A PORTRAYAL OF ART MUSIC IN COLOMBIA THROUGH FOUR WORKS FOR BASSOON

BY

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Abstract

The lecture recital focuses on pieces for bassoon composed by four well-known, contemporary Colombian composers: Blas Emilio Atehortúa, Jorge Pinzón, Pedro Sarmiento and Johann Hasler. I discuss how these works fit into the greater scheme of Colombian art music through an analysis of melodic and harmonic content, local and foreign influences, and performance practice. I show a relationship between musical language from indigenous, African and European traditions in addition to illustrating how compositional techniques begun in Europe and the United States were adopted by Colombian composers as a result of globalization.

My approach is both textual and contextual. In my extensive research I have found a vast amount of information, mostly written by non-Colombian authors, describing processes of acculturation, transculturation, and enculturation that date back to pre-Columbian times. These materials provide a framework of textual concepts that represent the complicated history of Spanish domination in addition to the struggle of indigenous peoples and African slaves to create an identity through artistic expression. Colombian music has a history of cultural influences that include Spanish colonialism of the 16th century to independence movements and battles in the 19th century, African beliefs and practices brought by the slaves in the 17th century until the abolition of slavery in 1851, large Native American civilizations that inhabited the territory before the arrival of Spaniards in 1492 and more recent influences resulting from globalization and transculturation. Contextual information comes from my own experience as a trained Colombian musician and Colombian native. This is my frame of reference in presenting the *Sonata para fagot y piano*, Op.144 by Blas Atehortúa, *Mobile para fagot y piano* by Jorge Pinzón, *Sonata para fagot y piano*, Op.10b by Pedro Sarmiento and *Diptych for Solo Bassoon* by Johann Hasler.

Through the discussion of how these works for bassoon, referenced above, fit into the larger realm of Colombian music, I establish a timeline for the history of Colombian art music.

I feel strongly that researching, studying and performing this repertoire provides a way to maintain the relevance of my instrument in the Colombian art music tradition. It also encourages the composition and transmission of new works. Thus, two of the pieces I will be presenting have been commissioned specifically for this project.

Acknowledgements

I want to wholeheartedly thank people that have guided, helped and supported the research and writing of this project: composers Blas Emilio Atehortúa (and his wife Sonia), Pedro Sarmiento, Jorge Pinzon and Johann Hasler, for their gifts of music, long conversations and the many memories; my committee members Dr. Roberta Schwartz, Dr. Margaret Marco, Dr. Veronica Garibotto and Dr. Kip Haaheim for their counsel and expertise; and my committee chair, teacher and mentor, Dr. Eric Stomberg, for his direction, generosity, wisdom and patience, and for teaching me to look at music with shiny eyes.

This project is the culmination of a journey that took me through intricate routes and that required an army of people to make sure life remained controlled. I want to thank my family here and in Colombia, especially Mike Pruneau, Gary and Margaret Southern, Scott Southern, and Guillermo Romero Soto; and friends, colleagues and students for their continuous love, support and words and acts of encouragement throughout the process.

Finally and foremost, I want to thank and dedicate my work to my kids, Amelia and Talvin Southern, for being the light of my path and the reason for all of this. I hope this brings you closer to your roots and to a better understanding of who your mom is.

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Chapter 1 - Colombia's Brief History

Colombia's history is important to this discussion because Colombian music, both traditional and academic, helps to reflect deep changes in Colombian society. The Republic of Colombia is located in the northwest of South America. Colombia is the fourth biggest country in South America, roughly the size of Texas, New Mexico and Arkansas combined, with a population of approximately forty-five million people. Colombia shares borders with Panama, Venezuela, Brazil, Ecuador and Peru, while being the only nation of this continent that has coasts on both the Pacific Ocean and the Caribbean Sea.

On October 12, 1492, Christopher Columbus arrived on an island in the Caribbean (today's Dominican Republic) as part of an expedition in search of the East Indies. This date marks the conquest of the "new world." A series of Spanish and Portuguese expeditions followed. Spaniards first arrived in the area we know now as Colombia in 1499. At that time, the most important linguistic families of Native Americans in the area were *Arawak* and *Caribes*, established in the Caribbean, and *Chibchas*, established in the Colombian Andes Mountains.

Initially, the Spaniards consolidated their territory in the region by founding the coastal cities of Santa Marta and Cartagena, followed by their exploration of the country's interior; they later founded Popayán, Bogotá, and many other cities. As the process of expansion continued, justified as a missionary campaign, indigenous people were forced to do extremely difficult labor. The African slave trade was introduced in the second half of the 16th century to replace indigenous people that had died because of the intensity of the work and diseases brought from

Europe for which their immune systems were not prepared. Also, it was technically illegal to enslave native populations, as the king saw them as Spaniards.

Spanish colonial institutions were instated around the middle of the 15th century and lasted until the 19th century. The last phase of their control was the creation of the Nueva Granada Viceroyalty, centered in the city of Santafé (known today as Bogotá) in 1717. This viceroyalty included modern Colombia, Ecuador, Panama, Venezuela, and some regions of Peru, Brazil and Guyana. This was a very special and protected area for the Spanish because of the amount of gold produced there, as well as the region's strategic location between the two oceans.

The first movement seeking freedom from Spain, started by *criollos* (locally born people of Spanish ancestry: white, rich, and in an advantageous socioeconomic position), occurred in 1781, with a protest against high taxes. Other movements against Spanish centralism took advantage of Spain's weakness during the Napoleonic invasion of 1808, and were ideologically inspired by the European Enlightenment and other revolts in the United States and Haiti. Final independence was reached in 1819, after the triumph of a campaign lead by Simon Bolivar. From 1819 to 1830, *La Gran Colombia* was a federal state that included the countries of Colombia, Panama, Ecuador and Venezuela. It was during this period that slavery was abolished. Clashes of ideologies resulted in the failure of Simon Bolivar's dreams of unification. After pro-independence talks and years of instability and internal upheaval, the Republic of Colombia was constitutionally established, politically organized and more or less unified in 1886. The transition from being a Spanish colony to independent country was not easy. In fact, the *criollos* took control and established a governing system that continued class and race divisions, which

created a situation that caused years of civil war between the white aristocracy and groups representing *mestizos* (persons of mixed European and American Indian ancestry) in search of a far more equal society.

Culture and music in Colombia took its initial direction from the *criollos*, essentially imitating European standards and aesthetics. Colombia did not officially acknowledge the contributions and active presence of many cultures in its history for almost one hundred years. In the Republic of Colombia's revised Constitution of 1991, the country was declared "multi-cultural and pluri-ethnic"[1] recognizing and embracing, for the first time, the complexity of history, race and identity in an official document. By means of the new constitution, the African-Colombians, indigenous peoples, *mestizos* and others gained legal rights of representation in the government, in addition to other privileges.

1 Oscar Hernández Salgar. "Colonialidad y Poscolonialidad Musical en Colombia," trans. Lia Southern, *Latin American Music Review* 28, no. 2 (Winter2007), 258.

Chapter 2 - Colombia's culture and traditional music

Culturally, Colombia is a heterogeneous country. One reason for these cultural differences lies in Colombia's topography, which caused isolated regions with difficult access to evolve at a different pace. In general, the Spanish provided the language in which many songs were written, a notation system, scales, harmonies, form and some instruments. African influence is found in other musical instruments (especially percussion), rhythm and accentuation, as well as the musical form of call and response. Indigenous influence is palpable in some instruments such as the *maracas* and the *güiro* (open-ended hollowed gourd with a ratchet-like sound), as well as traits such as singing in thirds.

"Spanish culture was dominant, and African and Indian were subordinated."[2] For Spaniards, it was easy to keep their culture prevalent, as the other two cultures were not only fighting the dominant culture, but were also fighting each other to gain status. "African music had greater survival powers"[3] because it already shared musical traits with the Europeans, such as diatonic scales and duple and triple beat groupings. Africans were allowed to retain their musical practices and in some instances even their religions, because in the process of evangelization only Indians were considered pagans.

Colombia is politically divided in thirty-two departments (which are similar to 'states' in the United States), but ecologically and culturally, "Colombia is divided in [four] 4 zones: Andean

2 George List, *Music and Poetry in a Colombian Village* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983), 569.

3 Ibid., 571

region, Caribbean region, Pacific region, and Eastern plains region."[4] Each of these zones has a different racial distribution and a specific set of traditional instruments, dances, and customs.

The Andean region contains 90% of Colombia's total population, concentrated in urban centers of Bogotá, Medellin and Cali. In this region, the population is mainly white and *mestizo.* Instruments such as the *tiple* (a stringed instrument smaller than the guitar with 12 strings grouped in four tripled courses), *requinto, bandola* (a pear-shaped chordophone with 12 strings grouped in six doubled courses), guitar and *charango* are used in genres such as the *bambuco, danza criolla* and *pasillo*.[5] The *bambuco* is the national dance of Colombia, and the most representative of its traditions. It is based on indigenous melodies and Basque influences. Most often sung in parallel thirds with strummed accompaniment, the *bambuco* frequently presents "descending melodies, dramatic modulations to predominantly minor keys, and hemiola rhythms."[6] The *pasillo* is a genre of dance music that is derived from the Austrian waltz and the Colombian *danza*, and that was cultivated during colonization.[7] The *pasillo* appeared in the 1800s, when the *criollo* looked for a type of dance that was more courteous than the lower-class *bambuco* and *torbellino*. In Spain the Austrian waltz became the *vals*; in Colombia, Ecuador and Venezuela it became faster and vertiginous, and was named *pasillo* (the diminutive of *paso*-step). In its early years it was played on the piano, but later it became popular to perform it on

4 Abadía, *ABC del Folklore Colombiano*, trans. Lia Southern, *(*Bogotá: Talleres Gráficos del Banco Popular, 1991), 18

5 Ibid., 24

6 William Gradante. "Bambuco." *Grove Music Online*. *Oxford Music Online*. Oxford University Press, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.my.otc.edu:8080/subscriber/article/grove/music/01926.

7 William Gradante. "Pasillo." *Grove Music Online*. *Oxford Music Online*. Oxford University Press, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.my.otc.edu:8080/subscriber/article/grove/music/21008.

the *tiple*, mandolin, guitar and with the voice. A variation of it is the slow *pasillo*, which is comprised of melancholic melodies and contrasting tonal areas, and is "characterized by syncopated melodies and both horizontal and vertical polyrhythmic effects created between 3/4 and 6/8."[8] The Colombian *danza* or *danza criolla* is the result of transformation of the European *contredans* and the Cuban *habanera*. It is also the slower version of the Austrian waltz. This dance was also influenced by the Cuban *habanera* (influenced itself by the English country-dance, the French *contradanse*, and the Spanish *contradanza*).[9]

In the Caribbean region, the population is mainly *mulatto* (mixed white and black ancestry). The main compositional genre is the *cumbia*.[10] The *cumbia* is originated from the blending of indigenous melodies and instruments such as *gaitas* (a wind instrument from the region, made of a long hollow tubular wooden stick with holes near the end and a head made of beeswax and vegetable coal, trimmed with a turkey feather), *guacharaca* (another instrument from the region, made out of the trunk of a small palm tree with ridges carved into its outer surface and scraped with a fork to create its sound) and *maracas*, with African rhythms and drums.[11]

The Pacific region is home to a large majority of African-Colombians. This is the purest area in terms of Colombian folklore, due to difficult geographic access (jungle and an excessively humid climate). The most important instruments of this region are the marimba and drums; the main

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8 William Gradante. "Pasillo." *Grove Music Online*. *Oxford Music Online*. Oxford University Press, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.my.otc.edu:8080/subscriber/article/grove/music/21008

9 Abadía, *ABC del Folklore Colombiano,* trans. Lia Southern, 39

10 Ibid., 63

11 "Colombian Music." Colombia-sa, http://www.colombia-sa.com/musica/musica- in.html

genres include the *currulao* and *bunde*.[12] The *currulao* is usually sung and danced, and accompanied by the native version of the marimba, *conunos* (conical drums original to the area), bass drum, side drum, and *guasas* (a bamboo percussion instrument, similar to the maracas but tubular and without the handle).[13] The *bunde* is from the Pacific coastal area and is of African origin. The genre also exists in Andean music, with a "mixture of [other] rhythms."[14] It is also referred to as the happy version of the *bambuco*.

The Eastern plains are inhabited mainly by *mestizos*. The main instruments are ultimately of Spanish origin: *bandolin*, harp, *cuatro*, *tiple* and *requinto*, as well as *maracas*. The main genre is *joropo*,[15] a fast-paced music generally performed on harp, *cuatro* (small guitar with 4 strings) and *capachos* (small maracas). The *joropo* contains tapping on the *cuatro* instrument, illustrating its connection with flamenco.[16]

Most of the influences of traditional genres on art music come from the Andean region, for two reasons: it was the area that had most Spanish influence, and Bogotá, the most important urban center, is located there. These traditional dances influenced art music in various ways.

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12 Abadía, *ABC del Folklore Colombiano*, trans. Lia Southern, 81

13 "Colombian Music." Colombia-sa, accessed January 15, 2013, http://www.colombia-sa.com/musica/musica- in.html

14 Ibid.

15 Abadía, *ABC del Folklore Colombiano*, trans. Lia Southern, 97

16 Ibid, 103

Chapter 3 - Colombian art music

Colombian music has a history of cultural influences that include Spanish colonialism of the 16th century, the independence movements and battles in the 19th century, African beliefs and practices brought by the slaves in the 17th century until the abolition of slavery in 1851, large civilizations of Native Americans that inhabited the territory before the arrival of Spaniards in 1492, and more recent influences resulting from globalization and transculturation.[17]
Music is often the result of a culture's need to express its values, and a tool to do so. In order to understand any given piece, it is important to situate composers and performers within a context.

Since music was used by the Spaniards as a tool to transform the beliefs of the indigenous people to Catholicism, especially those in the Colombian Andean region, native musical traditions and rituals were disregarded and replaced by European religious music, language and instruments. Whereas in popular music the most accentuated influences come from Africa and Amerindians, in art music the biggest influence came from Europe and later North America. The colonization process itself explains this situation. Spaniards developed an intricate class system based on race, which determined a person's rights in society. The Spanish referred to these class categories as *peninsular* (a Spaniard born in Spain), *criollo*, *indio* (a native of the area) and *negro* (a person of African slave descent). Culture and music functioned as a qualifying element when making distinctions among classes. In other words, skin color was also accompanied by mannerisms and

17 Dale Olsen and Daniel Sheehy, *The Garland Handbook of Latin American Music* (New York: Garland Publishing, 2000), 7.

customs that would enhance one shade over the other. Being white, or in some cases, acting white (listening to Spanish music, supporting Spanish causes, being a Catholic, etc.), were all necessary traits for one to be granted freedoms, entitlements and guaranties. Art music was conducted under this premise until the first half of the 20th century.

In order to understand art music in Colombia it is necessary to go back and trace its origins. To comprehend the development of Colombian art music, it is useful to situate its development in the following eras: pre-Columbian music, colonial and independence music, romantic/nationalist music, and contemporary music.

When the Spaniards arrived in the new world, they found established civilizations that had their own music system, rituals, dances and instruments. The Spanish chronicles describe the importance of music in indigenous societies, as well as specific rituals involving singing and dancing. There is also iconographic proof of musical instruments, and in some texts there are lyrics of popular pre-colonial songs.

Spanish colonizers perceived indigenous music as unorganized, loud, and most of all, not conducive to their mission of evangelization. For the purpose of garnering financial support from the Spanish crown, this became the main argument for colonization campaigns. The process of colonization motivated Spaniards to convert all systems of beliefs to their standards, religious and otherwise, including traditions of music, musical systems, and music making. New world chronicles also document Jesuits bringing entire sets of instruments to the colonies and teaching the indigenous people to play and read music as a way to instill the traditions of European

religious music in the new world territories. Church councils from the 16th century ruled that native musicians "shall sing polyphonic music only when their singing conforms to standards we consider acceptable… and they shall not be permitted to sing songs that remind people of their old idolatrous customs."[18] Also, those councils tried to completely eliminate singing and dancing at indigenous festivals and celebrations. However, missionaries did accept manifestations of native music in Christian festivals, hoping to accelerate the acceptance of the Christian religion. Therefore, music of the Roman Catholic Church became one of the main forms of colonial music. The other was popular music, which was specific to different regions and their specific development and context.

The first two hundred years of Colombian music history, as documented in existing records and archives, is filled solely with religious music. The printed score was the authority, and the church was the main musical institution for pedagogic and performance endeavors. The cathedral of *Santafé de Bogotá* became an art center, and many of the processes of musical *mestizaje* (or fusion of various cultural traditions) happened there. Still today one can find in this cathedral many examples of colonial music (including the only surviving copy of a part book by Tomás Luis de Victoria) but unfortunately, only religious pieces document what music was like in Colombia during those centuries. There were cathedral orchestras with instruments such as organ, harp, bassoon, flageolet, horns, and later violins and flutes. Choirs sang Gregorian chant and polyphonic music, while "musical accomplishments were measured against European standards."[19] The last years of the colonial era, however, were marked by a disregard for

18 Joseph Kerman and Gary Tomlinson, *Listen* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2012), 82.

19 John King, *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Latin American Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 241-242.

European polyphony. Military band pieces were popular during the era of independence from Spain, and there is a large repertoire of patriotic marches and songs that were used during the wars of independence to support the cause. The first years of the Republic brought dances like the *vals*, polka, and mazurkas to the elite society, especially the *criollos*, who were in search of a European model of behavior.

Nationalism in music came about in Europe in the mid-19th century as a response to German-centered styles of composition, and as a result of movements of independence, especially in Eastern Europe. The idea was carried to Latin America in an attempt by numerous countries to establish their identities and individuality following independence. During the colonial era, *bambucos*, *pasillos* and *torbellinos* were seen as musical forms of the lower classes. However, these were the only genres that had the possibility of becoming national music during the Republican era in Colombia. In fact, the *bambuco* was "the first genre to be adopted as [such]."[20] However, these styles had to go through a process of "cleaning," "whitening" or "improving," all of which denoted upward social mobility. *Mestizo* characteristics, such as the presence of regional narratives in lyrics and traditional instruments, were removed. One way to raise the status of these works was to transcribe the songs for piano. The intention, as it was in Europe, was to absorb the spirit and essence of popular music and adapt it to a universal language.

In post-independence Colombia there were many attempts to establish a tradition of concerts and of composition. The tradition of art music education in Colombia started with the founding of the *Academia Nacional de Música* in 1882, which became the *Conservatorio Nacional* in 1909. At

20 Oscar Hernández Salgar. "Colonialidad y Poscolonialidad Musical en Colombia," trans. Lia Southern, *Latin American Music Review* 28, no. 2 (Winter2007), 250.

the beginning, their intention was to educate musicians in the spirit of European art music, completely overlooking traditional and popular styles.

The first Colombian modernist composers to become known nationally and internationally wrote pieces in a romantic language, as a result of their European training. Their intent was to make their international experience compatible with the development of Colombian society. Some of those composers, such as Guillermo Uribe-Holguin, Jesús Bermúdez Silva, José Rozo Contreras, and Antonio Maria Valencia, incorporated Colombian traditional rhythms into their pieces and were recognized as the first true nationalist composers. Unfortunately, one consequence of their European training was that local sounds and rhythms had little influence on Colombian art music.

Neo-classicism was a response to the turn of the century in European music, a movement that often contained the revival of forms and structures from early periods of music. Nationalism and neoclassicism, however, were embraced in Latin America from a local perspective. European musical traditions reached and flourished in many places in Latin America. Those influences changed as new trends emerged in Europe, and through the new waves of immigration.

Starting in the middle of the 20th century, Colombian composers began searching for a modern and autonomous language that was not romantic or nationalistic in a European sense. That search allowed composers to create individual, and often Colombian, expression by borrowing themes and structures of traditional Colombian music while maintaining a style that aligned them with

the compositions of their contemporaries. This period represents the establishment of a true school of composing in Colombia. The most important names from this era include Carlos Posada Amador, Roberto Pineda Duque, Fabio Gonzales Zuleta, Luis Antonio Escobar, Jesus Pinzón Urrea, and Blas Emilio Atehortúa. Atehortúa, the youngest and most distinctive composer from this generation, will be discussed in more detail below.

Chapter 4 – Modern Colombian composers

What does it means to be a composer today in Colombia? According to John Blacking, "if a composer wants to produce music that is relevant to his contemporaries, his chief problem is not really musical, though it may seem to him to be so: it is a problem of attitude to contemporary society and culture in relation to the basic human problem of learning to be human."[21] The struggle of composers today lies in creating an individual style while also being relevant in their society.

In this framework of new ideas and intentions, Colombian composers are eclectic. They often draw from foreign as well as historical styles whilst presenting themselves as individuals. In analyzing their works using a postmodern approach (a skeptical interpretation of assumptions about culture and identity), artistic boundaries become blurred, and the once important German-centered canon is less influential. Composers write to fulfill their artistic and expressive needs, moving between cosmopolitanism and individualism, and audiences respond to those creations through their reception of them. "The ideologies surrounding Latin America are intimately connected to post-colonial class stratification."[22] To this day, when talking about academic Colombian music, audiences are formed of people from urban centers where folklore no longer represents the majority. When composers decide to use traditional Colombian elements, they work under the premise of a Colombian musical accent or flavor, as opposed to the literal

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21 John Blacking, *How Musical is Man* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1974), 104.

22 Marc Gidal, "Contemporary "Latin American" Composers of Art Music in the United States: Cosmopolitans Navigating Multiculturalism and Universalism." *Latin American Music Review / Revista de Música Latinoamericana* 31, no. 1 (2010): 47.

quotation of folk material. Perhaps the definition of a Colombian style is music conceived in Colombian territory by Colombian composers. According to composer Roberto Arias, "[music in Latin America is] neither a retreat into nationalism, nor the adoption of any political banners, but a refocusing of musical activity through a conscientious development of it as a form of thought about and reflection upon ourselves."[23] Therefore, one must ask if art music in Latin America, and specifically in Colombia, is a hybrid of many forms and influences. Garcia-Canclini explains the notion of hybridity, stating, "Latin American countries are currently the result of the sedimentation, juxtaposition, and interweaving of indigenous traditions, of Catholic colonial Hispanism, and of modern political, educational and communicational actions."[24]

How do the local Colombian genres interact with Western traditions and dialogue to transform each other? There are several elements that have played a role in the creation of a contemporary Colombian school of composition: institutions that provide composers the ability to compose, study, and examine contemporary repertoire; government policies and private initiatives that support and encourage the creation of Colombian pieces; and the creation of festivals, awards and other methods to assist young composers in the dissemination and transmission of their works.

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23 Ricardo Arias. "From the Margins of the Periphery: Music and Technology at the Outskirts of the West-- A Personal View." *Leonardo Music Journal* 8, no. 1 (December 1998): 50.

24 Garcia Canclini, *Hybrid Cultures,* 46.

Chapter 5 - The role of music institutions in Colombia

According to Rodolfo Acosta,[25] up until the 1980s the only institution offering a degree in music composition was the *Universidad Nacional de Colombia* in Bogotá. In the 1990s there was an expansion in music schools with the appearance of recognized programs at the *Universidad Javeriana* and *Universidad de los Andes*, both in Bogotá. The primary purpose of these institutions was to provide an alternative to the outdated curriculum of the conservatory, which was modeled after French institutions, by proposing a model that would follow the American traditions, with very strong theory and composition departments.

Until the 1990s, other institutions worth recognizing were the *Antonio Maria Valencia* conservatory (named after a composer that studied in France with Vincent D 'Indy), *Conservatorio del Tolima* in Ibague, *Conservatorio de Cucuta* and the *Instituto Musical* en Cartagena. These institutions were inclined to offer non-formal musical programs, which caused composition students to overlook them and go to Bogotá to further their education. I was one of the students at the *Antonio Maria Valencia* conservatory, and it was there where I learned about modern music and living Colombian composers for the first time. Blas Emilio Atehortúa was a visiting professor for a weekend, and his lectures were about his experience as a composer and his relationship with contemporaries such as Alberto Ginastera, Luigi Nono, Iannis Xenakis and John Cage. During his time on campus we listened to his music, discussed the pieces and played

25 Rodolfo Acosta, "Música Academica contemporanea en Colombia desde el final de los ochenta." *Circulo Colombiano de Música Contemporanea*. 2007. http://www.ccmc.com.co/usuarios/1000000019/Mus_academ_cont_colombiana_final_ochenta.pdf.

through some of his scores. At that time, he mentioned his bassoon sonata to me and gave me an autographed copy. This is the same work I am playing today, although he revised it and added an extra movement. Meeting Atehortúa completely changed my perception of music. I knew then that the music world was bigger than I ever imagined. Atehortúa also suggested I move to Bogotá to study bassoon with Siegfried Miklin, principal bassoonist of the National Orchestra and the one responsible for an established bassoon school in the country, so that I could expand and advance my career choices. I followed Atehortúa advice soon after and joined the Conservatory at the *Universidad Nacional*.

Partly as a result of the success of the new post-secondary music programs in Bogotá, other programs developed. Today there are more than twenty institutions that offer bachelor's degrees in music; some of these institutions offer master's degrees. This is significant because, on one hand, we have a growing number of performers in constant contact with Colombian composers and their music, which assists in the dissemination of contemporary works. Additionally, the exchanging of ideas with music historians, theorists, performers, and educators allows for these composers to broaden their artistic worldview.

From 1989 to 2007, Bogotá was home to the International Contemporary Music Festival, a biennial event that allowed for the dissemination of a huge number of musical works, both foreign and Colombian. The festival brought a significant number of foreign composers and performers to the country. These artists continue to influence the local academic music scene. In addition to concerts, the festival promoted courses, seminars and workshops. Over time, the festival widened its focus to include Latin American and Colombian composers, helping to

create a national and regional interest in composition that has provided abundant results. The Festival was a venue for the diffusion and exposures of pieces written by the composers discussed in this paper, namely Hasler and Sarmiento. The festival closed after budget struggles and the lack of leaders to replace its original founder, Cecilia Casas, who retired due to health issues.

Government policies started to flourish in the 1990s with the National Composition Awards for Colombian composers, which provide performance opportunities, publishing and monetary prizes. These awards are still in existence, and through the years, Atehortúa, Hasler, Sarmiento and Pinzon have all been recipients.

In 2010 the *Círculo Colombiano de Música Contemporánea* (CCMC) was founded, a nonprofit association to "foster, develop and promote contemporary academic music in Colombia."[26] The intention of this group is to provide composers, performers, pedagogues, journalists, and other patrons a center for discussion, interpretation, research, and study of art music in Colombia. The CCMC has been essential in the establishment of policies and in the generation of venues for the diffusion of contemporary music in the form of concerts, recordings, commissions, workshops and conferences. The CCMC works in conjunction with the Colombian Cultural Ministry as a consultant for governmental cultural efforts to support Colombian academic music. Johann Hasler and Pedro Sarmiento have been an active part of the CCMC since its beginnings.

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26 Círculo Colombiano de Música Contemporánea. http://www.ccmc.com.co/index.php. accessed February 24, 2013.

Radio, TV and the Internet have been primary sources for the dissemination of academic music in Colombia. There are some radio stations linked with universities that have taken the job of opening their doors to new music, both foreign and Colombian. Unfortunately, as is the case worldwide, competing for musical relevance against popular music stations is extremely difficult. Some concerts, especially those played by the main symphony orchestras (*Sinfónica Nacional* and *Filarmónica de Bogotá*) are broadcast regularly on national television. The presence of cable TV since 1987 has allowed people with special interests to experience European contemporary music, among other options.

There has been a rise in performers willing to expand their repertoire by interpreting new music as a result of new educational venues and institutions, in addition to their direct interaction with composers. Performing artists have also been instrumental in commissioning pieces and subsequently transmitting these new works (and the reputation of the composers) around the country and the world. Even while dealing with budget challenges due to the uncertainty of governmental funds, Colombian orchestras have embraced the music of young composers and provide a significant venue for the diffusion of new music. New concert venues have been opened in universities with music programs, and these have also become a place for transmission of new music, Colombian and otherwise.

Chapter 6 – Four Colombian Composers and their Pieces for bassoon

To understand the current state of Colombian art music and its composers, it is important to recognize the difference, relationship and interaction between European music originating in white societies in Europe and indigenous music. The works presented in this lecture recital contain influences from both while also acting as a microcosm of the evolution of Colombian composers.

Jorge Pinzon

Jorge Pinzon was born in Moniquirá, Boyacá, in 1968. His musical training started in Tunja, at the *Escuela Superior de Música*, followed by study at the *Conservatorio Antonio Maria Valencia* in Cali. In 1988 he was accepted to the Tchaikovsky Conservatory in Moscow and graduated in 1994 with degrees in composition and oboe. Pinzon lived in Perú for several years, where he was principal oboist of the Lima Philharmonic. He returned to Colombia in 1995 as principal oboist of the National Symphonic Band of Colombia before deciding to dedicate his life to composition. In 2000, Pinzon was a founding member of the *Escuela de Música de la Universidad Antonio Nariño* in Bogotá, where he later served on the faculty and was chair of the theory and composition department. Since 2003, Pinzon has served on the faculty and currently chairs the Theory and Composition area at the well-recognized *Escuela de Música de la Fundación Universitaria Juan N. Corpas* in Bogotá. He now teaches courses in composition, theory, and orchestration. More than a dozen of his most talented composition students have been recognized nationally and internationally for their work. His works have been performed in

Colombia, Russia, USA, Peru, México, Poland, Spain, Cuba, Portugal, Costa Rica, Venezuela and Paraguay. His pieces have garnered numerous national and international awards.

In the words of the composer, his personal language is defined by diverse compositional techniques developed in the first half of the 20th century such as altered harmony, modalism, politonalism, atonalism, serialism, pointillism, minimalism and tintinnabuli, a compositional style developed by Arvo Part, defined as the application of various inversions of a certain chord while evoking the pealing of bells. Pinzon divides his compositional work into two phases, acknowledging that he has just started a new exploration of the world of phonetics and controlled intuition, resources that he is using in his newer works and commissions.

When asked about the influences in his music of traditional Colombian music, Pinzon recognizes a subtle flavor of Latin-American rhythms evident mainly in the use of polyrhythm and syncopation. He declares his admiration for popular Colombian forms such as the *bambuco* and *pasillo* but believes that those traditions are better when left alone, referencing instances in which the traditional quality is lost when inserted into academic contexts. Pinzon accepts that his style has been deeply affected by the Russian composers, especially Igor Stravinsky, Sergei Prokofiev and Dimitri Shostakovich, due to his exposure to their music at the Moscow Conservatory. Consequently, Pinzon defines his musical language as traditionalist instead of avant-garde.

Pinzón composed *Mobile para fagot y piano* in August 2012 upon my commission. *Mobile* is part of a collection of four instrumental pieces with piano accompaniment, in which a harmonic accompaniment is maintained while the solo instrument develops a melody specific to its

technical and timbral characteristics. In addition to composing for bassoon, the other instruments that are a part of this cycle include saxophone, clarinet and double bass. *Mobile para fagot y piano* is written in ternary form (A B A). The first section (A), marked *Allegro*, contains syncopated and displaced accents typical of Latin American music making the overall character very lively. The middle section (B), marked *Adagio*, contains an expressive, measured and melodic character that Pinzon achieves with less active rhythmic movement, but more homophonic in texture than the preceding section. The influence of Arvo Part's tintinnabulation dominates this second section. In this piece, modal melodies are presented through conjunct movement, including numerous neighbor notes and intervals of 4ths, 5ths, and 6ths. This work also includes polyrhythmic passages: the traditional rhythm of the *bambuco* and *pasillo,* 3 against 2, is evident in sections of this piece, although this influence is not directly recognized by the composer (See Example 1), rhythmic pedals in the piano part, non-retrogradable rhythmic figures (the latter two are influences of Olivier Messiaen's *taleas* upon Pinzon's style; see Example 2) and combinatory meters (an influence of Stravinsky upon Pinzon's style). Harmonically, he uses quartal chords, with a fixed centrality of C throughout the three sections.

Example 1 Pinzón, *Mobile para Fagot y Piano*, mm. 13-17.

Example 2 Pinzón, *Mobile para Fagot y Piano*, mm. 45-49

Blas Emilio Atehortúa

Blas Emilio Atehortúa is seen as the father of Colombian art music, although other major Colombian composers preceded him. Some of his predecessors include Antonio Maria Valencia, Guillermo Uribe-Holguin (the founder and conductor of the National Academy of Music Symphony Orchestra) and Fabio Gonzales Zuleta.

Blas Emilio Atehortúa was born in Santa Elena, Antioquia, in 1943. Atehortúa earned a degree in composition and conducting from the *Universidad Nacional de Colombia* Conservatory in

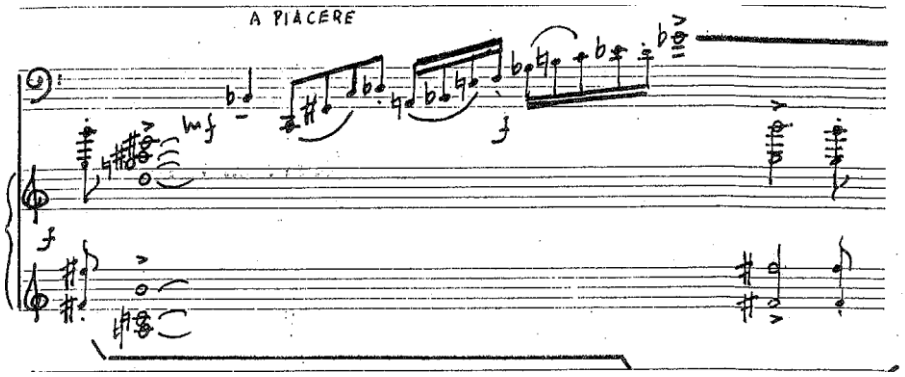
Bogotá. After graduation he traveled to Buenos Aires, Argentina, to study composition and orchestration at the *Di Tella* Institute with Alberto Ginastera. While there, he interacted with Aaron Copland, Luigi Dallapiccola, Ricardo Malipiero, Oliver Messiaen, Luigi Nono, Bruno Maderna, Cristóbal Halffier, Iannis Xenakis, Gerardo Gandini and Earle Brown. Many of these composers deeply influenced his compositional style. Atehortúa has composed more than 190 pieces, some of which have garnered national and international prizes. During his career, he has experimented with serialism and electronic music while generally composing with a neo-classical approach. According to Ellie Anne Duque "[His] music acquired a strong regional feeling, helping to create a Colombian musical identity."[27] Atehortúa has written two pieces for bassoon and piano: *Suite Concertante No. 2*, Op. 189, written for the American bassoonist Dr. Charles Hansen, professor of music and assistant director of the University of Northern Colorado School of Music; and *Sonata para fagot y piano*, Op.144.

His *Sonata para Fagot y Piano* was dedicated to Uruguayan bassoonist Esteban Falconi, principal bassoon at the Uruguay National Symphony Orchestra. The piece was commissioned by the Washington DC American University's Latin-American Center to be performed at Falconi's graduation lecture-recital after the completion of his studies there. This sonata can be classified as neo-classical due to the use of traditional forms and language. Throughout the piece there are multiple examples of polytonality, a technique that characterizes Atehortua's style. The sonata is written in four movements: Cadenza, Scherzo, Romanza, and Rondo alla Marcia. The Cadenza presents an atonal conversation between the bassoon and the piano. The main material

27 Ellie Anne Duque, "Atehortúa, Blas Emilio." *Grove Music Online*. *Oxford Music Online*. Oxford University Press, accessed January 3, 2013, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.my.otc.edu:8080/subscriber/article/grove/music/01455.

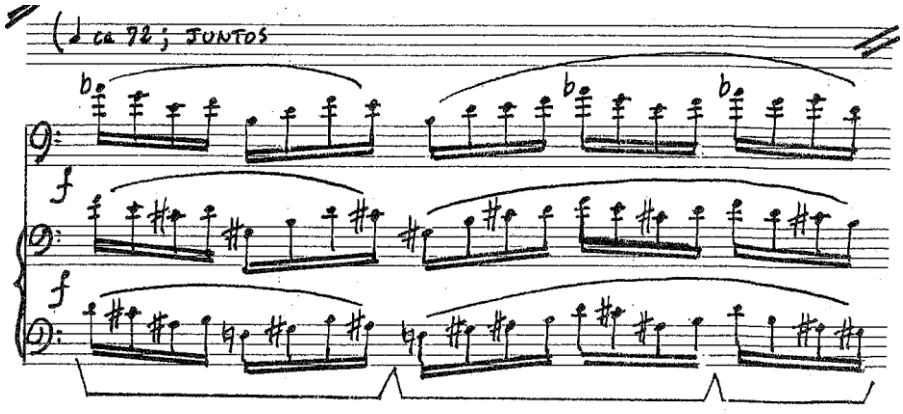
consists of a phrase constructed with a 12-tone row and elaborated sub-series (inverted, modulated, etc.) during the entire movement (See Example 3).

Example 3 Atehortúa, *Sonata para Fagot y Piano*, Mvt. I: Cadenza-beginning



The Cadenza is divided in three sections, A-B-A. The B section presents a series of sixteenth notes in a minimalistic fashion, where the bassoon and the piano play together a hemiola in a syncopated ostinato and homo-rhythmic passage. In this section, influences from the tango and its internal rhythmic subdivision of 3+3+2 are evident (See Example 4).

Example 4 Atehortúa, *Sonata para Fagot y Piano*, Mvt. I: Cadenza-middle section



The return to the A section (*come prima*) reestablishes the contrapuntal dialogue between the two instruments. This movement is non-metric.

The second movement, *Scherzo*, follows the traditional form of a scherzo and trio. The movement is written in 6/8, perhaps influenced by the *joropo* and/or the *danza criolla*, which use hemiola extensively to alternate (or superimpose in this case) between 3/4 and 6/8. The piano part in the scherzo presents an ostinato accompaniment with polyrhythm before being joined by the bassoon in an ostinato section with hemiola that is created by the changes in articulation and dynamics (See Example 5).

Example 5 Atehortúa, *Sonata para Fagot y Piano*, Mvt. II: Scherzo, mm. 25-32

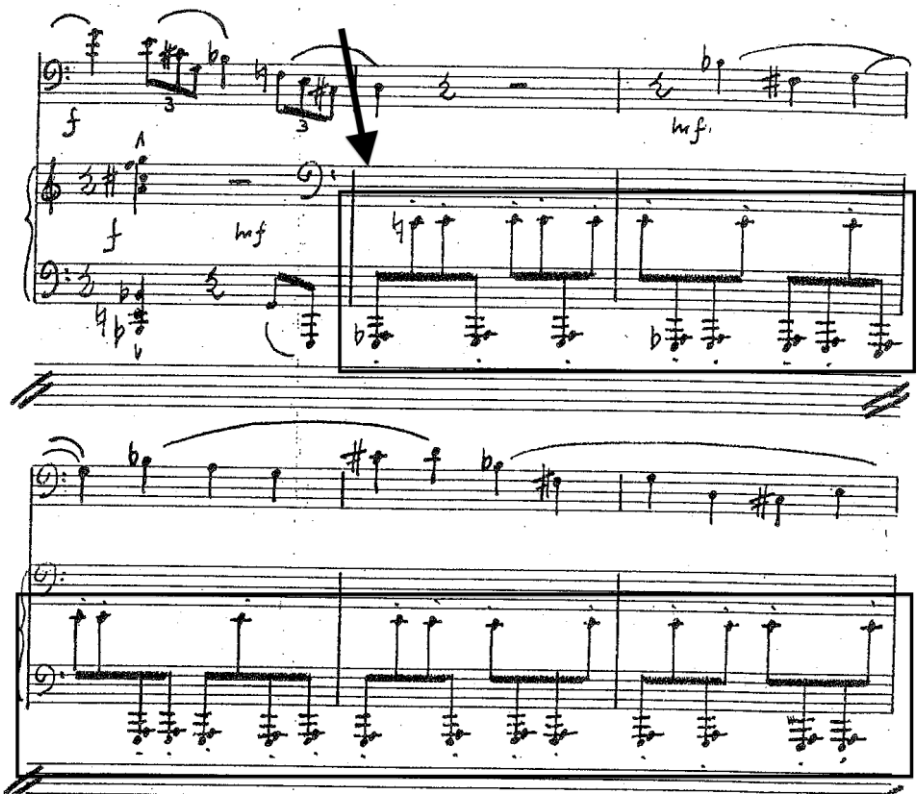
The Romanza introduces an expressive melody in the bassoon that explores the entire register of the bassoon (B1 to E5), against a syncopated accompaniment in the piano part. In this

movement, polytonality is explored in a constant polarization of tonal centers between the melody and the accompaniment (See Example 6).

Example 6 Atehortúa, *Sonata para Fagot y Piano*, Mvt. III: Romanza, mm. 21-23

The last movement, *Rondo alla Marcia*, is a rhythmic movement that I interpret as based in the tradition of marches that were very popular in the Gran Colombia during the battles for Independence. The layout of this rondo is A-B-A-C-A. There is evidence of use of syncretized Colombian tropical rhythms in the piano line of the B section. (See Example 7).

Example 7 Atehortúa, *Sonata para Fagot y Piano*, Mvt. IV: Rondo alla Marcia, mm. 15-26



Pedro Sarmiento

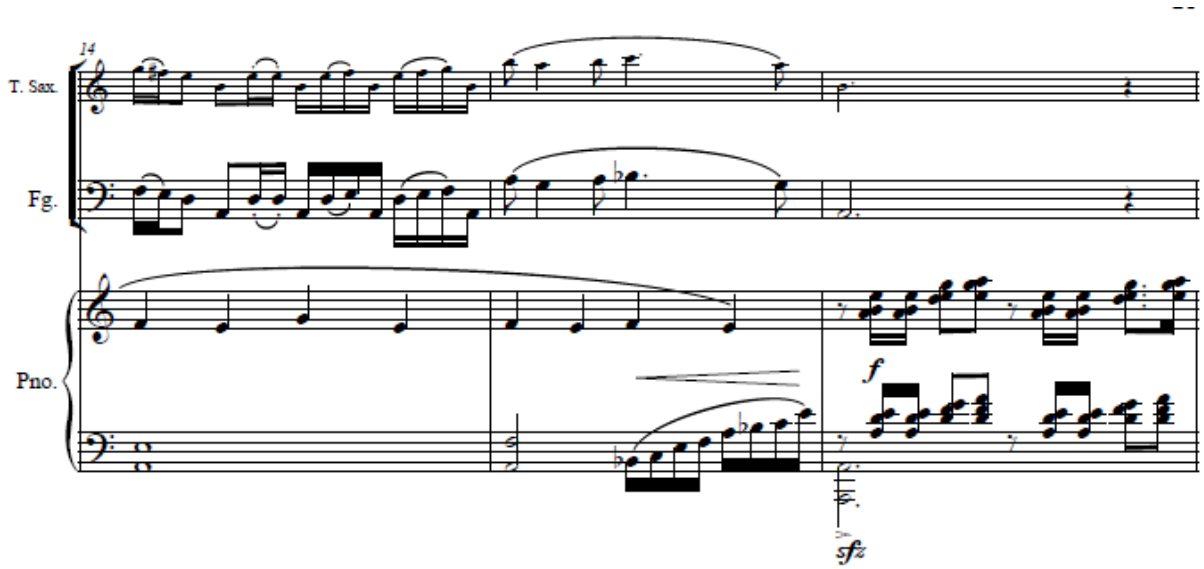
Pedro Sarmiento was born in Cali, Valle del Cauca, in 1977. He studied with Blas Emilio Atehortúa at the *Universidad Nacional de Colombia* Conservatory in Bogotá, where he earned his bachelor's degree in composition and guitar in 2000. Since then, he has devoted himself to the composition of music for band, symphony orchestra, chamber orchestra, chamber ensembles, and solo instruments. Sarmiento has participated in various music events in Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Spain, United States and Venezuela, and his works have been performed in Germany, Argentina, Austria, Brazil, Colombia, Spain, United States, Sweden and Venezuela (published by SIC Editorial in Colombia and World Arts in Spain). Sarmiento represented Colombian

composers at the Ibero-American Symposium of composers, directors, arrangers and instrumentalists of symphonic band and wind ensembles from 2002-2008, and, since 2007, has been a member of the World Association for Symphonic Bands and Ensembles. Sarmiento wrote the book *La música de Blas Atehortúa: Un estudio teórico, estilístico y estético de su música para orquesta sinfónica* (The Music of Blas Atehortúa: a Theoretical, Stylistic and Aesthetic Study of his Symphonic Music), published by *Universidad El Bosq*ue in 2011. At the moment Sarmiento lives in Caracas, Venezuela, where he is finishing a master's degree in composition. He wrote the *Sonata para Fagot y Piano Op.10b* in 2003 for Sandra Duque, contrabassoonist at the *Orquesta Filarmónica de Bogotá*. With this piece, he won an honorary mention in 2004 at the Colombia's Ministry of Culture National Composition Prize. This is one of Sarmiento's early pieces. By now his catalog has more than forty pieces.

This sonata is neoclassical, and follows the structure of a classical sonata written in three movements: Allegro (in sonata form), Adagio (ABA form), and Final (Rondo). Sarmiento's main interest when writing this piece was to explore the full range of the bassoon and its interaction with the piano. His experience as a guitarist provided Sarmiento with a special interest in the search of different timbres, an exploration that is evident in this piece. Sarmiento initially conceived this bassoon sonata as a concerto. In fact, the concerto score still exists, but it has not yet been premiered. The process of composition began with the second movement (which provided the second theme for the first movement), followed by the third movement (which provided the main theme for the first movement) and finally the first movement. Sarmiento grew up around Colombian music as a performing musician, first in the band and orchestra at his high school, and later in the *Conservatorio de la Universidad Nacional* Chorus, where he was

exposed to early Colombian baroque composers of religious music. He sees the flavor of Colombian/Latin-American music in the rhythms that characterize both the first and the third movements, and the Colombian baroque mannerisms in the compound voices and sequences used in those movements as well (See Example 7). At the time of this sonata's composition he was not looking to explore his Colombian heritage, something that he admits to doing in more recent years.

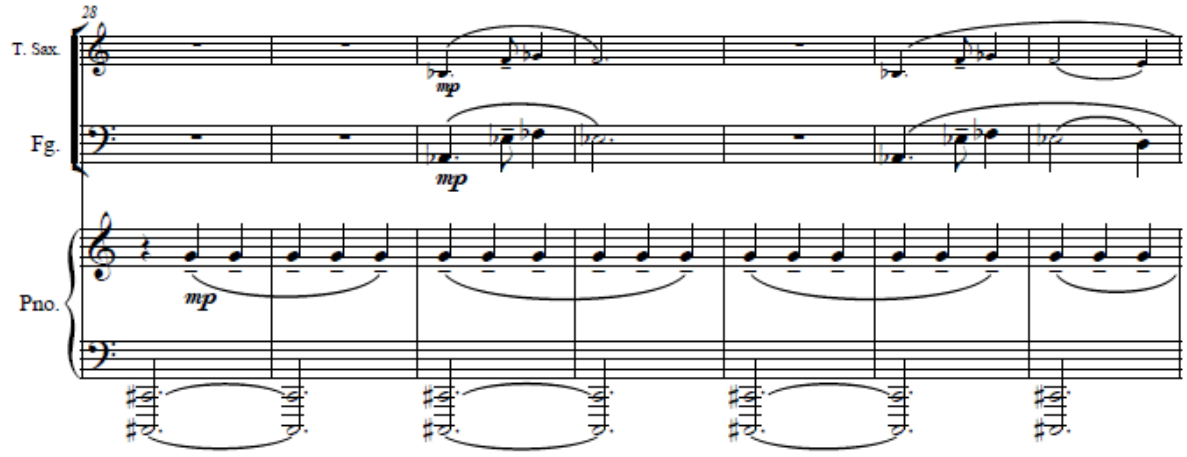
Example 7 Sarmiento, *Sonata para Fagot y Piano*, Mvt. I: Allegro, mm. 14-16



Sarmiento wrote this piece while he was still a student of Blas Atehortúa, who he considers his most important and significant influence. Atehortúa guided Sarmiento in the planning of the piece, including writing in a manner that was more instrumental than vocal by utilizing the whole register of the bassoon, breaking phrases in compound voices, using different articulations, etc.

An unusual characteristic of the second movement is the presentation of a recurrent pedal in the piano, described by Sarmiento as "anguish and persistent" (See Example. 8). [28]

Example 8 Sarmiento, *Sonata para Fagot y Piano*, Mvt. II: Allegro, mm. 28-34



Sarmiento acknowledges the influence of Leonard Bernstein's *Candide Overture* on the third movement of this piece. Harmonically, he uses quartal chords, with a fixed centrality of C throughout the three movements.

Johann Hasler

Johann Hasler was born in Medellin, Antioquia, in 1972. He began his musical studies in 1977 at the music preparatory program at the *Universidad del Valle* in Cali. In 2004 he obtained a degree in composition from the *Universidad Nacional de Colombia* Conservatory in Bogotá, and in 2007 he completed his doctoral studies in composition at the University of Newcastle. His doctoral work focused on speculative music, which deals with the study of esoteric influences in

28 Conversation with author, 23 February 2013.

music theory. On this topic Hasler is one of the few specialists in the world, and the only one in Colombia. Among his teachers are Luis Carlos Figueroa, Mario Gomez Vignes, Gustavo Yepes, Ellie Anne Duque, Egberto Bermudez, Catalina Peralta and Blas Emilio Atehortúa. His pieces have been presented in Colombia, Mexico, Slovakia, Argentina, the United States, and England. He has twice won the Colombia's Ministry of Culture National Composition Prize (1993 and 1995), and his works have been recorded and published in Colombia, Mexico, the Netherlands and Belgium.

Hasler describes himself as a *cantabile* composer[29]; a particular style of composing designed to imitate the human voice. Hasler hums his pieces, and then commits them to paper. Hasler was a student of Blas Atehortúa at the *Universidad Nacional* in 1994 and 1995. The main influence of Atehortúa is using atonal singing as a way of composing and the use of acrostics. During his studies with Atehortúa he was also exposed to solo instrument pieces that influenced him as well. There are a number of reasons Hasler's music does not sound "Colombian," namely his ancestry. Hasler was born to a German father and a Chilean mother; thus, he did not grow up with Colombian traditional music. Later in life he became interested in Colombian musical traditions, but from a musicological and academic perspective. The other main reason his works are not Colombian has to do with the two distinct tendencies regarding compositions by Colombian composers: nationalism and universalism. Hasler is more centrally aligned with universalism, along with other composers from his generation such as Rodolfo Acosta, Luis Fernando Rizo and Juan Monsalve. Hasler explains this technique as an antidote against nationalism, which is represented in music independent of its origin in addition to the reflection of an aesthetic

29 Conversation with author, 9 January 2013.

globalization of the musical language[30]. Hasler has written pieces in all genres, and for vocal, instrumental and electroacoustic resources.

I contacted Johann a year ago and asked him to compose a piece for my lecture-recital. The result was his *Diptych for Solo Bassoon.* Hasler's choice of extended techniques is characteristic of some new-generation Colombian composers. An interesting explanation I found regarding this choice comes from an article by composer Ricardo Arias, in which he explains his personal difficulties, and those of other young Colombian composers, of accessing personal/institutional equipment to write electroacoustic music. Arias labels a different type of music, "unplugged electronic," and described as the search for "other" sounds in traditional orchestral instruments to compensate for lack of other possibilities.[31] We can position Hasler's *Diptych for Bassoon Solo* in this category.

What I didn't know was that Hasler began writing this piece for me on January 14, 1998, and it was finished by my request on January 9, 2013. Hasler dedicated the work to "My friends Lia Uribe and Ana Maria Alarcon."[32] In composing the work, he acknowledges the influence of Mexican composer Mario Lavista (b. Mexico City, 1943). They met in Bloomington, Indiana in 1994, when Hasler was invited to participate in a composer's festival where Lavista was a guest lecturer, along with Cuban Tania Leon and American George Crumb. After meeting Lavista, Hasler was impressed by the lyricism of his compositions and the use of extended techniques,

30 Ibid.

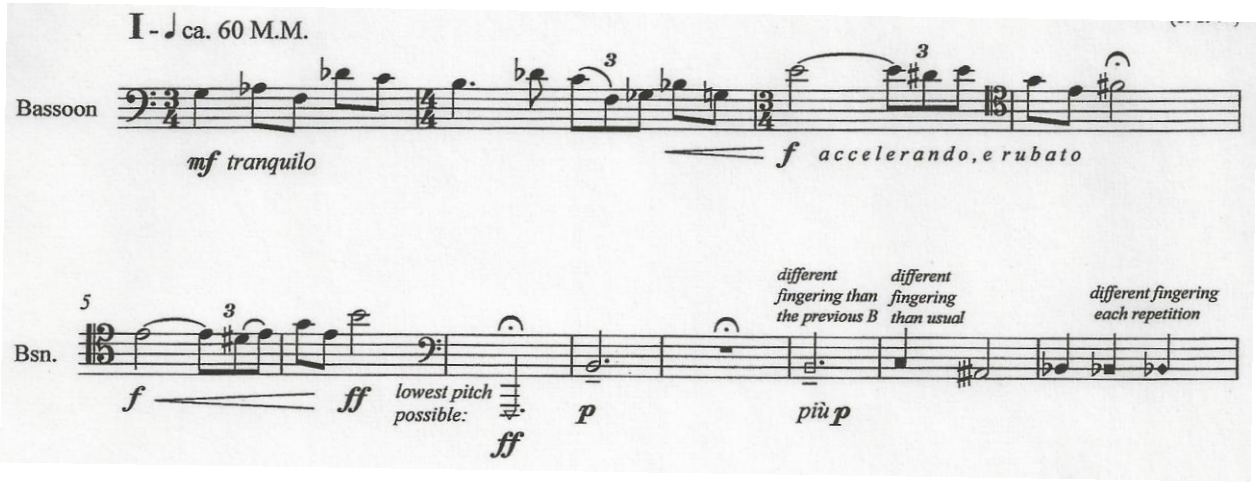
31 Ricardo Arias. "From the Margins of the Periphery: Music and Technology at the Outskirts of the West-- A Personal View." *Leonardo Music Journal* 8, no. 1 (December 1998): 49.

32 Hasler, *Diptych*

especially the exploration of timbre and microtones in expressive melodies.

The piece is written in two movements. The first movement is in ABA form and is an exploration of multiphonics, chords and microtones for the bassoon. The first bars of the first movement consist of a pandiatonic cantabile line that sounds in E; pandiatonic music, like tonality, typically features a "tonic" or more properly, a center, which is promoted by elements other than functional progressions, evident through the use of drones, repetition, metric accent, and phrase shape (See Example 9).

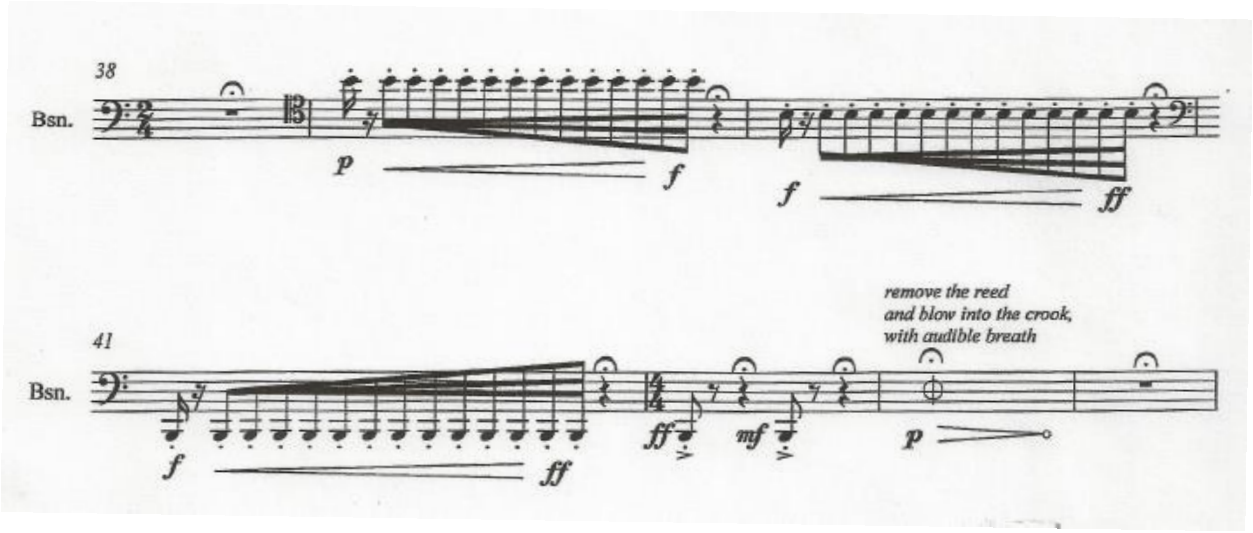
Example 9 Hasler, *Diptych for Bassoon Solo*, Mvt. I, mm. 5-7



The melody is interrupted with a low note that has an imprecise effect, but the melody returns with exploitations of the original colors and fingerings as a microtonal line (see Example 9 above, measures 10-12). Measures 15-18 mark a rhythmic interlude, written with the intention of separating section A from section B. Beginning in measure 19, extended techniques are explored through the entire register of the bassoon, such as tremolos that transform from a microtone to a "pure" note, with the intention of breaking the chromatic perception. Hasler establishes microtonalism, multi-tremolos (tremolos in multiphonics) and chords with at least three notes,

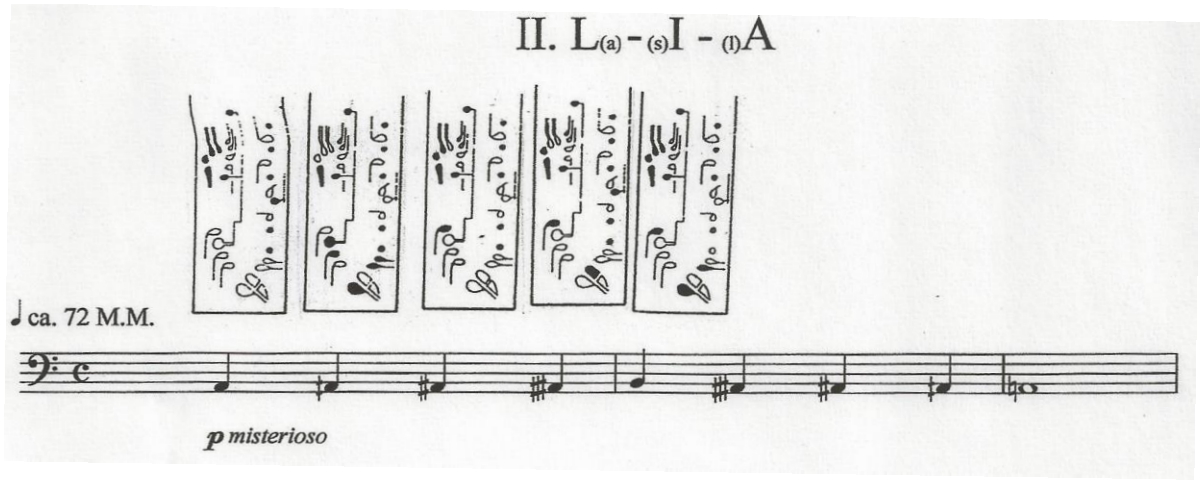
which also explore microtones. Measures 39-44 act as a second interlude, with collections of Bs in different registers, reiterative gestures that establish B as a dominant (See Example 10).

Example 10 Hasler, *Diptych for Bassoon Solo,* Mvt. I, mm. 39-42



The A section returns with a calmer approach, even though the first four measures are composed as chords. The last seven measures present a recapitulation of the opening melody. The second movement is based on my first name, Lia. The three letters are used to denote specific pitches in fixed-do solfege: la for **L**(a), si for **I** and la for **A**, a technique called *soggetto cavati* (See Example 11).

Example 11 Hasler, *Diptych for Bassoon Solo*, Mvt. II, mm. 1-3



The overall form of the movement is A-B-A. His intention was to respect the original sequence of the music acrostic, but enrich it with some variety. It is an obsessive recurrence of the three notes, using microtones and changes in register (octave). Measures 11-13 take a different direction, another acrostic with pitches derived from my last name, Uribe: Do(Ut) for **U,** re for **R** (which prepares E as a subdominant), si for **I**, si for **B**, and re for **E** (See Example 12).

Example 12 Hasler, *Diptych for Bassoon Solo*, Mvt. II, mm. 11-13

Measures 15-17 return to the initial melody that ends in A after a cadential turn from E, to B, to E. B is a note that doesn't belong to the acrostic but that is needed because it acts as a dominant.

Chapter 7 – Conclusion

I hope that researching, studying and performing this repertoire has provided a way to maintain the bassoon as a relevant instrument in the world of Colombian art music traditions. Commissioning pieces for bassoon by Colombian composers should be prolonged in the years to come as my contribution to the bassoon repertoire and also to the dissemination of Colombian contemporary music. I have already established contacts to do so. Jorge Pinzón, the composer of *Mobile para fagot y piano*, has a bassoon concerto in the works for next year, and other composers like Luis Fernando Rizo and Rodolfo Acosta will be writing repertoire for me in the near future. Blas Atehortúa has pieces for bassoon that are already written but need to be revised, and he is working on these so I can get a hold of them.

While it is true that musical acculturation, transculturation, enculturation and hybridization define the musical processes of culture and identity, my main interest lies in human interaction and collaboration as a force to propel artistic creation. My contextual information as a trained Colombian musician and Colombian native gave me the possibility to enter a realm of research that I believe went beyond the textual information, resulting in a very deep experience that I hope to transmit in my present and future performances of the pieces *Sonata para fagot y piano*, Op.144 by Blas Atehortúa, *Mobile para fagot y piano* by Jorge Pinzón, *Sonata para fagot y piano*, Op.10b by Pedro Sarmiento and *Diptych for Solo Bassoon* by Johann Hasler.

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