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Dalí's Eccentric Imagination: Impact of Audiovisual Culture in Roberto Sierra's *Sch*

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Abstract

From the appearance of sound film in the late 1920s to the spread of media outlets such as television and personal computers to today's video-enabled mobile phones, the immediacy of audiovisual culture has changed the way people navigate and manipulate content. Visual images often instinctively induce aural and musical associations, and vice versa. Yet musical analysis in audiovisual culture often presumes the constraint of the visual on the musical (i.e., the primacy of a visual product over its accompanying music). In this paper, I take a diverging approach. I present Roberto Sierra's *Sch*. as a case study for the effects of multimedia technology in a twenty-first-century composer's creative process and product, which conjures up the imagination in historical and contemporary ways. This investigation complements research in music analysis, film music, and music pedagogy in relation to audiovisual culture by highlighting the mutually influential effects of musical and visual cultures.

Keywords: Latin American music, audiovisual culture, music imagination.

Resumen

Desde la aparición de la película sonora a finales de la década de 1920 hasta la difusión de los medios de comunicación, como la televisión y las computadoras personales, hasta los teléfonos móviles de vídeo, la inmediatez de la cultura audiovisual ha cambiado la forma en que las personas navegan y manipulan el contenido. Las imágenes visuales inducen instintivamente asociaciones auditivas y musicales, y vice-versa. Sin embargo, el análisis musical en la cultura audiovisual a menudo supone la limitación de lo visual en lo musical (es decir, la primacía de un producto visual sobre su música acompañante). En este artículo, tomo un enfoque divergente. Presento el *Sch*. como un estudio de caso para los efectos de la tecnología multimedia en el proceso y producto creativo del compositor del siglo XXI, que evoca la imaginación de una manera histórica y contemporánea. Esta investigación complementa la investigación en análisis de música, música de cine y pedagogía musical en relación con la cultura audiovisual, destacando los efectos mutuamente influyentes de las culturas musicales y visuales.

Palabras clave: Música Latino Americana, cultura audiovisual, imaginación musical.

As are many kinds of imagination, [in] the romantic imagination almost never exist a rock.
It's only fog, music, evanescent visions of Nordic countries, Valkyrias,
everything is completely musical. This is also very clear in my mustache,
because my mustache is the contrary of the mustache of Frederick Nietzsche.

–Salvador Dalí¹

Describing the differences between Romantic and Surrealist aesthetics, Salvador Dalí, one of the most creative artists of the twentieth century, conjures up different functions for the human imagination, from the imprecise and transitory (evanescent fog, music) to well-defined, tangible forms (rocks). The fog, the point of departure for Roberto Sierra's *Sch.*, gives rise to the primordial soup, the misty atmosphere from which a set of ten “musical images” moves onward, representing as much a continuity with Romantic aesthetics as an original creation promoted by contemporary audiovisual culture. While academics often presume the primacy of the visual over the musical, Sierra's *Sch.* provides a good example of a score acting as both a product and a source of audiovisual culture.²

The framing of a musical score as a moving image is an important exercise in thinking out of the box in terms of listening audiovisually, and it highlights complex relationships between pictorial and sonic technologies. Several scholars have described inter-art compositional practices. For example, Diego Garro writes on important aspects of visual music wherein “non-narrative visuals (computer generated, or digitally captured and then computer manipulated) are combined with electroacoustic sounds” to produce art whose content favors the visual as much as the musical.³ Extramusical formats provided by real-time screen scores are another interesting way in which composers implement visual practices—color, dimension, form—facilitating musical performance.⁴ Yet existing studies that consider intermedia connections fail to account for the effects of audiovisual culture in musical works that are not immediately discernable or disseminated as such.

The materiality of the score and its presumptive exclusive musical content engender a persistent chasm between the visual/material and the musical/ephemeral as enunciated by Marianne

¹ “Salvador Dalí Interview 1963 ‘Paranoiac Critical Method,’” YouTube video, 7:51, from an interview by David Bryson broadcast by BBC Radio circa 1963 (exact date unknown), posted by Alberto Gitoto, May 25, 2013, <http://youtu.be/iGYhGdv-kLc>. As the excerpt shows, Dalí enjoyed playing tricks with words, speech and grammar.

² “The very titles of Prendergast's tradebook [*Film Music: A Neglected Art*] and Gorbman's academic monograph [*Unheard Melodies: Narrative Film Music*] then, crystalize two long-standing issues of aesthetics and practice. Two words—“neglected” and “unheard”—encapsulate, respectively, the question of film music's status in the world and the question of music's status in the soundtrack; they are now the longest-running tropes in the scholarly literature.” David Neumeyer, overview of *The Oxford Handbook of Film Music Studies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 3. See Roberto Sierra, *Sch.* (Verona, NJ: Subito Music, 2010).

³ “Hence visual music is considered an ‘experience of pure time, without the burden of a story.... Where cinema is audiovisual novel, visual music is audiovisual poetry.” Diego Garro, “From Sonic Art to Visual Music: Divergences, Convergences, Intersections,” *Organised Sound* 17, no. 2 (August 2012): 104.

⁴ See David Kim-Boyle, “Visual Design of Real-Time Screen Scores,” *Organised Sound* 19, no. 3 (December 2014), 286–94; and Sonya Hofer, “‘Atomic’ Music: Navigating Experimental Electronics and Sound Art through Microsound,” *Organised Sound* 19, no. 3 (December 2014), 295–303.

Kielian-Gilbert. She agrees with Noel Carroll's point that it is a presumption to believe "that each art form has a distinctive medium, that the material cause, so to speak, of an art form—its medium—is also its essence (in the sense of its *telos*); that the essence of an art form—its medium—indicates, limits or dictates the style and/or content of the art form."⁵ Kielian-Gilbert identified with Michael Chion's questions—"What do I see of what I hear? What do I hear of what I see?"⁶—when she discussed the sensory and authorial dimensions that were added to Stravinsky's *Symphony of Psalms* (1929) when it was visually interpreted through the choreography of Jirí Kylián (2004).

In considering possible interconnections between the visual and the sonic, the questions I am most interested in are: What kinds of operations are involved in the retrieval and manipulation of audiovisual content by a contemporary composer? What particular effects might they have on the end product, the score (expediency of information, ingenuity, multimediality)? How do we know that a score represents sounds alone and not (moving) images? To answer these questions, I first move retrospectively into the initial impetus behind Roberto Sierra's *Sch.*, highlighting the pictorial and musical sources acquired by the composer during the creative process, and then I analyze the score as an audiovisual product.

Imagination and Resourcefulness...

As a word of Anglo-Norman origins, *imagination* is defined as "the power or capacity to form internal *images* of objects or situations not actually present to the senses, including remembered objects and situations, and those constructed by mentally combining or projecting *images* of previously experienced qualities, objects, and situations" (emphasis added).⁷ Despite the literary origins of the term *imagination* circa 1174 and its extensive use throughout human life, the science of imagination has been understood (perhaps inadequately) as a recent academic phenomenon in fields such as neuroscience and psychology. Through describing different types (or functions) of the imagination, scholars have developed various theories that attempt to explain our human capacity to (a) place ourselves in an imagined past or future, that is, to engage in so-called time travel; (b) place ourselves in the positions of others, through pretense or mindreading;⁸ and (c) place ourselves in alternative realities, including fictional story lines.⁹

⁵ Marianne Kielian-Gilbert, "Listening in Film: Music, Film Temporality, Materiality, and Memory," in *The Oxford Handbook of Film Music Studies*, ed. David Neumeyer (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 504.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s.v. "Imagination, n.," accessed December 22, 2014, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/91643?redirectedFrom=imagination>.

⁸ In pretense, for example, a child may impersonate a fictitious character as well as use an object to represent something other than itself. In mindreading, a person projects her- or himself into another's place to relate to or predict feelings and outcomes—as in a game, for example. Amy Kind, "The Heterogeneity of the Imagination," *Erken* 78 (2013): 142. doi: 10.1007/s10670-011-9313-z.

⁹ "Despite this seeming opposition [between the factual and the nonfactual], however, recent work in cognitive neuroscience suggests that remembering the past and imagining the future may in fact be closely related functions of a single cognitive system or at least kindred functions that overlap significantly and share many of the same neural mechanisms. This has been termed the 'Janus hypothesis,' namely, that retrospection into the past and prospection into

While imaginative positings partially explain the “creative genius” with respect to the inventive ways in which composers develop original music by recasting preexisting ideas or formulating new ones, restricting our explanation to such positings is too simplistic insofar as it ignores the aggregate power of material culture (including audiovisual culture) in eliciting and objectifying creative ideas. In studying the evolution of imagination, Steven Mithen argues that “material objects, social structures, ritualistic performances, acts of story-telling, and complex tools of modern humans are not, therefore, simply products of representations of our inner thoughts,” but rather play an essential role in the affixation and propagation of ideas ready for further augmentation and transformation.¹⁰ He explains that imagination alone is insufficient to explain originality, and that modern humans have benefited from the compounding effects of tangible and intangible culture ignited approximately 50,000 years ago.¹¹

One good concept for expressing the linkage between innovation and material culture is resourcefulness, that is, the human ability to make creative use of available resources, past and present, to leap forward in generative artistic tasks. I believe Roberto Sierra’s *Sch.* provides a good example. From the appearance of sound film in the late 1920s¹² to the spread of communication outlets such as television and personal computers to today’s video-enabled mobile phones, the immediacy of audiovisual culture has changed the way people navigate and manipulate content. Visual images often induce aural and musical associations, and vice versa. Roberto Sierra’s *Sch.* can serve as a case study for the effects of multimedia technology in a twenty-first century composer’s creative process and product that conjures up the imagination in historical and contemporary ways.

Genesis of *Sch.*

Roberto Sierra (1953–) composed *Sch.* in 2010 over a period of four months. The work comprises a cycle of ten character pieces commissioned for Cornell University’s Mayfest, an international chamber music festival organized annually by music faculty members Xak Bjerken and Miri Yampolsky. Bjerken had suggested an homage to Robert Schumann (1810–56) on the occasion of the 200th anniversary of his birth.¹³

the future are ‘closely linked in mind and brain.’” Alan Richardson, “Defaulting to Fiction: Neuroscience Rediscovered the Romantic Imagination,” *Poetics Today* 32, no. 4 (Winter 2011): 670. doi: 10.1215/03335372-1459845.

¹⁰ Steven Mithen, “The Evolution of Imagination: An Archaeological Perspective,” *SubStance* 30, nos. 1/2 (2001): 50.

¹¹ “I suspect that the answer [to the question: How is the human imagination able to create fantasy worlds?] lies with the use of external supports of human thinking—the objects of art, paintings, the rituals created after 50,000 years ago are not only the products of a new way of thinking, but also their source.” Ibid, 49. As “external supports” to human imagination Mithen refers, for example, to the lion/man at Hohlenstein Stadel (40,000) and the bison/man at Chauvet Cave Paintings (30,000). As the sources indicate, there was an element of imaginative integration (animal+man) previously unknown to cognitive domains which Mithen termed “cognitive fluidity.” Ibid., 48–49.

¹² James Buhler and David Neumeyer, “Music and the Ontology of the Sound Film,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Film Music Studies*, ed. David Neumeyer (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 21.

¹³ *Sch.* was also performed at the Domaine Forget Festival in Charlevoix, Canada, on August 19, 2013. “Biocalendar,” Roberto Sierra, accessed December 29, 2014, <http://www.robertosierra.com/biocalendar.html>.

Two works, Schumann's *Carnival* and Sierra's *Carnaval*, can be viewed as musical precedents for *Sch.* The selected title, *Sch.*, symbolizes Schumann through the first three constitutive letters of his surname and, more circuitously, through Schumann's *Carnaval*, a large-scale cycle of character pieces in which Schumann used this abbreviation of his name as a musical device. The term *characteristic piece* or *character piece* generally refers to a short composition for solo piano that expresses "either a single mood (e.g. martial, dream-like, pastoral) or a programmatic idea defined by its title."¹⁴ Increasingly popular in the nineteenth century, these works frequently reiterated the Romantic interest in literature and visual arts. Schumann published *Carnaval* op. 9 (1835) as a set of twenty-one pieces, connected by a cyclical structure and an overarching theme of masked dances common to Carnival season.¹⁵ In *Carnaval*, Schumann imprinted records of his personal life such as the riddle "S-C-H," which refers to Asch, hometown of Ernestine von Fricken, his then fiancée, as well as to the spelling of his own name.¹⁶ Taking inspiration from Schumann's work, Roberto Sierra wrote his own *Carnaval* (2007) based on mythical beings such as unicorns and a phoenix and set to a classical symphonic tradition featuring "the rich Latin rhythms of his homeland."¹⁷

As a cycle of character pieces with descriptive titles in Spanish, *Sch.* was not envisioned as programme music per se.¹⁸ Absent the composer's intent to offer an accompanying program, Sierra shared details on his compositional process as well as the musical content of *Sch.* in a lecture on April 20, 2011, by invitation of Cornell University's Society for the Humanities. In his lecture, "Robert Schumann and the Caribbean: Analytic View and Performance of *Sch.* for Piano Four Hands," the composer announced that he would articulate "what happened as [he] was writing and what

¹⁴ Maurice J. E. Brown, "Characteristic Piece," Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online, accessed December 23, 2014, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/05443>.

¹⁵ Carnival is a pre-Lenten festival. "Each of the pieces comprising *Carnaval* has a title, the whole being a musical representation of an elaborate and imaginative masked ball during carnival season (Schumann at one point referred to the pieces as 'masked dances', 23 August 1837)." Eric Frederick Jensen, *Schumann* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), Kindle Edition, loc. 2590. Also, "[f]or a cycle [w]e assume that some sense of unity flows from a coherent tonal and formal organization," that is, "a significant integration of compositional elements." Peter Kaminsky, "Principles of Formal Structure in Schumann's Early Piano Cycles," *Music Theory Spectrum* 11, no. 2 (Autumn 1989): 207.

¹⁶ "[Schumann] wrote to Henriette Voigt (the confidant of both Ernestine and Schumann during their relationship), noting that Ernestine's place of residence, Asch, was a 'very musical' name (13 September 1834). Schumann had discovered that the letters of the town had equivalent musical pitches. He ingeniously arranged them in three patterns, spelling the town as well as the musical letter possibilities in his own name. All but two of the twenty-one pieces of *Carnaval* use either the second or the third motto (the first does not appear). The mottos themselves appear between the eighth and ninth pieces of the set and are designated 'Sphinxes' by Schumann." Jensen, *Schumann*, loc. 2590.

¹⁷ Donna Kline, "Colorful Dissonances Drive Stravinsky Work in Marin," *Classical Sonoma*, April 5, 2009, <http://www.classicalsonoma.org/reviews/?reviewid=99>.

¹⁸ "The term 'programme music' was introduced by Liszt, who also invented the expression symphonic poem to describe what is perhaps the most characteristic instance of it. He defined programme as a 'preface added to a piece of instrumental music, by which the composer intends to guard the listener against the wrong poetical interpretation, and to direct his attention to the poetical idea of the whole or to a particular part of it.'" Roger Scruton, "Programme Music," Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online, accessed December 23, 2014, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/22394>.

[s]ources inspired [him] to write the different movements.”¹⁹ Citing a popular metaphor of “talking [writing] about music” as a process akin to “dancing about architecture,” Sierra reiterated that he didn’t like to “talk too much about music.”²⁰ Despite the music’s nonprogrammatic objective, Sierra provided rich insights concerning the music and its creative trajectory, which highlighted the composer’s resourcefulness in borrowing from existing literary, visual, and musical source materials to develop a novel, multifaceted musical score.

Much of the inspirational content for *Sch.* comes from Schumann’s compositions, which Sierra came upon while a piano student in Puerto Rico.²¹ Sierra revisited this material by navigating and consuming content found on sites like YouTube, Spotify, and the IMSLP/Petrucci Music Library. (Figure 1. Sierra’s inspirational flow.)

Painting also played a significant role in the genesis of *Sch.* Sierra, an aspiring visual artist in his early years, admired the work of Salvador Dalí for its ingenuity, technical skill, and uncompromising artistry.²² Sierra had listened to a 1960s interview of Dalí by BBC reporter David Bryson on YouTube, set to a video that featured several Dalí paintings.²³

As previously noted, Dalí found Surrealist art superior to that of the Romantics, based on criteria of intelligibility, solidness, and imaginative extravagance. A notorious critic of both Romanticism and music for their lack of emotional precision, Dalí once issued a disapproving quote about “people who to express themselves need to start trembling or dance, or make noises or sounds as melodious as possible.” He added: “I find it disastrous! And by the way, I have never met a musician who was moderately intelligent!”²⁴ Paradoxically, Dalí created nearly a dozen visual works

¹⁹ Roberto Sierra, “Robert Schumann and the Caribbean: Analytic View and Performance of *Sch.* for Piano Four Hands” (lecture for Cornell University’s Society for the Humanities, April 20, 2011, with the participation of Miri Yampolsky and Xak Bjerken), filmed in *Robert Schumann and the Caribbean with Roberto Sierra*, Cornellcast video, 1:27:11, posted on May 2, 2011, <http://www.cornell.edu/video/robert-schumann-and-the-caribbean-with-roberto-sierra>.

²⁰ Sierra, “Robert Schumann and the Caribbean.” “Writing about music is like dancing about architecture,” is a quote variously attributed to Elvis Costello, Frank Zappa, and Thelonious Monk. See Bethany Klein, “Dancing About Architecture,” *Popular Communication* 3, no. 1 (2005): 1.

²¹ “So I knew them as a child, or more specifically rather as a teenager. I learned [these pieces] in the piano, so that’s when I first encountered these characters, as a teenager. By the way, the pictorial aspect, I may have mentioned this to you but originally before I wanted to do music and I wanted to be a painter. Did I mention that to you before?” Roberto Sierra, in conversation with the author, November 13, 2014.

²² “[I, Sierra, like Dalí] because of his absolute high degree of imagination, technique—he does something which is very modern so he shows you always, in my humble view, that he can be as good a painter as anybody else, as good as a Renaissance painter could be, and so there is this duality, he doesn’t compromise something that harks back to the past and yet he’s also very modern in his own time. And his wild imagination—he painted new things that even with the advent of camera or cinema you only could see it in Dalí’s paintings.” Roberto Sierra, in conversation with the author, November 13, 2014.

²³ Three possible dates are cited for Dalí’s BBC radio interview: April 25, 1963, July 22, 1963, or January 7, 1962. “Salvador Dalí Expounds on his ‘Paranoiac Critical Method,’” *Circle of 13* (blog), posted by “peacedream,” March 27, 2008, <http://circleof13.blogspot.com/2008/03/salvador-dali-expounds-on-his-paranoiac.html>.

²⁴ “Salvador DALI à propos de la musique et des musiciens,” YouTube video, 2:07, from an interview by Henri Laborit recorded on February 8, 1970, posted by Laurent Gané, January 28, 2012, <http://youtu.be/IUKIb2RLbos>. Translation by Benjamim Richardier.

referencing musical instruments (most frequently depicting piano, cello, and guitar), including the famous installation, *Dream of Venus*, for the 1939 World's Fair in New York.²⁵ He also collaborated on several works for the stage, including *El Café de Chinitas* (1943), *Ballet de Gala* (1961), and his own opera, *Étre Dieu* (1974).²⁶

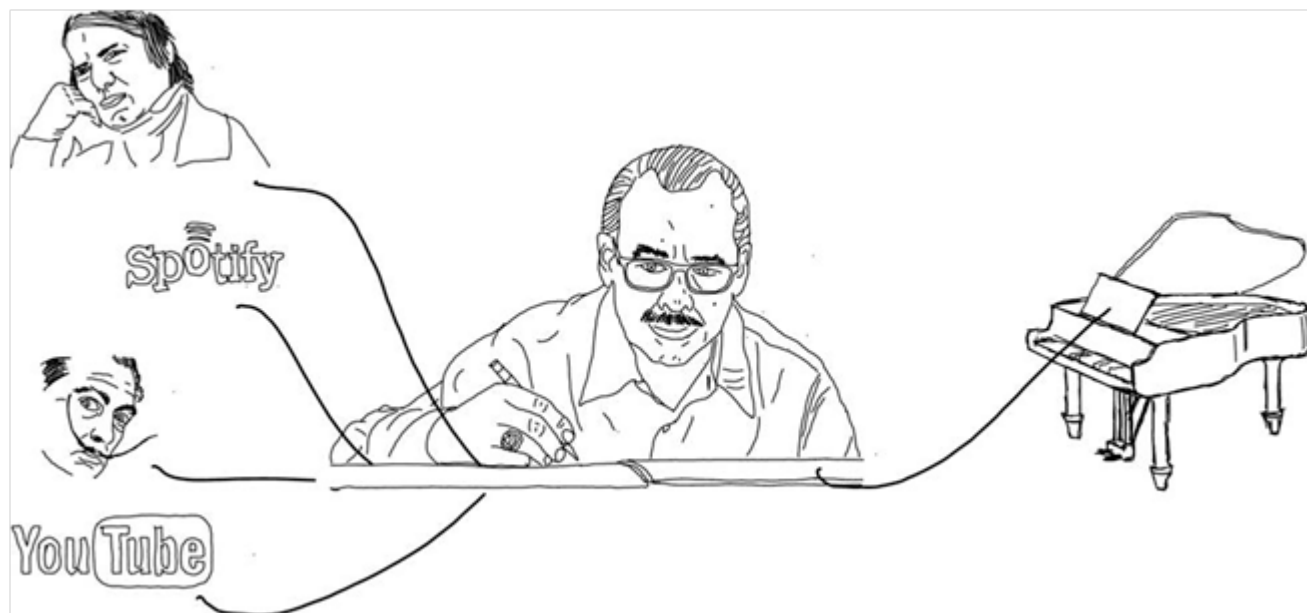


Figure 1: Sierra's inspirational flow.

Whatever the contradictory relationship between Dalí and music may be, his dramatic statements on Romanticism captured Sierra's imagination, providing a springboard for *Sch*. The first movement, "Figuras en la Bruma" (Figures in the Fog), draws the atmospheric mist enunciated by Dalí and from which elusive elements emerge: a butterfly (*papillon*) in the melody suggesting a D major scale and Florestan's theme. In a less tonal approach, Sierra references the S-C-H motto (E \flat -C-B) in the long bass notes of the second piano, underlying a recurrent rhythmic montuno figure, thus forming the "harmonic fog" that propels the storyline.²⁷ As a unifying device, S-C-H acts as a "triple-vision"

²⁵ The paintings referencing musical instruments include *Portrait of the Cellist Ricard Pichot* (1920), *The Red Orchestra* (1944), and *Warrior Mounted on an Elephant Overpowering a Cello* (1983). See also Christine Trotter, "Murray Korman with Salvador Dalí, *Dream of Venus*," Hofstra University, accessed December 10, 2014, www.hofstra.edu/PDF/lib_sc_weingrow_usrp_trotter.pdf.

²⁶ "In 1972, Dalí finally realized one of his megalomaniac projects, the 'opera-poem' *To be God (Étre Dieu)*. The respected writer Manuel Vásquez Montalbán wrote the libretto and Igor Wakhévich set it to music (CD, Distribucions d'Art Surrealista, Barcelona DCD-50001-3)." Antoni Pizà, "Dalí's Musical Roundabouts," *Music in Art* 28, nos. 1/2 (Spring-Fall 2003): 257.

²⁷ The montuno is a characteristic two- or four-bar phrase repeated as an ostinato accompaniment in salsa music.

referencing Schumann, *Carnaval*—where this word-puzzle is originally imprinted, and one of Sierra’s common musical signatures, the intervals M3 and m3.²⁸

What the listener might not yet know is that the montuno prefigures Eusebius, a character who makes his entrance in the fourth movement of *Sch. The Band or League of David (Davidsbund)*, formed by Eusebius, Florestan, and Master Raro, served as fictional spokespersons for Schumann’s music criticism in his journal *Neue Zeitschrift für Musick*.²⁹ Schumann’s *Carnaval* also presents movements named after these literary characters, a known fact known to Sierra, who was familiar with this musical work in addition to Schumann’s biographies. Recordings of Schumann’s piano works abound on YouTube, including live performances as well as instrumental solos enlivened by a moving score. Video-sharing websites like YouTube aggregate a large body of audiovisual culture that surround the daily work of composers like Roberto Sierra. Audio-score excerpts of Sierra’s own *Sch.* can be sampled on YouTube (<http://youtu.be/FMZi7qCnFeA>), underscoring the enormous magnetism and practicality of video-sharing websites.

As a result of technological and audiovisual advancements, scores that once depicted programmatic topics such as fancy balls and countryside shepherds may now embed elaborate cinematic practices that go well beyond the representation of sounds in a printed or digital score, perhaps calling for a redefinition of the terms “programmatic” and “character piece.” As a whole, *Sch.* can be thought of as a complete storyline mixing adventure, comedy, and animation within ten suggested scenes:

Scene 1. “Figuras en la Bruma” (Figures in the Fog)

Wide shot

EXT – FOG – ESTABLISHING SCENE

Evanescent visions call forth the dimly visible figures of Schumann (S-C-H), Eusebius (montuno), and the butterfly (*papillon*).

Scene 2. “Adivinanza” (Riddle)

Off Camera

INT – LIVING ROOM – PIANO – CONTINUOUS SCENE

²⁸ “This musical cell [ubiquitous in my music for a long time] finds its way into my sound world due to its basic intervallic construction: it contains two basic intervals that define modality in tonal music—the major third and the minor third—while at the same time retaining an abstract quality when all tones are struck simultaneously.” Sierra, “Robert Schumann and the Caribbean.”

²⁹ Mark Evan Bonds, “Robert Schumann,” in *A History of Music in Western Culture* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, 2013), 426. The *Neue Zeitschrift für Musick* was published in Leipzig (1934–44).

A pianist, off camera, improvises on a three-note pattern (the riddle), as if incessantly beating a rib bone extracted from a taxidermic specimen on a table. The music is awkward and mercurial.

Scene 3. “Estraña Flor” (Strange Flower)

Wide shot and fade out towards the beach

EXT – TROPICAL FOREST – DAYTIME – CONTINUOUS ACTION

A rather exotic flower is barely visible. The butterfly moves back and forth around the flower, enjoying its scent. Near the end, a horn calls (SFX: special sound effect) to announce the arrival of hunters.

Scene 4. “Montuno para Eusebius” (Montuno for Eusebius)

Wide shot and fade out

EXT – PUERTO RICO – BEACH – DAYTIME

Eusebius relishes his Caribbean retreat, sipping a piña colada while taking mental notes of salsa steps performed by nearby dancers. He becomes rather tipsy and excited.

Scene 5. “Tiempo Suspendido” (Suspended Time)

Fade in – frozen image to clouds – dissolve to bar scene

EXT – PUERTO RICO – SKY – SUNSET

Exhausted Eusebius lands on his beach hammock after tentative rounds of salsa dancing. The camera freezes and then refocuses on another scene, a bar in San Juan.

Scene 6. “Bolero para Florestan” (Bolero for Florestan)

Tracking shot

INT – SAN JUAN – BAR – NIGHTTIME

Florestan sits at a bar in San Juan. Sierra orders some rum from the bartender. Back story: The once outgoing Florestan is now depressed and melancholic, reflecting on his life. A jukebox in the background plays a Latin ballad.

Scene 7. “Coral Raro” (Strange Chorale)
 POV (point of view of the character)
 INT – REHEARSAL HALL – NIGHTTIME

Master Raro marches in and, as if leading a disorderly choir, issues an order for the characters to get back in line. The tone is imperative and grave.

Scene 8. “Pieza Fantástica” (Fantastic Piece)
 Intercut to Scene 2 and Schumann’s score
 INT – PIANO – SCHUMANN SCORE

Still in a state of disarray, the characters try to collect themselves. A pianist, off screen—as a flashback from Scene 2—repetitively beats a rhythmic motive in schizoid fashion. We hear both Schumann’s *Carnaval* and Sierra’s *Sch.*

Scene 9. “Ensueño” (Dreams)
 Close up
 EXT – SIERRA IN DREAM – SHADOWY BIRDS – NIGHTTIME

In a dream-like state, Sierra reconciles all of the characters, scenes, and emotions into a fanciful musical tale.

Scene 10. “Despedida” (Farewell)
 Fade out
 EXT – PUERTO RICO – TROPICAL FOREST – FOG – TWILIGHT

Resolution. The fog reprises Scene 1, and the cast of characters bid farewell, marching away into the tropical forest.

In modeling a treatment (screenplay scene description) for Roberto Sierra’s *Sch.*, an interpreter may enter the mental chamber of the composer and more deeply access the emotional context and dynamic aspects of the music. Sierra himself often participates in his own scenes, providing a rather

rich moment-to-moment account of the plot he is imagining. In similar fashion to *Space Jam* (1996),³⁰ a live-action, animated, comedy film featuring Michael Jordan and Looney Toons, in the fourth and sixth movements Sierra directly engages with the fictional characters, creating and acting his own “musical animation”:

I could not write *Sch.* without representation from these confederates [*Davidsbündler* or League of David]. In a totally irreverent state of mind, I decided to bring the sad and melancholic Eusebius on a vacation to the Caribbean, have him lie down on the beach and drink a Piña Colada while some salsa music plays along. The result is a bouncy and much more extrovert Eusebius, one that has changed in character, and that perhaps has learned some salsa steps.³¹

As the composer’s descriptive statement illustrates, the fourth movement, “Montuno para Eusebius,” constitutes one of the most complete dramaturgical scenes of the entire work, further accentuated by eighteen bars of highly ethereal music (“Tiempo Suspendido,” fifth movement), a segue to the mesmeric entrance of Florestan.

As noted, *Sch.* is populated by Schumann’s literary-musical characters (Florestan, Eusebius, Master Raro, butterfly, flower), whose stories evolve as short anecdotes of increasing tension, creating a chronicle-musical cycle. Thus, one of the main animating principles of *Sch.* is narrative. Music narrativity, a compositional process explored by semiotician Eero Tarasti, involves the deployment of theme-actants whose musical utterances underlie a dramaturgic goal, set in a temporal organization.³² Tarasti explains the significance of music narrativity to illuminate the “music-psychological mechanisms” motivating the “inner narrator” of a composition. Significant sonic designs evidencing “the nature of music as drama”—instruments, register, texture, motion, repetition, shifts, etc.—become visible not only through the music, but also upon investigation of historical documents.³³ As examples of a literary character, we have Franz Liszt’s *Années de pèlerinage*,

³⁰ *Space Jam*, directed by Joe Pytka (1996; Burbank, CA: Warner Home Video, 1998), DVD. *Space Jam* is a family/comedy animation film featuring NBA sports star Michael Jordan, who helps the Looney Toons (a group of cartoon characters) from being captured as entertainment bait in an amusement park. The film thus mixes cartoon and real life characters.

³¹ Sierra, “Robert Schumann and the Caribbean.” Salsa is a “[s]yncretic genre of Latin ballroom dance. Like the salsa music to which it is performed, salsa dance is a blend of forms from Cuba, Puerto Rico, and other Spanish-speaking nations and territories. Salsa is similar to mambo in that both are based on a pattern of six steps danced over eight counts of music, but whereas mambo moves generally forward and back, salsa tends to move sideways and to involve more turning steps.” Claude Conyers, “Salsa (ii).” Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online, accessed December 29, 2014, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/A2092687>.

³² “Narrativity can be understood in the very common sense as a general category of the human mind, a competency that involves putting events into a certain order, a syntagmatic continuum. This continuum has beginning, development and end; and the order created in this way is called, under given circumstances, narration. With this in view, the logic of narration appears to be very abstract and of a fairly general level. It turns out to be a certain tension between the beginning and the end, a sort of arch progression.” Eero Tarasti, “In Search of a Theory,” in *A Theory of Musical Semiotics* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994), 24. “Diaries and other biographical documents bring insight into the ‘soul’ or ‘mind’ of a composer-subject (verifying this insight is another matter).” *Ibid.*, 109.

³³ “Mere general thematic features, such as sufficiently characteristic traits, simple chordal background, repetitions, and so on, do not seem to be satisfactory explanations. Moreover, one has to account for all those transformations and consciously juxtaposed theme-actants whose conflicts emphasize the nature of music as drama, with all its attendant roles and figures.” *Ibid.*, 193.

a collection of piano pieces produced during a sojourn to Lake Geneva in 1836. Liszt created musical scenes such as *Au lac du Wallenstadt* and *Vallé d'Obermann* that parallel a travelogue. *Vallé d'Obermann* suggests Etienne Senancour's novel *Obermann*, which Liszt apparently shared with his fellow traveler Countess Maria d'Agout.³⁴

Sierra notes that he “could not write *Sch.* without these [Eusebius, Florestan, Raro] confederates,” evidencing the stirring effect of transporting these “Germanic characters” (Example 1) to the Caribbean. The elaborate settings and developments that unfold result from Sierra's intense imaginative activity. Sierra brings Eusebius to the beach, where he has Eusebius “lie down” and “drink a Piña Colada.” The scene is underscored by brisk diegetic salsa music (*agitado*),³⁵ which adds vitality and meaning to the action. Eusebius “changes in character” from “sad and melancholic” to a “bouncy and much more extrovert” personage, with periodic jolted entrances that are jerky and high-pitched (Example 2).



Example 1: Schumann's *Carnaval* No. 5, op. 9 ("Eusebius") mm. 1–4

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 181.

³⁵ “Diegetic music [is] music that (apparently) issues from a source within the narrative,” that is, music whose source is visible in the scene itself, be it music from a radio in the background inhabited by the characters or music played, for example, by the characters themselves. Claudia Gorbman, “Narrative Film Music,” *Yale French Studies* 60 (1980): 197.

Agitado, $\text{♩} = 104$ como una improvisación

Example 2: Sierra's Sch. "Montuno para Eusebius" mm. 1–4

Sierra's creation of a fundamental alteration in Eusebius's character may be a projection of himself or his desire to produce the same sort of shift in his listeners. He further signals this yearning in the following "scene" (fifth movement) marking the entrance of Florestan, who then asks for a similar psychological, "transformative experience":

Eusebius' euphoric gyrations end in exhaustion and the piece that follows, "Tiempo Suspendido" (Suspended Time), is really what he needs: suspended time that gives Eusebius the opportunity to slow down. Meanwhile, Florestan makes his entrance and requests to also have a transformative experience. I take him late at night to a bar in old San Juan, and ask the bartender to serve him a few shots of rum, while a Bolero is playing in the background. This Bolero is not the one composed by Ravel, but rather one of those sad romantic Latin ballads that became popular during the 1950's. Florestan's extrovert character becomes melancholic, sad, heartbroken and almost depressed—in a melancholic state of mind he now ponders about how different things may have been, only if he would not have been so impulsive!³⁶

The grouping of conventional Puerto Rican cultural markers—a beach, piña colada, salsa music, a bar in San Juan, rum, a bolero—bespeaks a complex internal reference system with profound implications for a Latino composer working in the United States. Sierra is deeply attuned to the social

³⁶ Sierra, "Robert Schumann and the Caribbean." The bolero is "[a]n international genre of Latin American popular music. Bolero first developed in the late 19th century as part of the traditional *trova* style of Santiago de Cuba. Throughout its 'Golden Age' (1930–60), Boleros were played by an 'ensemble of three singer-guitarists', whose well-known performers include Trio Los Panchos, Puerto Rican Daniel Santos, Argentine Leo Marini, and Cuban Celia Cruz." Daniel Party, "Bolero," Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online, accessed December 29, 2014, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/A2248419>. Sierra notes the specific character of his bolero as a composition in common time, wherein the bass notes present a rhythmic cell comprised of dotted-quarter, dotted-quarter, and quarter note, reminiscent of the slow, romantic ballads of the 1950s.

boundaries impinging upon his music. Sierra calls attention to classical performers' general lack of competency in Latin (and even global) musical practices: "One of the things I dream about which I won't see, because it would take a long time, is when we have built-in traditions of musicians coming from our cultures understanding all of that [European and Latin American music] the same way."³⁷ In performance practice, European- and US-trained musicians take the time to understand and play Scarlatti's Spanish-infused *Sonata in D major* (K. 492), for example.³⁸ Yet the same standards and concern remain elusive for many performers coming upon non-European classical music. The motivation to fully apprehend the intricate musical and social implications of works featuring Latin American elements seem so often tenuous as a result of centuries of hierarchical cultural distinctions.³⁹ The pervasive admixture of everyday Latin references to a "European musical system" is an intensely personal point for Sierra and must not be overlooked. His investment is not restricted to asserting his ethnic identity, but extends to political rights as well—especially when one considers Puerto Rico as a "territorial trophy" deeded to the United States, winner of the Spanish-American War (1898), while the population of Puerto Rico remain without direct representation in the U.S. Congress. The message becomes more poignant when Sierra describes the use of salsa and montuno as a process of "music humanization," a way of bringing the "hegemonic" and "ostentatious" European "pathos of the divine, of Beethoven"⁴⁰ to the unpretentious, reflection-inducing settings of Puerto Rico: "Consciously, [Sch.] is basically Schumann and Dalí's juxtaposition, and also the dynamics of the Caribbean; that's why [my] lecture [was] called 'Schumann in the Caribbean,' because no matter what I do, I want always to bring it home" (emphasis added).⁴¹

The sixth movement of *Sch.*, "Bolero para Florestan," features diegetic music, this time a bolero playing in the background while Sierra asks the bartender to serve Florestan "a few shots of rum." The opposition of foreground and background adds depth and mood to the scene. Contextual implications conveying distance from the sound source (implied by softness of volume) and location (late at night, bar in San Juan) connect with the character of the music—a "sad romantic Latin ballad." In trying to illustrate his score's bolero, Sierra reaches for the computer keyboard, opens his browser to Spotify, and peruses several samples (*La Lupe, Tu Dolor Barato*; *Trio Los Panchos, Sin Ti*), until he finds the one that most closely resembles the general feel, instrumentation, and meter he had in mind.⁴² Because of his familiarity with sites like Spotify, Sierra in his resourcefulness already envisions his desired sample as existing in this vast reservoir of musical files. Instinctual technological operations evidence the composer's inner world: navigating audiovisual archives, reclaiming

³⁷ Roberto Sierra, in conversation with the author, October 16, 2014.

³⁸ See, e.g., "Lena Jacobson in Recital: Domenico Scarlatti Sonata in D major K492 (Live Recording)," YouTube video, 3:32, posted by Lena Jacobson, November 12, 2009, http://youtu.be/v0RE_aRtcQc?list=PL56B636FEC4EB7CD8.

³⁹ "For in truth, Latin Americans and the music they make have multiple identities and cannot be reduced to simplistic rubrics." Walter Clark, "Preface: What Makes Latin American Music 'Latin'? Some Personal Reflections," *The Musical Quarterly* 92, nos. 3/4 (Fall-Winter 2009): 171. doi: 10.1093/musqtl/gdp019.

⁴⁰ Roberto Sierra, in conversation with the author, October 16, 2014.

⁴¹ Roberto Sierra, in conversation with the author, November 13, 2014.

⁴² Trio Los Panchos: *El Dia que Me Quieras*. URL: <<http://open.spotify.com/track/4LVYpXKJVLhLR19pP53Szz>>

historical sources, and applying them to a new work of exceptional detail, motion, and three-dimensional depth, precisely in the types of setups achieved by filmic constructions.

It is also important to mention instances in which Sierra is keenly aware of eliciting a sensation other than an image. For example, in the third movement of Sch., “Extraña flor,” Sierra wanted to “translate into sonority the sensations that can be caused by a flower” of undetermined yet exotic provenance, rather than the flower itself.⁴³ Sierra adds:

To me, the flower is the idea of the perfume of a flower, so those are the harmonies that are very soothing, very strange, and that’s why I called [this movement] ‘Extraña flor.’ Again, this is an exotic flower. If it’s a piece about Schumann and I’m talking about Schumann I don’t want to think of the flowers in the Thuringian forest. I may want to think of the flowers in the rainforest in Puerto Rico, something that comes from my own sort of world, or from the Amazonas even. As something that I have not heard, seen, or experienced. So I cannot you tell you ‘that’s a bromeliad flower’; I don’t know.⁴⁴

Sierra enhances the filmic narrative with additional sound effects: horn calls in the third movement, fade-ins and fade-outs in the third, fifth, and eighth movements, marches in the seventh and tenth movements, and use of suspended time in the fifth movement.

Given the dramaturgical build-up of movements four through six, the latter, “Coral Raro,” may be viewed as the climax of the action, introducing the third Schumannesque character, Master Raro, whose goal is to restore order to the chaotic turn of this Caribbean vacation (Example 3). Sierra emphasizes the S-C-H motto with a crisscross (vertical and horizontal) note pattern, accentuating Master Raro’s commanding voice with staccatissimo markings.

Example 3: Sierra’s Sch. “Coral Raro” mm. 1-3.

⁴³ Sierra, “Robert Schumann and the Caribbean.”

⁴⁴ Roberto Sierra, in conversation with the author, October 16, 2014.

Further delaying the work's resolution, the eighth movement, "Pieza Fantástica," acts as an extension of the previous tongue-in-cheek narrative. The work shifts to a musical deceleration in the dreamlike state of "Ensueño," ending with a reprise of the Romantic foggy arpeggiations of the opening movement, which gives way to the marching away of the characters at mm. 49 and a stately dénouement at mm. 100–124 (Table 1 lists Sch.'s movements and references).

The score of Sch. can be viewed and listened to as an audiovisual work. Through sophisticated intermedia operations that enclose musical and extramusical elements, Sierra affixes his ideas to a tangible medium. The music enunciates several theme-actants—Florestan, Eusebius, Master Raro, butterfly, strange flower—schematized in a musical cycle that begins and ends with Dalí's Romantic synecdoche, the fog. Incidental effects (horn calls, sighs, marching) provide dramatic tension and continuity between Puerto Rican scenes such as a beach, a bar in San Juan, and a tropical forest. Sch.'s narration resolves with a formal farewell, in a process akin to creating a moving image. The audiovisual circuit is closed, framing a new object that is open to further interpretations. (Table 2, Suggested visual rendition for Sch.).⁴⁵

Conclusion

Material culture acts as "cognitive anchors" that "augment and extend its powers in remarkable ways," providing the "foundation for future works."⁴⁶ Steven Mithen argues that "[i]n recent times, the imaginative genius expressed in the plays of William Shakespeare, the novels of Jane Austen, the science of Charles Lyell and the paintings of Salvador Dalí emerged from this cumulative and on-going dialectic between brain and culture."⁴⁷ In claiming Surrealist aesthetics to be superior to that of the Romantics because of a distinct mode of imagination, Dali might have been overconfident. He partook in the material culture that preceded him, including the Romantic tradition. Indeed, the Romantics placed great emphasis on the value of human imagination. They believed the construction of an egalitarian society depended on the power of the subjective, imaginative life of each individual, fostered through political liberty, communion with nature, and spiritual-artistic expression.⁴⁸ Perhaps the underlying difference between Surrealists and Romantics was one of artistic criteria rather than mental function.

Imagination—the human ability to interact with the world around us, conceiving connections with a historical past and potential futures, aided by technological advancements borrowing from a vast repertoire of literature, visual arts, and cinema—places composers like Roberto Sierra in an advantageous position for developing new works of increasing artistic expression. That this

⁴⁵ Illustrations by Elyse Whittaker-Paek.

⁴⁶ Steven Mithen, "The Evolution of Imagination," 51.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ "1/3 The Romantics—Liberty—(Episode 1 of 3) (BBC Documentary)," YouTube video, 59:01, from a BBC documentary narrated by Peter Ackroyd and broadcast on December 8, 2005, posted by "amigosrollopateron," April 3, 2014, http://youtu.be/_n7ruCqRLRk.

awareness is not necessary for creativity is clear. However, this does not diminish the need for more diverse analytical tools in the fields of musicology and film studies. The insights provided by audiovisual examinations also add significant information to performance practice and music pedagogy by insisting on the mutually influential effects of music and visual cultures. Ultimately, life has moved on and history and technology have moved on, giving us the ability to objectify and replicate our material culture with remarkable accuracy and depth and providing continuance to the human creative flow.

Resources

Roberto Sierra. URL: <<http://www.robertosierra.com>>

Sch. YouTube Excerpts. URL: <<http://youtu.be/FMZi7qCnFeA>>

Sch. Recording. URL: <<http://www.opengrecords.com/sch>>

Sch. Score: Subito Music Corporation, 2010.

Roberto Sierra. “Robert Schumann and the Caribbean: Analytic View and Performance of Sch. for Piano Four Hands.” Cornell University, Society for the Humanities Annual Invitational Lecture (20 April 2011).

URL: <<http://www.cornell.edu/video/robert-schumann-and-the-caribbean-with-roberto-sierra>>

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Table 1: Sch., Movements and References

Roberto Sierra Sch. Reference Table			
Mov.	Name	Location	Object
1	“Figuras en la Bruma” (Figures in the Fog) (Set 0-1-4)	E \flat -C-B (Sign 1) → S-C-H (Sign 2) → Pitch Class	M $_3$ and m $_3$: fundamental intervals in tonal music m $_2$ → adds dissonance Sierra’s music signature Schumann’s <i>Carnaval</i> (1835) Sierra’s <i>Carnaval</i> (2007)
		Bass notes	Robert Schumann
		Fluttering bass notes	Atonal “fog of harmonics” → Dalinian “Romantic Fog” or evanescent visions.

	montuno	Rhythmic figures, mm. 2, bass	Basic kern of Latin music, salsa rhythm, Caribbean popular music.
	melody	Upper registers	Suggests Dmaj of <i>Papillons</i>
	<i>Papillons</i> , no. 1, op. 2	mm. 9–10	Butterfly Also appears as a “musical interruption” in “Florestan” from <i>Carnaval</i> . A moment of poetry and self-reflection.
2	“Adivinanza” (Riddle)	S-C-H	Every mm., building block for chords and melodies. (Set 0-1-4) inverted, retrograde, and “translated to different languages.” A self-test of the imagination.
	<i>Dauidsbundlertänze</i> , no. 2, op. 6	[D-F#-A#-E D-G-C] mm. 19–28, bass	“Chord of Melancholy” → Riddle → “Ghostly sonority.”
	<i>Novelleten</i> , no. 2, op. 21	Fast and virtuosic piano figuration, Piano II	Schumann's Scherzo writing. Also in piano Sonatas. The awkward, mercurial character of piano works: <i>Kreisleriana</i> , op. 16 and <i>Fantasiestücke</i> , op. 12.
	Piano Sonata no. 1 in F# Minor, op. 11 (“Grosse Sonata”)	Long sustained pedal markings Middle pedal	Schumann's unusual use of pedal to create interesting sonorities. Sustained specific notes creating effects of repetition, resonance, and interesting sonorities.
3	“Extraña Flor” (Strange Flower)	<i>Blumentstück</i> , op. 19	Bass line, R-L hands, Pianist II Wild Caribbean flowers. “Sonorous perfume.”
	<i>Papillons</i> , no. 1, op. 2	mm. 2–10	Staccatissimo duro. Schumann's name-concealed within papillon fragment.
	<i>Papillons</i> , no. 12, op. 2, Finale	Rhythmic figure, mm. 11–12, 13–15, L hand, Pianist II	Forest scenes. Horn calls of <i>Waldszenen</i> (tenuto → trumpet-like sound of “Jäger auf der Lauer” or “Jaglied”).

Table 2: Suggested visual rendition for Sch.*

1. “Figuras en la Bruma” (Figures in the Fog)



 Musical score for the first section of "Figuras en la Bruma". It features two staves: a right-hand piano part and a left-hand piano part. The right-hand part begins with a dynamic marking of *p lejano*. The left-hand part includes a circled section labeled "fantasmagórico" with a dynamic marking of *p* and a triplet of eighth notes. The piece concludes with a dynamic marking of *ppp*.

R hand, Piano II, Montuno figure
L hand, Piano II, S-C-H, bass line

 Musical score for the second section of "Figuras en la Bruma". It features two staves: a right-hand piano part and a left-hand piano part. The right-hand part starts with a dynamic marking of *(sempre p)*. The left-hand part includes a circled section with a dynamic marking of *p* and a triplet of eighth notes, followed by a section with a dynamic marking of *pp*. The piece concludes with a dynamic marking of *(sempre ppp)*.

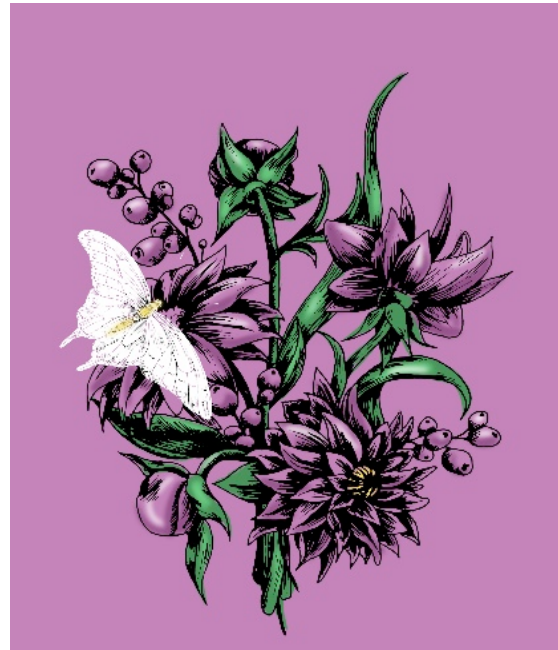
mm. 9, butterfly

* Image renditions by Elyse Whittaker-Paek.

2. “Adivinanza” (Riddle)



3. “Extraña Flor”
(Strange Flower)



 Musical score for 'Adivinanza' (Riddle). It shows two systems of music. The first system has a treble clef with a triplet of notes and a bass clef with a sustained chord. The second system has a treble clef with a triplet of notes and a bass clef with a triplet of notes. Dynamics include *sfz* and *p*. A fermata is present over the final note of the bass line.

mm. 19, “chord of melancholy”

 Musical score for 'Extraña Flor' (Strange Flower). It shows two systems of music. The first system has a treble clef with a triplet of notes and a bass clef with a triplet of notes. The second system has a treble clef with a triplet of notes and a bass clef with a triplet of notes. Dynamics include *sempre ppp, frágil*, *pp*, and *p*. There are markings for *8va* and *15va*. A circled section in the bass line contains a triplet of notes.

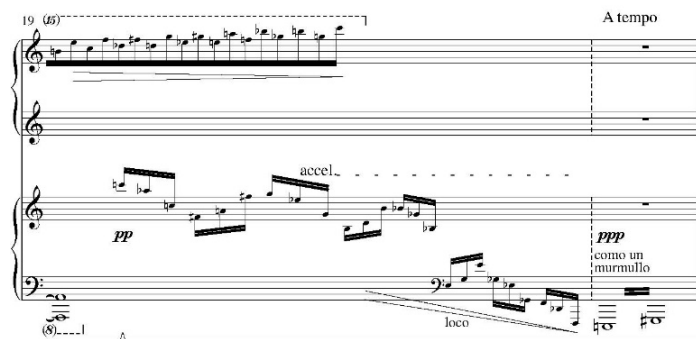
mm. 11, horn calls

4. "Montuno para Eusebius"
(Montuno for Eusebius)



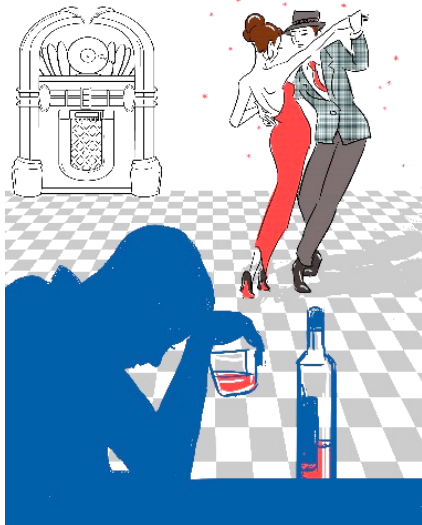
mm. 1-2, Piano I, Eusebius's theme
mm. 1-2, L hand, Piano II, clave

5. "Tiempo Suspendido"
(Suspended Time)



Vanishing point (fade-out)

6. “Un Bolero para Florestan”
(Bolero for Florestan)



7. “Coral Raro” (Strange Chorale)



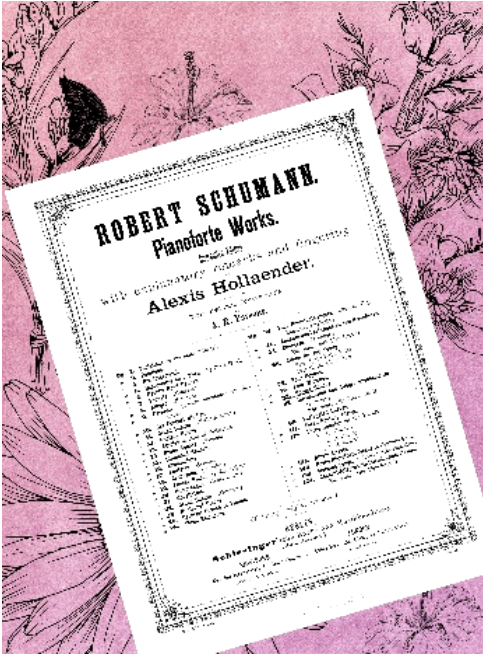
Musical score for 'Un Bolero para Florestan'. It consists of two systems of staves. The first system has a vocal line (marked 'p cantando') and a piano accompaniment. The second system shows the piano accompaniment in more detail, with a 'pp' dynamic marking. The music is in common time (C) and features a melodic line with some chromaticism.

Florestan’s theme
Bolero, L hand, Piano II

Musical score for 'Coral Raro'. It features a complex, dispersed texture with staccatissimo articulation. The tempo is marked 'Preciso, ♩ = 138'. The score includes dynamics such as 'fff', 'mp', and 'f'. The music is in 2/4 time and includes an 8va (octave) marking.

Dispersed texture, staccatissimo

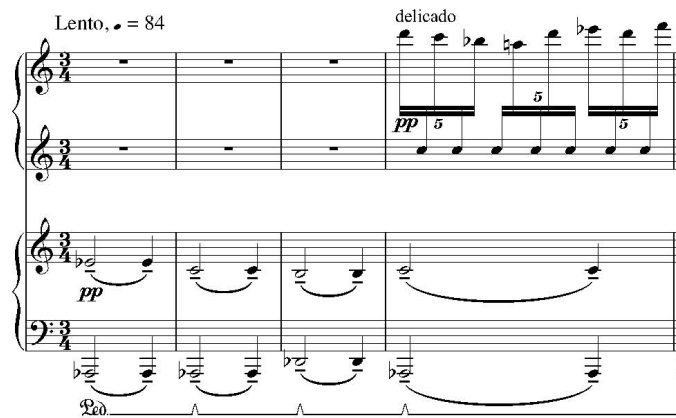
8. "Pieza Fantástica" (Fantastic Piece)



9. "Ensueño" (Dreams)



mm. 1, triplet motion



mm. 4, cascading dreamish filigree
mm. 1-6, warm bass tones (S-C-H)

10. "Despedida" (Farewell)

Musical score for the piano II part of "Despedida". The score is in 3/4 time and features a series of arpeggiated chords in the right hand, marked with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The left hand provides a simple harmonic accompaniment. The score is written on four staves: two for the right hand and two for the left hand. The first staff is the treble clef, and the second is the bass clef. The third and fourth staves are also bass clefs, with the fourth staff being the grand staff's bass clef. The score includes a first ending bracket and a repeat sign.

mm. 1, foggy arpeggios, R hand, Piano II

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