

cd magma / nine compositions

I revolt against the common practice of having to write on music much longer than it really lasts. This is why only some reflections are included here. The rest consists of reading between the lines or, still better, going straight to the tracks.

Composing is an act both of will and consciousness, involving historical, social and personal processes and situations, determined by philosophical and aesthetic thinking and - in the broadest and deepest sense - ideological frontiers and options.

To be a composer (male or female) born under the imposed strong influence and inheritance of western european, "white", christian and bourgeois culture, and willingly living in a third world country, implies the assumption of the dangers and challenges of such a choice, a choice willing to defy culture and music models established by a dominating northcentric first world.

Dependence has always been carefully nourished and supported by the powers imposing these models, from the inside and the outside. There are two kinds of answers to them: comfortable continuation of epigonalism on one hand, confrontation through awareness on the other. These answers may take different shapes, both the search of possible paths leading to expression and communication through music, here and now, means accepting this challenge and recognizing these options.

Technique, material, structure, contents, have to do with ideology. They always had. Also in music. And this ideological reading - for the past and for today - is defining and meaningful: not of pamphletary actions or fashionable gestures, but of the role culture (and therefore music) played before and could play now.

Music has never been a universal language. It has often and repeatedly been (mis)used as a cultural weapon for dominating purposes, to substitute through a "higher" expression, one proclaimed as "inferior". This is what was called - for the celebration of the 500 years of a continent's "discovery" - "encounter" of two cultures. The dark, cruel, shameless history of physical extermination and spiritual and cultural annihilation of millions of people through humiliation, slavery, greed, deceit, robbery and force should stand as one of the most painful and sorrowful events in the whole history of mankind in general, and of european "civilisation" in particular.

Being aware of this history - not at an end 500 years later - can help to understand the meaning of the absurd option of composing music in Uruguay today. It

can become a way of defending and rescuing drowned, forgotten and despised symbols and their right to exist and be listened to, a way of assuming the necessity of a free existence also through the challenge and risk of music creation.

magma I was composed in Buenos Aires between august 1966 and february 1967, for trumpet in C, trumpet in Bb, four horns in F-Bb, two tenor-bass trombones in Bb and contrabass tuba in C-Bb. In spite of not really being my opus 1 chronologically speaking, in my opinion it actually and willingly is the first one, since it points at the true beginning of my compositional work, starting from the process of awareness and the experiences in the period of studies and discussions at the CLAEM. It was originally called magma and under that title received an award at the composition contest organised by the Berlin Academy of Arts in 1970. Later on, the same name but with its corresponding numbering was used for other pieces that had a common denominator, evident not only through the presence of wind instruments, but also because of the kind of material chosen, its way of using sound energy, its structural frame and its timbric-intervallic handling.

E desidero solo colori (And I wish only colors) was composed in Freiburg in the first months of 1969, for a choir of six soprano and six alto voices, during my stay as a scholarship holder at the Institute for New Music of that city. The poems of the Italian Cesare Pavese, together with those of the Spaniard Miguel Hernández, of the Argentinian Juan Gelman and of the Uruguayan Idea Vilariño, have been an admired and dearly loved company for many years now. From Pavese's long poem "Agonia" (1933), I took only these verses:

<i>E desidero solo colori.</i>	And I wish only colors.
<i>Ogni nuovo mattino</i>	Every new morning
<i>uscirò per le strade</i>	I'll go out through the streets
<i>cercando i colori.</i>	Looking for colors.

The plays of superposition, substitution and decontextualization of the five vowels (particularly the "e" and the "o", which appear more frequently) serve as a support to the intervallic and timbric weft, those colors the poet pursues as the musician does with sounds. (Inner mobility, outer immobility, something that is still worrying me today.)

huauqui was realized in september 1975 with a Synthi EMS analogic synthesizer and two Revox A 77 tape recorders, and uses microphonic takes of vocal and instrumental sequences, edited with the electronic material. "Huauqui" - also "huauque" or "guauque" - was a little statue that the Incas carved after their own image. By extension, the "huauqui" concept also meant "brotherhood, friendship, community". This piece is the starting point of my self-imposed goal in search of simplicity, conciseness, bareness and silence. (I'm still carrying on with it.)

todavía no (not yet) was composed between Bonn and Freiburg in September 1979 for three flutes and three clarinets in Bb, during an invitation to Germany, partly to do some research work, partly to give lectures and seminars. The temporary physical distance with the awful daily reality prevailing at that time on both sides of the River Plate, surrounded me with a still more startling silence, paralyzed me in a still more suffocating vacuum: the nightmares were not yet over, cruelty and fright have not finished yet, pain and death were not yet drawing to an end. The sounds move as if they were gagged, get drowned in silence, fraternally look for each other in hope. The piece starts and ends in and with silence, is to be played throughout *PPP* (although natural *crescendo* will appear when all six instruments play an E at different octaves), and puts emphasis on the differentials and overtones, and on microtonal results.

un lado, otro lado (one side, other side) was composed in West Berlin between march and april 1984. The piano is only used in the keyboard and this one only in its extremes. The use of the pedals help to the presence of sounds that are not directly written, but appear through those notated. The piece is in two parts, clearly differentiated one from the other. For the program book of its first performance, I wrote the following lines, out of the sound reading, with no descriptive intention whatsoever:

<i>Tensión de la calma</i>	Tension of calmness
<i>Calma de los sonidos</i>	Calmness of the sounds
<i>Sonidos del silencio</i>	Sounds of silence
<i>Silencio del tiempo</i>	Silence of time
<i>Tiempo de extremos</i>	Time of extremes
<i>Extremos de la vida</i>	Extremes of life
<i>Vida de luchas</i>	Life of struggles
<i>Luchas de todos nosotros</i>	Struggles of us all

magma VII was also composed in West Berlin between July and October 1984. Up to the present, it is the last composition of the series bearing this title and the one that uses a larger quantity of instruments, fourteen in all: piccolo flute, two flutes, flute in G, clarinet in Eb, two clarinets in Bb, bass clarinet in Bb, two trumpets in C, two horns in F-Bb, two tenor-bass trombones. Almost transformed in lava, this magma is built on reiterative discharges organized around a timbric texture with friction of harmonics and microtonal spectra, whose states follow one another with no transitions, no breaks, no silences. (A treatment I still stand for today.)

dos piezas para pequeño conjunto (two pieces for small ensemble) were composed in Montevideo in December 1989, under the dismay of Panama's invasion ordered by the government of the USA, which coincided with the reading of Fidel Castro's speech for the fallen in Angola, out of which the titles of both pieces were taken: 1) ... *entre los últimos* ... (... among the last ones ...), 2) ... *hasta la última* ... (... up to the last ...). (Continuity, discontinuity, sound shifting through space and time.)

sendas (paths), a commission of the Ensemble Aventure Freiburg, was composed for flute, oboe, clarinet in Bb, bassoon, trumpet, horn, trombone and piano, in Montevideo in the first half of 1992 and first performed by this Ensemble on October 30 of the same year, in the frame of a series of concerts understood as anticelibration of the 500 years of the discovery of America. Each one of the four parts bears as epigraph a verse line by the Argentinian poet Juan Gelman (from "Tratos", 1983/1984):

1) *pero nosotros miramos con miedo el camino que pasa*

but we look with fear the road that goes by

2) *preguntamos a qué otro infierno conducirá*

we ask what other hell it will lead to

3) *preferimos infierno en mano a cien volando*

we prefer a hell in hand than hundreds flying

4) *y la libertad se convierte en un dolor en el cuerpo*

and freedom becomes a pain in the body

As in all previous cases, here too the mention of these lines is purely symbolic and affective and by no means should be understood as a "program". Equally symbolic is the presence, in the fourth piece, of a maraca and a pair of claves. (I am becoming

more and more interested in the "symbolic" in musical terms. Direct quotes can be in a way "appropriations", whereas symbols are links of union.)

algún sonido de la vida (any sound of life) was composed and first performed in Montevideo in 1993, motivated by dialogues with the Uruguayan oboist Mariana Berta, to whom the piece is dedicated. Its title was taken - once more! - from a line by the Argentinian poet Juan Gelman (out of "Tratos" again). All three pieces are based on scarce real sounds (my obsession for bareness), which give place to others, all of them inserted in a dialectic duality, by means of a certain speculative play of the splitting, going apart and coming together of two complementaries.

My thanks to the Núcleo Música Nueva de Montevideo, the DeutschlandRadio Köln, the INA and Radio-France, as well as to the friendly support of Martine Joste, Pierre Mariétan, Béatrice Montoriol and Reinhard Oehlschlägel, and of all the performers involved in this adventure.

- 1 - **magma I** (1966/1967) 5'47" A / A / D
 Live recording, Conrado Silva, San Cristóbal, Venezuela, 28-VII-1985.
 Ensemble of performers participating at the Decimotercer Curso Latinoamericano de Música Contemporánea, San Cristóbal, Venezuela, under the coordination of Cergio Prudencio.
- 2 - **E desidero solo colori** (1969) 6'12" A / A / D
 Anonymous live recording, Freiburg, 9-VII-1970.
 Chamber choir of the Hochschule für Musik Freiburg, conducted by Herbert Froitzheim.
- 3 - **huauqui** (1975) 11'03" A / A / D
 Electroacoustic composition realized at Elac, pequeño estudio de Montevideo.
- 4 - **todavía no** (1979) 10'48" A / A / D
 Live recording, G. Paraskevaïdis, Montevideo, 11-12-1979.
 Members of the Núcleo Música Nueva de Montevideo, conducted by Coriún Aharonián: Santiago Bosco, Gladys Margounato & Beatriz Zóppolo, flutes; Jorge Abella, Fernando Cón don & Elbio Rodríguez Barilari, clarinets.
- 5 - **un lado, otro lado** (1984) 8'46" A / D / D
 Live recording, Radio-France, Paris (Porte de la Suisse), 12-III-1986.
 Martine Joste, piano. Sound engineer: Roland Dandaleix. DAT copy: Jean-François Pontefract. Concert of the Groupe d'Étude et Réalisation Musicales (GERM), Paris. Avec l'aimable autorisation de l'INA (Institut National de l'Audiovisuel), Paris.
- 6 - **magma VII** (1984) 6'52" A / A / D
 Live recording, Fernando Lafferrière, Berlin, 2-XII-1984.
 Ensemble of the Hochschule der Künste Berlin, conducted by Barbara Kaiser.
- 7 - **dos piezas para pequeño conjunto** (1989) 5'24" A / D / D
 Live recording, Coriún Aharonián, Montevideo, 27-VI-1990.
 Members of the Núcleo Música Nueva de Montevideo: Mariana Berta, oboe; Gisella Hernández, clarinet; Manuel González Sanguinetti, trumpet; Miguel Marozzi, piano; Jorge Camiruaga, claves.
- 8 - **sendas** (1992) 8'34" D / D / D
 Live recording, Deutschlandfunk Köln, Freiburg, 21-XI-1993. Eine Aufnahme des Deutschlandfunk Köln.
 Ensemble Aventure Freiburg, conducted by Bernhard Wulff: Mateja Haller, flute; Christian Hommel, oboe; Walter Ifrim, clarinet; Wolfgang Rüdiger, bassoon; Klaus Stoy, horn; Michael Gross, trumpet; Uroš Polanc, trombone; Hansjörg Koch, piano.
- 9 - **algún sonido de la vida** (1993) 8'23" D / D / D°
 Live recording, C. Aharonián, Montevideo, 13-IV-1994.
 Mariana Berta & Elvira Casanova, oboes.

total: 73'18"

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 TACUABÉ - SERIE MÚSICA NUEVA - T/E 26 CD

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