

Ricardo Lorenz: A Post-Colonial/Modern Latin(o) American Composer

Hermann Hudde

This article examines Venezuelan composer Ricardo Lorenz (b. 1961), whose music and writing both focus around the concept of transculturation. First used by Fernando Ortiz ([1947] 1995) to describe the cultural evolution of Cuba in the mid-twentieth century, transculturation is understood by Lorenz as the phenomenon of two mutually influential musical cultures; it “entails the circulation of ideas in both directions, resulting in an interdependent network of mutual influences” (Lorenz 2000a, 93). This article explores the role of transculturation in Lorenz’s work, putting it in the context of his relocation from Venezuela to the United States in the 1980s, as well as his own writings on the subject. Even though Ricardo Lorenz has an outstanding career as a contemporary composer, his works and artistic persona still remain under-explored in musicology. This article seeks to establish groundwork for further scholarly study of Ricardo Lorenz’s music; at the same time, it aims to demonstrate the contributions of Latin American/Latino composers to Western art music, which they have accomplished by bringing forth a subtle universe of sounds shaped by its cultural history.¹

Venezuela, Latin American Art Music, and the United States

The Venezuelan cultural *mestizaje* (inter-ethnicity/ethnic integration)—a more complex and extended phenomenon than the basic race mixture among indigenous, Europeans and West Africans because it also includes Asia and the Middle East—has created distinct layers of subtle cultural webs in the country (Hu-DeHart and López 2008). This socio-cultural feature has molded the music-making process in Venezuela by incorporating complex subcultural layers of communities, identities, beliefs, genres, and styles. With respect to its art music, Venezuela, like other Latin American countries, has been working for centuries to build a tradition that cohabits with the country’s folk and popular music styles, generated as cultural products from a Venezuelan context. Juan Bautista Plaza, early-twentieth-century Venezuelan composer, describes this cultural framework:

Venezuela has always been strongly partial to the cultivation of musical art. In the field of popular as well as art music, it has given abundantly,

and its fruits should be better known and appreciated. The study of Venezuelan music and its history is of special interest. A careful survey of its characteristics and numerous forms will reveal, among other things, the profound influence of geographic and social environment upon the original creations of the most representative Venezuelan composers. (Plaza and Rexach 1943, 198)

Thus, continuing the lineage of distinguished Venezuelan composers such as Ambrosio Carreño (1721–1811?), Juan Manuel Olivares (1760–97), Teresa Carreño (1853–1917), Ramón Delgado Palacios (1863–1902), Antonio Estévez (1916–1988), Alfredo del Mónaco (1938–2015), and others,² Lorenz's generation was surrounded and impacted by a broad palette of musical genres beyond art music, such as salsa, pop, rock, jazz and folk. This generation included composers such as Alonso Toro (1963), Paul Desenne (1959), Manuel Sosa (1967) and Alvaro Cordero Saldivia (1954).³ And alongside its public conservatories, private music schools and El Sistema, Venezuela's musical tradition emphasizes participation in music-making and sharing it as a cultural experience.⁴ In Lorenz's words, "You are raised with music being a part of the family" (Kott 2008).⁵

In the United States, Latin American composers' presence dates from the time of the Viceroyalty of New Spain (1521–1821) and Mexico (1821–1848). As a result of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (1848), the borders changed, but the previous culture persisted (Saldaña-Portillo 2016; Moraga 2007). During the nineteenth century, composer-pianists Teresa Carreño (Venezuela, 1853–1917), Ignacio Cervantes (Cuba, 1847–1905) and Alejandro Monestel (Costa Rica, 1860–1950) developed important chapters of their careers in the United States (Brown 1982; Mann 1991; Stevenson 2004; Mikowsky 1973). Since the first quarter of the twentieth century, Latin American music and its composers have begun to rise in prominence. Orchestras, ensembles, and performers in the United States began to perform the work of Latin American composers more frequently; prominent concerts include those at the headquarters of the Pan-American Union in Washington, DC (1924–1939), the Pan-American Association of Composers (1928–1934) and the Berkshire Music Center at Tanglewood (1940–present). Institutions offered composers scholarships and commissions, and universities hired them to teach as professors of musical composition. Carlos Chávez (Mexico, 1899–1978), Alberto Ginastera (Argentina, 1917–1983), Julián Orbón (Cuba/Spain, 1925–1991), Mario Davidovsky (Argentina, b. 1934), Aurelio de la Vega (Cuba, b. 1925), Roque Cordero (Panama, 1917–2008) and Juan Orrego-Salas (Chile, b. 1919) were among this generation of composers during the twentieth century in the United States.

All across the American continent, this time period witnessed an important institutionalization of its art music. During the Seventh International Conference of American States in Lima/Peru in 1938, the Music Section of the Pan-American Union was founded.⁶ The organization appointed Charles Seeger (US, 1886–1979) as its chief, and Guillermo Espinosa (Colombia, 1905–1990) became his successor in 1953. With Espinosa the organization published works like *Musical Directory of the Americas* (1954) and *Composers of the Americas* (1955). In 1956 the institution was renamed as the Inter-American Music Center which published the *Inter-American Music Bulletin* (1957) and in 1958, the Chief of the Inter-American Music Center, Guillermo Espinosa, established the Inter-American Music Festival in Washington D.C. (1958–1972); the reception of the music varied, and, during the period of the Cold War, the composers had to renegotiate their modern aesthetics and techniques (Salas 1943; Fern 1943; Haskins 1957; Fern De la Vega 1980; Salas Orrego 1966; Pereira Salas 1943; Campbell 2010; Root 1972). In general, the ideal of Americanism, Pan-Americanism and Inter-Americanism in art music was dependent on the institutional funding based around the international milieu of World War II and the Cold War.⁷ Consequently, this ideal began losing its energy and platform with the disappearance of the institutions and the promoters who supported it.⁸

After his early musical studies, as well as a brief period as a student of philosophy and fine arts at the Central University of Venezuela, Ricardo Lorenz emigrated to the United States amidst this backdrop in 1982, where he attended the Jacobs School of Music at Indiana University until 1987.⁹ At this school, among many music instructors and colleagues whose work has contributed to shaping Lorenz's musical voice, the composer himself emphasizes the impact of his mentor in composition, the eminent Chilean composer/musicologist Juan Orrego-Salas (b. 1919) who was the Director of the Latin American Music Center at Indiana University from its founding in 1961 to 1987 (Orrego 1963; 1966).¹⁰ Lorenz explains:

At that time, spring 1981, I was fortunate to have been assigned to the tenor section of the University Chorus, which together with the University Symphony happened to be rehearsing for the performance of *Missa in Tempore Discordiae*. Through the rehearsal and the performance of this work, I was introduced to the music of Juan Orrego-Salas and, as a result, my then hesitant intentions to study composition became the first priority of my music education. Hence, when I now listen to this live recording, I am reminded of the first close encounter with the composer who was to become my mentor and longtime friend. (Lorenz 2000b, 10)

Orrego-Salas, likewise, responded to Lorenz's music making:

I've had American students—United States students—but I've also had Venezuelan students, and I've had Argentinian students during my teaching here. I don't know if there is a difference unless they decide to do it. I've had a composer who for me is among my very best: a Venezuelan, who now is teaching in Michigan—Ricardo Lorenz. Ricardo Lorenz is a Venezuelan composer who for me doesn't sound Venezuelan, or Chilean, or American. He sounds Lorenz. (Oteri 2014)

Together, both composers converted the space of the Latin American Music Center Library from an intractable deposit for cultural texts and historical memory into a vibrant location with Latin American music: performances, conferences, and an up-to-date collection that benefited the community of researchers, composers and performers from the continent due to the difficulty (especially in the pre-Internet era) of accessing such documents. With this work, the people who participated in these performances and conferences transformed the space from “archive” into “repertoire of embodied practice/knowledge” (Taylor 2003, 19). Later, Lorenz would continue Orrego-Salas' work as Interim Director of the Latin American Music Center from 1987 to 1992, and in 1995 he published his book, *Scores and Recordings at the Indiana University Latin American Center*.

After his experience at Indiana University, Lorenz continued his artistic path in Chicago, where he taught courses in composition and music history. In this city “he learned to think about music . . . as opposed to doing it—the anthropology and culture of it” (Kott 2008). Continuing to build his artistic persona as a composer as well as a cultural agent, Lorenz worked as a composer-in-residence from 1998 to 2002 for the *Armonia Musicians Residency Program*, sponsored by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. In this role as a cultural community liaison, Lorenz decided to work with the local band *Sones de México* instead of bringing European art music to the local community (Latin American, Latinos and Chicanos), and performed in non-traditional venues such as libraries and schools with a diverse population of immigrants, where “context matters” in terms of identity and race (Pucci and Faulstich Orellana 2002, 2).¹¹ All of these previous experiences nurtured and shaped Lorenz' artistic identity for his future endeavors.

In 2005, Lorenz was appointed as an Associate Professor of composition at Michigan State University in East Lansing.¹² With this appointment, Lorenz became part of the group of Latin American composers in the United States who have occupied composition professorships, representing a growing challenge to the academic-music scene in the US which is generally dominated by US-born and European-émigré composers.¹³ Most of the scholarship about art music in the United States has developed a nar-

rative based around European or Euro-American composers, and tends to leave any group different from the Anglo-Saxons on the outside. Race, gender and religion play a role in defining this canon. Adelaida Reyes (2005, 13–40), for example, has demonstrated how the migration of diverse racial and religious groups (forced or voluntary) shapes and continues to shape the musical landscape of the United States, starting with the groups of Native Americans and Africans that she defines as “Diversity from Within.” Regarding composers of art music, she notes that alongside a “niche market” of Latin American popular music, “composers with Latin American roots are making their presence increasingly felt in the art music field” (Reyes 2005, 26–31). Part of this increasing presence came from Lorenz, who engaged the College of Music at Michigan State University to revive the festival *Latin IS America* launched by his colleague, the Venezuelan conductor Rafael Jiménez (b. 1967); the festival “focuses on musical, artistic and scholarly events that celebrate the blending of Latin American and U.S. cultures,”¹⁴ and so cultural interdisciplinarity and diversity play a central component. MSU reported that “[i]n a span of 10 years, the Latin American Music series represented 12 countries through 127 works by 63 composers . . . and the community was exposed to a rich variety of Latin American music in classical, popular, and experimental forms [in addition to] film, theater, the visual arts, and scholarly discussions.”¹⁵

Ricardo Lorenz’s Philosophy of Transculturalism

A member of the Latin American art music composers’ diaspora, Lorenz’s Ph.D. thesis was a critical text titled *Voices in Limbo: Identity, Representation and Realities of Latin American Composers*.¹⁶ In this text, Lorenz gives an insider’s perspective on the obstacles that Latin American art music composers face in the construction of their own identity, as well as their “ghettoized” situation within the Western art music canon. His objective centers on “deconstructing the intellectual framework that fuels current characterizations of Latin America’s art music” (Lorenz 2000a, 10). Lorenz examined the context (exogenous and endogenous) surrounding the difficulties Latin American art music faced in reaching the music centers of the world and trying to “be incorporated into the Western musical canon.” He claims that the unique voices of Latin American composers remain either in a “subservient” role or in a permanent state of “limbo,” as a result of mechanisms such as the global commodification of folk and popular music genres from Latin America, the Eurocentric narratives in historiography perpetuating myths or spreading “self-inflicted pseudo-exoticism,” a tendency to regard Latin American music as antithetical to the modernist position, the fact of “presumably exclusive Western privilege of self-representation” or, at a

Current Musicology

more basic level, the “lack of musicological interest” (Lorenz 2000a, 4–5). Thus, Latin American music becomes the Other in Western spaces, and as Yara El-Ghadban argues:

the Other is treated as an object of Western musical representation but rarely is he or she treated as a subject and, thus, an active participant in and contributor to Western art music. In fact, the postcolonial Other ceases to be an object and suddenly comes to life only when the repertory studied or genres examined move from art music to popular and hybrid musics. (El-Ghadban 2009, 142)

Resonating with El-Ghadban, it is important to remember that colonialism is far more than a physical superimposition to dominate people and resources. It includes language and ideas as tools to generate dependency and hegemony between the center and the periphery. Hence, there is a constructed narrative between those who represent as the Self, which endorses practices like ethnography, and those who represent the exotic and erotic Other. In other words, theorizing Ethnicity is a common strategy to build not just the conceptualization of difference, but also *claiming* the Other; the colonized occupy an asymmetrical position as a result of being contrary to the Western logos (Fusco 1994). Accordingly, decolonization is possible when epistemologists deconstruct Western-logos, ethnocentrism, and Christianity from a “Third World” perspective (Mignolo 2000, 70–71). A similar discourse of dissent can be found in the post-colonial narrative, developed by “Third World” intellectuals and artists who look forward to displacing Eurocentrism by revising it and proposing a different methodology (Hall [1992] 1996).

Culturally speaking, *mestizaje* in Latin America has generated highly diverse products whose styles contain not only indigenous, European and West-African traces, but also cultural elements from the Middle-East and Asia. At the same time, the legacy of colonial structures and values has generated an identity crisis presuming the “discovery” of Latin American and Latino history. Postcolonial scholars have refuted this “discovery” imposition and have demonstrated how this event is better thought of as an “encounter,” although unequal, which also shaped Europe (Coronil 1996; Dussel 1991, 1993; León-Portilla 1992; Mignolo 1979; Uslar Pietri 1979). In addition, the word “discovery” enforces the process and term of acculturation; instead, the postcolonial scholars support their analysis of the encounter with the process and term of transculturation.¹⁷ It is a cultural limitation to not acknowledge that this event was an encounter, not a “discovery,” which generated the multilateral process of transculturation that has been transforming the world since 1492. Lorenz wrote that

self-proclaimed “nations are presented as the creative source of art music, providing the text, while the other nations produce by-products, mere commentaries on the original text, whether to conform to or subvert it” (Lorenz 2000a, 5). The construction of modernity/coloniality has included remapping territories and its peoples, in particular during the Conquest and Colonization by European powers, within the context of imposing hegemonic political, religious, economic and racial imaginaries. Thus, the project of imagining nation-states has the dialectical connotation of exclusion/inclusion (Mignolo 2000). The composer observes that, despite more than 500 years of art music creation in Latin America, a hegemonic relationship of power remains, and he concludes that “the fault lies with the language and terminology used to categorize and characterize these works” (Lorenz 2000a, 7–10). Lorenz expresses that, for Latin American art music composers, identity is a dilemma for both insiders and outsiders; he believes that throughout the permanent perpetual action of “aesthetics of museum traditions,” art music identity is still a European domain, leaving “invisible” the art music by Latin American composers (Lorenz 2000a, 13). From this point of view, it is the tradition represented in words such as “genius,” “classics” or “masterworks” whose cultural production seeks to perpetuate values and a paradigm related to Western civilization. This quickly gives rise to a situation in which the canon in art, music, literature or other disciplines in the humanities becomes a rigid secular-scholastic body, honoring only those within it.

Surrounded by this context the canon becomes like a religion, with its sacred icons and (musical) texts. Since the late nineteenth century, symphony orchestras and opera houses have been founded to become locations (temples) to collect, classify, display and immortalize canonized objects and the narratives surrounding them—according, of course, to the values and narratives of those doing the canonizing (Bergeron 1992; Bohlman 1992; Bolstein 1996; Nettl 2010, Berger 2014). In doing so, symphony orchestras and opera houses regularly practice a taxonomic approach to art music culture, which does not escape the politics of inclusion/exclusion. These institutions objectify works of art and group them according to chronology, geographical setting, or aesthetic/racial group. This phenomenon creates binary dichotomies: center vs. periphery, north vs. south, superstructure vs. base, innovators vs. imitators, high vs. low, among others. Henceforth, the privileged, Eurocentric canon emphasizes only one story within a world in which unlimited stories and narratives exist. In other words, the allocation by the “civilized countries” which have embraced and, in general, appropriated the monopoly of self-representation under the reductionist premise that the region is underdeveloped

(economics discourse) fail to understand that the problem resides, not in what they called Latin America and its culture, but in themselves: a lack of awareness regarding the complex concept of culture.

For Lorenz (2000a, 15) musical identity is a “multidimensional” construct that can draw on both “inside” and “outside” influences, which has complemented the process of identification in time and space. Thus, Lorenz (2000a, 20) maintains that identity should not be determined by musicologists in time by narratives, which include *histories* (what) and *discourses* (why) that encompass “problems of representation and power.” This includes something already mentioned above: that the “authentic” (read “Eurocentric”) musical canon establishes a dynamic that excludes the Others in the form of exoticism (Lorenz 2000a, 21). As a result of the non-Christian ancestry of Spain and Native Americans, during the second Enlightenment Age, Anglo-Saxon historiography positioned them as stationary, anti-progress, and impure cultures, ready to receive discipline and civilization; in addition, Catholicism, together with the adoption of mercantilism and not capitalism, relocated Spain and Hispanic America onto the periphery of progress (Mignolo 2000; Etzion 1998).

Regarding the construction of identity (including both exogenous/public and endogenous/private) Lorenz argues that those who can coin the name or concept exercise control and power to create stereotypes. This is one of the reasons Bolivian scholar Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui (2012, 105–106) points towards “language with which we name the world” as one of the ways to decolonize; this, she says, will establish an equality “with other centers of thought.” In this case, the composer references the “Eurocentric toponomy” of the French creation of “Latin America” or the Hispanic “Spanish-America” (Lorenz 2000a, 24; Robertson, 1993).¹⁸ The origin of the term Latin America was not conceived in the continent, but in France, as a means to differentiate it from Anglo-America during the Napoleonic period. Prior to this, the terms Hispanic-America or Ibero-America were also related to the asymmetrical relationship concerning colonizers and the colonized. By imposing such a categorization, the balance of power is altered and plays against the continent, its people and culture. The emphasis was placed on Latin American popular music; meanwhile, Latin American composers of art music are for this reason all too often reduced to the “exotic” category (Lorenz 2000a, 30–34).

The issue is not simply a matter of accessing recordings and performances of Latin American and Latino art music, but also the way those recordings and performances are marketed. For instance, the inclusion of works by Latin American composers in concert programs is infrequent, unless the orchestras want to present a concert with “exotic” music to their

audiences. Titles of recordings or concerts thus become part of a subtle game of representation and perception which denies the fact that Latin American composers produce their musical texts with the same seriousness as their colleagues from the US. A titular “Voyage,” “Fiesta,” “Latin Lover,” “Discovery,” or “Latin Night” is common; and as recently as 2015, *Deutsche Grammophon* released “El Sistema 40 – A Celebration,” which was described on its back cover as “a selection of Classical masterpieces and Latin American lollipops.” This inclusion of “Classical masterpieces” (in this case, Beethoven, Tchaikovsky, Dvořák, and Bernstein) is common, too. In 1998, Daniel Barenboim (1942) conducted the program “Waldbühne Berlin: A Latin American Night” with the Berliner Philharmoniker and Australian classical guitarist John Williams; the performance started with *Bolero* (Ravel), followed by *Carmen Suite* (Bizet/Guiraud) and *Concierto de Aranjuez* (Rodrigo), and then continued with the *Estancia Suite* (Ginastera), which is the only Latin American piece on the program; this was followed by arrangements of Latin American popular music. More recently, in 2012, the Houston Symphony Orchestra performed a concert entitled “Latin American Classical;” the program contained music by Manuel de Falla (1876–1946) and Joaquín Rodrigo (1901–1999)—both from Spain—with *Sensema yá* by Silvestre Revueltas (1899–1940) being the only work by a Latin American.

In addition, when we do address Latin American composers, we often do so from within the frame of Western art music. Labeling composers such as Ernesto Nazareth (1863–1934) or Camargo Guarnieri (1907–1993) as the “Brazilian Chopin” or the “Brazilian Mozart” (respectively), for example, already superimposes a comparative cultural and hegemonic musical model, one that mediates between the composer’s music and the audiences, which promotes a different reception and inflects a listener’s approach to the individuality and magnitude of their musical contributions.¹⁹ This kind of mediation also projects the audience’s perception of music by Latin American composers as a byproduct; by already attaching a label onto a parallel composer, it generates the perception that the Latin American composer is rooted in or subservient to an exogenous model who is better positioned or even canonized.

Regarding academic publications, language and diversity play a key role in the circulation of information. Even though, nowadays, there is an important publication corpus in Spanish and Portuguese from Latin America, this knowledge rarely makes its way to other musicological centers in the world. This becomes problematic when we realize that music-industry markets (including publishers) are not only places for commercial production and exchange, but also spaces to negotiate identities, canon,

Current Musicology

politics, power, and innovation. As Lorenz (2000a, 36) argues, this generates difficulties for those trying to “de-exoticize” their public identity, creating even more distance with their colleagues “from the continuum of so-called Western music.” To circumvent this, Lorenz says, the debate should be refocused to musical *style*, rather than (musical) language:

The compositions by composers from Latin America are written using the same musical language of their European counterparts, that is, the lingua franca of Western music. What varies greatly among them is the different idiosyncratic modes of assimilation and transculturation undergone by these Western musical traits when set in a new geography. The result is a wide range of new and original “semantical” approaches to the same overruling Western music syntax. (Lorenz 2000a, 40)

In other words, Lorenz claims that Latin American composers of art music create musical works by using the same order and system of fundamental musical elements (musical syntax) as their colleagues in Western art music. Nonetheless, and as a result of their history and culture, their compositions’ meanings (musical *semantics*, as opposed to *syntax*) are different. This is an outcome of the implied dialectics in Western art music between periphery and hegemonic center in which Latin American art music composers are positioned outside of the Western art music tradition; because of the external status of “non-Western” composers, Latin American composers must negotiate their musical identity within a Western-dominated culture—they have had to construct themselves as the Self inside the domain of the Other. Lorenz compares publications about the topic by three twentieth-century scholars—Nicolas Slonimsky (1894–1995), Gilbert Chase (1906–1992) and Gerard Béhague (1937–2005)—to demonstrate the “myth of otherness” (Lorenz 2000a, 44) and its impact on the representation of Latin American art music and composers:

Slonimsky’s text avoids, in most cases, associating twentieth-century Latin American composers with musical styles attributed to their European counterparts as well as with Eurocentric concepts such as nationalism. . . . [Slonimsky] does not resort to works by European composers as stylistic models by which to illustrate and compare the works of their Latin American counterparts. (Lorenz 2000a, 57–58)

Chase and Béhague represent the “music in this region from a decidedly Eurocentric perspective,” within a context of “nationalist dogma”; Lorenz points out the “danger that comes along with considering the supposed universality of nationalism as a theory,” because nationalism is an ideology and territorializes the music to a fetishized area, instead of appreciating the value of the works “for its historical and cultural significance” (Lorenz

2000a, 63; 75). This manipulation of time and space, together with the lack of theoretical frameworks to understand and explain this category, only generates more distance and distortion (Lorenz 2000a, 85). Philosopher Charles W. Mills (2014, 30) referencing the book *The Theft of History* by Jack Godoy (2006, 22–23, 25) adds that the “‘theft of history’ is not only one of time and space, but of the monopolization of historical periods.”

Consequently, Lorenz (2000a, 91) maintains that Latin American composers of the twentieth century are as modernist as their European or American contemporaries. He says that Latin American composers “breathed and lived” modernism by featuring it in their works and their “festivals and concerts” of modern music organized on the continent since 1920. Therefore, Lorenz (2000a, 85–95) demands a “de-territorialization of Latin America’s art music and advocates its full incorporation into the realm of Western art music” and understands that it is not about “national emancipation” but, more likely, “social and racial equivalence,” as well as a new intellectual framework that can interpret it differently. Hence, Lorenz’s scholarship is part of his multidimensional contributions toward opening up the Western art music canon, in which self-representation is still incomplete by not adding the “Others” (Lorenz 2000a; Mills 2008).²⁰

Transculturation in Ricardo Lorenz’s Music

Like his artistic philosophy, Lorenz’s music integrates a postcolonial “de-territorialization” of both Latin American and Western art music. This theory and debate have become central in disciplines such as literature, social sciences and cultural studies, and recently in the last three decades, it has become a growing concern in scholarship on Western art music. Postcolonial/modern composers like Lorenz are attentive to the fact of displaying agency as well as placing culture in the center, and not the periphery, of their compositional work. Accordingly, Lorenz often explicitly connects his compositions to issues of politics: migration, technology, diaspora, globalization, gender, class, and race. Hence, one of the real sources for his musical counter-discourse to the traditional European narrative comes from cultural anthropology (Lorenz 1995a).²¹ Complementing this idea, composers/musicologists Coriún Aharonián and Graciela Paraskevaídis (2000, 3) explain that despite living

in a world cultural structure of a colonial nature, . . . the only way of *being* oneself in a society depending on those metropolitan models is to try to live the creative act in such a way that it can generate cultural counter-models (and specifically, in our case, creating countermodels in the field of new art music).

MAMBOZART
Estudio para piano sobre la obertura de
Le Nozze di Figaro

Ricardo Lorenz,
(1995)

1 *Con total rigidez rítmica* (♩ = 85 ~ 100)

5 *marcato*
f
molto
sf
poco

Detailed description: This musical score is for a piano study. It begins with a tempo marking 'Con total rigidez rítmica' and a metronome marking '(♩ = 85 ~ 100)'. The first system shows measures 1-4, with a mezzo-forte (mf) dynamic. The second system shows measures 5-8, featuring a marcato marking, a forte (f) dynamic, and a crescendo leading to a fortissimo (sf) dynamic, followed by a decrescendo to a poco dynamic.

Example 1. Lorenz, *Mambozart*.

Presto

4 *pp*

Detailed description: This musical score is for a piano study based on Mozart's overture. It is marked 'Presto'. The first system shows measures 1-3, with a pianissimo (pp) dynamic. The second system shows measures 4-6, continuing the rhythmic pattern.

Example 2. Mozart, *Le Nozze di Figaro*, Overture.



Example 3. Lorenz, *Mambozart*.

Lorenz embodies such cross-cultural “countermodels” in his music. Consider *Mambozart* (1995), a “study for solo piano on the overture to *The Marriage of Figaro*” (Example 1). In this work, Lorenz positions himself as serving not only the creator’s role, but also as a negotiator who challenges modern notions of imagination and reality by playing with their symbolic order. Rhythmically, the opening of *Mambozart* (mm. 1–3) is almost identical to *Figaro*’s overture’s (Example 2). Both pieces’ first measures begin with four eighth notes, spaced closely together in terms of pitch, punctuated with a quarter note (beat 3) and then by a quarter rest (beat 4). The following two measures repeat the opening four-note rhythmic figure to gradually climb in pitch, concluding on the last note of m. 3 (Lorenz holds this note, while Mozart’s original uses another quarter note followed by a rest). After a link in m. 4, Lorenz’s opening gesture returns in m. 5 in a higher octave; like *Figaro*, *Mambozart*’s last four measures (5–8) again repeat this rhythmic figure, driving to a cadence in the final measure.

The “Mambo” of the title enters later, when Lorenz introduces a *montuno* into the piece (Example 3). The *montuno* is an important section within other musical genres like the *son*, *guaracha* and *rumba*, and in Cuba it came to be the basis for the mambo. The origin of the term comes from the rural areas in Cuba’s eastern region, and refers to a section in which a soloist’s syncopated vocal improvisation (*pregones*) alternates in a call and response with the refrain (*estribillo*) from the chorus; this can include improvised solo sections by some of the ensemble instruments such as trumpets, *maracas*, piano, *bongos*, *tumbadoras* (congas), *claves*, *guiro*, *tres* or *laúd cubano* (Giro 2009, 124; Rodríguez 1998, 830; Miller 2014, 786). The melody in this part of *Mambozart* is based on such a *pregones*, supported by a *tumbao* bassline. This syncopated, Afro-Cuban bassline was popularized as part of the mambo by Dámaso Pérez Prado, who transformed the dance from its Cuban origins by incorporating outside influences, especially North-American jazz. In terms of pitch, however, Lorenz’s

bass in mm. 79–81 outlines the quintessential cadential pattern of Classical music, supporting a I–ii⁶–V⁷–I progression in D major (the key of *Figaro*'s overture).

In this piece, then, Lorenz draws on Mozart, who signifies the intellectual dominance of Western (European) art music, alongside Prado, who signifies the assertion of a Latin American culture within the dominant Western (European) culture. Both are part of a discourse in which Latin American and Latino composers, like Lorenz, design and construct a challenge from a “Third World” art music perspective to the dominant culture of the (European) Western world. Therefore, inside this aesthetic-political context, Latin American and Latino art music composers strive to generate new, differentiated and emancipated meanings, webs of connections and functions, and at the same time, overcome the reality of past centuries of cultural colonialism. By exercising this kind of hybrid textual intervention between himself, Mozart and Prado, Lorenz must tread carefully to avoid any sort of auto-exoticism. He expresses his piece's philosophy with the following statement:

Mambozart seeks to dissipate or even annul, through a saturation of contradictions and differences, the opposite poles that apparently inhabit this work. It is true that the listener can feel seduced by the need to guess, whether the work is an intoxicated mambo with a Viennese air from the beginning of the century, or whether it is instead an overture of W. A. Mozart that has been irreversibly infected by the Caribbean syncopation's poison. However, the best way to understand the score is somehow a tribute to the relativity of what exotic is. It means that, regarding the work's sound argument, the gestures clearly derived from *Le Nozze di Figaro* are so foreign or, on the contrary, as familiar as the distorted *montunos* derived from the music of Dámaso Pérez Prado. . . . In other words, there is a subliminal criticism in the work that tries to bring out, in a subtle way, it is a topic of the marginalization of artistic expressions, based on its culture of origin. *Mambozart* is a plea to strip the musical genius of historical and stylistic hierarchies, so that it's appreciated impartially for its intrinsic qualities. Although we must recognize this statement ingenuity as an ideology, at least we have to accept that *Mambozart* is my imaginary response to the reality that nowadays affect many composers, who like me, come and reside in culturally marginalized countries (Lorenz, 1995a, 113–114)

Hence, Lorenz seeks to blend the opposites in order to neutralize them, and through this, generate a musical text. For Lorenz, regarding the activity of composing:

The musical composition transcends its quality of “work” and transforms it into a real “text” allowing in this way the receptor to “read” messages

from the musical work which could contain an allegory, critique or perhaps even irreverence. This extraordinary process, through art, gets into a highly discursive field, hyperbolizing its semantic potential, is the essence of what has been defined as postmodernism. (Lorenz 1995a, 111)

A similar discourse of dissent can be found in the post-colonial (de-colonization) narrative, which has been developed by “Third world” composers who look forward to displacing Eurocentrism by revising it and proposing a different option. It is about redefining the position of the “periphery, fringe or marginality” towards a productive and participative role in the discourse, in terms of celebrating the difference—also a characteristic of post-modernity.

With this political statement, Lorenz positions himself in egalitarian terms inside the score with the European composer, with the aim exercising his own musical agency and generate a counter discourse. This work is not simply a paraphrase or pastiche of Mozart (or Prado), but a political declaration in which Lorenz seeks to deconstruct hegemonic binary hierarchies like center/periphery or highbrow/lowbrow. The fact that he chose Mozart is significant; the Austrian composer and his music represent perhaps the most quintessential model of genius in the superstructure of the European art music canon, which has also been commodified and circulated as “universal.” In *Pataruco: Concerto for Maracas and Orchestra* (1999), we get a similar Lorenzian take on another Classical structure. Lorenz places a “marginal” and “exotic” native American instrument, the *maracas*, in the center of the narrative and the stage.²² By being cast as a solo instrument, the indigenous *maracas* (percussion) take the place of what is traditionally a pitched instrument (capable of sounding Western tonality).²³ In the Western art music tradition, enhancement of the harmonic system signifies progress or evolution, while rhythm is relegated to a secondary or supportive role; Lorenz inverts this relation of power between development signified by the modern and under-development signified by the Other. In other words, he positions the subaltern in the forefront, signifying a displacement of tradition within the concerto genre. The score becomes a hybrid text that encodes a challenge to hegemonic canonical discourses. While the work has the traditional concerto form, improvised cadenzas by the *maracas* connect the movements. With this approach, Lorenz is not only reconnecting with the tradition of improvising the cadenzas in the classical period concerto, but also preserving the *maracas* in the work invokes a traditional folk music environment. In addition, there is also a symbolic moment in which the woodwinds, brass and percussion sections start playing maracas (tremolo) before the coda.

Lorenz elevates the *maracas* not just to a solo position, but to a vir-

tuoso one. Listening and watching the performance of this musical work engages the audience not only with a masterful display of shaping musical phrases and dynamics coming from the *maracas*. The first and second movements allude to the music of the Venezuelan *llanos* (plains) and its traditional genres. In the second movement the opening motive in the violins suggest *tonadas*, monodic songs associated with the cattle ranchers' and farmers' various daily production labors (specifically, Lorenz recalls *Sabana* [Savannah] by Simón Díaz [1928–2014]).²⁴ This folk genre includes onomatopoeic sounds related to the specific work activity and the natural environment that inspires and surrounds them, which Lorenz weaves into his orchestration.

Another concerto, *Rumba Sinfónica* (2007) for Latin band and symphony orchestra, extends this instrumental hybridity further. Styled as a *concerto grosso*, Lorenz uses the salsa group as the *concertino* and the orchestra as the *ripieno*.²⁵ Lorenz views this as a meeting of two “universals”:

Before there was Castro, and way before there was Chávez, Cuba and Venezuela were joined together by the fantastic music of Orquesta Aragón, Son Matancera, Ignacio Piñero, Miguel Matamoros, etc. Like my parents, I grew up in my native Venezuela listening to Cuban music. That is to say that in my neck of the woods Cuban music is universal music, as universal as the music by Beethoven, Mozart, Tchaikovsky and so many other composers I studied at the conservatory. No surprise that since my days as a composition student I imagined bringing these two seemingly distant traditions together in an original work that would have the narrative quality and wide emotional range of classical music and at the same time possess the rhythmic intricacy and streetwise soulfulness of Cuban popular music. *Rumba Sinfónica* is such a work.²⁶

Such transcultural hybrids, which defamiliarize their sources by re-contextualizing them, work to disintegrate divisions like those between low and high art, the use of parody and pastiche, and the integration of the marginal and Otherness. And in this way, they create a space for both. Lorenz's political activism not only eliminates the borders between art music and popular music, but also represents a political position *with* music. Lorenz engages with the notion of artistic and political citizenship, freedom, and circulation within the modern nation-state and culture. Communities, in particular the culturally “imaginary,” can construct the “Us” and “Them” in different ways.²⁷ As he himself discusses in his program notes for *El muro* (“The Wall”):

At a conceptual level, *El muro* is my response to how I feel about walls, whether these walls exist in reality or in our minds. I should mention that I was raised in a South American city where most homes are sur-

rounded by walls topped with barbed wire. To put it simply, I was raised in a land of makeshift fortresses. This is how I learned early on that walls not only exist to delineate space but also to keep people away. In my own imaginary way, *El muro* humanizes those people that walls keep away by connecting them to their longstanding cultural traditions. As an adult I learned that these traditions breed soulful, exciting and sometimes even influential music capable of making even the most sturdy-looking wall tumble down (Lorenz 2012)²⁸

Thus, the construction of citizenship is mapped and spatially positioned inside and outside of the borders—in this case, nation-state borders—for all of those who have an image of a shared history, values, and traditions. The idealism and reality of a liberal nation-state, ultimately, remained more on the paper of the Constitution than in the daily life of the new “citizens.” The Social Contract has never necessarily been a Racial Contract. The secular conceptualization of the consolidated imaginary construction of the modern nation-state, whose aesthetical, ideological, racial and physical borders included “Us” and excluded “Them”. In this sense, the nation-state project, as mentioned, continues to perpetuate inclusion and exclusion patterns. With the creation of nation-states and its spatial reorganization of the territory, communities which circulated transnationally across these geographical spaces were separated. As a consequence, these migrant communities had to negotiate and reinvent identities.

Conclusion

Ricardo Lorenz is a multidimensional musical and artistic personality whose music has been performed from Tito Puentes (US, 1923–2000) and *Sones de México* to major international art music soloists and symphony orchestras. Since his migration from Venezuela to the United States, Lorenz has been contributing to music with diverse roles as a composer, music-educator, art administrator, scholar and cultural community agent. His artistic persona has nurtured and been shaped from all these experiences, but has also impacted its spaces, communities and his colleagues. Simultaneously, Lorenz’s musical language and aesthetic reflect his political philosophy, fluent in cultural diversity, which enrich his sonic world, and he accomplishes this by incorporating both insider and outsider elements from the Western art music tradition and his home, Venezuela. Lorenz’s music reminds us what the process of transculturation stands for, opening new postcolonial or postmodern paths for creation and self-representation. But this context also challenges the composer to make aesthetical negotiations and decisions to contest canonical and exoticism constructions. Lorenz is aware of his belonging to a global world and its fluctuations, and

though he has no aims of being labeled or mapped exclusively as Latino or Latin American, Lorenz's identity and works reflect a strong connection with this culture without losing the great picture of the diverse musical traditions to which he belongs.

Notes

1. I would like to express my deep gratitude to the GRAMMY Latino Cultural Foundation (2016) for supporting the research project on the life and work of a group of Latin American and Latino composers in the United States as well as to the journal reviewers. See a more extended composer's biography at <http://ricardolorenz.com/> or <http://music.msu.edu/faculty/profile/ricardo> [accessed on 15 May 2018].
2. Venezuelan—and, in general, Latin American—music research was initiated with the nineteenth-century publication by De la Plaza ([1883] 1977). Since then, Venezuelan music historians have documented it with the intention to analyze, understand and reconstruct Venezuela's art music heritage. More music research is available in the musicological journals: *Musicaenclave* (<http://www.musicaenclave.com/> [accessed 1 May 2018]) from the Sociedad Venezolana de Musicología and *Revista Musical de Venezuela* (<http://revistamusicaldevenezuela.com.ve/> [accessed 1 May 2018]). In addition, more research can be found in the thesis publications from the Graduate School in Latin American Musicology at the School of Fine Arts at the Central University of Venezuela.
3. Alonso Toro (1963) has made a career as a film and documentary music composer (<http://www.alonsotoro.com/Home.html> [accessed 8 May 2018]), Paul Desenne (1959) has developed an international career and his works are performed by New Juilliard Ensemble, LA Phil, I Musici de Montréal, and pianist Gabriela Montero (<http://www.pauldesenne.com/> [accessed 8 May 2018]), Manuel Sosa lives in New York City and is faculty at the Juilliard School of Music (<https://www.juilliard.edu/faculty/manuel-sosa> [accessed 8 May 2018]) and Alvaro Cordero Saldivia (1954) launched an impressive career in the United States and then returned back to Venezuela, where he writes film music. For larger biographical entries about Venezuelan composers see Peñín and Guido (1998).
4. Despite the fact of having the peripheral colonial status of General Captaincy, this context did not halt the conception, from the colonial times to modernity, of a Venezuelan art music tradition. See, for example, some of the historiography production about art music in Venezuela: Calcaño (1958), Calzavara (1987), Plaza (1990), Milanca Guzmán (1994) and Coifman Michailos (2010), which show a dynamic music making and production.
5. The maternal side of Ricardo Lorenz's family includes internationally-recognized artists, such as the harpsichordist and pianist Abraham Abreu (1939), whose wife Diana Abreu is a poet, writer, music pedagogue and Music-in-Education author. See Abreu (1995). Their son is the recorder performer Aldo Abreu, who has been on faculty at the New England and Boston Conservatories as well as Boston University.
6. The "Good Neighbor Policy" (1933–1945) instituted by Franklin Delano Roosevelt (US, 1882–1945) was the response against the seduction of fascism on the American continent; accordingly, music became part of the cultural diplomacy of the United States during World War II. The US government created the Division of Cultural Relations (1938), then substituted by the Music Committee of the Office of Inter-American (1940).

7. Simón Bolívar (Venezuela 1783–1830) invited a group of young, weak novel and weak South American republics to the Amphictyonic Congress in Panama (1826). The goal was to coordinate and unify policies, not only contrary to any new conquest attempt by any European foreign power, but to content any intervention of the United States on the American continent, following the principles of the Monroe Doctrine (1823). In the field of music, for example, Francisco Curt Lange's (1903–1997) main ideal was expressed in the term *Americanismo musical*, which examined the development of the Inter-American musicological movement to research, study and promote the music from the American continent with the founding of *Instituto Interamericano de Música* in Uruguay and the six-volume publication of *Boletín Latino Americano de Música* (1935–1946).
8. There were composers whose agendas were engaged in different degrees with this ideal as well: for instance, Alberto Ginastera (Argentina, 1916–1983), Henry Cowell (US, 1897–1965), Aaron Copland (US, 1900–1990), Juan Orrego-Salas (Chile, b. 1919) and Carlos Chávez (Mexico, 1899–1978).
9. From 1987 to 1992, Lorenz worked as Interim Director for the Latin American Music Center at Indiana University.
10. Orrego-Salas is emeritus Professor at Indiana University and a leading composer from Latin America.
11. The authors explain that large-scale immigration from Mexico did not start until the late 1920s, and Puerto Ricans began settling in large numbers in the 1940s. Other “Latino” groups present in the area include Central Americans, Cubans, as well as several smaller communities of Ecuadorians, Colombians, Peruvians, Venezuelans and Argentines.
12. Lorenz taught at the University of Chicago as Lecturer (1995 and 1997) and the City Colleges of Chicago (1999–2005) as Associated Professor.
13. This is a list of some of the current Latin American composers Professors in Music Composition in North America: Alcides Lanza (Argentina, 1929) teaches at McGill, Tania León (Cuba, 1948) teaches at Brooklyn College (CUNY), Oswaldo Golijov (Argentina, 1960) teaches at College of the Holy Cross, and Max Lifchitz (Mexico, 1948) teaches at University at Albany-SUNY.
14. Conductor Rafael Jiménez is currently faculty at Oberlin College and Conservatory. See his profile: <https://www.oberlin.edu/raphael-jimenez> [accessed 23 September 2018]. See also the section “Background and History” at <https://www.music.msu.edu/latin-is-america/background-and-history> [accessed 23 September 2018].
15. See the section “Background and History” cited in fn. 14.
16. His Ph.D. research paper at the University of Chicago. See the complete text at <http://ricardolorenz.com/research/realities-inside-the-limbo/> [accessed 17 January 2018].
17. Nonetheless the encounter was asymmetrical, because the Spaniards and their agenda of conquest and colonization already had them in the position of the Self and the indigenous in the Other's position. To find the right term for this historical event has been a permanent debate among scholars in Latin America.
18. In contrast, Lorenz points out that the interpretation borrowed from Alejandro Planchart of “the soul of a nation” in his chapter “Music in the Christian Courts of Spain” is less controversial.
19. In fact, Ernesto Nazareth is an excellent example about how transculturation flows and has impacted European art music composers. French composer Darius Milhaud (1892–

1974) studied Nazareth's music during his residency in Brazil (1917–1918), and since then has incorporated this influence into his music works. See Appleby (1983, 83).

20. Mills connects the fact that the Western political philosophy canon leaves outside non-whites; thus, their debates about race and gender, for example, become theoretically ghettoized. He examines how constructing the Western political philosophy canon, which only includes male and white philosophers, not only builds the Other (ethnicities and gender), but simply misrepresents the West. He also explains how under the “premise of progress, order, and modernity,” whites have created the “theory” to justify colonialism, slavery, and Jim Crow, among other domination projects. Mills reasons that by establishing race as an entitlement of dominion and colonization, exploitation and other similar projects have been practiced by the group that traditionally exercises power. He also pronounces that the West, by having the monopoly of building and decision making in time, manipulates binary categories such as exclusion/inclusion, development/underdevelopment, and modern/pre-modern.

21. Lorenz wrote about “One of the most successful answers inspired by the difficult question, what is culture? Claude Lévi-Strauss has certainly formulated it. According to the celebrated anthropologist, the concept of ‘culture’ can be explained as a system of codes and myths used by the human being to find imaginary solutions to real problems and contradictions.” See Lorenz (1995a, 111).

22. Venezuelan intellectual Rómulo Gallegos (1884–1969) wrote a short story called *Pataruco* (1919) which is about *zoropo* music, *mestizaje*, Venezuelan national identity and anti-Eurocentrism. *Pataruco* was premiered in March 1999 by the Chicago Sinfonietta and percussionist Ed Harrison, to whom the work was dedicated. A recording of *Pataruco* with the Czech National Symphony and Ed Harrison was released in 2002 by Albany Records. See <http://ricardolorenz.com/?s=pataruco> [accessed 20 May 2018]. Watch and listen to the performance of this work interpreted by the *Sinfónica Simón Bolívar*, conducted by Christian Vázquez, with the soloist Manuel Alejandro Rangel: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XEARtlWPzg> [accessed 3 June 2018].

23. Lorenz wrote for the CD booklet: “I admit, the idea sounds preposterous at first. A concerto for maracas and orchestra? You have to be kidding! I guess that’s why I titled this work *Pataruco*, in order to cater to the skeptic. In Venezuelan slang, *Pataruco* is the nickname given to someone or something provocative and cocky to the point of appearing ill-mannered or in bad taste. However, when one considers the unusual circumstances surrounding the gestation of this concerto for maracas, the idea seems only natural, almost inevitable. Those silly-looking, avocado-shaped gourds seen in vintage LP covers of pseudo-tropical music—and most often heard clumsily shaken by Carmen Miranda wannabees—do not even begin to compare to the beauty and sonic depth of the instrument. In Venezuela, the joke goes, maracas are such a cultural fixture that the name of the national’s capital had to be changed to Caracas in order not to make this fixation so obvious. This onomastic relation is pure coincidence, of course, but the truth is that playing the maracas in Venezuela has developed into a highly virtuosic art form which is considered by connoisseurs as one of the world’s most sophisticated vernacular percussion techniques.” See the booklet (Lorenz 2002).

24. To listen to tonadas by Simón Díaz, please visit: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L_M7mofsAfl [accessed 15 March 2019].

25. Lorenz collaborated with Cuban pianist Jorge Gómez and his band *Tiempo Libre* as well as the music manager Elizabeth Sobol. Lorenz relates that, “During the months that followed I worked with Jorge shaping my ideas so as to fit them to *Tiempo Libre*’s particular

style of Cuban music (known as timba) while Elizabeth worked the classical music circles looking for partners opened minded enough to bet on an adventurous project, eventually bringing on board major league co-commissioners such as The Minnesota Orchestra, Detroit Symphony, Festival of the Arts Boca and the Ravinia Festival. With Jorge's collaboration, the theme in rumba style I had composed was transformed into a 26-minute symphonic drama." See the complete program notes text "Rumba Sinfónica Cuban music ensemble meets the symphony orchestra," <http://ricardolorenz.com/rumba-sinfonica/> [accessed 15 June 2018].

26. "Rumba Sinfónica Cuban music ensemble meets the symphony orchestra," <http://ricardolorenz.com/rumba-sinfonica/> [accessed 15 June 2018]. Watch the documentary "MSU-Today presents: 'Rumba Sinfónica'" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mznz3Eisokg> [accessed 15 June 2018].

27. Borrowing the coined expression by Benedict Anderson (1936–2015). See Anderson (2016; 1983).

28. The composer also wrote "At a purely musical level, the wall I imagined is a ten-minute long sound structure made up of tightly woven riffs, each suggesting a different style of Latin American music. Some of the styles suggest are also the Colombian cumbia, the Peruvian huayno, the Mexican son, the Cuban montuno, to name a few."

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