

# Edgar Alandia

## *Edgar Alandia*

I was born in Oruro, Bolivia, on August 12<sup>th</sup>, 1950. I spent my early childhood in La Paz, where my father worked in a project of the country's agrarian reform. My memories of the time include a particular state of illness, which used to debilitate me and to force me to stay in bed for many days, to stay home for long periods and to feel particularly fragile and lonely, in sharp contrast to the natural joy and energy of the children of my age around me. I was very young when I learned how to read, thanks to my parents' intuition. Therefore, during this period, I read a lot (books, not magazines or comic books), giving way to my fantasy by imagining the characters of the fables of La Fontaine, Grimm, Andersen, etc.

Between 1955 and 1956, we went back to Oruro, a small city situated in the Bolivian Altiplano (3,706 meters above sea level), where I started going to Colegio Anglo-Americano, a school accessible to Bolivian middle-class children.

At first, I suffered with my inability to socialize with my colleagues, because I had not previously developed this skill. Then, at age 8, I discovered music by learning to play the accordion. I must say that my ears were actually not only accustomed to, but nurtured on music. My father, Orlando Alandia Pantoja, used to work at home, listening to music from Mozart to Stravinsky, so my "musical" instinct was already present when I started to play the accordion by ear, with relative ease. This gave a new meaning to my existence in the context

of my schoolmates, for it symmetrically generated admiration and aversion, making me face the real world and the dynamics that accompany us for life.

After a while, I started studying piano with good results, but with a terrible relationship with the world of teachers. I was expelled from the music school for “committing” the crime of composing. I must say that my chronic laziness induced me to compose music, because studying and practicing music was much more tiresome. Subsequently, apart from regular schooling, I studied music in a private institution, achieving great results. I even gave a student recital in a university, playing not only little classical pieces, but also my own compositions.

When I finished regular school, at 18 years old, I decided, stubbornly and without much discernment, that I wanted to study composition. The decision, although laughed at by my classmates, was taken seriously by my parents, who supported me thoroughly. They sent me abroad, to study at the Conservatorio di Santa Cecilia in Rome. My poor mother, Celia Cañipa de Alandia, suffered terribly for that distancing, sensing that I would never go back to my country.

The years at Santa Cecilia were tough, because my Bolivian academic background was limited. The presence of my composition teacher, Irma Ravinale, was essential to my education, especially because she intuitively noticed my chronic laziness and imposed a systematic plan of studies, which helped me reach my maximum potential. I graduated in Composition and Orchestral Conducting in 1977 and 1981, respectively.

Around that time, I married Aura Bruni, an Italian young lady who did not have much to do with music (she is a doctor in Spanish and French languages and literature), but who had the patience to cope with me and to support me in my difficult moments.

In 1978, I signed my first professional contract with the Brussels Opera Theater (La Monnaie), to work as a pianist and musical consultant for Maurice Béjart’s Ballet du Xxe Siècle. Béjart and I became somewhat friends, and I learned a lot with him about how to make a grand theatrical production. This job also enriched my human experience, as it gave me the opportunity to get to know countries like Japan and the USSR, among many others.

I came back to Italy in 1978, determined to become a professional composer. I wrote a piece for clarinet and orchestra, *Pampa*, which won first prize at the “Valentino Bucchi” International Composition Competition. *Pampa* opened to me important professional doors: a contract with Ricordi Editions and the possibility of premiering the work at the Teatro Comunale di Bologna.

Between 1979 and 1981, I was a student of Franco Donatoni’s, with whom I maintained a terrible relationship. Nevertheless, he was crucial to my formation, because he forced me to reconsider all my work under a critical perspective. At these moments, I really appreciated the support of the Italian master Goffredo Petrassi, who always comforted me and pushed me forward.

Since then, my composition activity has been steady. I choose to work slowly, because I consider important to dedicate enough time to each work, without being governed by the anxiety of having to be present in every music festival or concert season, in which I end up being present anyway.

I must mention some excellent musicians who, with their art and experience, have contributed to my artistic and professional development: Giancarlo Schiaffini, Michiko Hirayama, Jesús Villa-Rojo and the other members of the Gruppo Strumentale “Nuove Forme Sonore” of Rome, in which we made music for more than twenty years.

Simultaneously, I have been teaching composition in different Italian conservatories, among which I must mention “Gioacchino Rossini” in Pesaro, “Santa Cecilia” in Rome and, nowadays, “Francesco Morlacchi” in Perugia, in addition to many institutions in Europe and in the Americas, in which I have offered master classes and composition seminars.