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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA SAN DIEGO

Building an Emotionally Expressive Performance plus two Creative Projects

A Thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

in

Music

by

Mariana Flores

Committee in Charge:

Professor Susan Narucki, Chair
Professor Anthony Davis
Professor Wilfrido Terrazas Perez

2021

The Thesis of Mariana Flores is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically.

University of California San Diego

2021

DEDICATION

To my parents, Luisana and Gabriel

for always being by my side with unconditional love and support.

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File 1: Video file, flores_01_la_llorona_project_part_1.avi

File 2: Video file, flores_02_la_llorona_project_part_2.avi

File 3: Audio file, flores_morenita_mia.wav

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Likewise, I want to acknowledge Professor Anthony Davis for generously sharing his knowledge and inspire with his stories.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge my talented colleges Kathryn Schulmeister and Joseph Bordeau, for their commitment and engagement for La Llorona Project.

ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Building an Emotionally Expressive Performance plus two Creative Projects

by

Mariana Flores

Master of Arts in Music

University of California San Diego, 2021

Professor Susan Narucki, Chair

The following master's thesis consists of two descriptive papers of two creative projects and a performative analysis. The first creative project describes an experimental approach to the famous Mexican son, *La Llorona*, as my first step towards a new sub-genre: Experimental Mexican Traditional Music. The second creative project is a composition, with a political subject, of an opera aria that integrates elements from Mexican folk music. The third paper is a performative analysis of how I built an emotionally expressive performance of the piece *A su*

retrato by Georgina Derbez, a piece that I performed in my master's recital in my second year in the Music Department at UC San Diego.

Part 1

La Llorona Project

This project is an experiment that arose from an interest in bringing experimental improvisation and Mexican folk music together. Through the project, I aimed to expand the Mexican folk music sound frontiers and propose a sound aesthetics from Mexican traditional music to experimental improvised music. I consider this project my first exploration towards a new sub-genre: Experimental Mexican Traditional Music.

My grandfather learned to sing and later play the guitar when he was a child, during the breaks between long hours of work picking cotton in the fields of Mexicali. He learned a vast repertoire of songs by listening to different genres of Mexican music such as modern mariachi, *son jarocho*, *son istmeño*, Mexican bolero, and *canCIÓN ranchera*. He learned most of these genres listening to the radio, in a time when they were promoted by the Mexican government to advance the official Mexican nationalist ideology during the 20th Century (Moreno, 1997, Villalobos, 2015). He went to school in the mornings, worked on the fields in the afternoons, and played in a trio in bars at night to help support his family. He says that my great-grandmother loved to sing, and she had a beautiful voice. After studying to be a *maestro normalista* (teacher) and an artist, he became a music teacher and taught many generations of children to play the music he learned as a child. When he had children of his own, he taught them too, and when his children had children, my grandfather and his children joined forces in order to instruct the new generation. In that third generation, I was born. I have a strong family connection with the nationalistic repertoire that my grandfather and my father instilled in me.

Some years ago, while I still was a music undergraduate student at the Autonomous University of Baja California (UABC), I heard a music group called the Sibarg Ensemble. It is an ensemble of UC San Diego alumni who present themselves as a group that “explores a creative intercultural music-making by combining the sounds of traditional Iranian music and jazz.” I found their music remarkably interesting and inspiring, and this experience opened a door to new thoughts and interests for me.

Years later, as a graduate student at UCSD. I enrolled in MUS 201A: Projects in New Music Performance seminar, taught by Professor Wilfrido Terrazas during the Spring Quarter of 2020. The course focused on improvisation, and the professor promoted creativity, collaboration, and development of personal projects. In one of the sessions of the seminar, we listened to the album *Full Force* by the Art Ensemble of Chicago. It was a delight. Their improvisations are so well executed that you can almost hear their self-confidence, the trust between the members of the ensemble, and their freedom to explore and extend the jazz sound. All my previous experiences somehow crystalized in MUS 201A and led me to propose and direct “La Llorona Project,” which I will explain later in this paper.

I recently found the album *De brujas peteneras y chachalacas* by La Bruja de Texcoco (aka Octavio Mendoza), which contains five original songs recorded in 2019 and integrates sounds from different genres of Mexican folk music and sounds from experimental music (Mendoza,2019). It is important to me to mention La Bruja de Texcoco’s work because it is an example of another musician with musical interests that are similar to mine. Before I knew of their work, I had not found out of any other explorations involving experimental improvisation and Mexican folk music. Knowing La Bruja de Texcoco’s music has been overly exciting and

encouraging. I think that it is important to continue exploring our musical identity, not just by repeating the traditions of our families or cultures as we learned them, but also transforming and redesigning them.

“La Llorona Project” started as the final assignment for the MUS 201A seminar in the Spring Quarter of 2020. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the project took place over Zoom. I collaborated with UCSD Professor Wilfrido Terrazas, a Mexican flutist and a fantastic improviser; the bassist Kathryn Schulmeister; and the percussionist and composer Joseph Bourdeau. Both Kathryn Schulmeister and Joseph Bourdeau are doctoral students at UCSD, and incredible improvisers as well.

To start our musical experiment, I proposed three Mexican songs to my collaborators and asked them to choose one: the *son istmeño La Llorona*, and two *sones jarochos*, *El Coco* and *La Bruja*. I also provided them with two or three different versions of each *son* so they could be aware of the existing variations and different interpretations. (*Son* is an umbrella term used to depict many musical genres found in various musical traditions throughout Mexico).

After listening to the songs, we chose *La Llorona*. Some of the collaborators agreed to it just because they liked it, and others because they had a special connection with it. This *son* is incredibly famous; and, therefore, many versions exist. It is usually performed in a rather a slow tempo, which allows lots of room to insert other musical ideas, and so I thought it would be ideal for musical exploration.

The versions of *La Llorona* that we listened to were a) a traditional version by Los Hermanos Ríos (Ríos, 2014); b) a *ranchera* version by Chavela Vargas (Guerrero, 2018); and c)

a modern *banda* Oaxaqueña version by Lila Downs (Downs, 2019). Afterwards, I provided my collaborators with the chord progression of the *son*.

For the first approach, in March 2020, we agreed to record the explorations without rehearsal. I proposed to review *La Llorona*'s chord progression and improvise on it —We could either improvise within the harmony or the melody, or we could improvise by exploring experimental sounds that could evoke the *son*.

I wanted to keep true to the song's feeling of calm, mystery, sorrow, and spirituality. Therefore, we all wore headphones, and recorded ourselves separately while we were connected, improvising together over Zoom.

In this improvisatory exploration, we recorded three takes. After each take, we exchanged feedback, commenting about the development of materials, agreeing on solo parts, and highlighting essential elements of the song. The first and third take were about seven minutes long, and the second one was about nine minutes long. Because we were improvising together over Zoom, the sound we heard from each other was not entirely clear because of the audio shortcomings of the platform (i.e., latency and involuntary audio distortions). We could not know the actual result of our improvisation in the moment. Still, we were aware of the general atmosphere we created together and what we did individually, which we thought was successful

Joseph volunteered to put together and mix the recordings. Once the mix was ready, we could listen to the actual improvisation we did. The results were not only excellent, but also quite different from what we had heard separately during the live performance over Zoom. The atmosphere we created truly evokes *La Llorona*, and I found that fascinating. The melody was there but not explicitly, and the bass line, which is especially important in *La Llorona*, was

present too, coming in and out occasionally. The lyrics were also there but fragmented or represented by sound. However, the rhythms were lax due to our regard for the latency caused by playing over Zoom, but this turned out to be a compelling display of much desired instability.

Two months later, I received an invitation to participate as a guest of the First Festival of Composers and Sound Artists of Baja California 2020, and chose to present the “La Llorona Project.” I wanted to revisit the *son* and see if we could keep more of the original in our version of the piece. I thought that a good idea would be to come up with a scheme to guide our improvisation and agree on a specific moment where the song would be more present (Fig. 1).

Experimental approach to "La Llorona" song						
	Impro towards Llorona song	Transition Llorona song	Impro Llorona's transformation	Vague reminiscences of La Llorona	Fading	
Flute / Ocarina	spiritual atmosphere Constructing towards Llorona's Melody	Long-tone	Llorona's Melody accompaniment	tutti in crescendo transforming to free impro (climax)	Free impro with occasional Llorona's motifs decreasing energy	Fading atmosphere
Voice	Constructing towards Llorona's melody		Melody with lyrics	tutti in crescendo transforming to free impro (climax)	Free impro with occasional Llorona's motifs decreasing energy	Fading atmosphere
Percussion	spiritual atmosphere		percussion accompaniment	tutti in crescendo transforming to free impro (climax)	free impro decreasing energy	Fading atmosphere
C bass / Ukelele	Impro with Llorona's Continuo		Continuo	tutti in crescendo transforming to free impro (climax)	Free impro with occasional Llorona's motifs decreasing energy	Fading atmosphere

Fig. 1 Scheme for “La Llorona Project”, 2nd version.

The scheme presents an improvisation in an ABA form (colors yellow, pink, and green in Fig. 1). The A sections present an improvisation based on some elements of *La Llorona*; the B section presents our version of the *son*, closer to how it usually sounds; and the second A section presents an improvisation that distances itself from the song, closer to the aesthetics of free improvisation. The other colors of the scheme (orange, red, and beige) are transitions between sections and the Coda.

We started the process by recording the audio and video for section B. We did not record this part through Zoom because I wanted to avoid delays caused by latency. We recorded it asynchronously, starting with me (voice), then Kathryn (bass), followed by Joseph (percussion), and finally Wilfrido (bass flute). This means that I recorded my voice without listening to anyone; Kathryn recorded listening to me; Joseph recorded listening to Kathryn and me; and Wilfrido recorded listening to the three of us. After this process, Joseph mixed the four recordings.

The final mix for part B was exciting. Because we recorded alone, without interaction with anybody but the recordings from the others and the models we shared showed each person's musical personality and background. For example, there were a lot of jazzy sounds, which sounded incredible. I liked the result a lot.

Once we had finished with section B, we met on Zoom to record audio and video for both sections A, this time following the scheme to guide our improvisation instead of freely improvising as we did in the previous version. We started with ~~the~~ recording the first A section, then we listened to the B part that we had prerecorded, and then we recorded the second A section. We repeated this process three times, giving each other feedback after each take. One important comment that I remember was that I wanted to avoid any jazzy sounds in the A

sections because section B already had a few of those, and I wanted to focus the music on sounds coming from the song and experimental atmospheric, noisy sounds. Other comments were more about how fast to arrive to a dynamic or about various technical things.

After this process, Joseph mixed all the recordings in order for us to listen back to each take. Then we chose one of the takes, and, finally, I edited the video (you can find the result of the second version in File 1 and 2).

The second version pleased me entirely. The structure was evident, section B was remarkably successful because it was the only part where we are all in tempo together, and it felt like if we would arrive to the actual song. Also, the material seemed to be more familiar to the ensemble, and we could explore even more sounds.

Although some of my collaborators felt distant from the song we explored, they were able to contribute creatively, connecting with it coming from a type of music with which they were familiar, namely, experimental music. From the performer's perspective, I genuinely believe that experimental music can bridge Mexican traditional music and musicians from different backgrounds and cultures. Therefore, from the listener's perspective, this combination of musics can bring Mexican traditional sounds to experimental music listeners and vice versa, which I think is extremely exciting.

Leading this project has been an enriching experience. I profoundly reflected on my musical heritage, the essence of Mexican traditional music, the goals of my approach to this music, and the role of experimental music in this project. I feel deeply grateful to my collaborators for their commitment, engagement, and enthusiasm for La Llorona Project. I am motivated to continue exploring this field and share the music of the two musical worlds I love: Mexican traditional music and experimental music.

Part 2

Morenita mía:

A Mother's Aria

During Winter 2021, I worked on an opera project for the MUS 206 Experimental Studies class about Opera and Musical Theater, led by Professors Susan Narucki and Anthony Davis. The course focused on developing tools to compose an opera based on a political issue or historical confrontation.

My project is inspired by the massive marches of women throughout Latin America on March 8th, 2020, Women's Day. I was powerfully moved by the enormous number of women marching, dancing, and singing together. They were asking for no more violence against women and girls, no more femicides, and above all, asking to stop corruption in the security and justice system that commonly grants impunity for criminals. After investigating about the femicides mentioned during the marches, I realized there are many more cases than I imagined. I found numerous articles and documentaries by independent journalists and just a few by the main media. I noticed that the little information given by the leading media objectified and questioned the alleged victims' testimonies. Therefore, I proposed an opera in Spanish to talk about how the media interferes with the communication of cases of violence against women and to build empathy for the victims and their families. To further give context about my project, I will explain one scene that I proposed in the following paragraph.

A giant television set hangs at the back of the stage, representing the mainstream media in my imaginary opera staging. The tv turns on with a woman from the news on it. She sings

happily and enthusiastically in an exaggerated way about the advances in gender equality in the country. At the same time, another woman is looking for something with great anguish: running all over the stage and screaming (without making sound, only making facial and body gestures). I imagined the music of the news aria excessively jubilant and loud and the woman's movements on stage extremely expressive. After that, the television turns off, and the woman stays to sing her lament *Morenita mía*.

I decided to compose a lament in which the audience, during the composition, realizes that the woman looking for something on the stage is a mother who has just lost her daughter. The lyrics of the lament are inspired by real testimonies I found in different interviews. One of the sentences that moved me more was from the testimony of Araceli Osorio, mother of Lesvy Berlín Rivera. She said in an interview with *El País*: "Se te van a acabar las lágrimas pero lo que no se te debe acabar es la rabia y el hambre de justicia" which I would translate as: "You may run out of tears, but what you shouldn't run out of, is the anger and the hunger for justice" (El País, 2017)

The piece is scored for solo voice accompanied by guitar in the style of Mexican art song and huapango. Mexican art song commonly uses waltz or ranchera rhythms in $\frac{3}{4}$ playing the bass in the downbeat and the rest of the chord in beats two and three. I chose the Mexican art song style because it is commonly sung with bel canto technique, and I wanted to be closer to operatic sound. On the other hand, I decided to use the huapango rhythm from the north of Veracruz because one of the most important feminist groups in Mexico (Brujas del Mar) are from that region. (You can find the Huapango rhythm in Figure 2).

Besides, the characteristics of these two styles are very different. They would help me develop the mother's emotions: going from a slow tempo, with head voice in high pitches as a painful lullaby to a fast tempo sang with strong chest voice and low pitches expressing rage.



Fig. 2 Huapango Rhythm

The form of the piece is AB + Coda, where part A is about the mother expressing her confusion and pain only knowing that an unidentified man killed her daughter. Part B is where huapango begins and is about the mother telling with courage that she will not give up until she finds justice. The Coda shows the mother losing her voice slowly and little by little after the catharsis.

The Spanish lyrics of the lament *Morenita mía* are below, followed by its translation to English and the music score (Fig. 3). (You can find a recorded version in File 3).

Lyrics:

Morenita mía
Inocente niña
¿Quién se ha robado tu cálido color?

Tus ojos, como estrellas, cerrados se encuentran
y tu risa alegre callada se quedó.

¿Quién es, mi niña, ese hombre que se lleva tus sueños?
¿Quién me ha robado tu cálido color?

Yo me quedo con sus recuerdos,
para que ella descansa en paz

Yo recordaré por ella
lo que ese hombre hizo
Yo lucharé por ella
yo gritaré por ella
a quienes quitaron su voz.
Yo, ella, quitaron, voz
yo, quitaron, voz
quitaron, voz
Voz.

English translation:

My little brunette
Innocent child
Who has stolen your warm color?

Your eyes, like stars, closed are
And your happy laugh, remained quiet.

Who is, my girl, that man who takes your dreams?
Who has stolen your warm color from me?

I keep her memories
so that she may rest in peace.

I will remember for her
what that man did
I will fight for her
I will scream for her
to those who took away her voice.

I, she, took away, voice
I, took away, voice
took away, voice
Voice.

Morenita mia

Music and Lyrics by
Mariana Flores Bucio

A

$\text{♩} = 80$

Dm Gm A Dm

Mo-re-ni-ta mi-a, ino-cen-te ni-ña, ¿Quien sea ro-ba-do tu ca-li-do co-lor?

12 F Bb Gm G# A Dm

Tus o-jos co-mo estre-las ce-rra-dos se en-cuen-tran y tu ri-saa- legre ca-lla-da se quedó

22 C Bb A Dm Gm A Dm

¿Quien es, mi ni-ña, e-se hom-bre que se lle-va tus sue-ños? ¿Quien sea ro-ba-do tu ca-li-do co-lor?

B

32 $\text{♩} = 60$ Dm A Dm

Yo me quedo con sus re-cuer-dos, pa-ra que e-lla descan-se en paz

41 $\text{♩} = 100$ Dm A E

Yo re-cor-daré por e-lla lo que e-se hom-bre hi-zo yo lu-charé por e-lla

Coda

Am

Yo gri-taré por e-lla a qui-e-nes qui-ta-ron su voz

quienes quitaron su voz

Lamenting / airy sound
Improvise on the chords
Am Dm Dm Dm

Fig. 3 Musical Score of *Morenita mía* by Mariana Flores

I think that the selection of the styles for the piece was effective. The Mexican art song style helped convey the mother's sorrow taking advantage of the soprano head voice. On the other hand, the huapango rhythm helped express more energetic emotions. In the end, the coda conveys a sense of sorrow and tiredness. I liked the results of this first step towards a Mexican opera. It was an enriching process where I practiced and learned how to convey emotions through composition efficiently to tell a story.

Part 3

Performative Analysis:

Building an Emotionally Expressive Performance of *A su retrato* by Georgina Derbez.

This paper presents a performative analysis of my personal experience in building an emotional, expressive performance by narrating my learning and analysis process through the piece *A su retrato* by Mexican composer Georgina Derbez. The interest arises from my experience performing my MA Recital in which I felt a strong emotional connection with the piece and felt confident in my emotional expressiveness through my performance of it.

I was standing on the stage of the Conrad Prebys Concert Hall of the Department of Music at UC San Diego, on the evening of March 17, 2021. I was there to record my master's recital, which featured robust and beautiful pieces by three Mexican woman composers of contemporary classical music. Although I felt the regular pre-performance nerves, I felt confident and deeply emotionally connected to the repertoire once I started performing. While I was singing, I felt that all my energy was focused and efficient, reflecting upon my vocal technique and emotional expressiveness: I was performing with truth. This experience sparked my interest to better understand my process in building an emotionally expressive performance. Hence, I am interested in identifying the decisions I took for my emotional approach to the music I performed, which I think were successful, in order to repeat this experience in future pieces through a more precise and more efficient process. Therefore, I decided to analyze and narrate the emotion-relevant process of one of the pieces with which I felt most strongly connected: *A su retrato* (2016) by Georgina Derbez.

On October 20, 2020, I received an email from Georgina Derbez with the *A su retrato* score attached to it. I immediately downloaded the file and started reviewing the piece on my computer. The first things I identified with a naked eye were constant changes of time signatures, some tempo changes, a quite broad use of vocal register, a wide use of dynamics, and a few required extended vocal techniques. Also, I realized that the poem was by Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, arguably the most influential Mexican poet from the 17th century.

One of the musical elements that impacted my attention to a greater degree was dynamics. They are, perhaps, the most predominant element in the piece since every measure in the vocal part has dynamic markings. The piece has a range of dynamics from pianissimo to fortissimo and sforzando, with numerous crescendo and decrescendo marks that indicate agile dynamic changes. I immediately thought of the dynamic markings as invitations by the composer to perform in an emotional and expressive way.

Dynamics indicate loudness in music. They can suggest an abrupt or a gradual change of loudness. They can change regularly or stay without change. They can change abruptly or subtly. In *A su retrato* dynamics are constantly changing, sometimes subtly and at other times abruptly. Since loudness is an important acoustic feature to identify emotions in vocal expression and music, I perceived that *A su retrato* could be performed as a powerful and emotional, expressive piece. A change of dynamics can expose two things: change of type of emotion or a change of intensity of the same type of emotion.

To explain a little more about acoustic features in vocal and musical expression and its relationship with emotions, I will expand slightly on the subject. When I react emotionally in my daily life, it implies physical reactions (e.g., changes in my breathing, muscular tension,

muscular disposition). Those physical reactions affect how I vocally communicate because the timbre, loudness, register (pitch), and tempo of the voice are deeply connected to the body's physical disposition (Levenson, 1994 Juslin & Laukka, 2003, Sauter et al., 2010). The voice is a vulnerable and transparent reflection of our physical state. For example, if I am scared, my body's energy would increase and probably the rhythm of my breathing would increase too. My body would be tense, and if the emotion were intense, (Mayne, 2001, Juslin & Laukka, 2003) the significant amount of muscular tension would provoke my body to shake. If I wanted to communicate vocally in this emotional state, all these physical reactions would cause my voice to have specific acoustic features regarding loudness, timbre, register, and tempo (Johnstone & Scherer, 2000, Juslin & Laukka, 2003). If the emotion intensifies, the physical reaction will change; perhaps, the rhythm of my breathing would increase (e.g., faster inhaling and exhaling) provoking a change in the acoustic features like an increase in loudness in a higher register and possibly a change in timbre and tempo. If the emotion changed to another type (e.g., sadness), I would experience other physical reactions; perhaps decreasing the energy in the body, muscular relaxation, and if the emotion were intense, perhaps muscular collapse. This second physical reaction would change the acoustic features in my voice, e.g., a decrease in loudness (depending on the emotional intensity), a darkening of the timbre (larynx going down), the using of a lower register, and a slower tempo (Gabrielsson, 1999, Sauter et al., 2010).

Coming back to dynamics, I noticed that in *A su retrato*, dynamics were set very coherently with the use of register in terms of vocal technique and the efficient use of the voice. The singing voice needs the fluency to feel free and take full advantage of the instrument; on the contrary, a restricted voice causes involuntary muscular tension, reducing the possibilities to

explore different timbres for emotional vocal communication. The use of dynamics, especially in a high register, helps the singer find the necessary fluency to sing efficiently and expressively.

I printed the score and started working on the melodic line. I usually work first with solfeggio because it helps me build the rhythms, the melodic line, the big intervals, etc., solidly, and consciously. While working on the melody, I identified several wide intervals throughout the piece (e.g., sevenths, eighths, ninths, tenths); most of them were ascending intervals at the beginning of musical phrases in which the first note or notes were short, and the following note was longer. I thought that those repetitive gestures could be linked to emotional expression. My first assumptions were that the repetitive gestures at the beginning of the phrases could represent a repetitive emotion, an emotional reaffirmation, or a sequence of actions with a common purpose.

On the other hand, I found some spots in the piece with long tones and minimal dynamic variations. Some were in the high register, others in the middle register, and others in the low register. Lively melodic lines with agile dynamics were followed by these long tones. Although the transitions from agile to passive melodic lines were fast, they were smooth, connecting the two contrasting melodic behaviors subtly rather than passing abruptly from one melodic behavior to another. I thought that these melodic behavior changes (acoustic feature changes) could be interpreted as an emotional change, perhaps a decrease in intensity of emotion (e.g., from intense anger to mild anger), a smooth change to another emotion with less energy (e.g., from intense anger to mild sadness), or a change of emotional perspective (e.g., from feeling sadness to contemplate sadness).

I kept working on learning the melodic line and realized that all the aforementioned changes took place throughout the piece except in the final part. The piece's last section contrasted with the other sections in register use, general melodic behavior, and dynamics. The final section was quiet with dynamics from pianissimo to piano, was integrated by long tones in the low register with minimal movement in pitch. These kinds of acoustic features are related to emotions with low but constant energy. I thought that depending on the specific emotions I express in the previous sections of the piece, I would know what kind of emotional contrast I would express at the end: perhaps a sense of calm (e.g., low, and relaxed happiness), contemplation (e.g., being reflexive about something), or resignation (e.g., low sadness).

A should note that I am Mexican, and my native language is Spanish, the language used in the piece. Thus, I did not spend much time practicing pronunciation or looking for the meaning of each word in the poem. After working with solfeggio and feeling confident singing the melody, I just added the lyrics to build muscle memory in my mouth articulators. I did not analyze the text at this point.

After learning the melodic line, I started working on the required vocal extended technique. *A su retrato* has three different vocal extended techniques. One is the consonants alternation between (s) and (z), with sforzando, which appears at the end of two phrases. Another technique is a type of trill, which instead of the usual fast pitch changing, requires a fast timbre changing; the composer called it *trino de color* (color trill). It appears four times in the piece, just before the last pitch of the phrase where it is placed, like a gesture on a leading tone, similar to the trills used in Baroque music to embellish the return to the tonic. The third technique is a whisper/unvoiced sound at the end of the piece in the phrase "es sombra", which means "it is

shadow”, and appears only once. I rehearsed the different techniques several times to get used to them, and then I started integrating them into the melodic line. At this point in my process, I was not sure if the extended vocal techniques had an emotional purpose, although I had a hypothesis. I noticed so far that the piece had several aspects that could initiate an emotional, expressive performance; the dynamics, for example, were highly detailed. Heeding that there were only three different vocal extended techniques appearing in a few moments in the piece, I thought that they should have a purpose to highlight specific musical phrases or perhaps certain words. Therefore, the vocal extended techniques could highlight certain emotions in the piece.

Most of the musical features that I had identified in the piece were related to the acoustic features that help us to identify emotions in vocal communication: register, tempo, and loudness. As I mentioned before, these acoustic features are constantly changing in the piece, suggesting emotional movement. Still, with the information I had, I could not tell what specific type of emotions I should express, not even if they were positive or negative. Once I felt that I mastered the complete melodic line, including the vocal extended techniques, I decided to analyze the poem set in the piece to have all the information written in paper and have the emotions suggested in the poem and the acoustic features indicated in the music dialogue with each other.

A su retrato

Este, que ves, engaño colorido,
que del arte ostentando los primores,
con falsos silogismos de colores
es cauteloso engaño del sentido;

este, en quien la lisonja ha pretendido
excusar de los años los horrores,
y venciendo del tiempo los rigores
triunfar de la vejez y del olvido,

es un vano artificio del cuidado
es una flor al viento delicada,
es un resguardo inútil para el Hado:

es una necia diligencia errada,
es un afán caduco y, bien mirado,
es cadáver, es polvo, es sombra, es nada.

To her portrait

These lying pigments facing you,
with every charm brush can supply,
set up false premises of color
to lead astray the unwary eye;

Here, against ghastly tolls of time,
bland flattery has staked a claim,
defying the power of passing years
to wipe out memory and name.

And here, in this hollow artifice,
frail blossom hanging on the wind,
vain pleading in a foolish cause:

poor shield against what fate has wrought,
all efforts fail and in the end,
a body goes to dust, to shade, to naught.

Translation by Alan S. Trueblood.

I started my research about Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz to refresh my knowledge about her and to better contextualize what she wrote. Resuming my findings, Sor Juana was a 17th century (Baroque period) Mexican writer, philosopher, composer, and poet. She was a restless, defiant, curious, and creative woman during her life, disapproved virtues in women in that period. She dedicated her life to God, fleeing from a life as a housewife and pursuing a life of knowledge. Her life as a nun was not easy; her interest in science, mysticism, and politics kept her in a

constant internal struggle with her religious devotion, which demanded certain behaviors and beliefs.

Then I went back to analyze the poem, and according to my interpretation, *A su retrato* is a confrontative metaphor about the vanity of youth, transcendence, and time. Sor Juana, in the first person, with contempt and by way of reproach, expresses her rejection to all forms of vanity and states that it is useless to live in the past, because no matter how beautiful it is, it is a hoax. Although the poem is relatively short compared to many of Sor Juana's writings, Georgina Derbez did not use the entire poem. She removed the following lines:

- 1.- "Este, en quien la lisonja ha pretendido excusar de los años los horrores, y venciendo del tiempo los rigores triunfar de la vejez y del olvido" (in the translated version by Alan S. Trueblood "Here, against ghastly tolls of time, bland flattery has staked a claim, defying the power of passing years to wipe out memory and name").
- 2.- "Es una necia diligencia errada, es un afán caduco y, bien mirado" ("poor shield against what fate has wrought, all efforts fail and in the end").

In my opinion, this decision makes the interpreter focus directly on the words that provoke the emotions rather than focus on the words that receive the emotions. The lyrics become more open, still talking about vanity and pretensions, but not about youth, transcendence, and time.

After analyzing the text, I started building my interpretation of the piece. I had the information I had received from the written music and my interpretation of the poem to identify the emotional changing points in the piece. I had to decide what type of emotion I wanted to express in each changing point. Once I decided what emotions I wanted to express, I explored different timbre possibilities to complement the acoustic features the written music suggested

(loudness, tempo, and register). In the following paragraphs, I will present excerpts from the vocal part of the piece to explain the acoustic features I identified in the written music and what decisions I made to build an emotional, expressive performance.

The musical score shows a vocal line in 4/4 time. It begins with a rest in measure 23. In measure 24, the vocal line starts with a triplet of eighth notes (F, C#, E) marked *p*. This is followed by a half note (F) marked *mf*, a quarter note (C#) marked *p*, and a quarter note (E) marked *p*. In measure 25, there is a triplet of eighth notes (F, C#, E) marked *f*, followed by a half note (F) marked *mf*. In measure 26, the vocal line starts with a triplet of eighth notes (F, C#, E) marked *p*, followed by a half note (F) marked *ff*, a quarter note (C#) marked *f*, and a quarter note (E) marked *sfz*. The lyrics are: 'que del arte ostentando los primores sszzss'.

Fig. 4: Vocal line, measures 23-26, Derbez, *A su retrato* 2016. Used by permission of the composer.

Lyrics: “Que del arte ostentando los primores sszzss”. Literal translation: “That of art flaunting the beauty”. Poetic translation by Alan S. Trueblood: “With every charm brush can supply.”

In this excerpt (Fig. 4), I noticed the repetitive ascending intervals (F, C#, E, or Eb) with similar rhythmic disposition: short – long. This repetitive gesture divides the phrase into three parts. Dynamics had a wide range from piano to fortissimo and sforzando, while having crescendo and decrescendo marks moved the dynamics back and forth between loud and quiet. My interpretation was that an idea rapidly evolved emotionally in three parts: starting with low emotional intensity and ending with high emotional intensity. Considering the lyrics and the musical acoustic features (cues), I wanted to develop my expressiveness by increasing the intensity and changing the type of emotion. I decided to start with disappointment (low sadness), a transition between sadness and anger, and finish with anger. Thus, my timbre and articulation

decisions began with a covered sound with smooth onsets, made a transition with a little brighter sound and less legato, and finished with a bright and concise sound, almost marcato. Besides, there were two extended vocal techniques requirements at the end of the phrase: color trill and “zsz” effect. I found this extremely helpful for expressiveness. I used the color trill to highlight the climax of anger, like the physical reaction of body shaking when we accumulate a significant amount of muscular tension that could be related to anger or fear. Finally, I used the “zsz” vocal extended technique to express containment of the emotion, as if I were prohibited from continuing to express the emotion.

The image shows a musical score for a vocal line, measures 51-57. The score is written on three staves. The first staff shows measures 51-54 with lyrics "es una flor al viento delicada". The second staff shows measures 55-56 with lyrics "ca da mm". The third staff shows measures 57-58 with lyrics "aa ha". Dynamics include *delicatiss.*, *p*, *poco*, *P*, and *pp*. There are also markings for "3" (triplets) and "poco" (ritardando).

Fig. 5: Vocal line, measures 51-57, Derbez, *A su retrato* 2016. Used by permission of the composer.

Lyrics: “Es una flor al viento delicada”. Literal translation: “It is a flower on the wind, delicate”. Poetic translation by Alan S. Trueblood: “frail blossom hanging on the wind.”

This excerpt of the piece begins with the indication *delicatiss*, meaning extremely delicate. It keeps the use of register in the high middle register, and after the last word of the phrase, maintains the previous pitch with long tones on "m," "a," and "ha." The dynamics are always in low intensity with range from piano to piano pianissimo. For me, these suggested that the emotion was stable in a low intensity. I thought that this part was ironically calm and

peaceful, talking about the object's beauty that generates vanity. I decided to exaggerate those feelings of happiness and pleasure by making a light and bright timbre with delicate vibrato and extreme legato articulation. I used the color trill differently for this excerpt and performed it very softly, almost airy, close to a sigh.

The image shows a musical score for a vocal line. It consists of two staves. The first staff is in 4/4 time and contains measures 71-76. The lyrics under the first staff are "es ca da ver es pol vo es sombra". Above the staff, there are performance instructions: "voz vacia, casi ausente", "pp", "poco", "p", and "susurrado". There are also markings for "3" (trills) and "senza vib.". The second staff is in 4/4 time and contains measures 76-79. The lyrics under the second staff are "es na da". Above the staff, there is a tempo marking of "♩=100".

Fig. 6: Vocal line, measures 71-79, Derbez *A su retrato* 2016. Used by permission of the composer.

Lyrics: “Es cadáver, es polvo, es sombra, es nada”. Literal translation: “It’s a corpse, it’s dust, it’s a shadow, it’s nothing”. Poetic translation by Alan S. Trueblood: “a body goes to dust, to shade, to naught”

In this final excerpt the composer indicates a timbre at the beginning of the phrase by writing *Voz vacia, casi ausente*, which translates to empty voice, almost absent. Then she indicates a whisper which I considered a vocal extended technique in this paper, and for the last measures, she asks for a non-vibrato voice. The melody consists of long tones with minimal movement. I thought that the composer wisely used the register since it contrasts with the rest of the piece to separate the emotional approach to the text. Also, it is coherent with the mood of the text: low energy. By identifying the acoustic features (cues) that the composer proposed and my interpretation of the lyrics, this final part shows the relaxation after an intense journey of emotions: rest after catharsis. Furthermore, I thought this ending shows the resultant reflection

with a sense of acceptance and nostalgic emptiness. Therefore, I decided to use a soft chest voice, open timbre.

Once I decided what type of emotions I wanted to express through the piece and decided what timbres and articulations I would use to complement the acoustic features suggested in the written music, I started practicing performance, advice that I took from my vocal instructor Susan Narucki. To practice performance in my daily vocal practice was essential to build the technique memory of the piece and a muscular memory of emotions. I explored, for each emotion, different images from my life that could remind me how each type of emotion felt in my body. The more time I invested practicing performance and exploring images to get involved with the emotions, the easier it was to recall the emotions while singing. The moment came when I no longer needed to see the images in my mind because the emotional relationship migrated from the images to the lyrics and music, building a solid connection with the piece.

The day of the actual performance arrived, and I felt confident about what I wanted to share with *A su retrato*. The emotions that I had decided to express as a result of an analysis of what Georgina Derbez wished to express through her music and an analysis of what Sor Juana wanted to express through her poem became personal emotions from my own emotional life experience. On the other hand, when I was exploring emotions before deciding what type of emotions I wanted to express, I realized that the complex emotions (e.g., contempt, annoyance) I tried, sounded very similar to anger (the basic emotion where they come from), so I chose to use basic emotions (in this case, anger) with different intensities to have a more precise emotional approach to the music.

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