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SOUND AS RECURSIVE PRESENCE

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“El lenguaje es ficción, la imformación lo confirma.”
“El timbre es el mensaje”
Balerie McRoen¹

¹ As quoted in Carmen Baliero’s book Música y Teatro to be published by Instituto Nacional de Teatro in Buenos Aires, 2016
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Introduction

What is “normal” when conceiving sound transmission and perception? What is normative in our ways of listening? Where is that normativity coming from? Because sound transmission, processing and consumption are so intimately related to technology, I want to question how it conditions our listening practices. Hi Fidelity sound technologies attempt to create machines that leave no trace of their operation: interfaces which functioning is supposed to be neutral and clean. I think that playback systems and sound technologies are never neutral either as acoustical devices or as artifacts bearing the traces of class, power, and social structures.

Therefore, I try to investigate that issue by creating and experimenting with alternative and non-functional listening devices, working with the materiality of the sound sources as bodies of resonance, where meaning is ascribed and where there is no neutral point of listening. I want to generate and examine these impure sounds, where the noise of the machines is part of the sounding content, making these non-functional features into positive features as an ideological stand. Carmen Baliero refers to this aspect of my work as “Ideology of Timbre.” In her words, this would be “the use of a loaded and corroded material to filter or project sound.” Concepts such as high fidelity, technological cleanness and clarity are completely subverted in an operation in which the sound and the object in which that sound is placed become inseparable.

By the same token, I am interested in problems of communication. Understanding communication itself as a transmission process or a
mechanism between people, formal structures and technology, I am interested in the margins of messages. I want to bring to the foreground all the noise that is not supposed to be content but that actually carries a lot of it as a residue of its form. What are the things that obscure and complicate the transmission process? How do we hear content that is filtered through formal and physical processes? What is understanding and building meaning around a sound that we perceive? What is “the rest” left in the operation of sound transmission? What is the rest left in the processes of cultural transmission?

My personal method of responding or investigating to these questions is to play with the representation of and fantasies about what processes are, using the subjective space of my own imagination about sound, form, instruments, etc; taking inspiration from Raymond Roussel and Roberto Arlt novels about machines, alchemy and mechanical fantasies.

In this thesis I will refer to my two composition mentors in Buenos Aires --Carmen Baliero and Gustavo Ribicic-- and to their understanding of musical education and how it was reflected in their teaching. On one hand, I see their working methodologies as key to the way I developed my own practice. On the other, because they created self-managed spaces outside of musical academia, their teaching practices remain undocumented and there is no written material about that part of their work. Besides this, the existing texts that address these issues are only available in Spanish so a lot of this thesis is narrating my own experience as a student with them and trying to make some of the existent material available in English.
Teaching-Learning, methodologies in Buenos Aires

Being born and having always lived in Buenos Aires, Argentina I am used to moving in the marginal space of the cultural “global main stream.” I am interested in the logic of marginal spaces, which even in the literal image of a page allows another kind of freedom and creative thinking. The history or lineage in the sound work and music that I do is related to two of my mentors in Buenos Aires: Carmen Baliero and Gustavo Ribicic and the way they thought of musical education. Both of them generated social spaces to study music in a very idiosyncratic and deep way outside the Buenos Aires academia. Their teaching formats were individual but also group lessons without an institutional framework; thereby, they created social contexts for the music to be produced. Part of the music lived in that unique collective space for interaction. The social dynamics needed and created to produce the pieces were considered part of the compositions.

In my composition and exploration practices with them, the focus was always put on how to create my own vocabulary and systems in order to be able to produce the music I imagined. The procedures and processes generating the pieces were considered an integral part of the pieces themselves. Both had a very strong sense of how music works in a social context and always tried to challenge and use that context for making ideological content visible while maintaining a sense of humor.

In trying to trace the genealogy of both of their practices as artists and teachers, I will refer to Camila Dolores Juárez Cossio doctoral dissertation
“Experimentación en la canción rioplatense (1977-2000)”\textsuperscript{3} Juárez describes as the goal of her work to explain the emergence and development of a new conception of song that manifests in the Río de la Plata between 1977 and 2000 and which is primarily characterized by the use avant-garde experimentation. According to her, this is articulated with the institutionalization of avant-garde poetics through the Cursos Latinoamericanos de Música Contemporánea (CLAMC) and also of the Talleres Latinoamericanos de Música Popular (TLAMP), which carry leftist political project of esthetic renovation in the region.

As Juárez states in her work, the CLAMC and the TLAMP, funded by Coriún Aharonián (1940) y Conrado Silva (1940), and later by Argentinean composer Graciela Paraskevakidis (1940); were in some way a crossed consequence of the CLAEM (Centro Latinoamericano de Estudios Musicales) of the Instituto Di Tella which happened in Buenos Aires in the sixties and in European summer courses as Darmstadt (1).

As a student of Coriún Aharonián, Carmen Baliero was directly influenced by these musical and political conceptions. Gustavo Ribicic’s case is harder to define but his teaching methodologies resonate with the ideological stands of these early workshops as well as with some other non-academic social spaces like the ones generated by the Festival Experimenta, Grupo Cultrún, Grupo Parakultural, among others.

I will use some quotes from Juárez’s thesis to describe what was the spirit of the CLMC and TLMP.

“The Cursos Latinoamericanos de Música Contemporánea (1971-1989) and the Talleres Latinoamericanos de Música Popular (1983-1988) were funded by a group of Uruguayan composers. From these spaces emerges a catalogue of pieces considered relevant for been engaged with social and political movements that where present in the continent since the sixties. The Latin American musical canon conceived by these institutions is a combination of avant-garde tradition from the second half of the XX century- generally in its electroacoustic version – and popular music – mostly in its politically engaged song facets.” (2)

“The seventies in Latin America are marked by the crisis of the hegemony of what was called musical nationalism- unable to have a dialogue with the international avant-garde (Corrado 1997: 85)- and also the growth of political and social movements. Certainly, the Cuban Revolution in 1959 marks the beginning of a “latinoamericanization” and political radicalization process in the whole continent. In this context, the generation of people born in the forties was in the midst of the debates about the social function of the composer in a context of “the institutionalization of the intellectual Latin American community” (Gilman 2003: 120). (3)

In an interview with Juárez, Aharonián states:

“Probably, the idea of the creation of the Cursos Latinoamericanos came from a conversation I had with Mariano Etkin on our way out from Bremen Festival. In the huge park across from the train station, outside, we discussed the experience we just had. After that, Mariano didn’t have any particular
interest in following this issue but it was a very important discussion. And for me there was a very important experience at the Summer Courses of Darmstadt in 1970 and was related to May ‘68. Because there was a big uprising from all the students but divided in two sections: the Latinos and the others. The others were rebels but they remained within the system, they renewed the system (...). And the Latin faction was made of a few Latin Americans, plus some French, a few Italians, a Portuguese and maybe a Yanqui (...) we questioned everything and we left. (...). There were Bértola and José María Neves⁴ and we had an extremely constructive dialogue. I personally, kept taking notes about everything we shouldn’t do if we did something like that in Latin America, and those worked as commandments afterwards.” (4)

Juárez writes about the CLAMC: “The fifteen editions of the Cursos Latinoamericanos de Música Contemporánea happened in a seventeen year lapse, from December 1971 to January 1989. The frequency was usually once a year. The program included different specialties as composition, interpretation and investigation in musicology and pedagogy, so the participants could choose freely their own programs and work line. (5)

In her thesis work Juárez analyzes how the Cursos are a reference in the history of the institutionalization of musical and political avant-garde in Latin America. Aharonián, in an interview with her states: “The normal mechanism of colonial system is not to give good training to young people in the Third World, meaning competitive training compared to the First World.

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The awareness of the need to help young people in Latin America to have a first level education was really urgent." (6)

According to Juárez, the Cursos are born under the rule of been self-financed, itinerant and activist in spirit. Aharonián states:

“The invitations to teach were fee-less, they were an act of activism and therefore they produced a moral selection (...). The people that came were ready to do something useful for young people in Latin America, without economical interest. So they came to work one or two weeks, in a remote place, without tourism.” (7)


Juárez writes: “The program of the Cursos Latinoamericanos de Música Contemporánea allows for a Latin-American minimist esthetic to be constructed (Aharonián 1993b: 83-4). This esthetic rejected the mechanical automatism of North American minimalism and it’s main characteristic is what Omar Corrado calls an “esthetic of reduction” (Corrado 1998). The combination of minimalism with the idea of “músicas pobres” coming from the North American west coast especially through Gordon Mumma that takes part
of the CLAMC, is reformulated by the generation born in the 40s and has a huge impact in the new generation of musicians from the *Cursos Latinoamericanos de Música Contemporánea*. This trend develops through the radical poetics of some composers that were part of the *Di Tella* like Mariano Etkin, Coriún Aharonián, Graciela Paraskevaídis and Oscar Bazán, among others. These composers, through that reformulation, search to develop a truly Latin American music by the means of diverse historical and contemporary materials and procedures in which ideas of repetition, austerity, construction of expressive blocks and silence are emphasized. (Etkin 1984 y 1989; Paraskevaídis 1997; Corrado 1998; Aharonián y Paraskevaídis 2000; among others) (9)

Both Baliero and Ribicic responded to these ideas in their own work: Baliero, in a tighter way blurring boundaries between contemporary and popular composition and Ribicic looking for strategies to relate avant-garde formal composition methodologies to his own every-day life experience.

As state by Aharonián in Juarez: “The problem of contemporaneity is not related to the supposed aseptic holy character of music but with its insertion in a real world (…) In the realm of what is called classical music, we are used to a non-contemporary music consumption (…). It’s a way of trying to stop historical events, predicting the already rehearsed possibility that if society is

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anchored in the cultural historical past, it will be also anchored in everything else.” (10)

It is very useful for me, when thinking about my own work in the context of US academia, to consider this migration, combination and hybridization of different cultural traditions. I referred many times to “cultural transplant” when trying to address how meaning transforms when creative work is presented in a different context from the one it was produced in. Also, learning about North American experimental music tradition from Buenos Aires and then coming to the USA’s academia made me re-think the complexities of the differences of both contexts. In Argentina experimental music is understood more as a counterculture, underground movement. Accessing information, recordings, and books was somehow hard there. Concerts and events are often held in artist-run spaces without institutional framework. It was striking for me to confirm how experimental music is a Tradition in the US (with all the institutional weight that it entails: academic structure, physical infrastructure, necessity to confirm itself, etc.) while in Argentina it’s more a scene, or a music genre but not an “institution”. Furthermore, Argentina--Buenos Aires in particular--has a great mix of traditions due to many immigration waves, mixed with local natives cultures and criollo culture. So, there is a great flexibility to mix, assimilate and transform cultural content.

As we read in Juárez dissertation: “The institutional expression of the relationship between esthetic avant-garde and politics has it’s best example in the CLAMC and TLAMP between 1971 and 1989. The experimentation in the song genre is the result of a transposition of avant-garde techniques to new contexts of enunciation. In this sense, different kinds of transposition can be
observed: of post war European avant-garde techniques to the artistic and intellectual “rioplatense” realms, of avant-garde techniques to song genre, from esthetic-political program of one institution as the CLAMC to another one as TLAMP, and also the transposition of this program from one shore of the Río de la Plata to the other one.”
The quotes have been translated from Spanish to English. The original fragments can be found here as notes:


(2) Juárez Page 36 and 37: “Se trata de los Cursos Latinoamericanos de Música Contemporánea (1971-1989) y los Talleres Latinoamericanos de Música Popular (1983-1988) fundados por un grupo de compositores uruguayos. Desde estos espacios se transmite un catálogo de obras consideradas relevantes por estar comprometidas con los movimientos sociales y políticos que recorren el continente desde la década del sesenta. El canon de la música latinoamericana delimitado desde estas instituciones se compone tanto por la tradición de la música de vanguardia de la segunda mitad del siglo XX – generalmente en su versión electroacústica–, como por la música popular –en gran medida en su vertiente cancionística comprometida.”

(3) Juárez Page 38. “Los años sesenta en Latinoamérica están marcados por la crisis de la hegemonía del denominado nacionalismo musical – incapaz de dialogar con la vanguardia internacional (Corrado 1997: 85)– a la que se le suma el advenimiento de movimientos sociales y políticos. Ciertamente en 1959 la revolución cubana marca un proceso de ”latinoamericanización” y de radicalización política en todo el continente. Dentro de esta coyuntura, la generación nacida en los cuarenta se encuentra atravesada por los debates sobre la función social del compositor en el contexto de “institucionalización de la comunidad intelectual latinoamericana” (Gilman 2003: 120).

(4) Juárez page 48: “Probablemente el primer motor de la creación de los Cursos Latinoamericanos fue una conversación entre Mariano Etkin y yo a la salida del Festival de Bremen, en la plaza enorme frente a la estación de trenes, a la intemperie, discutiendo sobre la experiencia que habíamos tenido. Mariano luego no tuvo especial interés en seguir con esa problemática, pero esa discusión fue muy importante. Y hubo una vivencia para mí muy importante que fue el Curso de Darmstadt del ‚70, que fue el mayo del ‚68 en Darmstadt porque hubo una
rebelión muy grande por parte de todo el estudiantado dividido en dos sectores: los latinos y los otros. Los otros fueron rebeldes pero se quedaron dentro del sistema, renovaron el sistema (...). Y el sector latino, que éramos algunos pocos latinoamericanos más un par de franceses, un par de italianos, algún portugués y algún que otro yanqui (...) cuestionamos todo y nos fuimos. (...) Ahí estaba Bértola y estaba José María Neves y fue sumamente constructivo el diálogo entre nosotros. Yo personalmente iba anotando en mi cuaderno de anotaciones, todo aquello que no debíamos de hacer si algún día hacíamos algo en América latina y eso sirvió como una especie de decálogo después (Aharonián, entrevista con la autora 28 de junio de 2009).

(5) Juárez page 49: “Los Cursos Latinoamericanos de Música Contemporánea se desarrollan en quince ediciones por un lapso de diecisiete años, desde diciembre de 1971 hasta enero de 1989. La frecuencia de los cursos tiende a ser anual s. El programa incluye diferentes especialidades como composición, interpretación e investigación musicológica y pedagógica, de modo que los participantes pueden elegir libremente la línea de sus propios programas de trabajo.”

(6) Juárez page 60: “El mecanismo más normal del sistema colonial es no darle posibilidades de buena formación al joven en el Tercer Mundo, es decir de formación competitiva con la del Primer Mundo. (...) La toma de conciencia a fines de los sesenta de la importancia de ayudar a los jóvenes de América latina a tener una formación de primer nivel, era una cosa realmente muy acuciante (Aharonián, entrevista con la autora 28 de junio de 2009).”

(7) Juárez page 60: “Las invitaciones eran sin pago, eran un acto militant y eso producía una selección moral (...). Los que venían eran tipos que estaban dispuestos a hacer algo útil por jóvenes en América latina, sin intereses económicos. Entonces venían a trabajar, una o dos semanas, en un lugar inverosímil, sin turismo de por medio (Aharonián, entrevista con la autora 28 de junio de 2009).”

(9) Juárez page 66: “El problema de la contemporaneidad tiene que ver no con aquella supuesta santidad aséptica de la música, sino con su inserción en un mundo real. (...) En el terreno de la música llamada culta (...) estamos acostumbrados, normalmente a un consumo musical no contemporáneo. (...). Es una forma de tratar de frenar el acontecer histórico, apostando a la posibilidad –ya ensayada– de que, si la sociedad queda anclada en el pasado histórico en lo cultural, pueda quedar anclada en el pasado histórico también en todo lo demás (Aharonián 2000a: 32-33).

(10) Juárez page 100 and 101: “El programa de los Cursos Latinoamericanos de Música Contemporánea permite construir una estética minimista latinoamericana (Aharonián 1993b: 83-4) que rechaza el automatismo mecánico del minimalismo norteamericano y es caracterizada por lo que Omar Corrado denomina una “estética de la reducción” (Corrado 1998). El fenómeno minimalista combinado con la idea de músicas pobres provenientes de la costa este norteamericana, especialmente a través de Gordon Mumma que participa de los CLAMC, es reformulado por la generación nacida en los cuarenta e impacta fuertemente en la nueva generación de músicos desde los Cursos Latinoamericanos de Música Contemporánea. Esta tendencia se desarrolla a través de las poéticas radicales de algunos compositores formados en el Di Tella como Mariano Etkin, Coriún Aharonián, Graciela Paraskevaídís y Oscar Bazán entre otros. Dichos compositores, a través de esa reformulación, buscan una música propiamente latinoamericana mediante el uso de diversos materiales, históricos y contemporáneos, y procedimientos en los que se enfatizan las ideas de repetición, austeridad, construcción de bloques expresivos, el silencio y el despojamiento (Etkin 1984 y 1989; Paraskevaídís 1997; Corrado 1998; Aharonián y Paraskevaídís 2000; entre otros)

(11) Juárez P.293 La expresión institucional del vínculo entre vanguardia estética y política tiene lugar entre los años 1971 y 1989, a través de los CLAMC y los TLAMP. La experimentación cancionística es pensada en términos de transposición de técnicas de vanguardia a nuevos contextos de enunciación. En este aspecto pueden identificarse varios tipos de transposición: de técnicas de vanguardia de posguerra europea y norteamericana al campo artístico e intelectual rioplatense y latinoamericano; de técnicas de vanguardia a la canción; del programa estético-político de una institución como los CLAMC a otra como los TLAMP; y por último de este programa de una orilla a la otra del Río de la Plata.
Carmen Baliero

Carmen Baliero was born in Buenos Aires in July 1962. She is a composer and performer of experimental and popular music and also creates original music for film and theater. She studied music with Lucía Maranca, a singer and pianist and one of the early members of Agrupación Nueva Música. This group, founded in 1937 by composer Juan Carlos Paz did the first auditions of pieces by Arnold Schoenberg, Alban Berg, Anton Webern, Igor Stravinsky, Charles Ives, Henry Cowell, Bartók, Hindemith and many others. This group became of great importance for the history of contemporary music in Argentina. Through studying with her, Baliero got in touch with these musical ideas and decided to pursue studies in composition in Universidad de La Plata. There, she studied with Mariano Etkin, Gerardo Gandini and Segio Hualpa, among others. In 1989 she dropped out of the university to dedicate fully to her own composition work. Outside of the institution she met and studied with Uruguayan musicologist Coriún Aharonián that in her own words “Made it possible for me to think seriously about dedicating to contemporary music with joy”.

In an interview with Juárez Baliero states: “It was the first time that I heard popular music been analyzed and treated seriously not only as a material of study but also as a material of discussion, where the relationship between technique and ideology, the relationship between media, critics and music was taken into account. (2)
As Aharonián states in his book “Conversaciones sobre Música, Cultura e Identidad” (P.78) when discussing issues of identity, colonialism and musical education: “To educate in music is understood, without intention, as to colonize musically. To go deeper in the imitation of the metropolis’s model; Chisel it with care. The unconscious goal is mimesis with the other, with the master, with the exploiter-conqueror. It is the sublimation of voluntary schizophrenia. Musical education is also often understood as to educate the pupil in the values of one of the musical languages of Western Europe that is classical music, omitting systematically the popular music (mesomúsica) or just letting it stick out through the cracks of folkloric survival. These ways of survival have been accepted by the dominant culture as innocents and innocuous or as a potentials for a fascist regression to the past”

This issue of how to inscribe popular music into the classical or contemporary musical practice was key for Baliero and the way in which she became a composition teacher is closely aligned with this ideological stand. Musical academia is modeled after Europe in South America and so it made sense for Baliero to create a different social context in order to create a different way of teaching, learning and sharing musical knowledge.

“Yes, I’m a composer of popular music, I think, and also of contemporary music. Because in popular music they say my work is not popular music and in contemporary music they say my work in not contemporary music. So I don’t know exactly what it is (...) I couldn’t perform at Festival de Cosquín, for example but I wouldn’t go to Darmstadt either” - Carmen Baliero interviewed by Juárez. (3)
When thinking about popular music (*mesomúsica*), Latin-American identity and Argentinean identity is useful to refer to Aharonián again. In the same essay "Identidad, Colonialismo y Educación Musical" he discusses how Latin-American identity is often conceived as a reaction to colonialist power and there is often not enough distinction between all different musical identities that coexist in Latino America.

Aharonián writes when talking about cultural identity: “In both small scale – of political “national” boarders- and the large scale – of Latino America- there are common features that can be noticed by the observation of an aficionado, especially looking at the ‘*Patria Grande*’ from a chair located in the metropolis. There are common features ‘between Us’ – and differential features ‘between us and them’. Mostly between Us the Latin Americans, and Them the Europeans. But these features are not so many as we may wish and they are not so clear to make an inflamed proclamation” (4)

He also states that there is not enough systematical study in the subject and that Latino-American identity exists but is not full of concrete examples. Latino-American identity for him responds to a historical necessity more that anything else. The construction of a common identity is the only way of defense of the subdued semi-continent. So, for him, the educators have the responsibility to systematize the knowledge of what is Latino American, to construct this concept in a logical way, without excluding any particular cultural characteristic of minorities, or smaller cultural groups. So for him to educate “forwards” (*para adelante*) means to keep track of what is
happening in the present of musical creation (both in the classical and popular realm).

When interviewed by Juárez, Baliero says: “In general I like to work with musical objects but depriving them from their musical connotations, meaning the predicted conduct that the musical object has and vice versa, to find music logic in things that don’t have it”. Juárez then elaborates that for Baliero to work with musical instruments subverting their functionality and general structures is the base of her experimentalism. (5)

Carmen Baliero has been a piano and composition teacher for many decades now. I was part of her first composition workshop that took the form of a weekly group session of between 6 or 7 people meeting to discuss, listen and play each other’s works. After that I attended other groups sporadically either as a participant or guest. That first group was: Guillermina Etkin, Lola Linares, Julieta Collangelo, Manuel Briante, Amalia Bosellli, Florencia Mosso and myself.

Meetings were held, during the first year at Baliero mother’s living room in Palermo. After that we moved to Carmen’s house. We even met temporarily on the second floor of VirasoroBar (normally a jazz venue in the same neighborhood in which Carmen would occasionally play). The usual set up in her studio would be a piano, some percussion folkloric instruments, small mechanic toys, and other things that we would bring as needed: guitar, clarinet, trumpet, home appliances (I remember writing a piece for nebulizer, and someone else using drills for another one), electronics, etc.
We had weekly assignments that were usually related to the production of some kind of piece or recorded sound material that was listened by the group on the next session. Some of these assignments were:

- To use the instrument you are familiar with in a way you’ve never used it before and generate sound material with it.
- After listening to Webern’s and other’s miniature pieces, to create a miniature sound piece that has some kind of structure or dialectical musical development in less than 2 minutes.
- To do a version of a sound piece, song, etc. The aim here was to really think about what a good version is. To get the core idea of the original but to reach a strong personality in the new piece so that it really was a different interpretation of it. Guillermina Etkin did a version of Violeta Parra’s *Gracias a la Vida* for solo voice and I did a version of folk Latino American song *Duerme Negrito*, sung by Atahualpa Yupanqui. My version was done using very basic electronics and voice.
- Potus Project. This was an assignment made after the observation of one of the plants (Epipremnum Aureum) at Baliero´s studio. We thought about the structure and the way the plant grew. We produced both sound pieces and scores for this exercise trying to emulate the self-generation of the plant.
- Material-based assignments. There would be a specific sound material selected to do a sound piece either recorded of it or live. Examples of this were using plastic bags, balloons and home appliances.
• Metamorphosis. This exercise could be done recorded or live. The task was to choose a sound and make it transform into a different one.

• To create a notation system for a piece of music to be performed by the members of the workshop. For this assignment I remember bringing the prototype of what it would be later my piece Copas (for 12 goblets). What was in the beginning a notation system of just lines with starting and stopping points became the systematic use of sine waves to describe in real time the movement of the finger over the edge of the glass to produce sound. I will describe this project in particular later.

Some of the music that we listened to as examples in class to discuss and analyze were: Charles Ives – The Unanswered Question, Kurt Schwitters - Ursonate, Chico Buarque - Construcción, Alfredo Zitarroza - Guitarra Negra, Diamanda Galas, Anton Webern’s miniatures, Cuchi Leguizamon, Sergio Lazaroff, Thelonious Monk, Conlon Nancarrow, Iannis Xenakis, Violeta Parra – El Gavilán, Sofía Gubaidulina – De Profundis, Edgar Varese – Poème Élèctronique, Tuvan throat singing recordings, Eric Satie – Vexations and Terry Riley’s Keyboard Music that we would perform as a group occasionally.

At the end of the second year of this workshop, in 2002, we did a concert at Centro Cultural Ricardo Rojas in Buenos Aires as part of the series “Nueva Generación”. We mostly performed each other’s pieces. This was the first time that I presented a piece in a public concert. The event was called Hoy
Coinciden (See concert’s program in the appendix). We also did a self-produced a concert at El Archibrazo a few years later.

In line with what Aharonián discusses about musical education, the approach of composition in the workshop was always related to each of the member’s practice. There were no stylistic directions assumed and methodological solutions were adapted to each piece necessities. Genres and material of study could vary from popular songs, noise, contemporary and experimental music pieces and hybrid of all kinds. This, in addition to the fact that we were composing for a group of colleagues, specific performers with diverse skills degrees, made the work produced in the workshop very personal and socially specific. The idea seemed to be that the social space was constructed for the music to be produced an informed by it and vice versa.

Similar strategies can be observed in Baliero’s own work. From the piece Bocinas (car horns) that works with sound pollution and public space to her work with Argentinean traditional singers Copleras and her project to do a piece with Cardones (native cacti) in Tilcara, north of Argentina. In the conception of all of these pieces, the methodologies of production are linked to the local social and cultural problematic, making these last visible during the process. That’s how Baliero uses her compositions and artistic interventions to make connections between people, generate visibility about specific issues and generate change.
Baliero is always interested in connecting people, generating spaces for exchange, spaces for encounters to take place. As part of one of the composition workshops, she invited Gustavo Ribicic to give a talk about experimental music. He gave a number of lectures for a small group of us, referring to American experimental music and European avant-garde. After this experience I started taking private lessons with him in his house studio and kept doing it for about five years.
NOTES

(1) Coriún Aharonián, “Conversaciones sobre Música, Cultura e Identidad”, page.78 “Educar musicalmente es sobreentendido, sin quererlo, como colonizar musicalmente. Como profundizar en la imitación del modelo metropolitano. Cincelarlo con más esmero. El objetivo no consciente es la mimesis. La mimesis con el otro, con le patrón, con el conquistador-explotador. La sublimación de la esquizofrenia voluntaria. Educar musicalmente es sobreentendido también, casi siempre, como formar al educando en lo valores de uno de los lenguajes musicales de la cultura europea occidental, el así llamado culto, omitiendo sistemáticamente el mesomusical o solo dejándolo asomar por las rendijas de las supervivencia folclóricas, aceptadas por la cultura dominante como inocentes e inocuas, o como potenciales de un retorno fascista hacia el pasado.”

(2) Juárez Pages. 192/193. “Era la primera vez que escuchaba analizar y tomar seriamente la música popular como un material no solamente de estudio sino de discusión, donde la relación entre la técnica y la ideología, la relación entre los medios, la crítica y la música popular, se tomaba en cuenta (Baliero, entrevista con la autora 1 de octubre de 2010)

(3) Baliero buscar cita en castellano en Juárez


(5) Juárez Page.254: “En general a mí me gusta trabajar objetos musicales quitándoles su connotación musical, o sea la conducta previsible que tiene el objeto musical y viceversa, aquello que no tiene ningún sentido musical encontrarle su lado sonoro (Baliero, entrevista con la autora 8 de noviembre de 2000). Para Baliero la desfuncionalización de los instrumentos, de los géneros y de las estructuras en general, fundan su propuesta “experimental” que intenta “romper la ley de gravedad” a través de una lógica “que no sea la que viene dada o tenemos culturalmente asimilada” (Micheletto 2001, 16 de febrero: 22)
Gustavo Ribicic

Gustavo Ribicic (1950 – 2011) was a composer born and based in Buenos Aires, Argentina. He was an extremely idiosyncratic creator and active participant of the local scene. Ribicic received musical training taking private composition lessons with composer Mariano Etkin who he met through chess playing. He was a founder member of the group Cultrún (1989) that offered an independent space for the commission and dissemination of works of contemporary and experimental composers and also participated in the birth of Festival Experimenta (1995, 1997, 2000, 2005) with his friend and festival’s director Claudio Korembliit.

Ribicic’s friendship with Juan Andralis and his printing house El Archibrazo, when he was in his early twenties, allowed him to develop a deep practice in graphic design and put him in touch with surrealism and dada, ideas which he used in his music and score writing throughout his life. Juan Andralis came from a Greek family that immigrated to Buenos Aires when he was a child. When he was a young adult and after some years of studying painting with Batlle Planas, he travelled to Paris where he joined the late surrealist movement. He was part of some collective painting shows with Man Ray, Marx Ernst, Wilfredo Lam and he also became a friend with Tristan Tzara, Jean Pierre Duprey and Benjamin Péret. While there, he worked as a graphic designer with Cassandre and Frutiger. When he went to Argentina where he worked as a graphic designer for Instituto Di Tella and in 1968 he founded his on print shop in the neighborhood of El Abasto, called El Archibrazo.
The print shop was a place in Buenos Aires where practice and diffusion of surrealism took part for about thirty years. It was like an informal salon where all kinds of artistic and intellectual activities could coexist. From chess games, an informal design school, art exhibitions that included artists such as León Ferrari, Federico Peralta Ramos and Roberto Aizember; concerts and poetry readings. Among the poets that had their work published by *El Archibrazo* we could mention Edgar Bayley, Oliverio Girondo, Enrique Molina, Basilia Papasta-matiu, Esteban Peicovich, Dolores Etchecopar, Carlos Esbartaco, a bilingual edition of de Odiseas Elytis and Jorge Luis Borges´ long story *El Congreso*.

Gustavo was part of this scene and even after Juan Andralis's tragic death in 1994 he kept in touch with that community and did concerts and events in the print shop.

Some of the influences of this period that can be observed in Ribicic´s music are the use of chess as a composition tool, surrealist and dada ideas, chance operations, open forms, and also a very deep and usually cynical understanding about how social context informs the production of music.

Ribicic presented works in *Teatro Colón de Buenos Aires, Festival Experimenta, El Archibrazo, El Parakultural* (emblematic place of the underground culture in the Buenos Aires eighties), among others. His works often are of difficult classification. There is one compilation of his works on CD (concert registers, rehearsals from 1986 and 2005) edited by Argentinean label *NoSeso Records* that Ribicic together with Zelmar Garín edited before his death in 2011.
As Daniel Varela Write in his article *Lejos del Mundanal Ruido*: “It is well known that contemporary music in Argentina, as well as many other human expressions, is a hostile territory, place of numerous exclusions over decades, where documentation and space for composers to express their ideas is almost null. It is true that there has been official concert series dedicated to contemporary music with a certain degree of organization and production (*Agrupación Nueva Música, Instituto Di Tella, Centro Cutural Recoleta, Goethe Institute*, the series of *the Teatro San Martín* in the last decade), but what impresses as a focus of production is not enough to hide the provincialism of our music scene.

Some other initiatives flourished over the years, almost without exception in the shadow of the institutional concert series without financial support and sustained only by the enthusiasm of their disparate members also disparate. On many occasions, those spaces served to spread notable works for originality, though not always produced the best conditions and that came to life through the efforts of these composers, usually also performers or thanks to the interpretation of young musicians not always well prepared in the discipline of concert music.”

Also, in a different part of the article he writes: “It should be noted that in 1988, Ribicic was part of the team that, coordinated by Adriana de los Santos and with participation of surrealist Juan Andralis, presented a 12 hours version of Satie’s *Vexations* at the *Centro Cultural San Martín*. This is an important event, a point of reference for the reconstruction of the
resurgence of experimental musical attitudes in the Buenos Aires post-dictatorship. Ribicic’s work reaches a high level of complexity with his musical “La Momia” (1990-91) for five actors and ten musicians. The piece is described as a “silent opera”. It was presented for the first time at the great off venue Centro Parakultural and was directed by Adriana de los Santos who had an extended trajectory as performer (and author) of experimental works and with whom Ribicic work in many projects”.

Ribicic struggled with this chosen anonymity, or reluctance to participate in an exclusive mainstream scene throughout his life. Around the year 2000 he started teaching music classes and this activity ended up agglomerating a group of people that would perform his music and also music from the other members of the group. Again, as we saw before in Baliero’s case, a social contextual space for making possible this musical experience was produced.

I met Ribicic through Carmen Baliero around 2001/2002. He was invited to her workshop to teach us “history of experimental music” or provide some historical context in relation to the work that we were exploring. After a month of doing this group classes I started taking individual composition lessons with him.

The classes were done at his living room in an apartment on Juan José Cabrera street, Almagro in Buenos Aires city, were he lived with his partner Marta Roldán. There he had a computer, an upright piano, a home stereo, a hand harmonium and some other instruments. We would do paper
work at his dinner table besides which there was a chest of drawers where he kept all his scores, drawings and graphic works.

Our individual lessons were of variable duration, between 2 and 4 hours and would include different activities: We would listen to some music and talk about it and its context, I would play at the piano some of Gustavo’s pieces, I would have to write “on site” some music following serial and chance procedures or we would analyze scores together. The way in which the classes evolved and functioned was somehow obscure for me and transmission happened through the tangents of musical experience.

Two of the pieces I wrote in that period include La Planta de Ives (modular composition for piano, violin and clarinet) and La Decisión (for piano, violin and hand harmonium). Both scores are at least partly traditionally notated and the pitch material was the result of some
mathematical and serial operations. Around this time I was also starting to work with sheets of metal and producing sound sculptures.

Pieces and composers that we would listen in class would include Alvin Lucier- I’m sitting in a room (the first time I heard that piece was at Ribicic’s), Harry Partch, Davin Ronsemboom, Gordon Mumma, Ribicic’s own archives of recordings, Alban Berg, John Cage, Edgar Varese, Cornelious Cardew, Mariano Etkin. I recall analyzing scores by Charles Ives, John Cage and David Rosemboom. Readings would go from literature such as Lautremont, Raymond Roussell, Oliverio Girondo, Aldo Pellegrini, Antonin Artaud, John Cage, Morton Feldman, the I Ching and The Mahabharata, among others.

During 2003 and 2005, we started having group classes or workshops with other people who were also doing individual classes with him. The stable group was myself, Manuel Briante and Pablo Andralis (son of Juan Andralis) and other groups had the presence of Zelmar Garín, Claudio Koremblit and Lola Linares among others. During these workshops we would play pieces that Ribicic would write for us, or that would have open instrumentation. The usual formation would be piano, trumpet, clarinet, harmonium, violin and percussion. Some of the pieces that we played are: El Mundo Pandoquier (September 2002), La Batalla de Pampa Chaco (2003), La Ganga (2003), 2+1 for piano clarinet y violin (2003), Tres Platos y un Pan (October 2004), Los Noqueados (2004/2005), Insignificante (2005), Un Año de Flapp (2005), Pianitos (2005), Vollmond (2005), Radios Bajos (2005) and NN-
DR (2005), BR_N (2005/2006), and PL_PL_PL (2005/2006). With this formation, we presented these pieces grouped as “Piezas Instrumentales” once at Festival Experimenta on the 11th February 2005. The concert was held at Teatro Celcit in Buenos Aires.

Daniel Varela writes about Vollmond: “Vollmond. Singspiel ohne Schauspieler nicht Text (2005), as Tres Platos y un Pan, is another piece for clarinet, violin and piano trio and includes graphic notation and small explicative notes for its execution. It begins with one of Ribicic’s typical surrealists word games: a sung piece without singer or text. The piece works with concepts of unity and direction of energy (up and down) that respond to certain principles of Hindu philosophy related to chakras. “

Gustavo Ribicic died in August of 2011. His archive is now at the Centro Cultural Archibrazo in Buenos Aires where scores are being catalogued while looking for an institution that will take care of the documents. The archive team is: Pablo Andralis, Manuel Briante, Trilce Infantidis and Alex Elgier, among others.

Claudio Koremblit in his obituary for Ribicic published in Revista Experimenta wrote: “The most illustrious contemporary composers have used experimentation in their investigations, lab essays, sound production strategies, previous to the composition maturation of each puzzle piece of their work. In contrast, experimental composers base their work in the laboratory itself. They prefer the beauty of the unfinished piece, creative processes with forms that get better with the passage of time. Experimental
composers have given the tools to the performers/ co-composers for them to take their own path and rediscover the poetic sense in each idea. They have thrown innumerable bottles to the XX century’s sea that are yet to be discovered”.

During the fall of 2015, for the Wesleyan fall concert series I decided to do two pieces of Ribicic. The pieces, chosen were *El Mundo Pandoquier* and \textit{PL\_PL\_PL}. The choice had to do with instrumentation and the fact that I was still studying with him when he wrote the pieces so I remembered playing them at some point.

*El Mundo Pandoquier* is a score composed for 4 instruments. (See score and translation in appendix). Two are instructed to be strings in thirds of a tone up and down (In this case played by Ron Shalom and Cleek Schrey) and the other two instruments are free (Warren Enstrom playing bassoon and myself on synthesizer). The score instructs that a director should cue the decided timings for the reading of the score with gestures. Instead, we decided to make a time structure that each one would follow with a stopwatch. In order to make the decisions needed to “direct” the piece I had to understand its generative structure. Usually, in Ribicic’s pieces the material to be played seems very open and devoid of meaning. For analyzing the piece I went back to Gustavo’s notes (found in the archive in Buenos Aires). The structure and values of the piece are derived from a geometric and mathematical structure (see appendix for scheme). Shapes and proportions are given interpretations in values and intentions for the players.
The second piece, PL_PL_PL is written for clarinet and tape. Gustavo was writing the piece while I was studying with him and I played the clarinet part. It was interesting for me to come back to this piece that I had the chance to see develop so long ago. The tape instructions set two different frequency scales, one in quarters of a tone and the other one in thirds. To be able to play the part, instead of generating a fixed media track as we did with Gustavo in 2005, Ron Kuivila helped me to set up a Max patch that will allow me to play a midi keyboard with those tunings. The tape became a live element too, sharing the modular and improvisatory nature of the clarinet part. Terri Hron performed the clarinet part on recorder.

It is very interesting to consider the resistance that Ribicic’s work often generates in the performers. To play his pieces involves an act of giving away expectations. The material is often presented in a very austere way, without giving many indications of what is the desired sound outcome. I remember being angry, in a bad mood, lost while our lessons took place. I didn't know what was expected from me as an interpreter, or what were my own expectations about myself. There is something about that discomfort that works as an invitation to non-musical logics; to think as music as something that goes beyond a sound result. What do we consider as making music? How to get to the core of the musical gesture? In a way, playing his pieces worked as a practice of John Cage’s premise to “let the sounds be themselves”, to separate our neurotic thinking from our sound emission trying to connect with a more essential, even spiritual, level.
NOTES

(1) Daniel Varela, Lejos del Mundanal Ruido, Revista Experimenta: “Es un hecho bien sabido que la música contemporánea en Argentina, así como muchas otras expresiones humanas, es un territorio hostil. Escenario de numerosas exclusiones a lo largo de décadas, la documentación y el espacio para que los compositores expresen sus ideas es casi nulo. Es cierto que ha habido ciclos oficiales de conciertos dedicados a la música contemporánea con cierto grado de organización y producción (Agrupación Nueva Música, Instituto Di Tella, Fundación San Telmo, Fundación Encuentros, Centro Cultural Recoleta, Instituto Goethe, los ciclos del Teatro San Martín en la última década), pero lo que impresiona como un foco de producción no es suficiente para ocultar el provincianismo de nuestra escena musical. Algunas otras iniciativas prosperaron con los años, casi sin excepción a la sombra de los grandes ciclos, sin apoyo económico y sólo sostenidos por el entusiasmo dispar de sus también dispares miembros. En no pocas ocasiones, algunos de esos espacios supieron difundir obras notables por su originalidad, aunque no siempre producidas en las mejores condiciones y que cobraban vida gracias al empeño de los mismos compositores, a su vez también intérpretes o gracias a la interpretación de jóvenes músicos no siempre bien entrenados en la disciplina de los programas de concierto.

http://experimenta.biz/revistaexperimenta/gustavo-ribicic/

(2) Daniel Varela, Lejos del Mundanal Ruido, Revista Experimenta: “Debe destacarse que en 1988, Ribicic es parte del equipo que – coordinado por la pianista Adriana de los Santos y con la participación del surrealista Juan Andralis – presentan una versión de Vexations de Satie durante doce horas en el Centro Cultural San Martín. Este evento constituye otro de los puntos de referencia para reconstruir en el resurgimiento de actitudes musicales experimentales en la Buenos Aires posterior al proceso militar. El trabajo de Ribicic llega a un alto grado de desarrollo con su teatro musical La Momia (1990 – 91) para cinco actores y diez músicos calificada como una “ópera muda”. La presentación fue en la ilustre sala off Centro Parakultural y dirigida por Adriana de los Santos, quien tuviera una extensa trayectoria como intérprete (y autora) de obras experimentales en los últimos veinticinco años y con la que Ribicic mantuviera una larga asociación en diferentes proyectos. Deberíamos dedicar otro extenso párrafo a La Momia y esperar hacerlo en no mucho tiempo, baste decir que la propuesta escénica y su música heterodoxa llegan a uno de los puntos más destacados en la sinuosa historia de la composición de signo experimental en nuestro medio”.

http://experimenta.biz/revistaexperimenta/gustavo-ribicic/
(3) Daniel Varela, Lejos del Mundanal Ruido, Revista Experimenta: “Vollmond. Singspiel ohne Schauspieler nicht Text (2005) es otra partitura para trío de clarinete, violín y piano con tres platos y un pan. Incluye grafismos musicales y breves notas explicativas para su ejecución. Comienza con un juego de palabras propio de los surrealismos de Ribicic. Alienta a una “obra cantada sin cantante ni texto” y en ella se plantean ciertos conceptos de unidad, ascenso y descenso de energías nuevamente conforme a ciertos principios de la filosofía hindú relacionada con los Chakras”.

http://experimenta.biz/revistaexperimenta/gustavo-ribicic/

(4) Claudio Koremblit, In Memoriam Gustavo Ribicic (1950-2011), Revista Experimental: “Los compositores contemporáneos más ilustres, han usado la experimentación en sus investigaciones, ensayos de laboratorio, estrategias de producción sonora, previos a la maduración compositiva de cada pieza del rompecabezas de su obra. En cambio, los compositores experimentales han fundado su trabajo en el laboratorio mismo, han preferido la belleza de la obra inconclusa, la forma del proceso creativo que se va embelleciendo a medida que el tiempo pasa. Han dado las herramientas a los intérpretes/co-compositores para que ellos hagan su camino y re-descubran el sentido poético de cada idea. Han lanzado innumerables botellas al mar del siglo XX que aún hoy están por descubrir”.

http://experimenta.biz/revistaexperimenta/radioexperimental/
At some point in that context, I became interested in working with acoustic structures, focusing on composing with live resonant objects in space. The materials I use (sheets of metal, steel structures, oil drums, audio wire) have a discarded quality that I associate with a post-industrial junk universe. They are re-signified by means of relocation and by using them in a different way than intended. I’ve come to realize there is something very local, very “South American” in this way of using materials. In Argentinean Spanish, the word “chapa” means any piece of thin metal (usually the ones that are used to make the roof of a humble house, or a precarious structure, shelter, etc.). To bring an object found in a junkyard, some unspecific piece of metal that could be someone’s roof (techo de chapa), into a concert or gallery situation is an ideological gesture. It is about using what you find, and not so much about the choice of a precious material. Despite this Lo-Fi, corroded quality, I’m also engaged with some very formal aesthetic tropes: plain industrial materials, simple and clear shapes (the cylinder of the oil drum, the sheets of metal, round cuts on bodies of resonance, wire, etc.), graphic scores to organize sound material and actions in time, etc. I try my best to make the formality of these structures collide with some nonsense and arbitrary decisions. For me it’s a way of playing with the formal transmission structures that music has, to use them in my favor. Writing a score for a piece of metal, in which the written parts are actually supposed to be improvised, could seem like a contradiction. By doing this, I try to expose the limitations but also the possibilities that these
established formal systems carry with them (I will describe this in more detail when talking about my piece *Música Mecánica para Chapas*).

**COPAS**

One of the projects that I did while studying with Baliero (years 2000 and 2001) and that really changed and deepened my understanding about my own listening and musical interests, is my piece *Copas*. The piece was premiered in the concert that the workshop group did at *Centro Cultural Rojas* in Buenos Aires in 2002 and I worked on it for about 2 years before that. It was also performed at *El Archibrazo* in 2003, *Festival Experimenta* in 2005 and at the *Conservatorio Superior de Buenos Aires* in 2008. Musicians that played the piece in the different performances include: Cecilia Bienati, Facundo Gómez, Florencia Sgandurra, Gerardo Morel, Guillermina Etkin, Juan Bernabé, Julieta Collangelo, Lola Linares, Manuel Briante, Manuel Sahores, Marcos Zoppi, Matías González, Pablo Andralis and Sam Nacht.

![Manuel Sahores, Facundo Gomez and Leandro Albin rehearsing Copas in Lopez’s studio in 2008.](image)
This piece has new meanings and relevance for me today and it ended up being directly related to my thesis work and latest sound investigations.

**Copas** is written for twelve crystal goblets with defined pitches. The tuning or gamut of pitches was done by me focusing in the interference between sounds, in the “beat frequency” phenomenon and in the acoustic effects produced in the listener. At the time I was trying to explore some internal ear tones that I personally perceived and to excite these vibrations through the playing of the goblets.

In July of 2015, at Bard college NY, Bob Bielecki did some recordings of my ears proving that I have very strong spontaneous otoacoustic emissions and the actual sound of them is very similar of what I produced as a piece without been informed about this at all around 2001. The frequencies chosen for the wine glasses are around the frequencies audible in my own otoacoustic sounding. This makes sense because I was trying to generate interference and not necessarily to match those tones. Another striking similarity is the timbre of those tones and the way they oscillate in intensity. I couldn’t find a timbre closer to the ear tones than those of the wine glasses.

The process of writing the score was also very interesting for me, as it required creating a notation system that could describe the circular movement of the player’s fingers on the edge of the goblets. Making an analogy with the sinusoidal wave, I conceived one wave period as a complete circle broken down in time. As a result, the score describes the movement of players in real time, even choreographing collective movement through constructive and destructive wave phases. (See score in appendix)
Another interesting aspect of the piece is the social dynamics that it proposes. Because there is not an established right way of playing this instrument, all musicians, between 8 or 10 depending on the performance, would be in the same level in terms of technique. There was not musical knowledge required in order to be a good player and that meant that the group of performers was made with musicians and not musicians. The hardest task (somehow related to focus and patience) was to be able to sit still on the floor through the whole piece and enter the meditative space that was required for the long and constant playing of the goblets.

There where also some humorous aspects about the staging of the piece and had to do with the extended duration of the performance (23 minutes) and with the fact that sometimes the musicians didn’t have time to stop the playing to get their fingers wet. Therefore, I created a system using plastic squealing animals that I filled with water and then I would attach a small plastic hose to their holes and to the performers fingers. Then whenever the player needed they fingers wet they would press the plastic animals without having to interrupt the sound.
Música Mecánica para Chapas

The idea of working with sheet metal came from the need to move compositional musical structure from a theoretic to a material realm. I had the intention to set up a device to generate a real time sound process with which interact in live performances. There was also a fortuitous aspect involved. In 2005, while looking for parts for another project I ended up buying 4 sheets of metal at a metal junkyard. At the same time I was starting to work with piezoelectric microphones and through experimentation I found ways to bring these objects together in sound processes but also to generate processes following the acoustical characteristics of the sheets of metal.

The name is meant to bring attention to the mechanical aspect that is involved in the functioning of the system. The word “chapa” carries diverse colloquial meanings in Argentinean Spanish. First, any pieces of thin metal (usually the ones that are used to make to roof of a humble house) are called chapas. It can also describe a person that is crazy, to go very fast, it describes a police agent, and keyboards among others. Again, there is a sense that this is not a precious material (although for me it is), a sense of functionality that is transformed when treated as an instrument. Carmen Baliero refers to this as “ideology of timbre”. The timbre and the mechanics that are necessary to produce it, carry social and ideological meaning.

Música Mecánica para Chapas is a project that consists on a series of compositions for a device made with very thin stainless steel sheet metal, amplification, a variable group of performers and some acoustic instruments (mainly brass but I’ve used also voice through megaphone, electric guitar, etc.). The piece is an organization of the system’s functioning written as a
graphic score (See appendix for scores). The scores are composed for almost every new performance taking into account: the space in which the performance is taking place (infrastructure limitations, acoustical characteristics), number of metal sheets used, number of players, which acoustical instruments are used, context of the presentation, among others.

The scores aren’t meant to be read in real time (to describe the graphic’s details in proportion to time) but as a visual map, a formal organization of materials following a timeline. The system works using the metal surfaces as filters for the instrument’s sounds and also to generate sound feedback. The piezoelectric microphones pick up the vibrations and the signal is send both to speakers (feedback) and to transducers that are attached to the metal emphasizing its resonant frequencies. Players are given instructions as far as dynamics and time but parts are improvised as they are expected to interact with the sonic result itself.

The group of people that started working in Buenos Aires with me and kept doing it for years (2005 to 2012) was: Lobi Meis (saxophone), Guillermima Etkin, Facundo Gómez and Manuel Sahores. When done internationally a new group would be trained so that they could get a feeling of the sound experience of playing the piece. Performers that have participated include: Bárbara Togander, Federico Barabino, Bohdan Hilash, David Kant, Florian Juncker, Jacob Wick, Josh Shinton, Juliana Paciulli, Magnus Nilsson, Mustafa Walker, Owen Stewart-Robertson, Sergei Tcherepnin, Terri Hron, Thomas Verchot, Wenchil Lazo and Loadbang ensemble.

After a performance at Floating Points Festival in 2010 David Kant wrote an Article, published at Free Music Archive, in which he describes his
experience performing the piece: “We played the *chapas* in pairs; for each *chapa*, one performer playing at it and the other playing the *chapa* itself. Facundo Gómez—López’s partner in acoustic crime—shook, bent and uncurled the metal sheet, capturing and transforming the sounds of my saxophone into disembodied and transfigured specters of ringing feedback. It was a strange kind of duet. It felt like we each had one hand on the same instrument. It felt like someone was taking the voice right out of my throat and manipulating it before it ever reached my own ears. At times, the sound of my saxophone and the sound of the *chapa* were completely indistinguishable. Then the metal sheet trembled and the sound split into two halves. Sometimes I tried to mimic the sound of the *chapa*, and other times I struggled to distinguish myself from it. I felt an overwhelming sense of being part of the machine, part of this immense acoustic mechanism. In contrast to the all-too-often disembodied sensation of performing electro-acoustic music, this was not my sound and processed sound. It was not about input and output. It was just one giant edifice of physicality and acoustic resonance.”

**RED**

This piece is an investigation of a system made with various nets constructed out of wire (one built with piezoelectric microphones and the other one with speakers) that are used to produce acoustic feedback. This is a very unpredictable DIY electronic instrument which functionality responds to non-standard parameters. At the same time, its physical nature is to be flexible; it can be constantly transformed and shaped. It is a system that seems to have some independence, or even life or agency of its own. In this sense, the
sound that this electronic device produces is somehow different from the sound that most electronic instruments generate. I like to think of this device as proposing an alternate “soft” or “organic” electronic system. It is not about patching cables in a circuit inside a box. In fact, there is no box and there is no circuit. The sound that its movement produces is more related to the dynamics of movement itself than to the sound of traditional electronics. So again, I’m using some established concepts like “electronics”, “feedback” in a different, probably “wrong” way. The emphasis is on what it means to interact with an electronic device in which functionality works in unconventional ways. The resulting sound responds more to that question than to some other expectation of how an electronic instrument should sound.

There is something about the wire-net that is about a system unstable enough to be somehow unpredictable and in that sense independent from its performer, where actions have unexpected consequences. When playing with it, it’s more about interacting with something that will propose some behavior than about control. There is an interaction between the human listening and gestures and the reaction of the material that happens as a dialogue. In that sense, the piece is not about mastering technology but more about reaching a collaborative level with the means one uses to explore and produce sound.

3-channel video installation untitled

This untitled piece is a video and sound installation with footage of a sound sculpture I’ve been working on for a very long time. This is an object that consists of an oil drum mounted in a rectangular steel frame with an axis
that allows it to be spun. It has a speaker inside that is used to play music or sound (either appropriated or my own), which is filtered by the spinning of the machine. The barrel is moved by hand and that movement shapes the sound that is being played from the inside. I’ve never actually used this sculpture live. It is a huge artifact, very hard to move, and I never found the right context to present it. It has also a very strong personal dimension for me, almost totemic, because it was in my studio when it caught on fire in 2006 and is one of the few objects that survived. Even if it’s not the same as it was (it used to have a motor to make it spin) it has great significance in my artistic practice and even my own life story. While visiting Buenos Aires and trying to keep up with a premise of documenting my studio practice I started filming this machine, doing what I usually do with it: listening to music through it. I did a lot of filming of different recordings played through the barrel: a poem read by its author (Cadáveres, by Nestor Perlongher, very charged in political meaning), some synthesizer improvisations, a filtered Bach track (part of a series of works called Versiones Arruinadas / Ruined Versions), the SAP audio channel of a TV station back in Buenos Aires, some songs of mine, and even several silent takes. They are all similar shots in terms of framing and spinning direction, though the lighting changes. The same content is filtered through the machine several times while it spins at different rates and then is presented synched. This mode of displaying the material generates another layer of visual and sound movement (sometimes coordinated and sometimes not) over the material that is being played. By manipulating the presentation of these “different but same” takes I want to create an immersive environment for the audience that will complicate the perception of the material referencing
sameness and difference. The experience of the object becomes a fiction, an augmented perception of its function, a representation. By immersing the audience in this constructed space I want to generate a sense of disorientation around interior/exterior spaces, functionality, sense of place and content. Also, the logic of the cycling that the sculpture performs and the way it’s filmed is somehow related to the hypnotic, to trance experiences, to the way obsessive and fixated ideas unfold. I’m interested in the impossibility of solution in this operation and how that logic collides with the other logics that are present in the piece (content, form, timeline).

I’ve also observed that there is something pseudo-scientific or sci-fi about the aesthetic I’m proposing. I am interested in playing with these signs. How the image I’m showing resembles celestial bodies, eclipses, moon phases, or spatial artifacts. How that “universality” is re-signified by the precariousness of the materials I’m using. For me, it ends up being a staging of those formal tropes. It is like trying to observe the sound phenomenon from a material perspective. Instead of putting the focus on the purity of the sound event, I try to situate it in the particularity of materials and bodies. There is a similar operation happening in this piece related to the musical and sound content that I’m filtering. For example, how is a Bach piece perceived through this material filtering process? How can we detach form from content? How content can be blurred through the manipulation of its transmission?

**Vigilante Margarita**

Vigilante Margarita is a song project formed by Guillermina Etkin (voice, piano and zither), Cecilia Grammatico (drums and samplers) and
myself in (voice, synthesizer and electric guitar).

VM was born as a duo in 2007. After playing synthesizer and singing in Guillermina Etkin’s solo project for some time, we decided to form a band that would play songs as a result of a collaborative composition process. Our idea was to investigate the encounter of our own different styles and musical sensibilities playing with the contradiction that they produced. Sometimes one would write lyrics and the other one would create music for them and vice versa, sometimes we would do collages of each other’s music, bringing back abandoned ideas that would get re-signified by the combination with something else. The band’s style is hard to define. The only stylistic decisions we made were to stay between genres without getting fixated in any. The result was a music that was too experimental for the pop scene and too pop for the experimental scene. Timbre had a big role in our compositions and we would often praise it over form or use it to structure songs. The band’s sound has been compared with Os Mutantes, Stereolab, Deerhoof, Virus and has a strong personality through its unusual instrumentation.

The group played as a duo and then we incorporated drums. In 2012 Cecilia Grammatico joined the project with the goal of recording an album within one year. On November of 2013 we released our eponymous debut 10 tracks EP. The record is an independent production by Vigilante Margarita and Pablo Barros, who was also the recording and mixing engineer. The recording process took place between the months of March and April of 2013 at Estudios ION and DDR Recordings (Buenos Aires).

It was very important for us that this was an independent production.
We were involved in all the decisions of the process, from the album cover to the design, the way it was recorded, the way it was distributed to press, etc. The only way to translate the ambiguous spirit of the music into a product was to keep all decisions very sharp.

Vigilante Margarita was active in the Buenos Aires scene from 2008 to 2014 and played in many different places in Buenos Aires, from more official places as Centro Cultural Recoleta to house concerts, festivals of experimental music such as Instantes Sonoros in Domus Artis to pop shows. In February and March 2015 the band visited the US for a tour in NY and then visited Wesleyan to play a show. We played at the chapel as part of the EMG series of spring 2015.
Wesleyan thesis work

Been part of academic life in the US, has been an intense formative process for me. I started doing this work in Buenos Aires in a very different music scene. For me, the meaning of what I was doing was very informed by the situation in which the performances took place – a very informal scene in which works are usually presented without institutional framework, and which allows a great mix of vocabularies and sound practices. The understanding of experimental music there is somehow detached from the history of North American and European experimental music: it follows its own lineage. The fact of having a partial, dismembered, other history of that genealogy gave me a lot of freedom, in terms of not having to respond to it. It was very interesting and striking for me to observe how the understanding of my work changed when presented in the US academic context. Things were read as more informed, related to that specific tradition, and formalized than they really were for me. My work in Buenos Aires was never presented as “academic music”. In fact, I never was part of musical academia there and I always tried to escape that context and stay in a different scene. It is hard to think that the reception of a piece of music will be academic or “cult” when it is presented alongside rock bands, DIY electronics in a “party” context where people are usually drinking, eating and hanging out. Another challenge was how to deal with the expectations of people about South American identity. For me, it was really about understanding the complexities of that background and trying to observe that identity in my work but without responding to the cultural clichés that are promoted by the colonialist cultural market. I want to keep working in
this direction, trying to locate my specific position in relation to the “global” music and art scene and finding strategies to make that position intelligible.

My thesis for Wesleyan consisted on a site-specific concert held at World Music Hall auditorium at Wesleyan Campus in Middletown CT. There were two pieces (one based on video and the other one on audio) that were installed in the hall with spatial considerations and that combined physical devices with fixed media and live performances.

The concert was called *Música Mecánica*, Mechanical music, referencing my past work with objects that require physical interactions to be activated. *Sillas* is a 2-channel video piece made with footage of my instrument *Red* laying over different configurations of chairs. The shooting was done at Experimental Intermedia Foundation in New York City in 2016 and the space and environmental sounds are treated as part of the video. In a similar operation from my previous untitled video installation, the frames are still shots of these immobile objects. Also the work aims to treat the film as documentation, where the sound is presented as a field recording of the sound event been documented. The nets are connected to small amplifiers that are running out of battery, thus producing a pointed and cyclic feedback. As far as the video, the only clue about the passage of time is the evolution of sound and some shadows and sporadic actions that are performed over the objects. The mechanics of what’s shown on the video was somehow “exposed” to the audience though a few actions choreographed with the same folding chairs and nets and that were performed by Ron Shalom before the
video started. The idea was to give the audience some access to what was happening in the mediated piece.

The second piece was a live mix of a sound multichannel piece that was presented using steel drums as resonators, acoustic feedback and also included the live performances of Cleek Schrey on hardanger fiddle and Ron Shalom on double bass. The recorded sound for the piece is a combination and processing of two different materials. On the one hand, I listened to the material produced by me in the past filtering audio through oil drums and picked up the resonant frequencies of the oil drums acoustical responses. Knowing that, I generated a number of sine tones that I used later in the composition. On the other one I worked with recordings of my ear tones that I did in the summer of 2015 with Bob Bielecki at Bard College. This material consisted in a rough track of the recording and also a clean version with 16 tracks, one for each independent tone.

I worked with all of these tones, combining them and putting them through some acoustical and synthesized filtering processes. Ultimately they were played through transducers and speakers inside the steel drums. I added two channels of feedback, setting up piezoelectric microphones and speakers in adjacent steel drums. This mix was produced thinking about the coexistence of two listenings. First, the listening of the ear tones produced by the ear and that interferes with anything else been listened (even more when it’s their own sound!) and then the listening of the actual sounds of the barrels through the barrels themselves.

In this listening through listening logic as well as in the feedback system’s logic I refer to the fact that we listen to our listening process and
listening artifact. As Ron Kuivila said when discussing the work with me: One might say you are "presenting presence". There is something about working with this presence (even the room presence or room tone) that it becomes my strategy to connect the work with the present situation in which the work is produced and received. In my piece *Música Mecánica para Chapas* and my piece *Red* the role of the players is to interact with the listening of this presence. The outcome of the system is never fixed so players will react to these present conditions with their playing and actions.

Concerning my Wesleyan thesis, the combination of live actions, video and the steel drums piece, moved back and forth between a more and less directly mediated experience of sound. Sound is always mediated but a number of factors including our own listening. By placing the steel drums in the audience and presenting the videos on stage I tried to bring up questions about mediation and materiality, audience and performers, signal and noise.

When I applied to Wesleyan my statement said that I was interested in sound as a phenomenon “that is there” in objects as light or heat. After a while I thought that that statement was not very sharp but slowly I came back to it. The sound that is there is our own sound that is shaped by the space in which we are situated. How does the idea of listening change when the listening itself produces sound?
Appendix

Program for the concert *Hoy Coinciden*, November 21\textsuperscript{st} 2002

*Centro Cultural Ricardo Rojas,* Buenos Aires, Argentina.

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*Thursday 21- *Hoy Coinciden

Unprecedented pieces and composers:

- **Piece for cello and trumpet** by Julieta Colangelo
- **Cuarteto**, for string quartet by Laura Fuhr
- **Chuva**, for piano, accordion, voice, tape and projection by Amalia Boselli
- **Piece for three hand piano, cello and two violins** by Guillermina Etkin
- **Piece for three violoncellos** by Lola Linares
- **Copas** by Cecilia Lopez
- **Pieza para dormir a las jirafas**, for trumpet, violin, base, electric guitar by Manuel Briante.
Program, front and last pages.
*PL_PL_PL for Clarinet (transposed) and Pianoforte

Gustavo Ribicic, December 2005, Buenos Aires
**Table of frequencies**

**Tempered**

***8 dice throws***
*Clarinet B flat / percussion

**Limits for repetition sections (optional)
* MMM____SSSS for clarinet in B flat and tape

** Pitches are valid for any available register-

*** Exposition: direct da capo al fine, intersperse or in any order.

**** Loop of modules or combinations, direct or interspersed.
EL MUNDO
PANDOQUIER

PARTITURA & PARTES

PARA 2 INSTRUMENTOS DE CUERDA (¾-tones) y otros 2 tradicionales libros más
1 DIRECTOR MÚSICO.

GUSTAVO RIBICIC - BUENOS AIRES, SEP. 2002

INSTRUCCIONES

- Las alturas indicadas son válidas en cualquier registro.

- Intensidades/ataques/silencios/duraciones de notas flautín (3-4000), en cuyo caso el director el tiempo a través de sus indicaciones gestuales adecuadas (inclusive signos especiales).

- Los tiempos son libres para cada instrumento, a menos de una convención al respecto.

- Las duraciones (méticas) igualmente libres.

- Lectura: Cada instrumentista debe hacer lo propio con cada uno de los movimientos (I-III).

- Se pueden caracterizar (indicar raths fijos para todas las variables) los movimientos (I-III), y repetidos.

- Los números adjuntos a cada nota o grupo de ellas, los afectan internamente, siguiendo una regla.

- Los instrumentos de cuerdas (2) indicados en la partitura, definirán respectivamente 8, 10, 12 y 14, y en cada uno de ellos, las capas iniciales que toquen las notas para leer sus partes respectivas.

- Los restantes instrumentos afinarán con el clave, y no hay más detalles sobre su origen o disparación, a menos que no alcancen los registros indicados en sus partes.

- Las formas indican signos, (A V D Π y Π), que serán interpretaciones, obligatorias.

- La interpretación total de la partitura se determina, (prior), de acuerdo a las necesidades del momento.
*El Mundo Pandoquier – Translation*

Gustavo Ribicic, Buenos Aires, September 2002

*For two string instruments (1/3 tone), two other instruments with free or traditional tuning and one director –musician.*

**Instructions:**

- Indicated pitches can be played in any register.

- Dynamics/attacks/silences/module’s durations (I-XVI), should be agreed and respond to the directors gestural indications.

- Tempo is free for each instrument, unless agreed.

- Durations (metric) are also free.

- Reading: Each player will read his part as a column, from top to bottom throughout the movements (I-XVI).

- Movements can be repeated and characterized (assigning specific values to the variables through movements I-XVI).

- The two string instruments indicated in the score will tune 1/3 of a tone up and 1/3 of a tone down from A440 but will play the traditional positions for all indicated pitches. Each string player should read his own part.

- The other instruments will tune according to A440 and there are no restrictions concerning their origins or timbre unless they don’t reach the registers indicated in the score.

- The shapes (squares and triangles) indicate signs and these indicate intentions.

- The total duration of the piece should be determined beforehand, according to the needs of each situation.
Música Mecánica para Chapas – Bicéfalo II – July 2010

Música Mecánica para Chapas – Bicéfalo IV – July 2012
Copas – Cecilia Lopez 2002
Bibliography:


