Performance of Saint Teresa of Avila in
Spanish contemporary classical music

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Abstract

I propose a paper presentation dedicated to the performance of Saint Teresa of Avila (1515-1582), her person, life and work, in Spanish contemporary classical music as result of a poiesis of Christian mysticism and body politics. Both processes can be studied departing from the music based on the writings of the nun, and her representations as cultural, political and mystical icon. This research work requires a theoretical and practical knowledge, not only of historical musicology, musical analysis and theory, but also of ethnomusicology and performance studies. However, that this is a preliminary study, really a kind of “Directions for further research”, and such does not have a specific argument.

There exists an extensive bibliography dedicated to the person and work of Saint Teresa of Avila, but a comparative study related to the reception of her person and work in musical creation has not been carried out. In the same way, the presence of musical and speculative practice in the work of the nun have been documented, but not her representation and resignification in later musical creation, or the possible relation of this phenomenon with the institutionalisation of this woman as cultural Hispanic icon.

Key words: Performance, St. Teresa of Avila, body, mysticism, music.

1. Current and proposed research

Since 2006 I have been investigating the presence, reception and resignification of poetry, forms, genres, and musical conventions of the Spanish Golden Age in the musical creation of the 20th and 21st centuries (Campos 2009, 2010, 2011). But inside the Project Hispanic Heritage Performance as Projected on the Female Body (case studies), the first result of my research has been the lecture

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“Between Left-led Republic and Falangism? Spanish women composers, a critical equation”, presented in the Conference Encuentros/Encounters 2011 devoted to Music and Dictatorship during the Franco Regime, 1936-1975 (February 16-18) celebrated in the Center for Ideas and Society of the University of California Riverside (UCR), under the direction of Dr. Walter A. Clark, and published in Diagonal. Journal of the Center for Iberian and Latin American Music (CILAM), of UCR.

My purpose with this research is to explore the politics of memory, and embody/powerment as a critical equation between Memory and History, Woman`s body and Nation, sense of the past and identity, because the status of "ethnological" discourse of "historical" musicology includes women as creator in the trilogy “nation, race, sex”. I refer to the theory of "contretemps" of the French woman philosopher and historian Dr. Genèvieve Fraisse. According to her theory, "women are for themselves and otherwise, ends and means. Currency exchange, or still better, a medium of exchange in political history as well as in historical theory." Fraisse proposed the need to "develop women`s historicity with data that resist all thought about emancipation and subversion, the kind of thought in which the woman remains an object, even when she becomes a subject of history and of her own history." (Fraisse 2005)

This theory proposed by Dr. Fraisse, shows why the facts form part of the cultural and historical "imaginary", in this case, built around Saint Teresa of Avila, facing a critical equation as a social performance. However, that this is a preliminary study, really a kind of “Directions for further research”, and such does not have a specific argument. Rather, I purpose is to suggest some possible arguments, without entering into any of them. The purpose of my lecture for this panel, is to introduce the project Hispanic Heritage Performance as Projected on the Female Body(case studies), and must be understood as a work in progress departing from an interdisciplinary methodological context, to include historical,

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2 Read on the original: "las mujeres son para sus mismas y para otra cosa, son un fin y un medio. Moneda de cambio o, mejor aún, medio de cambio en la historia política tanto como en la teoría histórica". (…) "elaborar su historicidad con este dato que resiste a todo pensamiento de emancipación y de subversión, este pensamiento de la mujer que permanece como objeto, incluso cuando se convierte en sujeto de la historia y de su historia." (Fraisse 2005) The translation is mine).
philosophical, iconographical and literary research, as well as analytical and theoretical music research. Thus, my work, focusing on contemporary classical music\(^3\) comes in line with the studies of my colleagues Dr. Josemi Lorenzo Arribas and Dr. Mauricio Molina, both historians, musicians and medievalists. I propose to study the reception of the person, life and work of Saint Teresa of Avila (1515-1582), but my complete research project also includes Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz (1651-1695), the current state-of-the-art, antecedents and consequences in Western music. Both processes can be studied departing from the music based on the writings of these nuns, and their representations as cultural, political and mystical icons. For this reason, this research work requires knowledge of performance studies. However, my contribution in\(^{\text{PERFORMA 2011}}\) is to introduce our Project, and its objectives, such as:

1. To study the musical representation of different narratives, the use of musical resources, and their efficiency in the representation of \textit{poietic} conceptualizations of the body and religious thought as sense of Hispanic identity.
2. To examine in which measure these representations have influence on the musical development of the sacred as performance according to a previous iconographic articulation.
3. To analyse the resignification of musical conventions as Landscape, its consequences, dialogue and contradictions, in relation to specific traditions and cases.
4. To investigate the correspondence between different levels of musical structuring of memory and body politics which have been used as reference, and to reveal their ideological and aesthetic foundation.

And in my case, at the first level of this work in progress:

5. To locate the scores which have been created taking as a reference the person and work of Saint Teresa of Avila in the chronological field of contemporary classical music, for example in the music of Spanish

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\(^3\) Contemporary classical music can be understood as belonging to the period that started in the mid-1970s with the retreat of modernism. However, the term may also be employed in a broader sense to refer to all post-1945 modern musical forms.
composer as Beatriz Arzamendi (1961), Consuelo Díez (1958), Leonardo Balada (1933) or Gonzalo de Olavide (1934-2005).

There exists an extensive bibliography dedicated to the person and work of Saint Teresa of Avila, for example, the studies of Margaretta Salinger (1949), Carole Slade (1995), even a comparison with Sor Juana (Ogden 1984), or the portal “Santa Teresa de Jesús” on the Biblioteca virtual Miguel de Cervantes (see Online resources), but a study related to the reception of her person and work in musical creation has not been carried out. In the same way, the presence of musical and speculative practice in the work of both nuns have been documented, but not their representation and resignification in later musical creation, or the possible relation of this phenomenon with the institutionalisation of both women (adding Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz) as cultural Hispanic icons (Mexican/Latin American in the second case).

The same way, though there exists relevant bibliography on the relation between mysticism and body politics, especially in women’s studies, for example in the works of Caroline Bynum (1990, 1991), Jodi Bilinkoff (1989), and Sarah Coakley (2000, 2002), but these have had a limited impact on Spanish official musicology, regarding this period of investigation, with the exception of Dr. Lorenzo and Dr. Molina’s works about women and music in Iberian Middle Ages, 4th – 16th centuries. Saint Teresa of Avila is post Tridentine, but Lorenzo and Molina not treat “The Council of Trent” and the following period. These factors come together in this work in progress, which will seek to understand the appropriation of her personality and presence in musical creation as an extraordinary source for the study of complex social performances in Spanish contemporary classical music as part of Western music, still an experimental field of research.

2. St. Teresa's body as performance (an introduction in-conclusion)

“Mas busca la vida ante todo su cuerpo, el despliegue del cuerpo que ya alcanzó, el cuerpo indispensable. Y busca otro cuerpo desconocido” (Zambrano: 2004, pag. 17). The influence of Saint Teresa of Avila in European spirituality is a research problem in itself (Lavrin 2002). My goal is to introduce an enquiry: *how is the body of this woman,*
first female doctor of the Catholic church⁴, performed in Spanish contemporary classical music? But this goal involves understanding her historical person and work as a complex performance, institutionalized during the Franco regime as feminine and spiritual model (Richmond 2003), a factor that makes more difficult the study of the musical performance of her writings, in this case, between 1952 and 2011.

In these practices, I can identify a constant, a kind of common narrative, with added different aesthetics and compositional structures. However, before going on to describe the initial appearance, only sketched here to illustrate this narrative/performance, I refer to specific works: The Kitchen. Homage to Saint Therese by Marina Abramovic (performance and photograph, 2010); Ecstasy of St. Teresa (sculpture, 2010) by Alessandra Pohlmann and Cristobal Lehyt, and Extasis de Santa Teresa (photography, 2009) by Victoria Diehl.

⁴ Saint Teresa of Ávila was prominent Spanish mystic, Roman Catholic saint, Carmelite nun, writer of the Counter Reformation, and theologian of contemplative life through mental prayer, reformer of the Carmelite Order and considered, along with John of the Cross, a founder of the Discalced Carmelites. In this regard, I note that, contrary to her beatification may suggest, one of the least tolerated by Rome of Felipe II’s confessionalism was the imposition on the Spanish monarchy to the reform of religious orders. Which culminated in greater control by the Monarch through the General Orders. Parallel to this reform, appeared in Spain in the 16th century, a religious movement as descalcez or recolección, which is aimed at espiritual radicalism, and a return to the primitive observance of the Order (Jimenez 2008), St. Teresa was an active part of this political and spiritual radicalism.
These works mediate for an idea: St. Teresa as body of Christ. Remember for example the film *Teresa el cuerpo de Cristo* (2007), by Ray Loriga and the Spanish actress Paz Vega as Teresa of Avila, performance of the canonical work of the painter and sculptor Gian Lorenzo Bernini, made between 1647 and 1651,
by order of Cardinal Cornaro, to be placed where his tomb would be in the church of Santa Maria della Vittoria in Rome.

The body as border is clearly represented here, the sexual and mystical element coincides with the sacrificial act contingently to everyday life, figurative and abstract, traditional and innovative consciousness. This condition can be understood as liminal *embody/powerment*, as indicated by Diamela Eltit: “Double hostage, the woman's body trapped in the category of the feminine, the female has been the subject of the most compelling speeches in each one of the historical times, which have reserved the last and only word to decide what is inextricable: the body.” (Eltit 2007)

This inextricability condition can be identified in the musical works of Spanish composers, organized in the following table:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Nº</th>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>COMPOSER</th>
<th>TITLE</th>
<th>ENSEMBLE</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Beatriz Arzamendi (1961)</td>
<td><em>Alma, buscarte has en Mi</em></td>
<td>Organ and 12 voices</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Amparo Otero (-), arr. Miguel Gálvez (-)</td>
<td><em>Vivo sin vivir en mi</em> : oratorio basado en textos poéticos de Santa Teresa</td>
<td>Voice and ensemble</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Consuelo Diez (1958)</td>
<td><em>Nada te turbe</em></td>
<td>Reciter and string orchestra</td>
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5 Read in the original: “Doble rehén el cuerpo de la mujer atrapado en la categoría de lo femenino, ese femenino que ha sido el objeto más imperioso de los discursos que, en cada uno de los tiempos históricos, se han reservado la última y la única palabra para decidir aquello que resulta inextricable: el cuerpo.” (Eltit 2007). The translation is mine.
### Table 1. List of Spanish musical works based on St. Teresa of Avila’s texts (1952 to 2011).

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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>José Manuel Adrán (-)</td>
<td>Véante mis ojos</td>
<td>Voice and organ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>1981</td>
<td>Jesús Mª Muneta Martínez de Moretín (1939)</td>
<td>Búscate en mí, Op. 41</td>
<td>Chorus</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Sylvia Tan in *Religion as Art* (2009) edited by Steven Loza, indicated several points on this matter: 1) “Art as experience of the sacred”; 2) “Art mediates sacred experience through the work of symbol”; 3) “[A]rtworks […] have the potential to mediate the sacred with everyday life experience because they work symbolically[…] This figure “[St. Teresa in this case] brings the tradition into everyday life”; 4) “The artistic encounter of the sacred also inspires a renewed concept of self in relation to the sacred.” (see Tan, in Loza 2009:128-129)

As can be seen in Table 1, the performance of St. Teresa of Avila is based on specific texts (St. Teresa 2006, 1996) that refer to a type of *embody/mediation* with the sacred. Similarly to Virgin representations, as in the case of Tan study of
the Guadalupan cult, the nun performed a type of mystical embodiment which refers to an identity, *a tradition*. In any case it should be noted that contemporary classical music does not have a continuous presence in everyday life, in contrast, is a kind of exceptional experience. Also not all works located were written to perform the same function: some play a devotional purpose within a specific type of ecclesiastical commemoration (Thomas, Muneta, Adrán, Otero) and some are created as concert pieces (Arzamendi, Díez, Balada, Olavide, for example).

However, in both cases are identifying a type of thinking connected to a *mystical-poietic* phenomenon known as “silent music” (Rey 2010), in communion with several literary and iconographical testimonies from the 16th and 17th centuries of embodiment *ecstasy*, offering reelaborated allegorical complexes that expand into the human body seen as a musical microcosm (Robledo 2007:1), in *resonance* with the sacred. Consider the example of Bernini’s St. Teresa compared with an engraving of Johann Melchior Gutwein representing Saint John of the Cross’s mystical ecstasy experience at death:

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This silent music as *matris* of quiet mysticism in the Spanish tradition (Rey 2010) is a historical reality as body performance, present inclusive in the reflection of post-war Spanish philosophers such as María Zambrano (Campos 2011). Put together, the scores introduced for this study built a complex Landscape related to this tradition, and my purpose is give an idea of the extent of this research project. Unfortunately I can not deepen in this paper an analysis using specific examples of the localized scores (I have already exceeded the 3000-words); I hope to reflect this in future activities and scientific publications.

Acknowledgement

I am very grateful with the Juan March Foundation (Spain), where I had access to the musical works mentioned in this paper, and to Dr. Josemi Lorenzo Arribas, Dr. Mauricio Molina and Dr. Elisabeth Le Guin (UCLA), their advice and recommendations. Dr. Le Guin proposals about the possibility of a “carnal musicology” (Le Guin 2005) as field of study have been an inspiration for this research project.

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Author’s biography

Philosopher of culture and musical director. Her work, devoted to the philosophical history of music, music and literature, contemporary classical music and jazz in “the Americas” and Spain, have been published by prestigious international journals and collective books. She’s "100 Latinos" Award 2007 (Spain) and the Corda Award 2009 (New York). Coordinator, with Josemi Lorenzo, of the Special issue on Women's Studies, Gender, Feminism, and Music of *Transcultural Music Review*, 15 (2011), Campos is Director of the Women’s Studies in Music Research Group of the Society for Ethnomusicology (SIBE) of Spain.