Portfolio of compositions and technical commentary

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PORTFOLIO OF COMPOSITIONS

AND TECHNICAL COMMENTARY

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Abstract

The works in this portfolio of compositions explore various ways in which rule-bound compositional approaches may be inflected by intuitive decisions in order to broaden expressive possibilities. While having distinctive instrumentations and differing durations, all the works share a concern with the use of a restricted variety of types of material as well as the reliance on a small number of collection of pitches as sources of harmony and line.

My interest in these types of rule-bound compositional strategies arose from a commitment to musical organicism. Yet my music fulfils organic criteria only partially, for it deliberately eschews traditional harmonic developmental processes, thus giving rise to friction between the rigidity evident in the motivic treatment and modes of progression that are commonly associated with developmental motivic transformations.

Generally, a motif or gesture presented at the beginning of a composition becomes all-pervasive, giving rise to structures in which all parts are inter-related. Another rule-bound aspect is that some groups of works share their material, as in Dana (for mixed quintet), Contorno Circular (for chamber orchestra), Two Pieces for Piano and Ciclo Altazor, a set of three settings of excerpts from poems by Vicente Huidobro.

In Constantis and Reqle for mixed ensembles, I explore the use of non-triadic collections of pitches for prolonged sections and create tonal hierarchies by projecting particular pitch-levels and/or by means of their ubiquitous repetition, as well as by assigning them prominent positions within phrases.

Another aspect of my concern with setting boundaries to a composition is that Tándems, Incorrangible Negligence, Oboes (three duos for different combinations of instruments) and Mecánico, Lírico y Preciso (for piano) are permeated by motivic repetitions, so as to create nets of interconnections. Concertante (for piano and chamber orchestra) is based on the idea of re-using and re-signifying elements taken from Peccadillo, an earlier short piece for piano.
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My mother doña Lina Inés del Carmen Concha Coronado, my father don Luis Alberto Stuardo Herrera.
List of Submitted Scores (bound separately)

- Dana (2014) - (fl,cl,pf,vl,vc)
- Reqle (2014) - (fl,cl,mar, hp, vl, db)
- Constantis (2014) - (fl,cl, pf, vl, va)
- Contorno Circular (2015) - (chamber orchestra)
- Two Pieces for Piano (2015) - (pf)
- Incorrigible Negligence (2015) - (fl, cl)
- Peccadillo (2016) - (pf)
- Tándems (2016) - (fl, cl)
- Ciclo Altazor (2016)
  - Crujen las ruedas de la tierra (alt, cl, vl, vc); Silencio la tierra va a dar a luz un árbol (alt, fl, cl, pf, vl, vc); and Todo ha de alejarse en la muerte (alt, pf)
- Oboes (2016) - (2ob)
- Concertante (2017) - (piano and chamber orchestra)

Audio Material

Track Number:

1. Reqle
   Lontano Ensemble, Odaline de la Martinez (cond.)
   King’s College London, 6th June 2014

2. Oboes
   José Luis Urquieta and Leonardo Cuevas
   King’s College London, 5th October 2017

3. Constantis
   Lontano Ensemble, Odaline de la Martinez (cond.)
   King’s College London,

4. Peccadillo
   Danor Quinteros
   Newnham College, University of Cambridge, 19th January 2017

5. Tándems
   Qiri Duo (Kathya Galleguillos, clarinet; Karina Fisher, flute)
   Festival Internacional de Música Contemporánea UC, Santiago de Chile, 22nd November, 2016
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Background

This commentary deals with music written over the course of four years, enough time to forget some of the ‘whys’ and ‘hows’ of some compositions.

My first compositions resembled the pieces I was practising as a piano student. Bartók and Kurtág, alongside elements of pop music, were my main influences. Bartók’s influence can still be seen in some of my pieces, especially his handling of rhythm and bi-tonality in his *Six Dances in Bulgarian Rhythm* from *Mikrokosmos*. This is particularly evident, for instance, in my *Peccadillo* and *Mecánico, Lírico y Preciso* where I tried to imitate the percussive and rhythmic features of those pieces. *Piece II*, from *Tándems*, also reflects another of Bartók’s compositional devices found in *Mikrokosmos*, in this case, the extensive use of unisons found in *Six Unison Melodies* and, in a little more intricate manner, his use of interrupted unisons found in *In Hungarian Style* (piece 43), *Chromatics* (54), and in some parts of *Chromatic Invention* (92).

During my undergraduate studies in Chile Andrés Maupoint, showed me what later became, yet only for a short period, a score that served to free me from the tyranny of classical metric structure. It was *Lemma-Icon-Epigram*, an astoundingly difficult-to-read piece by Brian Ferneyhough whose complex notation and extensive use of irregular tuplets and irrational duration values worked as a liberating tool. Being able to compose music using a language which largely reflected the composer’s musical and structural thought by creating a score that mirrored the multi-layered organisational structure of a piece, regardless of performance difficulties, seemed, at the time, an emancipating compositional experience and a hugely attractive and validating approach. It did not take long before the first problems of that approach appeared. The problem of performance, or the intermediacy of the performer between the score and the audible result of his/her reading, was the first to appear. As pointed
out by Duncan1, New Complexity notation is assumed by performers as a specificity that ‘leads to a prioritizing of accuracy over all other musical considerations’. The impossibility and impracticability of this kind of ‘notational extremities’2 has been noted by many scholars of which Richard Taruskin offers an unceremonious description: ‘composers associated with the New Complexity put much of their effort into finding notations for virtually impalpable microtones, ever-changing rhythmic divisions and tiny gradations of timbre and loudness in an effort to realize their ideal of infinite musical evolution under infinitely fine control and presented with infinite precision, with absolutely no concession to ‘cognitive constraints’3.

To me, the problem relied precisely in the concessions to be made by the performers who, unable to perform the humanly impossible rhythms I wrote, had to approximate or, as expressed by Marsh ‘to rationalise’4 the notated rhythms, generating a deviated version of what has been painstakingly written in the score. That is how Ferneyhough’s complexity became my model for a couple of years until I realised that music does not need that level of entanglement and intricacy in order to be interesting and attractive. I am grateful to Ferneyhough, however, because his music opened a window to a fascinating world I believed impossible until then. His early works, which, as Jonathan Harvey posits, were ‘astonishingly advanced for their time’ especially remembering ‘that the composer is English’5, also helped me to think beyond the constraints of time signatures whilst encouraging me to engage with my own music at different intellectual levels.

3 ibid.
My path from rhythmic complexity to my current aesthetic thinking and practice reflects my openness to contemporary uses of tonal/modal expectation in combination with a loose use of serial techniques. This new approach derives from my acquaintance with George Benjamin and Harrison Birtwistle, whose tendency towards the creation of sounding environments that privilege coloristic effects, gestural writing and relative consonance made a good impression on me. Knowing this music added new colours to my palette while also contributing towards a more conscious use of pitch material in my music.

My current compositional thinking also draws inspiration from Czech music, notably from Bohuslav Martinů, Jan Novák and Vítězslava Kaprálová. These three composers are united by a close teacher-pupil relationship as it was Martinů who informed and shaped Novák’s and Kaprálová’s approach to composition. It seems to me that these are unjustly under-studied and under-performed composers, especially Martinů, who is widely regarded, after Janáček, as the most substantial Czech composer of the 20th century. Martinů’s ‘ability to sustain a movement by the progressive manipulation of a few brief melodic or rhythmic formulae’ is probably his most attractive compositional device and the one which has influenced my music the most. In fact, my pieces Incorrigible Negligence (English for ‘nenapravitelná nedbalost’, a Czech phrase that accompanies Martinů’s expulsion from the Conservatoire in Prague) and Concertante were composed keeping the idea of sustaining movement through constant repetition of musical gestures. In Incorrigible, for example, the
always-ascending lines found in bars 18-19, 26, 29-30, and in the section that spans from bar 79 to 82 mirror, in a small scale, the gestures found in the introduction of Martinů’s *First Symphony*. In my triptych for flute and clarinet *Tándems*, in the middle section of II (from bar 21 to 28) and in an important section of III (from bar 14 to 29) I also make use of these ascending gestures. These motives are also found in *Oboes*. In my music, however, there is a tendency not to develop but to repeat and intersperse the rhythmic and melodic formulae so as to create a constantly forward-moving musical discourse.
I. Introduction

In my compositions, I have set out to explore the relationship between the ideas of rule-bound composition and intuitive procedures. Despite their distinct sonic results, instrumentation and length, all the pieces share a common concern with the use and organisation of a limited amount of material and the use of limited collection of pitches as the source of harmony and line. Additionally, in these pieces, I explored the idea of taking musical material and compositional procedures from previous works and developing them into new pieces. The objective of carrying out this experiment is to observe and determine the limits that the musical material, in all its aspects (rhythmical, harmonic, timbrical, etc.), is able to withstand without losing its original musical significance.

My idea of rule-bound composition arose from a commitment to organicism. Due to the use of compositional devices that deliberately avoid harmonic developmental processes, my music fulfils traditional organic criteria only incompletely, as it does not bear on the grand structure of the piece, but only affects the musical material and its combinations. This organic approach is expressed in that each piece focuses on the use of a small number of concise musical gestures, motifs and pitch collections from which most of the material springs. These gestures are typically found at the beginning of the scores and are all pervasive. This restrictive use of motives and their constant presence, at different levels, creates musical structures in which all parts are related.

In short, the rule-bound aspect of my approach can be seen in my all-pervasive use of the motives that appear at the beginning of a given work and which in turn generate all the material to be used later. This self-imposed guiding principle serves the purpose of providing unity and coherence while also providing organic boundaries. There is also an aim to maintain gestural and thematic unity by tempering development. A sense of expectation and
resolution is created by means of a controlled use of dynamics, tempi, and frequency of the occurrences of the material generating musical journeys and drama which constantly return to the originating sources.

Additionally, I have endeavoured to create pitch hierarchies that do not necessarily rely on strict tonal centrality while relying on a sense of tonal expectation.

While the works in this portfolio were conceived keeping the above ideas in mind, each piece gives prominence to its own characteristic collection of materials. Furthermore, some compositions contain a high degree of diversity which complicates a complete generalisation. There are, however, several artistic concerns and procedures that I see as being common to the pieces here presented.

Some pieces can be grouped in sets as they share what I like to refer to as a ‘musical DNA’, a traceable thread of musical material or materials taken from an originating piece which in turn acts as a framework for subsequent compositions. By doing so, I discovered that often the musical material used can be sensed in strikingly different ways when it appears in a new instrumentation as well as a result of the transformations undergone in that new sounding environment. A point of departure and inspiration for this way of dealing with material is Boulez’ *Notations*. Originally conceived as a set of twelve twenty-or-thirty-second-long, serially-organised twelve-tone pieces of twelve measures each, Boulez enlarged the musical ideas contained in those short pieces and created a reworked version for large orchestra of six of the *Notations*. This process, which took place 30 years after composing the short original versions, produced four new compositions that featured an extended version of his original ideas. The group formed by *Dana, Contorno Circular, and Two Pieces for Piano* fulfils the criteria of arising from shared musical material and will be thus considered as a set of pieces in the subsequent chapters.
Subsequently, I will discuss my use of harmony and rhythm. Each parameter will be dealt with separately, keeping in mind the far-reaching implications each element bears over the other. In discussing harmony, I will ponder on the elements more common to my music, those I consider sufficiently unified to be used in the description of my musical language and in generating a supportive structure and a means of expression adequate to my own expressive needs. In this sense, the use of non-tonal (or not obviously tonal) collections of pitches for prolonged sections constitute one of the key controlling devices that shapes the harmonic language of my pieces. While using dense collections of pitches for extended periods of time, I have often attempted to create tonal hierarchies by projecting particular pitch levels and/or by means of their constant repetition and position within phrases. The sonic implications of those collections have often been used to create clear quasi-tonal hierarchies of pitches and/or even modal ambiguity. This way of writing has enabled me to move freely inside a rigid, albeit changeable, harmonic structures. My pieces *Constantis* and *Reqle* can be seen as the clearest example of this kind of procedure.
II. Harmony and Rhythm

My harmonic language is intimately connected to the way I use collections of notes. It is from those notes and their corresponding combination that I construct chords and melodic lines. Constantis and Reqle clearly exemplify the way vertical and horizontal combinations of notes are made. Occasionally pitch classes are ordered both in the horizontal and vertical dimensions in a non-systematic manner, so as to satisfy particular expressive needs and taste. Generally speaking, my compositions feature a sense of harmonic stasis resulting from the constant repetition of a particular collection of pitches over relatively extended sections. I have not taken any conscious inspiration in regard to my use of collections of notes. However, I am aware that this compositional procedure is not new nor unique as it can be found in pieces by Toru Takemitsu and in early Anton Webern, Berg and Schoenberg, among others. Takemitsu’s *A Flock Descends into the Pentagonal Garden*’s use of scales to generate vertical superimpositions produces an effect akin to my own use of collection of notes. Similarly, Takemitsu’s use of modes and different octatonic scales to construct different sections of a melodic line, as exemplified by Timothy Koozin\(^{11}\) (2002) in his analysis of *Air*, can also be seen in some of the pieces I will discuss below. Peter Burt (2002)\(^{12}\) writes extensively about Takemitsu’s modal resources in his analyses of *The Dorian Horizon, Green* and *November Steps*. Apart from accounting for the use of the octatonic scale, Burt also summarises almost all of Takemitsu’s ‘modal universe’ (2002) by dealing with all the scales used by the composer. As pointed out by Montandon\(^{13}\) (2015), Takemitsu emphasises modal or intervallic relationships by separating pitch from rhythm while utilising the same cycle of


pitches although not always in the same order. This way of dealing with pitch material is also found in my pieces.

A similar compositional procedure, although with a different sonic result, can be found in Webern’s *Six Bagatelles for String Quartet*, Op. 9 whose use of intervallic cells have been extensively studied\textsuperscript{14} 15. Furthermore, the first movement of Webern's *Symphony*, op. 21 presents a consistent placement of all of the tones of the chromatic scale in particular registers\textsuperscript{16}. Paul Nauert calls this registral disposition of pitch classes a *pitch field* and proceeds to define it as ‘an unordered collection of pitches’\textsuperscript{17}. According to his opinion, what makes these collections of pitches interesting is the way they are used\textsuperscript{18}. In a given passage based on a particular pitch field, only certain pitches of the field are kept in circulation excluding other pitches\textsuperscript{19}. In an analogous way, in my music, a collection of pitches basically serves to restrict pitch fields while its recurrent use corresponds to an inner need to construct a sort of compositional framework which gives musical coherence and harmonic consistency. My approach to this way of organising pitch material differs from Webern’s as I do not place pitch classes in particular registers preferring to use them in a freer way instead. I do share, nonetheless, a concern with the constant circulation and projection of a fixed number of pitch-classes as a way to create a sense of order and a framework which is rigid-enough to allow me to move flexibly inside it. As I will discuss below, a collection of pitches can work either as a rigid construction with a clearly defined and ordered succession of notes or as a collection from which I can freely choose which notes to use.


\textsuperscript{17} ibid.

\textsuperscript{18} ibid.

\textsuperscript{19} ibid.
**General examples of the use of collection of pitches**

I have often assigned specific collection of pitches to certain parts of a piece to provide a coherent and limited harmonic framework. These pitches function as harmonic boundaries and, together with the constant polarisation of certain notes or intervals, furnish the composition with a sense of modality. In the case of *Constantis*, I have used the following collection as a footprint for the entire piece. I will name this collection as Collection 1:

Ex. 1

![Ex. 1](image)

The above collection and its transpositions constitute the basis of the piece’s harmonic language by providing the pitches to be used both vertically and horizontally in determined sections of the piece. This specific group has been used throughout the first 10 bars as shown in the following example.
Ex. 2.- *Constantis*, bars 1-10

In the following bars, Collection 1 has been transposed a semitone up. Consequently, all the pitched material featured from bar 11 to the first half of 16 are part of Collection 1’s
1st and 2nd transpositions combined. It is from the second part of bar 16 until 24 where only notes from the 2nd transposition unfold. 3rd transposition appears abruptly in the piano at bar 25 and is present until bar 29.

Ex. 3.- Collection 1 and its subsequent transpositions

From bar 29, a new collection unfolds (Collection 2). This new collection corresponds to a small variation of Collection 1’s 3rd transposition as they share almost all the pitches except for the fact that in Collection 2 there is one extra pitch (B). Collection 2 also undergoes two transpositions, both to a semitone up.

Ex. 4.- Collection 2 and its subsequent transpositions

This type of harmonic procedure allows the free manipulation of the melodic lines and chords using the pitches featured in each group, while also providing helpful harmonic boundaries which control processes of mutation and dramatic development.

A similar instance of this technique is evident in *Reqle*, which also features discrete collections for particular sections. *Reqle*’s harmonic language was determined by my use of fixed tunings (i.e. pedalling) in the harp. The harp shaped the harmonic language by compelling me to think in terms of the instrument’s possible pedalling combinations. As a result, the harmonic language reflects the tuning of the harp which in turn provides the group of pitches in operation for each part. This is a self-imposed restriction as the harp can change
its tuning or feature some parts of the set. However, ordering pitched material as it was played only in a harp constituted the main controlling device of the pitches that circulates in the piece. I have found that circulating small amount of pitched material produces a kind of sensuous stasis which allows me to create mobile lines that are always sensed as belonging to a tonally debilitated harmonic context. In the case of \textit{Reqle}, this procedure helped to keep material crystalline and static, avoiding any sense of clear or abrupt development. Examining how collections are applied, example 5 shows which groups of pitches have been used during the first 8 bars.

\begin{example}

\begin{diagram}
\begin{multicols}{2}
\exampleimage{Bars 1-5}
\exampleimage{Bars 6-7}
\exampleimage{Bar 8}
\end{multicols}
\end{diagram}

\end{example}

As example 5 illustrates, there are three different collections contained in the first eight bars of the piece. The notes played vertically in the harp in bars 1 and 2 unfold horizontally in the clarinet and flute in bar 2. The violin prolongs some of the notes of the harp while the double-bass extends the A flat presented by the flute and harp.
The second collection is introduced in bar 6 by the marimba in a downward gesture which is answered by the harp in ascending form. The violin and double-bass further prolong some of the notes of the group while giving harmonic support to the line that unfolds in the clarinet in bar 8. The eight notes of the 3rd collection are introduced by the flute in bar 8.
This manner of organising pitch material provides me with enough melodic leeway while also delivering a firm base on which to lay the foundation for a controlled musical writing. Additionally, since the pitched material used in these pieces can be seen as belonging or resembling a particular tonal or modal scale, the resulting melodic lines sometimes resemble tertian harmonic tonal constructions (see: clarinet at bar 7; harp at bar 6). It is doubtful that the listener would be able to identify those hidden and rather brief tonal references. However, as the pitch material can be perceived as diatonic, the music consequently has a tonal flavour.

Rhythm

While my use of rhythm is less systematically conceived than my harmony, it still can be reduced to a small number of distinctive procedures. Pitch-related structures such as chords
and melodies tend to work in relationship with rhythm so as to create a set of cyclically repeated musical gestures. Thus, the dramatic unfolding of my pieces is anchored on the repetition of a small number of rhythmic events. Furthermore, motifs and motivic relations provide coherence and lead to comprehensibility. In my music, rhythm plays a crucial part in the creation of memorable events.

In order to illustrate my use of rhythm in the conception of musical motifs, I shall discuss two pieces in which I created memorable musical gestures through the constant use of short rhythmic motifs.

*Constantis* presents a repetitive use of sextuplets throughout the composition creating an environment that privileges similarity over difference and homogeneity over contrast. This piece revolves around sextuplets in their normal and metrically displaced versions.

Ex. 7

Used as a sort of rhythmic mould, these tuplets are filled with the corresponding pitch classes contained in the collection which is in operation, creating melodic lines which keep on the same repetitive shape. This patterning is aimed at creating a sense of non-developmental progression, while creating networks of interconnected rhythmic gestures.
My piano piece *Mecánico, Lírico y Preciso* (Mechanical, Poetical and Precise) also features a distinctive, repetitive rhythmic gesture which, despite its variable melodic configuration, establishes itself as a memorable motif. The constant presence of a three-note figure throughout the entire piece works as the main unifying element.

As in *Constantis*, the pitch content of any specific section in *Mecánico* is determined by particular collections. Consequently, every rhythmic motif may feature a different pitch content in different parts of the composition. There is a direct relationship between harmonic
density and the number of occurrences of the rhythmic gesture. In the case of Mecánico, the structural importance of the three-note rhythmic gesture has been emphasised by means of dynamics (it is always louder than the context) and through repetition.

This use of a reduced number of rhythmic gestures and the deliberate act of keeping away from a more developmental treatment is a general trend that can be observed throughout all the pieces of this portfolio. This self-imposed tendency springs from my idea of a rule-bound way of writing and, in conjunction with my particular use of collection of pitches, summarises my approach. The intuitive aspect of this manner of composing can be interpreted as a kind of freedom of movement inside a semi-closed compositional method. The ruling aspect is normally applied to the parameters of pitched and rhythm material while register and melodic contour tend to be freer. Reflecting on the way I chose to deal with material, I realise that two conflicting compositional identities are constantly colliding: one that tends to control while the other looks for ways to break away from the rules I have previously set. This conflict resulted in pieces that have been composed as if solving a problem, the problem being the preservation of unifying elements and the creation of a structurally coherent musical discourse. In that sense, I have found that the use of persistent motivic repetition in distended musical forms effectively provides useful frameworks for unity and variety. I sometimes tend to see my compositional approach to composition as improvisatory but, as pointed out by Wallace Berry\textsuperscript{20} improvisatory styles concede ‘freedoms of execution and approach only within an understood framework of structure-conditioning terms, bounds, and directive orientation’.

III. Dana, Contorno Circular, and Two Pieces for Piano

This section explores shared concerns amongst Dana, Contorno Circular, and Two Pieces for Piano. It focuses particularly on how material featured in Dana is re-worked and transformed in the subsequent pieces. By doing this, I intend to show how I reused pitch material from an original composition by placing it in a new environment. This way of composing is related to my idea of pieces that share a common ‘musical DNA’ (as explained in the introduction), which in turn acts as a harmonic framework for the pieces that derive their material from an originating composition. This way of working with previously composed material springs from my fascination with Boulez’ Notations for Orchestra. Originally conceived as a set of short piano pieces, Boulez used these miniatures as ‘a seed, as it were, in order to develop ideas’ resulting in a set of orchestral pieces where ‘the form was bound to grow’.

The considerable more spacious orchestral versions of the pieces keep all the original material very recognisable, to the point that some critics see these new pieces as ‘recompositions’ while (jokingly) considering Boulez a ‘recomposer’. My approach to this way of using the material differs from Boulez in the sense that I do not seek to explore the timbric possibilities of my material, but simply to re-interpret it and extend its combinatorial possibilities in different contexts.

Another related case is Luciano Berio’s series of Chemins, which are re-orchestrations of his ground-breaking Sequenze, for solo instruments. These Chemins, Berio says, ‘do not offer a transcription of a solo part composed at an earlier date …but rather an exposition and an amplification of what is implicit, hidden in that solo part’.

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21 Boulez, Pierre, Cecile Favre-Gilly, and Richard Stokes, Boulez on conducting: conversations with Cécile Gilly (London: Faber and Faber, 2003), 121-122
22 ibid.
24 Berio, Luciano, Remembering the Future (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006), 42
Commenting on *Chemins IV* for oboe and eleven strings (3,3,3,2) which is based on *Sequenza VII* for oboe solo, Arnold Whittall\(^{25}\) compares the original pedal note that accompanies the oboe to the resulting more elaborate string background which goes ‘far beyond mere passive sustaining’, unlike the sustain note found in the originating *Sequenza*.

In both cases, Boulez’ and Berio’s resulting pieces, even though based on previously fully composed material, constitute fully independent pieces that develop and amplify their originating material while adding new timbral levels and expanding harmonic language. In addition to that, the resulting pieces manage to retain their original character and material.

I have not intended to keep material as recognisable as in the pieces discussed above. Instead, I see the material as a sort of activator from which to start a new composition. This material is still recognisable in the new pieces where its presence can still be sensed, especially pitched material.

**Dana and Contorno Circular**

*Dana* constitutes the originating piece of the group. Its overall structure has been expanded generating new music by means of processes of transformation that extend the duration of the original. The relationship between *Dana* and *Contorno Circular* is evident from the very beginning as the latter constitutes an elastic, flexible re-interpretation of the original motifs. There is in *Contorno* an example of the concept of flexible re-interpretation which mainly affects the rhythmic appearance of the original gestures found in *Dana* while maintaining pitch material unchanged. This is manifest, for example, in the downward gesture found in *Dana* at bars 13-15 and re-composed in *Contorno* at bars 22-25 where the lines have been arranged in a modified rhythmic profile.

Ex. 10.- *Dana*, flute part, bars 13-15

*Dana*’s bars 13-15 have four instruments playing in rhythmic unison: flute, clarinet, violin and violoncello. The rhythmic uniformity and downward movement has been retained in *Contorno* but, as has been mentioned before, there is an elastic, free re-interpretation of the rhythm. Example 11 shows the resulting rhythmic profile played by the string section.

Ex. 11.- *Contorno*, string section, bars 19-29
The following examples compare the original and resulting rhythmic profile of the passage in question.

Ex. 12.- Original rhythmic profile

The above example shows the rhythmic profile of the original passage.

Ex. 13.- Resulting rhythmic profile
The eight attacks contained in the originating rhythmic gesture (example 12) are also present in the resulting line (example 13). However, as in Contorno the originating gestures are reworked and the duration of those attacks has been modified by unevenly stretching them, so that the line becomes longer. Even though the rhythmic profile has changed, the pitch content remains the same as all the notes that make the descending three-line gesture in the resulting passage in Contorno come from Dana’s originating gesture.

**Dana and Two Pieces for Piano (Matices Grises, Áspero Sendero)**

The same principles of using Dana’s material in a different piece is used in Matices Grises (Gray Nuances, from Two Pieces for Piano). Here, the pitch material presented by the piano in the first bars of Dana has been arranged in a more polyphonic fashion. In order to understand this procedure, we will briefly analyse what happens in the piano part in Dana. In the first eight bars, two sets of pitches (A and B) followed by three subsequent semitone-up transportations unfold.

Ex. 14
These pitches have been allocated in the following way:

Ex. 15.- Dana, piano part, bars 1-9

As the above example shows, sets A and B create the introductory passage of the piece. These pitches provide the musical material used in the first two bars of *Matrices*. The following example shows how those pitches have been arranged into a new context.
The pitch material found at the beginning of *Dana* fulfils a different role in *Matices*. The predominantly horizontal, long introductory phrase featured in the former takes a new, more polyphonic and delicate shape in the latter.

In an analogous way, *Áspero Sendero* (Rough Path) also uses material from *Dana*. The first bars of *Áspero* take pitches from different parts of *Dana* while creating new verticals with them. The melodic line contained in *Dana* which unfolds in the clarinet from bar 8 to 10 constitutes the source of pitches used in the first two bars of *Áspero*, where the original one-voice line is transformed into two voices.
The following example shows how the above pitches unfold in Áspero.

Ex. 18.- Áspero Sendero, bars 1-2

*Matices Grises* and *Áspero Sendero* both reflect my preoccupation with the ordering of pitches and how they unfold in different sounding environments. I see composition as an interplay between the available material and the ability to create something meaningful with it. I am very attracted to the idea of having to work with given pitch material (which I normally take from older pieces of mine). Probably, the main reason behind this way of composing, one which exerts a powerful attraction to me, is the problem it poses, and the problem-solving mind set it requires. In the case of the pieces discussed in this chapter, the pitch material contained in selected parts of *Dana* provided me with raw material as well as a problem to solve as I was constrained to use only those pitches and their limited combinatory possibilities.
IV. Duos for woodwinds: *Incorrigible Negligence, Tándems, and Oboes*

*Tándems* and *Incorrigible Negligence*, for flute and clarinet, deal with the constant repetition of a restricted number of gestures throughout the piece. These gestures, which mostly consist of short melodic and rhythmic motives, are combined, briefly expanded, and polarised so as to create a net of interwoven sonic connections that give rise to an expressive musical discourse. While both works address similar artistic concerns, they exhibit different approaches in the manner of working with their respective pitch material. In *Tándems*, a set of three pieces for flute and clarinet, the same collection of pitches is featured throughout the entire work assuming different functions and creating diverse contexts which range from unison to more polyphonic and contrapuntal textures.

In *Incorrigible* I refrained from using irregular subdivisions of the beat preferring instead constant rhythmic and melodic dialogue with a binary beat division. Regarding the musical material, this can be reduced to four kinds of melodic or linear movement: 1) sustained melodic movement; 2) disjunct ascending and descending movement; 3) short staccato preceded by a grace note and 4) ascending gradual linear movement. All these types are evident in the first three bars.

Ex. 19. *Incorrigible Negligence*, bars 1-3

From bar 4, the material starts to undergo some degree of development by means of horizontal addition of pitches or by changing their order and frequency of appearance. Bars 8-11, for example, contain short staccato notes played in succession while type 1 material is
preceded by type 4 in the clarinet. In bar 12, type 3 material prevails until, at the end of the bar, a short unfolding of type 2 material leads to a more imitative section made almost exclusively of types 2 and 4 material.

In terms of phrasing, *Incorrigible* falls into different sections characterised by the unfolding material. For example, the section extending from bars 1 to 12 incorporates, in different degrees, material of all types, whilst the music comprised in the section that starts at bar 13 and ends at bar 24 is made up exclusively of variants of types 2 and 4 material.

*Incorrigible*’s internal organisation and dramatic pace rely on the combination of the various types of material. Although there is almost no variation of the gestures found at the beginning of the score, some degree of variety has been achieved by virtue of intuitive and simple combinatorial techniques. For example, the section encompassed between bars 48 and 62 consists of fragmented motifs from different combinations of types

Ex. 20.- *Incorrigible Negligence*, bars 48-49

As shown in example 20, in bars 48-49 a motif formed by type 4 material (ascending gradual linear movement) and followed by a short sequence of type 3 material unfolds (disjunct ascending and descending movement). In the next three bars, a similar combination takes place with type 4 material further developed and featured between both instruments. After the dotted crochet rest in the flute in bar 52, a longer motif, with an expanded development of type 4 material, unfolds until the end of bar 54.
Ex. 21.- *Incorrigible Negligence*, bars 51-55

The longest segment is bars 57-56, where even though there is a substantial presence of type 4 material, a sequence of five consecutive type 3 motifs occurs at bar 59.
Towards the end of the piece, there is a sense of varied return to the way of combining type at the beginning of the piece. The long notes appearing in the flute (from bar 84) and the rest of the material played by the clarinet are reminiscent of the first bars. Apart from a brief, joint irruption of type 4 material in bar 87, the sustained long notes in the flute and the more mobile figurations in the clarinet will continue until bar 95, where type 4 material leads the piece to its end.

**Tándems**

As mentioned above, *Tándems* deal with the constant use of a restrictive number of materials. In terms of pitch content, I tried to create gestural variety with a limited number of pitches only by varying their order and position. *Tándems’* pitch material is taken from *Constantis*. The three pieces that make *Tándems* feature the same pitch collection in many varied ways.
As shown in example 22, and eleven-element pitch collection is followed by its retrograde transposed a semi-tone up. Two passages from Piece I serve to illustrate treatments of the collection. For the sake of clarity, I have assigned an order number to each tone of the collection.

The first three bars of Piece I feature both versions of the pitch collection in the way shown in the following example.

While the original collection has been set following a strict order, its retrograde version follows a more flexible arrangement. Since I wanted the flute’s upward-line direction to be replicated by the clarinet, it was necessary to modify the ordering in the clarinet. The A, framed by the square, does not belong to the retrograde as it was conceived as a sort of echo of the A (tone 6) in the flute in bar 1. The following example exhibits an analogous treatment in bars 4-5.
Flexibility in the ordering of pitches can also be observed in the first part of the example where pitch number 7 sounds after number 3. Order is resumed, however, after pitch 10.

Piece II also makes use of this technique. Although featuring a contrasting character, Piece II also profits from the same pitch collection and a similar ordering.
The excerpt shown in example 25 contains three different versions of the pitch collection: 1) original; 2) retrograded and transposed a semi-tone up; and, in order to add variety, 3) original transposed a tone down.

From bar 12, a much slower section begins. Here, the pitch ordering is more extensively altered than in previous sections. This apparent lack of consistency, however, is
compensated by the creation of short motifs made of pitch-classes that belong to one of the original series.

Ex. 26, *Tándems*, Piece II, bars 12-16

The following is an instance of this procedure from Piece III which, similarly to Pieces I and II, features the same pitch series, while presenting patterns of repetitive musical gestures, particularly septuplets.

In order to create variety, the first statements of Piece III contain melodic material built from different sections of the pitch collection.

Ex. 27 Pitch collection used in *Tándems*

The above example corresponds to the original and retrograded versions of the collection. The pitches contained inside the boxes (unbroken and dashed) are projected in the
music as shown in example 28, resulting in two short phrases made of three melodic motifs each featuring imitation and a free canonical writing.

Ex. 28.- *Tándems*, Piece III, bars 1-10

The septuplets which populate the piece from bar 12 onwards are another example of the use the collection. These septuplets form a set of recurring gestures that evolve, by means of constant repetition, to become the dominating feature of piece. The first septuplet is introduced in bar 12. It contains the first seven notes of the collection. The second septuplet to appear (bar 14) uses the last seven notes in retrograde – with some liberties, necessary to keep the melodic shape of the gesture within the required register. This manner of articulating segments of the set into the septuplets continues until the end of the piece.
Finally, I would like draw attention to the fact that the septuplet evolves from being a quasi-arabesque gesture to become an all-pervasive motif towards the end of the piece. Its consistent ascending direction makes for a relatively blurred accompanying texture over which a melodic statement unfolds.

**Oboes**

The duo *Oboes*, a piece for two unspecified melodic instruments, deals with similar preoccupations as the pieces discussed above. Here both instrumentalists contribute to a complex and unified instrument. Although *Oboes* has been conceived as an eminently linear, forward-moving piece, its correct interpretation relies on the performers’ precise coordination and ability to play together.

Ex. 29.- *Oboes*, bars 5-12

Example 29 illustrates the use of similar melodic and rhythmic gestures for both instruments. Rhythmic unisons are to be found throughout the entire piece and constitute, alongside the constant use of the rhythmic and melodic patterns they generate, the main feature of the piece. As in *Incorrigible*, in *Oboes* there is also a tendency to limit the amount
of material and a reliance on the combination and repetition of a small number of gestures. In this regard, triplets and quintuplets are the most recurrent rhythmic gestures. To make them memorable, I decided to fill these gestures with recurrent pitch material and repeat them in different parts of the piece. Example 29 shows some of these repetitive gestures. For instance, the quintuplet found in bar 7 is featured again at the end of that bar and also in bars 13 and 15. At bar 13, the quintuplet appears followed by a series of two triplets and a short gesture formed by a semiquaver and a quaver. That same combination, which appeared first in bars 7-8, will reappear at various points throughout the piece (e.g. bars 31-34), notably towards the end of the piece.

_Oboes_ also tends to feature major sevenths. The most noticeable major seventh (E-D#) is found in bar 2. Its constant repetition, always in the same register, works as a device that constantly reminds the listener of the beginning of the piece. I have also made use of this interval as a connection between certain sections of the piece (see bar 17, and bars 41-43).
V. Ciclo Altazor (Altazor Song Cycle)

Ciclo Altazor is a set of three settings for alto and different combinations of instruments: Crujen las ruedas de la tierra (The wheels of the earth creak)26, Silencio la tierra va a dar a luz un árbol (Silence the earth will give birth to a tree)27, and Todo ha de alejarse en la muerte (Everything must go off to death)28. Its title is derived from a book by Chilean poet Vicente Huidobro entitled Altazor o El Viaje en Paracaídas (Altazor or The Parachute Trip)29. The poem belongs to a literary tendency inaugurated by Huidobro30 with his Horizonte carré, book published in 1917, known as ‘creacionismo’ (creationism) characterised by abstraction, oniric images and a free use of the Spanish language. Huidobro organised his poems into seven sections (cantos). Each canto is, in turn, organised in stanzas. So as to give the pieces a sense of coherence, and since Altazor is a poem of gigantic dimensions, I decided to use only some stanzas, the ones that feature the word ‘muerte’ (death). Each of the selected stanzas is set as a different song and each piece takes its title from the first line of the stanza.

In the following examples I will briefly discuss how I created recurring motifs and used them as points of reference. From a technical point of view, it is that recurrence the element that provides these pieces with coherence and constitute the work’s most important feature. I see the voice, at least in these pieces, as an integral part of the ensemble and not as a part meant to be accompanied by the instruments. The text is ‘just’ and excuse that provides the sombre character of the work. In Altazor, the pitches given to the voice do not come from

26 As translated by Eliot Weinberger in Altazor Edición Bilingüe
27 ibid.
28 ibid.
29 ibid.
the ensemble but are introduced by the singer. I am completely aware of the exigencies these particular pieces set for the performer and how taxing this situation can be for her. It is worth noting, however, that I have provided some notes which assist the singer at the beginning of her lines, so that the chances of error are minimised.

Great attention has been paid to making the words understandable while often taking expressive liberties in the way I extend certain syllables.

Ex. 30.- *Crujen las ruedas de la tierra*, bars 28-31

Example 30 shows how the natural stress of the word ‘cielo’ (sky), which is on the first syllable, has been moved in order to follow the crescendo happening in the ensemble. This change, however, has been compensated by the descending movement in the last part of the word (syllable ‘lo’). Additionally, the first syllable appears in the downbeat, which helps to minimise the impact of the stress moving towards the second syllable via a crescendo.
In terms of their structural organisation and phrase construction, these pieces set the text ‘verse by verse’ with a musical interlude between each line. By doing this, I have been able to explore the character of each verse.

Each piece features a characteristic collection of gestures which aims to create memorable points of reference across series of events. In *Crujen*, for instance, the linear repetition of pitches, which appears for the first time in the violoncello at bar 1 (G sharp) is echoed on different pitches and by different instruments throughout the piece (see for instance the violoncello at bar 4, clarinet and violin at bar 11, violin at bar 44).

In *Silencio*, on the other hand, the number of recurring gestures is slightly more concentrated in certain parts of the composition. The short gesture made of broken octaves played by the piano in bars 1 and 2 constitutes the piece’s most memorable point of reference due to both the dynamic indication and the register in which it unfolds. The first 15 bars of the piece serve as an introduction in which broken octaves alongside fast upward melodic lines create compound gestures, which in turn provides memorable material. The broken octaves appear timidly again at bar 59 and later, this time with more panache, in bars 64-65. Other instances are, for example, bar 72 (in a lower register and quieter) and 75.

Finally, the use of motifs as points of reference and signals finds its most noticeable use in *Todo ha de alejarse en la muerte*. The introduction of this composition for alto and piano, which goes from bar 1 to 8, features all the memorable gestures which are to be found later. The two-voice material featured in bar 8 is particularly important as it will appear later on a number of occasions (see bars 49-51, 53, 68). This way of organising the material allows me to treat each verse with its own elements while also, by using recurring gestures at certain points, particularly between verses, keeping a coherent and understandable piece of music.
VI.  *Concertante*

While *Concertante* summarises the main artistic concerns addressed during my almost four years of research, it also shows a different way of dealing with those problems and interests. *Concertante* is intended as a virtuosic show piece. The result is a work that falls in the tradition of concerto writing where the solo instrument is opposed and accompanied by the orchestra in a theatrical way. Even though I cannot quote a specific musical influence, composers like Bohuslav Martinů, Ján Novák, and George Gershwin have, to some extent, permeated my aesthetic thinking. Martinů’s and Novák’s relentless forward rhythmical movement, as exposed in their piano concertos, constitutes the spiritual basis of *Concertante*.

Like in previous pieces, *Concertante* deals with continuity and repetition and can be perceived as an endless fluctuation involving recognisable music gestures and their constant and unchanged emergence throughout the piece. The musical material is constantly recycled in an almost literal manner. *Concertante* tends to feature dense and continuous sonic textures which are an intentional strategy to avoid silence and vacuum.

I have modelled *Concertante* on the first bars of a short piece for piano entitled *Peccadillo*, written the previous year, and it constitutes, to certain extent, a much-expanded version of that piece. *Concertante*’s first four bars are almost an orchestral version of the first two bars of *Peccadillo*. What follows, however, is a developed, augmented, and elaborated interpretation of those bars.

The general form of this piece can be understood in the following way:

- Part One: (bars 1-142)
- Part Two: (bars 143-335)
- Part Three: (bars 336-391)
• Epilogue: (bars 392-449)

Each part features its own internal subdivisions and presents a sort of emotional continuum. Each section constitutes a unified entity in which highly distinguishable phrases, statements, developments and motifs bind each section together. I have not followed, however, any strict model nor based this composition on any other, as my creative and compositional process tends to rely on intuition rather than on any preconceived musical or discursive structure. In this piece, nevertheless, I only held on to the use of material that comes from Peccadillo, as a way of maintaining unity and coherence.

Before proceeding, it is worth noting a couple of characteristics of the way music examples will be shown in the next section. When dealing with Concertante, almost all examples will come from the piano. This responds to the fact that in Concertante the orchestra is most of the time constrained to echo what has been musically presented by the piano. Except for certain passages, where the music is being led by the orchestra (e.g. bars 5-16, 101-114 and 211-235), it is from the piano that the relevant material springs, chiefly pitch and motivic content.

**From Peccadillo to Concertante**

In this sub-section I shall explore how Peccadillo, a two-minute piece for piano solo, is transformed into a bigger, elaborated showpiece for piano and chamber orchestra.

Both pieces emphasise the brilliant colour of the piano and provide many opportunities for bravura and a more intimate musical expression by a very idiomatic writing, seeking the greatest effect with the least possible challenges to the performer. Both compositions have been conceived as showpieces meant for the display of the performer’s technical brilliance and, in the case of Concertante, enabling the instrument to stand out clearly as solo. In addition to this, both pieces deal with a constant use and literal repetition of
a determined set of musical gestures or motifs. In the case of *Peccadillo*, two main motifs stand out: 1) C sharp accompanied by a descending melodic line (bar 1) and; 2) a progression of three chords, also accompanied by a descending melodic line, found in bar 6. These two motifs, alongside material derived from them, constitute the core of the piece as they constantly recur between newly appearing gestures. This has been expanded in *Concertante* by following a similar procedure of organising music material (this will be discussed in more detail later).

The character and mood of *Concertante* is markedly influenced by the degree to which material from Peccadillo, especially its pitch content, has been developed and extended. The material found in the first 4 bars of *Concertante*, for instance, is an extended, orchestrated version of *Peccadillo*’s first 5 beats. It is worth noting that the original compound metre (12/8 time signature) has been translated into 4/4. This transformed the original grouping of six semiquavers into sextuplets which, in turn, became the main rhythmic motif in the new piece. In order to create a denser sound, the original series of descending melodic lines played by the left hand have been superimposed onto a different version of the same melodic line in which, while containing the same pitch material, the sequence in which pitches appear has been altered. The idea of superimposition of different versions of a similar melodic line as a way of creating sonic density is a recurring compositional device and can be seen throughout the entire composition.

Examples 31 and 32 show *Peccadillo*’s original descending lines and their resulting organisation in *Concertante*.
As explained above, the original sequence G-F-E_B-B_G (in the violin) has been superimposed onto the same pitches ordered in a different way E_B-B_G-G-F (viola and cello).

Turning again to *Peccadillo*, specifically to the first beat of bar 2, we see a descending line played by the left-hand. This line undergoes a similar treatment in *Concertante* as the one found at the beginning of the piece. This time, however, it is superimposed against three other different sequences of the same line and for a longer period of time. The new verticalities
generated out of this superimposition create a dense sonority, while also establishing the
descending sextuplet as an important device.

Another observation that can be made about Concertante’s pitch material is that, even
though it is always derived from Peccadillo, it undergoes many changes throughout the piece.
Transposing by a third and a semitone are the most common ones. The pitches contained in
Peccadillo’s first beat, for example, can be seen functioning as an accompanying melodic
line to a short vertical gesture played by the right hand. In order to create variety, I have used
those original pitches, featuring them in their original state while subsequently transposing
them by a semitone.

Ex. 33.- Pitch collection from Peccadillo’s bar 1, first beat

Ex. 34.- Pitch collection in original state and its subsequent transpositions

The pitch collections shown in the examples above serve as material for bars 17-23
and 30-35. The next example shows the actual unfolding of these pitches and their
transportations.
The quintuplets featured in bars 52-53 are also a clear instance of a different use of the pitch material. The first quintuplet is made of the pitches contained in the first and second transposition of the pitch collection from *Peccadillo’s* first beat of bar 1. Featuring those pitches in their original order but alternating dyads and individual notes, I created a distinctive motif which has in turn been transposed by a descending major third twice.

The above example shows the notes used in the quintuplet motif by placing them inside the box. The resulting motif and its actual scoring is represented in the following example.
What follows is a more straightforward and simpler compositional device. From the second beat of bar 53, the left hand executes a series of three sextuplets against a short arabesque-like melody in the right hand. The content of the first sextuplet belongs to the second transposition of *Peccadillo*’s pitch collection. Each subsequent sextuplet features the same notes transposed by a semitone. *Peccadillo*’s collection has also undergone further transformations. In the passage at the beginning of Part Two (bar 143), the same pitch collection unfurls in a less horizontal, more verticalised and forward-moving fashion. On this occasion, the selection of pitches comes from a mixture of the original and first transpositions (see example 34). Also, the pitches in the woodwind section, which also derive from that collection, freely vary the material featured in the piano. The string section provides harmonic background by doubling the piano while also emphasising some notes to create variety inside the dense texture.
In regard to the idea of rule-bound composition and the use of limited amount of material, and analogous to my already explained reiterative use of material and its placement in the score, Part Two also features this compositional procedure. Bars 143 to 157, for example, contain all the material to be used in the rest of Part Two which can be divided into two statements: The first statement goes from bar 143 to 154 while the second starts at the end of 154 finalising in 157. From these two statements I have derived three different types of material: 1) quaver-based, 2) triplet-based, and 3) semiquaver-based. Bars 143 to 154 contain the first statement which is going to be repeated later yet in a shorter version. Here, the piano executes a three-part passage while the orchestra doubles the low and middle voices. A closer look will show that its final part (from bar 152) contains a triplet which breaks with, until now, binary division of the pulse. The final part of the statement (from the
second beat of bar 152 to the end of the second beat of bar 154) will appear on various occasions throughout the score (i.e. 158-160, 162-164).

The motivic interlinking between the constituent sections of Part Two is clearly exemplified in bars 158 to 166 where the types of material appear in the following order: 2-1-3-2-1-3-2-3. From bar 166 onwards follows a section where type 3 material is further developed.

Ex. 39.- *Concertante*, piano part, bars 158-166

![Ex. 39.- *Concertante*, piano part, bars 158-166](image)
The first statement appears again at bar 175. Here, however, its last part (semi-quaver-based) begins a developmental section analogous to that starting in bar 166.

**Cadenza**

The section encompassed in bars 211 to 235 introduces the cadenza. Here, the orchestra, especially the string section, is given timbral prominence. The music has been shaped in a free imitative fashion while allowing triplets to unfold most of the melodic material. The calmness of this segment is only interrupted by the piano and woodwind sections, which perform reminiscences of type 2 and 3 materials. The beginning of the cadenza, bar 236, has been constructed from type 3 material. As the music continues, quadruplets in forte emerge, interrupting the discourse. It is from bar 244 that the piano begins its intervention without any orchestral accompaniment. This cadenza summarises all thematic material used in Part Two. In bar 261, still on the cadenza, starting with the left hand, a series of two-part descending quadruplets unfolds. These descending gestures, which are repeated three times, lead to the following section whose repetitive use of descending quadruplets follows directly from the idea proposed by the piano. The connection between these two adjacent sections goes beyond the use of a similar gesture, being also connected by means of a constant repetition of a music segment. In this case, the segment goes from bar 268 to 275. The same procedure is applied from the last beat of bar 278 until 284. In this regard, this particular passage mirrors and extends the idea of recurrence found in bars 76-80 and 101-111, also in the woodwind section, where recurrent short motifs constantly unfold.

**Final Remarks**

In general, *Concertante* can be seen as an endless fluctuation between repetitive and recognisable musical gestures that constantly reappear in varied sequences and shapes. In this regard, the final sections of the piece, Part 3 and Epilogue, act as a synthesis of the whole
work while constituting a camouflaged return to the spirit and material of the opening bars. As in previous sections, the Epilogue also circulates material from Part 1 (octaves) while introducing a new motif in the top of the register (string section). The treatment of this motif is already familiar as it also constitutes an element to be constantly repeated throughout this short section. Contrary to what has been happening in previous sections, where all the material came from the piano, here it is the piano that joins the orchestra, doubling the double basses until bar 404, reassuming its role as a solo instrument at the very end of the piece.
VII. Epilogue

While this portfolio encompasses a diverse set of compositions, ranging from pieces for duos, mixed ensemble and chamber orchestra, all the pieces share a common concern with the use and organisation of a limited amount of both pitch and rhythmic material. While using dense collections of pitches for extended periods of time, I have often attempted to create tonal hierarchies by projecting particular pitch levels and/or by means of their constant repetition. The creation of memorable musical events and their use as points of reference in the discursive unfolding of the pieces also constitutes a common feature. This is particularly relevant in Ciclo Altazor and Mecánico, Lírico y Preciso. In Ciclo Altazor, each piece features a characteristic collection of gestures which create memorable points of reference and act as interludes which musically connect each verse. In the case of Mecánico, the repetitive occurrence of a three-note gesture also constitutes a memorable gesture while acting as a unifying musical element. Another example of this way of working can be found in Constantis where the extensive use of sextuplets also serves to preserve the thematic unity of the piece.

The earlier pieces in this portfolio (Dana, Contorno Circular, Constantis and Reqle) tend to prioritise a more stationary and uniform harmonic and timbric motion while avoiding literal repetition of sections. In these pieces I sought to create floating, not-thematically linked sonic events but sonically concatenated episodes that leads to the end of the pieces as in a journey from point A to point B. This thematic disconnection, which gives the impression of a lack of goal-directed development, does not necessarily contradict my self-imposed principle of constantly reusing material but shows a loose conception of form where almost no literal repetition is featured. The opposite occurs in Peccadillo, Oboes, Concertante and, to some extend in Tándems (Piece II). In Peccadillo and Oboes there is an obvious sense of return to the material featured at the beginning of the pieces whereas in
Concertante each section can be perceived as a self-contained entity almost exclusively featuring only one ‘affect’ (as understood by Baroque theorists) at a time. In these pieces, and especially in Concertante, literal repetition of sections and gestures plays a critical role in their dramatic unfolding. It might be said that the latter pieces correspond to a sort of neoclassical use of musical forms. To some extent, such an influence, albeit not totally conscious, can indeed be found. As I have acknowledged in the preface, Bohuslav Martinů and his students have influenced my musical language. Martinů’s neoclassical approach and saturated, over-repetitive use of rhythmic patterns can be seen in Concertante and Inexcusable Negligence. Those repetitive patterns, paired with a constant use of a limited number of pitches, create a sense of stasis which I sought to explore and exploit in the above-mentioned scores.

I have found it useful to re-use and re-signify elements taken from earlier compositions into new pieces. As seen in chapters III and VI, this way of working has allowed me to explore the possibilities of extending material from a short piece into a larger one (as in the case of Peccadillo and Concertante) and extracting pitch material from small parts of a composition so as to re-use it and extend it by means of different processes of transformation (as in Dana and the subsequent pieces discussed in chapter III). Nevertheless, in spite of the common techniques used for construction of the pieces and their common artistic concerns, ultimately each one aspires to stand alone for its uniqueness and independence.

All the ideas presented above are the result of my preference to work within a compositional environment governed by certain rules. All the pieces considered in this commentary originate in former compositions, which in turn provide the material to be used and extended in the new works. By limiting the material to the elements obtained from a previously composed piece and deciding to make use of an also limited number of gestures,
normally found at the beginning of the new piece, I created a rule-bound method of composition that relies on a previously composed work as a source. This working strategy, however, does not prevent me from freely combining gestures, rhythmic figurations and other parameters such as dynamics, tempo, timbre, etc., as variety and dramatic changes can be obtained by many means, especially by controlling the number of elements unfolding at the same time in a given composition. That control, however, mainly relies on intuition and my own aural expectations, informed by the composers mentioned above. In that sense, I am convinced that musical influence can occur at both conscious and unconscious levels. In this text, I have tried to acknowledge my consciously adopted influences while also trying to contextualise my compositional approach. My relationship with the music of Takemitsu, for instance, and his use of modes and tones (as discussed in Chapter III), before the writing of this text, has always been limited to the careful listening and not to a deeper technical understanding of his compositional techniques. This, however, does not hinder his influence on my music, albeit unconscious, but reinforces the idea that influence comes in various, not-necessarily-conscious, ways. Heitor Villa-Lobos was very vocal in denying any kind of musical influences to the extent of altering the chronology of some of his compositions, so that the pieces could appear as truly original and not influenced by Stravinsky\(^\text{32}\). I have no intention of denying any influence nor of claiming that ‘I learned music from a bird in the jungle’, and ‘not from academies’ as Villa-Lobos has been quoted to have said\(^\text{33}\).

Amongst my current concerns there is one which is currently informing my pieces with more strength: To create works which can be performed by a wide range of performers and used during their formative years. In that sense, I have decided to limit the technical difficulties, so that my music can be approached by performers not specialised in


contemporary music. *Peccadillo* is one of the first compositions that fulfils that criterion. This approach does not affect the artistic qualities of my art works, but seeks, in a very humble way, to reunite the performer, the public (or bourgeois society, as Helmut Lachenmann angrily call those ‘seekers of Beauty’, which he heatedly pairs with ‘artistic pleasure’34) with the music composed today (I am aware that this is a huge generalization as there are many different kinds of musics being written today). Lachenmann is correct in his diagnosis when he states that society demands, for whatever reason, comprehensibility and beauty, while also blaming what he calls the ‘aesthetic apparatus’35 for the inability of the listener to understand non-tonal music. My possible leanings to a neo-classical use of form can be seen as an aspiration to a more intelligible musical discourse. This return, however, would not lead me, I hope, to an all-tonal kind of composition nor to a ‘new simplicity’ approach to music writing. My objective, at least at this point, is firstly to compose music that I would like to perform or listen to and, secondly, to write music that could easily fit into the repertoire of a performer or group non-specialised in performing contemporary music exclusively. In other words, to bridge the existing gaps between artists and audiences by making them (us) aware of the fact that music is just another expression of humanity. In that sense, I do not aspire to place music and the arts above all human endeavours but to give them their place for the good they provoke when studied and appreciated.

My rule-bound compositional approach cannot be compared to that of Boulez who attempted to extend twelve-tone technique beyond melody and harmony to rhythm, dynamics, timbre, articulation, and texture36. There is in my approach, however, despite its rules, room for flexibility, as it still allows improvisation to have a say in the decision-making

35 ibid.
process. This approach responds to an inner necessity to control, but also to create music which can be enjoyed for the sake of the pleasure it can offer. Sadly, I cannot account for the pleasure (or discomfort) that my music provokes in those who choose to listen to it. I can, nevertheless, account for my own enjoyment both when writing and listening.
### Appendix

**Altazor song cycle:**

Texts in Spanish and English translated by Eliot Weinberger

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<th>Spanish Text</th>
<th>English Translation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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Bibliography


Duncan, Stuart Paul. "Re-Complexifying the Function(s) of Notation in the Music of Brian Ferneyhough and the "New Complexity"." *Perspectives of New Music* 48, no. 1 (2010)

Evans, Peter. “Martinu the Symphonist.” *Tempo*, no. 55-56 (1960)


Marcos STUARDO

Ciclo Altazor
(Altazor Song Cycle)
(2016)

for alto and mixed ensemble
Instrumentation

Crujen las ruedas de la tierra
Alto, Clarinet in B flat, Violin and Cello

Todo ha de alejarse en la muerte
Alto and Piano

Silencio la tierra va a dar a luz a un árbol
Alto, Flute, Clarinet in B Flat, Piano, Violin and Cello
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Crujen las ruedas de la tierra

Score in C
Duration: 5 minutes circa

Text: Vicente Huidobro
Music: Marcos Stuardo
Como una fecha

el árbol que crece

Como el_
Todo ha de alejarse en la muerte

Duration: 6-7 minutes circa

Text: Vicente HUIDOBRO
Music: Marcos STUARDO
Alt.

muer - te.

Yo__ tú__

Pno.

P

Alt.

él__ nosotros vosotros

Pno.

P

Alt.

tros__ ellos Ayer hoy__ mañana

Pno.

mf
para la eternidad

del caos incansable

mf

cresc.
Justicia ¿qué has hecho de mí Vicente Huidobro?

Se me cae el dolor de la lengua

...y las a...las marchitas
¿Qué has hecho de mi voz cargada de pájaros en el atardecer
la voz que me dolía como sangre?

ejecutar a tempo
cuando escuche la
palabra "pájaros"

---

Pesante.

F legatissimo
cresc.
cresc. sempre

cresc. sempre
cresc.
Silencio la tierra va a dar a luz un árbol

Score in C
Duration: 5 minutes circa

Text: Vicente HIDOBRIO
Music: Marcos STUARDO
Y cada pluma tiene un distinto temblor

Abo ra que
Dios se sienta sobre la tempestad
Marcos STUARDO

Concertante

(2017)

for piano and chamber orchestra
Instrumentation:
Duration: 18 – 20 minutes circa

Solo Piano

Score in C

Flute
Oboe
Clarinet in B flat
Violins I
Violins II
Violas
Cellos
Double basses

Accidentals apply to subsequent notes on the same staff position for the remainder of the measure in which they occur.
Marcos STUARDO

Constantis

(2014)

for flute, clarinet, piano, violin and viola
Marcos STUARDO

Contorno Circular

(Circular Outline)

(2015)

for chamber orchestra
Instrumentation

Flute
Oboe
Clarinet in B Flat
Bassoon
Horn in F
Trumpet in B Flat
Violins I
Violins II
Violas
Cellos
Double Basses

Score written in C
Duration: 12 minutes circa
Contorno Circular
(Circular Outline)

Marcos STUARDO

Score in C
Duration: 12’ circa
Marcos STUARDO

Dana

(2015)

for flute, clarinet, piano, violin and violoncello
MARCOS STUARDO

Dana
Marcos STUARDO

Oboes

(2016)

for two melodic instruments
Oboes
for two melodic instruments

Marcos STUARDO

(Duration: 3'30" circa)

with energy, precision and refinement

(=92)
Marcos STUARDO

Reqle

(2014)

for flute, clarinet, marimba, harp, violin, double-bass
Marcos STUARDO

Tándems

(2016)

Three pieces for flute and clarinet in B-flat
Duration: 1' 45'' circa
Transposing Score

Marcos STUARIO
II

Duration: 1' 40" circa
Transposing Score

Marcos STUARDO
Marcos STUARDO

Two Pieces for Piano

(2015)

for piano
Matices Grises
(Gray Nuances)  Marcos STUARDO

(Duration: 2' circa)

*Muy tranquilo y delicado*

Accidentals apply to subsequent notes on the same staff position for the remainder of the measure in which they occur, unless explicitly changed by another accidental.

*R.H.*

*Very calm and delicate*
Áspero Sendero
(on a Rough Path)

Marcos STUARDO

Duration: 1' 20" circa

(\textit{i}=70 circa)

Como caminando por un áspero sendero*

\*As walking on a rough path
Marcos STUARDO

Peccadillo

(2016)

for piano
Accidentals apply to subsequent notes on the same staff position for the remainder of the measure in which they occur, unless explicitly changed by another accidental.

To Danor Quinteros

Peccadillo

Duration: 2 minutes circa

Marcos STUARDO
Marcos STUARDO

Incorrigible Negligence

(2015)

for flute and clarinet
Marcos STUARDO

Mecánico, Lírico y Preciso
(Mechanical, Poetic and Precise)
(2015)

for piano
Duration: 3’ circa

Mecánico, Lírico y Preciso
(Mechanical, poetical and precise)

\( \text{\textit{mf}} \) \( \text{\textit{p}} \)

With mechanical and poetical precision

Marcos STUARDO