

Todos mis nombres cubiertos de arena (All my names covered in sand)

(Piece II of 4 poetic-musical Holographies)

Chamber choir and eight cellos (2008-2009)

Text by Pilar Martín Gila

Work commissioned by IFIDMA, dedicated to the Iberian Cello Octet

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“All my names covered in sand” is the second piece in the tetralogy “4 poetic-musical Holographies,” where each piece forms part of a poetic vision based on an interpretation of the essence of the holographic technique: viewing the object from three different structural points of view (formal dimensions), which are produced over a succession of events that occur parallel in time, giving rise to the instability typical of "smooth" time (according to the concept developed by P. Boulez). The holographic technique allows what is observed to acquire volume, distance and depth. These parameters translate to the musical field as a subjective symbolic interpretation, which allows for the elaboration of a form inscribed in the essential elements with which music is manifested: synchrony and diachrony.

In this second piece of the tetralogy, the object is presented as a static plane, which could correspond to an amplified, symbolic vision of the 2nd dimension of the generating musical structure (spatial plane that represents distance and whose interpretation in musical terms is given through the verticalization of the basic melody that generates the work). It could be said that this piece reacts to the static observation of the holographic object with almost no movement on the part of the observer. There are dynamic growths which, however, never reach a climax. The sensation of depth prevails, in which synchrony (the harmonic verticalization of the 2nd dimension) becomes the main protagonist, and the melodic form of the 1st dimension (basic generating melody) is relegated to the background. The piece has got abundant polyphony which, however, does not produce an undulated temporal vision (striated). Rather, it is precisely this internal movement, the constant development of form, which gives it a static appearance. The melodic aspect is “hidden” through different procedures and is seldom perceived clearly. The object is presented to the observer in all its depth, but without allowing for interpretation, capturing his attention as a visual whole that devours his contemplative freedom.

In this sense, the selection of a template where the instrumental timbre is limited to same instruments (8 violoncellos) and to the vocal range (chamber choir) allows the elaboration of a discourse without a pronounced relief and lacking in contrastive elements that may lead to a limited temporal perception. Therefore, from the formal point of view, although there are different textures that could make up structural sections, these are hidden from perception, since they will occur in cycles over fragments of time that cannot be perceived as macrostructural elements. For example, assuming the existence of a series made up of the succession of different textures, the changes from one to the other are blended in, without definite cuts; additionally, this same series can be superimposed, out of phase, on another plane, (using groups of instruments and voices), so that different stratifications of a formal material are created, and which intersect each other forming a global structure similar to that of a canon. These successions of textures, which react to their antecedent as a "copy" - that is to say, as a not-exact, not-predefined imitation – will contribute to a smooth perception of time, without having the work suffer from lack of internal coherence or development. It could be said that work is done with a very limited material, but which could proliferate endlessly inwards; that is, the form is not constructed as differentiated segments with delimited time, but which rather flows “inwards,” reelaborating the event immediately before it, superimposing itself on it, and fading in the next.

The texts and their treatment in the work:

The texts used in this work are taken from the collection of poems "Demonios y Leyes" (Demons and Laws) (Ediciones Libertarias, 2010) by Pilar Martín Gila¹, which, in an adaptation process carried out by the same author, appear in the piece in a peculiar way. On the one hand, this adaptation consisted of the selection of excerpts of verses from different poems that contain key thematic elements as regards the whole book. This book of poems plays on going “back and forth,” which is expressed through repetitions (sometimes with slight variations or variants, depending on the context) of ideas, images, and even full verses. This relates very clearly to the musical piece, where both the base material and the very process of composition act in a similar way, going back to and reinterpreting the sonorous space. Therefore, this selection of verses gives rise to

¹ Other pieces in these last years also work on the collection of poems “Demons and Laws” by Pilar Martín Gila, such as “Transgressed space: between the corner with light and the limits of the shadows” (2008), or the most recent “Trail of whispers” (2009), besides a third one I am planning at the time of writing this comment. This *reiteration* on the same collection of poems is due to – apart from the obvious interest and the level of suggestion that the quality of these poems brings out in me – the need to inquire, multidirectionally, into the incidence of the written word on music. Thus, the focus on one same collection of poems and – what is even more important – with the privilege that direct contact with the author of the texts entails, allows me to be able to investigate deeply into the relations between music and poetry, something which I dare say is infrequent, if not unique.

a fragmented text, which, however, serves as a kind of essentialization of the whole book. Thus, these verses are taken as the basis for the choir in the musical piece.

On the other hand, the musical piece sees the progressive appearance of other excerpts belonging to the poems from which the verses mentioned before as basic literary material have been obtained. This means to say that the selection made by the author is similar to the selection made for use as basic melody, in the sense that it results in the thematic essence of the whole piece. But, just as in the process of composition, this essence is given different nuances in its realization, superimposing on it other elements that have a common origin (verses surrounding those selected initially), which provide different interpretations brought about by the context in which they are set. To this we must add a freer treatment of pitch (harmony that surrounds, chromatically, or even microtonally, the elements of the precompositional base), associated with these “comments” which come from the poems from which the selection has been made.

In the final part of the piece, there is a gradual turn in different aspects evidenced from section 7 onwards. The most relevant aspect is maybe detected on the observation of one event: the fragments of text that do not belong to the initial selection, the ones which have acted as mere “comments” on the essential ones, appear more and more frequently, until they occupy all the sonorous space, becoming mere words (they are no longer sung, they are recited). In this way, little by little, the whispered texture starts taking over, until it becomes a *parlato* which lacks rhythmic values, to end with the essence of the whisper: the air, whispers with air... Another component of this change that starts in section 7 is the progressive appearance of soloist elements in the voices, until the real *solì* is reached (from b. 143 to the end), as well as the progressive appearance of synalepha (this syllabic resource is not used throughout most of the piece, and which is gradually increased, in direct relation to the increase of *legato* articulation).

It could also be said that, parallel to what happens with the text throughout the piece - which progresses from the word “silence” (sections 1, 2 and 3), to “noise” (sections 5 and 6) and to “noise-light” and “noise-light-silence” (sections 7 and 8) – the cellos “seek” the noise, the sound without pitch, which coincides with the disappearance, in the first place, of the 1st dimension (volume, corresponding to the main generating melody), and in the second place, of the 3rd dimension (depth, represented in the imitative melody). Finally, there is also a gradual “erasing” of the elements of the precompositional base, which are omitted. An elaboration based on omission, rather than on addition or variation (in practice, the discourse is emptied out of its theoric plan,

but has no development, just the omission of sounds, of relations between sounds). All this suggests the loss of consciousness of what is observed, the dissolution of the object due to that very static observation. An analogy could be made with the following idea: when we observe fixedly an object for a long time and start going into it in depth, as our sight grows used to the context, its forms start fading, we imagine (“see”) other elements, we unconsciously elaborate – without being able to avoid it – on the object that is being observed. And, in the end, everything becomes blurry, what used to be pure definition of forms turns into an unrecognizable mass. The shape becomes hazy; the melodic line, noise; singing, mere spoken or whispered words; words (represented as the essence of the poem), the verses surrounding it... And then, finally, the silence left by the noise, silence as impossible resonance... The light as metaphor for the noise, very well expressed in one of the verses: *noise is light*.