannot submit to human activities that do not produce considerable richness. Thus, art music often lingers among things that do not matter. Easy to say, my investigation as a DMA student, a pianist, and a researcher, focuses on demystifying this conception. Reflecting on the present consumer-oriented society, I am persuaded that: on the one side globalization frequently results in a flattening of cultural identities; on the other, contrasts between ethnicities and cultural identities still provoke social tensions. Apparently, neither money nor technology is even sufficient to solve conflicts without brutally annihilating the diversities in the name of global standardization. Can art music play a positive role in this scenario? Is music a language capable of interpreting the evolution of cultural identities and functioning as an intermediary in the negotiation between ethnicities? I believe it is, and that there are many underrated examples showing it. As a case study, I consider Louis Ballard and Alberto Ginastera among the composers who worked in this direction in the last fifty years. By

operating a semantic analysis of Ballard's *Four American Indian Piano Preludes* and Ginastera's *Piano Sonata no. 2 op. 53*, I want to show that both the composers (even though using a different approach) were willing to connect the indigenous roots of their culture with the modern dominating post-colonial world. To do this, they fused Native-American musical elements with compositional techniques belonging to the European musical artistry. This research aspires to demonstrate that the art music, despite its apparent elitist nature, can enhance dialogue between communities, and aims to engage pianists to include more regularly this repertoire in their recital programs.