

Conference I

Edgar Alandia

Over the years, I realized that I do not have much to say, and, even more, that I do not have anything to say through the music I write. At most, what I do is to satisfy an instinctive curiosity: the curiosity of exploring within the sound and making experiments mixing sounds as if I were going for a walk, an artistic excursion to the unknown, which fascinates me. With luck, some listener may promptly join me on this journey, becoming a companion along the way.

Example: *Arie sospese*.

Musical activities are supposed to be part of what is defined as CULTURE. I am a person used to questioning. Therefore, it is logic that, after having cautiously studied, read and practiced “art and culture”, I would try to understand the meaning of such word. Fortunately, I grew up in a fertile environment, and once Jaime Sáenz, the Bolivian writer, clarified to me: “Culture should not be understood; it should be comprehended, which is not the same.” Comprehension implies experiencing, and that experience constitutes a fragment, one more cell that forms people’s culture and knowledge. If we think through, life’s experiences form our culture, and questioning or even sharing these experiences with others form a collective consciousness, a shared culture, the cultural traits of a social group and even of a society. Following this path, we can understand that there are no better or worse cultures, that things and experiences in life may be simply “different” and that the established scales of values have always been just an invention of the dominant system.

I think the same happens with music. In fact, music does not communicate anything other than the relationships between the sounds. About the emotional and communicative side of music, some neurologists state, and I share the idea, that music does not communicate emotions; music, in fact, causes them. I would say that the musical game is played between the fantasy and the intelligibility of the process used by the composer, the professionalism and creative capacity of the interpreter and the sensibility of the listener. A Mozart symphony, a work by Luciano Berio or a Beatles song may bring up emotions, and none of them is better or worse than the others; all we can say is that they are different. About my goals, self-imposed or not, I believe it is worth to make it clear how each thing, each intention and each result in the recreational act of composing is never a final goal. For me, they are not but important “references”, around which I move with maximum attention (so I do not get out of their specific spheres) and at the same time with the maximum freedom of movement and action.

Example: *Passacaglia*.

Since I was a child, I was taught the common idea that music was the universal language. Over the years, I started to doubt such definition, after having suffered enough, when the audience’s reactions to my music varied from stunned to bored and displeased. I discovered that, in fact, for the number of people who take part in the event and for the passions it arises, the universal language could not be any other than soccer. Having put much thought into the subject, I think I understood that the “trick” lies within the code, the rules and the processes of the referred sport. Its essence is so simple – which is not the same as banal – that, after ten minutes into a game, one may understand the purpose and, especially, the unfolding of the game, so that the experience and the emotion are such that its originality and absolute value may not be denied. These thoughts have helped me to understand that, at the very foundation of any event that anyone wishes to share with others, lays the complexity or simplicity of the code and the processes that are used to share such game.

We have mentioned codes and processes and, yet these words may have restrictive meanings, I cannot find better ones to define the rules and the logic path which imagination and fantasy follow and which help me along the itinerary of my sound excursion. Far from being a theorist of anything, I think music is, at least for me, according to the circumstances, the articulation of thoughts that are expressed through sounds or, even better, the articulation of sounds through thoughts. When I use the word “thoughts”, I imply emotions, fantasies,

skills, ingeniousness and many other things that are necessary to be expressed in music. In any case, sound and thoughts seem to be the two indispensable elements of making music. One thing that is extremely important is to highlight that the word thoughts corresponds to the organization of sound ideas, sound fantasies, to things that sound and that explain themselves by sounding.

Example: *A wolf in my living room.*

I believe that, in order to choose a material, one considers very subjective factors that have actually very little to do with the quality of a work. I have this idea, that every material contains in it characteristics and possibilities of organizing itself according to a grammar and even a syntax of its own; to the composer, a task remains: studying the material enough to make it reveal some of its possibilities and suggesting the adequate procedures to this material. Material and process are closely related and I believe that the well-written composition depends on the coherence between these two elements. Back to my references, I must say that they are and have always been the fusion of both cultures in which I was lucky to grow up within: the humanistic and technical-artistic formation acquired at regular school, my musical studies in Italy, becoming acquainted with the process of musical creation in a very broad sense, and the proximity and strong influence of a way of thinking, living and understanding life such is the Andean culture in Bolivia. None of the two cultures have absorbed me completely and it has never occurred to me representing any of them as an ornament which I could use to call attention to myself and obtain easy success. The truth is that, consciously, some aspects of both cultures interest me and I believe that, unconsciously, the influences of these two worlds, these two ways of thinking, living and feeling are part of my sensibility, my ethics, and, to whom it may concern, my aesthetics. Also, in a marginal way, the social contrasts between the opulence of the dominant society and the misery of the dominated society, the social injustice and the fight against it, all this has always touched me very closely, in such a way that, in a discreet but firm manner, I have tried to act very clearly from one of the sides of the arena.

Example: *¡Grito!*

Regarding the matter of aesthetics, beauty as a shared concept does not interest me: I believe this is a paradigmatic idea in service of superficiality. Another thing is authenticity and its fascination. I believe that few things are more beautiful than the authentic expression of a sincere emotion through a clear and essential thought. Supposing I am able to write a very beautiful work,

aesthetically, according the trend of the moment, this work would end up being part of the thousands of beautiful works that already exist and would be lost in that endless catalogue without any better perspective than fortuity. On the other hand, I believe that a consistent thought, a thought that generates questioning and suggests possibilities, has some chance of enduring as a reference to various interpretations. Hence my incapacity to represent myself through music and, in a more general way, to represent myself in any kind of object, musical or not. The object does not interest me; what calls my attention is what is behind the object, i.e., the fantasy and the thoughts it represents.

At some point, I realized that my way of thinking and creating processes is symmetry. This is a curious coincidence with many things in my life since my childhood, including fabrics, engravings, archeology and even the organization of the supposed pentatonic scale, which is said to be the basis of Andean music, since it consists in fact of two trichords symmetrically disposed. I decided then to write something that would play overtly with either the material of the trichords or with the idea of symmetry, using, moreover, a native instrument as the soloist of a chamber group. The surprising experience was the central cadence, in which I combined everything symmetrically, which resulted, almost automatically, in an Andean melody. This convinced me of the possibility of thinking that sound objects and music pieces may be formed if one applies to a given material the same appropriate specific and natural processes that such material already contains. Music reveals itself through these processes, even if one had not necessarily imagined it.

Example: *Tu avrai delle stelle, come nessuno ha.*

Regarding the concept that fantasy and processes guide the composition, I propose another work, written three years ago, which uses the same material and similar but different processes, which are always symmetric and, for me, more evolved as an experience. This work sounds very different from the previous one, although they certainly present some kinship.

Example: *...como una luz de invierno a mi lado.*

Finalizing this presentation, I noticed a surprising similarity between the graphic expression of my music and pre-Columbian archaeological representations or the texture of an Andean fabric.

The matter of timbre greatly influences the sound result of my works. The sounds that I imagine were somehow idealized; in order to obtain them, I often

have to resort to not-so-easy instrumental solutions, but such complications are definitively functional in the light of the idea of a sound “mural” that I propose. They are never performed fortuitously and demand from me a detailed work, a work that is complex, time-consuming, and tiresome, requiring an in-depth study of the technical possibilities of each instrument, which also have a fascinating appeal to me. I have casually or unconsciously found out that the music I write has a characteristic that is typical of the sound and of the expressing mannerisms of the people from the Andes. The inhabitants of the Andean Altiplano sing syllabically and speak singing. Notwithstanding my long-term permanence (more than forty years) in the land of *bel canto*, my melodic sensibility does not go beyond three or four notes. So, small details like this give me the idea and the conviction that a person is not but a result of the culture he or she has experienced. It is worthwhile to accept oneself with one’s own possibilities and limitations, and to take them as a reference to live coherently, with clarity and simplicity without aiming for things like style. Finalizing, it is pertinent to tell you that lately I realized that I use little, or even better, I do not use silence whatsoever. And this is because, in my ear, silence contains and is always filled with sounds.

Example: *...se me ha perdido ayer, el canto de las estrellas.*