

# **On *Como una luz de invierno a mi lado***

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## **The autogenous sound**

In some cases, the terminology used in traditional analysis and criticism is inadequate and insufficient. If we are dealing with a work without narration, descriptions or recognizable formal processes, it may be necessary to abandon the usual analytical tools and to start searching for other elements or, contrarily, not to look for anything at all, since we could be facing the peremptory affirmation of a simple condition of existing: the condition of the sound which generates itself.

One must approach *Como una luz de invierno a mi lado* empty-handed, with a sense of lost stupor and the availability of a novice. All parameters are up for discovery. The listener who, more or less consciously, tries to trace a formal development based on predetermined schemes or already-traveled paths would end up trapped in other kinds of processes and transported to new horizons. Time loses its structural meaning and identifies itself with space, the indefinite and immutable container of sound, which is autogenous, in the onset, and generator of impulses and sonorous events, later on.

## **In the beginning was the D: generating sound and background sound**

It would be interesting to read what the author writes about his soundscape in his short essay *Writing music*, even if not necessarily going for a deeper

music-psychology approach: “I realize, finally, that in my music there is no silence; my silence always sounds. I read often that Andean civilizations, conditioned by the immense void spaces where they built their cultures, where their people have been born, grown up and lived, are obsessed by the *horror vacui*, the fear of empty spaces... is that the case?” This citation is not useful, in a specific way, for the comprehension of this particular work; it actually introduces us to a constant concern of Alandia’s in his music: the search of expressiveness through sound.

In *Como una luz de invierno a mi lado*, the elements used by the composer to realize the idea of a continuous sound atmosphere are multiple and multiform. This variety is the essence of the sound in its function of generating sound: each “event” (more or less 60 sonorous impulses, depending on how one considers the succession of them), its figures and its variations incorporate the meaning of that sole sound situated in the beginning of each successive sound event.

Thus, when the clarinet’s tenuto D begins, it functions as a generator of the other instruments’ successive sounds, while, on the enunciation of a chromatic-scale beginning, this same D becomes the generator of itself in the immediately following articulations: ribattuta note, trill and acciacaturas of various specular notes in relation to D and, little by little, of small figures always built around the center D.

Anyway, the typology of the figures and its variants finally become a secondary element, which means it is not important to define in detail the evolution of each figure. When listening to the work, the main attitude is to follow closely and gradually the sound’s self-generation principle, which is ubiquitous and the very matrix of the work.

## **Irradiation**

Pitches are chosen, and proceed coherently, according to a criterion we will name “irradiation”: the harmonic fields which succeed the primary sonorous impulse include the first notes of a chromatic scale in D, at first ascending (measures 1 and 2) and soon descending (measures 3 and 4 – Fig. 1):

Fig. 1. Measures 1 – 6 of *Como una luz de invierno a mi lado*,  
by Edgar Alandia

♩. 40-42 ca. - 1 -

Fl  
Cl  
Pf  
Vno  
Vla  
Vc

5 5

The set of variations and modifications of the subsequent figures will generate, spontaneously, a second instance of irradiation, the note A (measure 21 – Fig. 2),

Fig. 2. Measures 19 – 21 of *Como una luz de invierno a mi lado*,  
by Edgar Alandia

This musical score shows measures 19, 20, and 21 for the piece 'Como una luz de invierno a mi lado'. The score is arranged in five systems, each containing two staves. The instruments are: Flute (Fl.) and Clarinet (Cl.) in the first system; Piano (Pf.) in the second system; Violin (Vna.) and Viola (Vla.) in the third system; and Violoncello (Vc.) in the fourth system. The music is written in a key with one flat and a 3/4 time signature. Measure 19 features a melodic line in the flute and clarinet with a dynamic marking of *mf*. Measure 20 shows a complex texture with the piano playing a rhythmic accompaniment and the strings providing harmonic support. Measure 21 continues this texture, with a dynamic marking of *pp* for the piano. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, ties, and dynamic markings.

before going back to D (measure 21 – Fig. 3).

Fig. 3. Measures 28 – 30 of *Como una luz de invierno a mi lado*,  
by Edgar Alandia

This musical score shows measures 28, 29, and 30 for the piece 'Como una luz de invierno a mi lado'. The score is arranged in five systems, each containing two staves. The instruments are: Flute (Fl.) and Clarinet (Cl.) in the first system; Piano (Pf.) in the second system; Violin (Vna.) and Viola (Vla.) in the third system; and Violoncello (Vc.) in the fourth system. The music is written in a key with one flat and a 3/4 time signature. Measure 28 features a melodic line in the flute and clarinet with a dynamic marking of *mf*. Measure 29 shows a complex texture with the piano playing a rhythmic accompaniment and the strings providing harmonic support. Measure 30 continues this texture, with a dynamic marking of *pp* for the piano. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, ties, and dynamic markings.

The interdependence of these two irradiation poles is evident in the moments when both are present (measures 32-44 – Fig. 4):



Musical score for measures 35-39. The score includes parts for Flute (Fl.), Clarinet (Cl.), Bassoon (Bj.), Violin (Vno), Viola (Vla), and Violoncello (Vc.). The music is written in 4/4 time. The Flute part has a trill marked with a '3' and 'pp'. The Bassoon part has a trill marked with a '3' and 'mp'. The Violin and Viola parts have complex rhythmic patterns with many sixteenth notes. The Violoncello part has a trill marked with a '3' and 'pp'. There are various performance markings such as 'ord.', 'aria', 'pp', 'mp', and 'ff' throughout the score.

Musical score for measures 40-44. The score includes parts for Flute (Fl.), Clarinet (Cl.), Bassoon (Bj.), Violin (Vno), Viola (Vla), and Violoncello (Vc.). The music is written in 4/4 time. The Flute part has a trill marked with a '3' and 'pp'. The Clarinet part has a trill marked with a '3' and 'mp'. The Bassoon part has a trill marked with a '3' and 'pp'. The Violin and Viola parts have complex rhythmic patterns with many sixteenth notes. The Violoncello part has a trill marked with a '3' and 'pp'. There are various performance markings such as 'ord.', 'aria', 'pp', 'mp', and 'ff' throughout the score.

The process of irradiation happens throughout the piece, except, for obvious reasons, for the natural harmonic acciacatura passages in the strings and in the rare and brief moments when the instrumental figures get momentarily blurred, distancing themselves from the instances of D and its complement, A. These brief blurry moments are actually a direct consequence of the irradiation. Therefore, the process of irradiation is considered and utilized in its most intrinsic possibilities as a driving force. In its global aspect, the work may be considered an observation of the possibilities of self-generation and self-transformation of the sound.

The natural consequence of such a direct work on the sound is the discussion of the effective relationship between composer and interpreter: two agents closely associated, equally partaking on the process of making a soundscape concrete. The composer reveals the natural evolution of the impulses and the sound figures, and the interpreter executes the self-transformation of each element. The composer makes the primary choices of the elements and their development. In these elements, it is not much the gesture or the figure which generate the dynamics, but, rather, the dynamic dimension is the responsible for producing the gestures and figures. When the ear perceives specific elements as sound-generating impulses, it is not the figures that determine their role, but the universe of situations and dynamics in which these elements are embedded. The articulation of silences respects such principle: in the dialectics of each

instrument, the silence is, on its turn, a subsequent generating element, the humus which nurtures the sound elements so that they produce roots, define themselves, develop and react. A space, therefore, not of silence, but of profound listening, in which dwells the idea of breath-silence. This breath-silence is achieved partly due to the important contribution of the tonal pedal of the piano, used in a good portion of the work and which also provides balance between motives, phrases and silences.

Therefore, the narrative unfolds in a context in which there are no rest-silences; the only rest-silence (measure 10 – Fig. 5) marks the beginning of the end.

**Fig. 5.** Measures 100 – 102 of *Como una luz de invierno a mi lado*, by Edgar Alandia

In such an environment, with no silences, each instrument is constantly guided by the impulses of at least some other instrument and by a constant thread which permits almost imperceptible variations and changes of figure.

### **A concertante metamorphosis**

Given that the importance of every instrument, in the best chamber-music tradition, is completely equal, the idea of ensemble is absolutely necessary. Following coherently the metamorphosis logic, the composer gives the piano

interventions in which the very timbre of the instrument is often disguised in such a way it is not recognizable. The pianistic writing, neutral from the instrumental and timbrical perspectives, almost seems to have been brought about so that the piano's sonority is disguised, in a way that its concertante role is not emphasized, even though such is the role it actually plays, as tradition demands. The initial gesture is given to the piano, however mute this gesture (the pianist must silently lower the keys, while pressing the tonal pedal); the piano is responsible for restoring the movement after a fermata, as well as filling the gaps in between the other instruments' figures. Therefore, if the last note of the clarinet is superposed with an intervention of the strings, for example, we always find the piano with the role of softening, with a gesture, the timbrical differences between the instrumental interventions. Also, every time this happens, the pianistic gestures are always different from the previous ones, creating a continuous dissolution and disguising the timbre of the other instruments. In addition, as the transformation of the figures takes place by progressively dissolving a gesture into the next one, intertwining sets of figures get constantly modified in ever-changing combinations.

The indications of dynamics assume an important role in this process, because, as we have previously discussed, they generate the gestures and the different instrumental impulses. It is particularly significant the attention given to background sounds, in which changes happen slowly, yielding a great balance between that background and the instrumental impulses. In that sense, it is noticeable how the piano often maintains a softer sound comparing to the other instruments, which helps disguising its timbre. For instance, we can cite the "union" clusters between interventions of other instruments. These clusters' function is to disguise timbre, or to become a signal to resume the movement after a fermata, but never a percussive function which would represent a rupture in the continuity of the sound. Thus, the perception of the music fabric is facilitated precisely by the piano interventions.

The instrumental figures are, in general, idiomatically natural, but they reflect, more than the instrumental processes, sound-elaboration processes. They have more to do with sound than with the technical particularities of the instruments, with the exception of the pedal-figures, thought and customized for each instrument. The pedal-figures grant, most of the times through the continuous perception of the background, the perception of a primary suggestion of sound and the amplification of the greatly reverberated impulses, determining the

characterization of the ambiance and of some sonorous particularities that the tonal pedal would not be able to provide.

The use of strings is particular: they are almost always used as an ensemble, as if they were one sole instrument. The rare and brief “solo” moments are like the other interventions, or like links between different interventions. Flute and clarinet enjoy more independence and freedom. The piano assumes a multifaceted role, though less compromised, as stated above: sound box for the rest of the ensemble, precisely because of the frequent use of the tonal pedal. When this pedal is not being used, the sound is less transparent, not only for the piano, but for every instrument. Therefore, the piano’s roles include reverberation, prolongation of sound, “closing” between sections and, finally, being the “concertatore”.

The leading actor is always the sound, which the composer lets unfold with great autonomy. For that purpose, it is useful the absence of a pulse, replaced by the sound impulse, sole motor of the whole action. This is suggested by the metronome indication for the work, too low to generate a pulse but, on the other hand, useful for the concept of impulse as the only movement factor.

Obviously, the idea of measure exists here simply to guide the alterations and as a support for the ensemble dynamics. An analogous function is given to the fermatas, which impose moments in which a particular reference must be given to a guiding “concertatore”. Having overcome the need of a pulse means, actually, overcoming the need of a climax, because it would be hard to build a peak in a process of continuous metamorphosis. Although the last gesture has a closing nature, at the end the piece could easily start over without rendering the idea of repetition, almost like the natural process of transformation of sound and light.