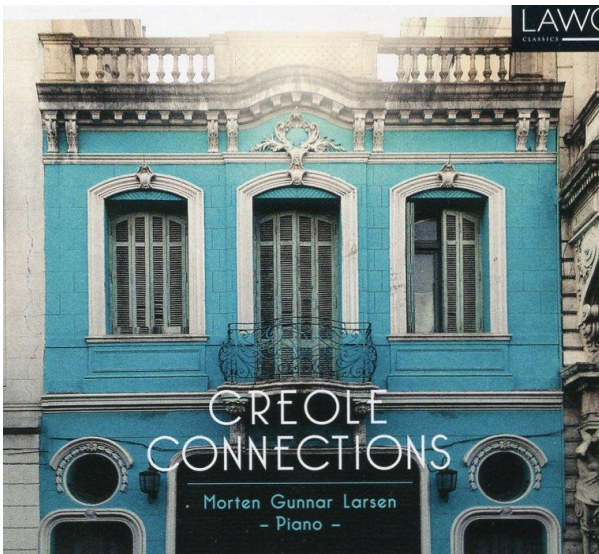


# Ragtime Music Reviews

## COMPACT DISC REVIEW

By  
Jack Rummel



***Creole Connections***  
***Morten Gunnar Larsen, piano***  
***Lawo Classics LWC1070***

Odeon / Labirinto / Batuque / Carioca / Danza, Op. 33 / O, Ma Charmante, épargnez-Moi! / Suis Moi! / Mazurk / Retrato de Alfredo Gobbi / La muerte del Angel / Danza No. 2 / Maria Antonieta Pons / Te Quiero Tanto! / A La Antigua / La Comparsa / Tenebroso / Nenê / Turbilhão de beijos / Vem cá, branquinha / Venezuelan Little Tune.

Over the past 30-plus years, works by Latin American composers have slowly but surely made their way into the hearts and ultimately the repertoires of ragtime aficionados, as they discover the lure of this different, yet no less hypnotic, form of syncopation. Yet the music is not new. Early North American pioneers included Louis Moreau Gottschalk, who concertized across the United States in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> Century; and the “Spanish-tinged” works of Jelly Roll Morton in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

The first Latin American composer to recently break through the “It ain’t ragtime” mindset was Brazilian Ernesto Nazareth, a contemporary of Scott Joplin, and this CD by Norwegian pianist Morten Gunnar Larsen spotlights him with eight selections. Gottschalk is heard on four cuts, with the remaining tracks featuring one or two works by Argentinian Astor Piazzola, Cubans Ignacio Cervantes and Ernesto Lecuona, and Trinidad-born Lionel Belasco. Two living North American composers are also represented: Hal Isbitz and David Thomas Roberts.

Larsen’s reputation as a superb pianist precedes him and this disc fulfills that promise. Tempos are appropriate and range from spritely tangos to languid danzas and a waltz. Dynamics are at times breathtaking, with fortes that are strident and pianissimos that are ethereal, all captured in intimately recorded sound from a concert grand piano. These are not renditions that might be played at *el Carnaval* over the din of the merrymakers, but instead they would be at home in a salon setting where the inherent beauty of the compositions could be savored.

Morten Gunnar Larsen, in his brief liner notes\*, states, “The primary focus of this recording is the Brazilian composer and pianist Ernesto Nazareth (1863-1934), whom I wish to make better known in Norway.” In so doing, he joins a distinguished list of ragtime artists who have embraced Nazareth’s works, while at the same time introducing the compositions of lesser-known Latin American writers who someday may be equally welcomed by ragtimers. We will all be rewarded by Norway’s proposed enlightenment. Highly recommended.

(\*additional notes may be found

at <[http://www.lawo.no/LAWO\\_ebooklet/LWC1070\\_Creole\\_Connections\\_eboklet.pdf](http://www.lawo.no/LAWO_ebooklet/LWC1070_Creole_Connections_eboklet.pdf)>.)

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