Delimitation of Compositive Constants in Electroacoustic Music from the Interior of Argentina

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Abstract
Argentina has a very particular demographical and geographical conformation as it has 2 de facto different “countries” inside: Buenos Aires, the capital city of the country, with its outskirts, and the rest of the country or the “interior,” which is much less developed both economically and culturally. All of this is reflected in the electroacoustic music practice. Concerning electroacoustic music production, what is so far more well-known and performed internationally is that one coming from Buenos Aires. But, with some very few and isolated exceptions, very little has been documented and researched about the composers from the interior and their music. This Paper represents the first systematic research done about electroacoustic music from the interior of Argentina. After establishing the methodological criteria employed, the research work is mostly concentrated in the 2 most important cities of the interior: Córdoba and Rosario, where most of the electroacoustic production of the interior takes place. Above all, 2 composers, César Franchisena and Dante Grela, are the axis of my research, from whose works one can surely determine trends and constants from any of these approaches: aesthetical, technical, and technological, and above all, compositive. As it represents an exception for all constants found, the music of Oscar Bazán is given special consideration as well. As a conclusion, many constants are explained including their repercussion in the younger generations of composers, the close relationship with the trends in instrumental music, and their historical background.

1 Introduction
Under certain methodological premises I come to the conclusion that César Franchisena and Oscar Bazán in Córdoba, and Dante Grela in Rosario are the most important electroacoustic composers in the interior of Argentina. However, only Franchisena and Grela allow us to establish constants that were followed by other composers in the interior. Bazán is an exception to those constants but given his originality and impact, he must be considered separately.

1.1 Methodological considerations
It is important, before any other consideration, to make certain methodological explanations that are fundamental in this research. The first question that arose to me was: is there any way of generalizing regarding Argentine electroacoustic music in general, and about that one from the interior in particular?, it is at this very moment when the “siding-with” process described by Coriun Aharonián in his article “Breaking through Borders” (Aharonián 1994) becomes unavoidable, i.e., to determine which compositions and which composers are transcendent and under which criteria, said in a few words: the establishment of my position as an analyst. For instance, is it enough for considering a piece the fact that it had several performances?, and what about those works that remain unperformed?, does it deserve a “better” assessment a piece that was featured in a commercial recording than a non-recorded one?, up to what point is it important the international recognition of a composer?, etc. As Coriún Aharonián stated: “Aspesis is impossible here” (Aharonián 1994). My opinion also involves inclusions and exclusions.

1.2 Grela, Franchisena, and Bazán
Therefore, and under the aforementioned premises, my research is based in the 2 most significant electroacoustic composers from the interior: César Franchisena and Dante Grela. Both of them are among the most accurate followers of the thought of Juan Carlos Paz. Franchisena, who was born in 1923 in the province of El Chaco, developed most of his career in the city of Córdoba until 1992, the year of his death. Dante Grela, born in Rosario in 1941, has been the main personality in the field of electroacoustic music in that city and in the city of Santa Fe as well. Besides, Oscar Bazán, born in 1936 in Cruz del Eje, a town in the province of Córdoba, is also quite meaningful in Córdoba. But in spite of being close to Juan Carlos Paz, Bazán is more representative of the school of Alberto Ginastera. The electroacoustic production of Bazán contains many elements and influences that are not of an European origin, such as: the mesomusic, the authoctonous, the Latinamerican primitive, the microdifferencies, the simple, the austere, etc.
But despite its uniqueness and originality, the electroacoustic production of Bazán did not reach the influence in the interior that happened with Grela and Franchisena. Bazán’s music is a strong countercultural model and for that reason does not follow the constants present in the music of Grela and Franchisena. However, the style of Bazán has been more impacting and followed in the neighbor countries like Brazil, Uruguay, and Bolivia, mainly in the environment of the historical “Latinamerican Courses of Contemporary Music.” Conversely, the constants found in the electroacoustic music from the interior belong to the European inheritance. Some of the Latinamerican composers who were influenced by Oscar Bazán are: Cergio Prudencio (Bolivia), Tato Taborda Junior, Gilberto Mendes and Conrado Silva (Brazil), Elbio Rodríguez Barilari, Coriún Aharonián, Graciela Paraskevaidís and Carlos da Silveira (Uruguay).

1.3 Other methodological considerations

On the other hand, it is to point out that it has not been my purpose to make a statistical study, a catalogue or an inventory of pieces, but a qualitative and tendencies-based research, that’s why I only take as a paradigm to those composers that I consider among the most distinguished beyond Grela and Franchisena: Oscar Bazán and Eleazar Garzón in Córdoba, Claudio Lluán and Jorge Molina in the province of Santa Fe.

Likewise, there are several outstanding composers born in the interior of Argentina who emigrated abroad and are recognized internationally but in this research I have included those ones who are residents and have developed most of their careers in the interior. For that reason, Horacio Vaggione and the late Eduardo Bértola, from Córdoba, and Alcides Lanza, Luis Mucillo, and Daniel Zimbaldo, from Rosario have little reference. In the same sense, those composers like José Ramón Maranzano, a native of Santiago del Estero, who followed their careers in Buenos Aires have a minimal consideration.

Another fact to outline is that the electroacoustic music practice in the province of Córdoba has always been focused in the city of Córdoba almost without existing in Río Cuarto (the second largest city in that province) whereas in the province of Santa Fe things have been more balanced, including a permanent activity in Rosario and Santa Fe. One of the most encouraging activities in the city of Santa Fe is the teaching and research practice of Dante Grela as a Professor in Composition and Latinamerican music in the National University of the Littoral, which includes one of the most ambitious research projects referred to Argentinean contemporary music carried out in an Argentinean university.

The only fact to point out in Río Cuarto is the residence of Ariel Martínez for many years as a Professor in the National University of Río Cuarto. This marginality of Río Cuarto is due to the fact that it plays a very secondary geopolitical role in the province of Córdoba.

2 Grela and Franchisena, axis of my research

Why Dante Grela and César Franchisena? There are many reasons to explain the paramount importance given to them. That importance is recognized by the Argentine electroacoustic community with almost no exception. Already in the historical book by Juan Carlos Paz “Introducción a la Música de Nuestro Tiempo” (Paz 1970), there is a high acceptance and recognition for both composers. That acceptance has been increasing over the years and is also reflected in other publications. Both of them have had a very similar importance in their respective cities and have several things in common:

A) they studied with Juan Carlos Paz: they know his music, his thought, his aesthetics, very deeply. B) many years in the field of electroacoustic music with prizes and distinctions. C) intense academic activity: they have been full Professors in their universities, having formed several composers of trascendence, D) influence and leadership in their mediums: they have been the Presidents of the “Nueva Música” and of the “FArME” associations, E) important experience as private instructors, F) both are skilled instrumental composers, G) national and international recognition, H) profuse research work that is associated with composition. Some of the research articles by Franchisena are: “El tiempo en la composición actual,” “Sistemas Anamorfos,” and “Apunte de operaciones compositivas espaciales.” Grela has the following research publications: “Análisis Musical: una propuesta metodológica,” “Catálogo de obras musicales argentinas producidas entre 1950 y 1992,” and “Los lenguajes del siglo XX en la creación musical de Latinoamérica.”

2.1 Franchisena

As one of the most important composers from Argentina, Franchisena is studious of time and its interrelation with space in composition. His conception of the “temporal-space” and the “spatial-time” are a constant in the majority of his pieces. As he has expressed: “In music all time behaves as spatialized and all space as temporalized.” This causes a Formal Unity or an “Enhanced Formal Reality.” Franchisena did study the difference between the qualitative and quantitative time. Other outstanding and unique points in his musical thinking are what he calls “Anamorfisms” and the intuitive topology. I have analysed his most representative pieces: “Tres Momentos Mágicos” (1973), “El Ucumar” (1985), “Horeb” (1987), and “Canticum” (1988).

A special mention deserves the piece “Tres Momentos Mágicos,” which is considered an historical and landmark piece in Latinamerican electroacoustic music and has been
included in the IDEAMA archive. This work is characterised by its non-evolutive movility and statism, using gradual transition between each part (or each “momento”). “El Ucumar” is another example of the brilliant use of the statism and non-evolutive movility. It shares with “Horeb” a very rich and complex counterpoint, but in this case making an extensive use of sounds in the range of the high frequencies. “Canticum” is a pioneer piece for its usage of the YAMAHA CX5M computer and has an instrumental approach, which is something exceptional in his electroacoustic pieces.

2.2 Grela

In reference to his piece “De los Mundos Paralelos,” for piano and electronic sounds, “El Mercurio” newspaper from Chile said: “The composer shows a very remarkable sense of timbre, which wakes up associations with the universe and the supernatural powers” which already makes explicit one of the best traits in Grela's music: his capacity of timbrical combination and expansion. The piano “is” several times an electroacoustic instrument in that piece. Another particular feature in his music is the spatial organization, as Grela is a continuous explorer of the space domain. His music is a permanent study of sonorities and textures. The beginning of the pieces “Composición 1991” and “De los Mundos Paralelos” are similar as they employ 2 different superimposed textures. His combination of the logical-rational with the intuitive is a common element with Franchisena. I have analysed the following pieces by Grela: “Glaciación” (1979), “Sonoridades” (1993-94), “Composición 1991,” all of them for tape alone, and “De los Mundos Paralelos” (1989) for piano and electronic sounds.

3 Other composers considered: Lluán, Garzón, Molina

Composers Eleazar Garzón (from Córdoba), Claudio Lluán (from Rosario), and Jorge Molina (from Santa Fe) follow most of the traits of Franchisena and Grela, being their main continuators. Claudio Lluán, born in 1957, has produced 2 pieces to commend: “Vestigios” (1991) for tape alone, and “Antiguas Preguntas” (1992) for woman voice, 8 instrumental groups and tape. Lluán is particularly brilliant as a composer of mixte works. Other composers from Rosario who deserve mention: Stella Perales, Eduardo Piantino, Claudio Ferrari and Natalia Solomonoff. Eleazar Garzón counts as one of the most salient disciples of Franchisena. Other former students or disciples of Franchisena to mention: Carlos Ferpozzi, Mario Saúl, José Mataloni, Jorge Naparsteck, and Martín Fumarola.

4 Bazán, the exception

Strong transgressor, Bazán is part of the powerful countercultural model that arose from the historical “Latinamerican Courses of Contemporary Music.” He is basically a Latinamerican creator, which makes him radically different from Grela and Franchisena. Bazán produced 2 key electroacoustic pieces that have an historical character: “Parca” (1974) and “Austeras” (1975/77). He follows several of the features already outlined as belonging to the “pure Latinamerican electroacoustic music” (Fumarola 1996) (Fumarola 1998) and to Latinamerican music in general (Aharonián 1984). The electroacoustic music of Bazán has the following constants:

- reiterative elements: use of repetition that it is not mechanical, the reiterative elements in Bazán are of a movilizing nature, i.e., they want to movilize the listener.
- austerity: the minimal, the austere and the sparing predominates related to the aesthetics of the poor in Latinamerica.
- violence and taste for the “little things”: it is a violence without shouts and sometimes with a smothered scream.
- a particular use of the silence: it is an affirmation, a cultural symbol. Silence in Bazán is also reflection, meditation, nothing to do with its common use by the European tradition.
- presence of the primitive: not what it is usually, i.e., the decorative or the postcard with an ethnocentrist conception but a serious conceptual investigation.
- breaking through the borders: the best example is the mesomusic (following Carlos Vega’s terminology) in which there is no border between “art” and the “popular.” Permanently playing with listeners expectations, creating false expectations.
- ideological awareness: “disquieting music instead of sleep-inducing music” as Coriún Aharonián says (Aharonián 1984). He is identified with the region in which he lives, something that does not happen with the other composers.
- the magic: it is a rediscovering of the magic inherent to the musical act, referring to “going deeper and rediscovering the lost visceral and magic function of music” as Mariano Etkin said (Etkin 1972). It is very evident in his musical theater production.

5 Conclusion: general constants

I have found the following compositive constants, shared by most composers except Bazán:

- statism, non-evolutive movility: most of the considered pieces create static climates, where “all remains” and “nothing or little moves.” Also called static-movil structures, the statism has been frequent in their instrumental works as well. Grela's orchestral piece “Estatismos” is an appropriate example.
- use of climax and the tension-distension arch: based in the traditional tension-distension arch, almost all pieces have a high-tension moment with semiconclusive
connotations followed by the a distension period in the end.

- the “temporal-space” and the “spatial-time”
- a very original timbral search
- a common technological approach: there is neither much interest in cutting-edge technological developments nor in the technocratic position, the focus is in the compositive side. Grela is very clear with his statement: “the cooking aspect of electroacoustic music is not the most important”
- very rich and complex counterpoints: all species of counterpoint are used, enrichment takes place from the timbre, and by using sounds in extreme frequencies.
- punctual electronic sounds with percussive traits: being more frequent in Grela (even in the mixte pieces as the piano in “De los Mundos Paralelos” plays that role) this resource allows to establish analogies with instrumental pieces.
- influence and inheritance of the serialism: even though it is not always perceived explicitly, it is noticeable in the instrumental pieces by Grela and Franchisena. The influence of Juan Carlos Paz teaching is obvious here.
- superimposition of sound planes: the simultaneous employment of 2 sound planes, generally one with punctual and short sounds and the other one with slow and long sounds. Very rich textures.
- gradual, non-repentine transitions: composers from the interior prefer the gradual and soft transitions to the violent and unexpected ones. The piece “Tres Momentos Mágicos” is the most accurate sample.
- perfect combination between the logical and the intuitive: even with different grades in each composer, the logical and rational side goes linked with the intuitive-irrational. Whereas Franchisena and Saul adhere to a strict mathematical approach, Grela and Lluan are more flexible and approach rationality in a more general way.

5.1 Final remarks

With the only exception of Bazán, an aesthetical, compositional, and technological uniformity is found. Being Grela and Franchisena the epicenter, Lluán, Garzón, and Molina are their continuators in the younger generations. In consequence, there is an historical continuity. Electroacoustic music from the interior is significant and has reached its recognition overseas.

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http://www.geocities.com/maralefu/becafna.html