

Fátima Miranda

A very particular voice

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The birth of a furious voice

Fátima Miranda pushed her destiny by letting a strange voice be born in her cavernous body. It was in 1979 when she just brought forth ***Taller de Música Mundana*** [Wordly Music Workshop] insisted on sounding *musics of context*, with every element at hand. The ***Taller***, very lonely and very post-avant-gardist, badly substituted, with rigorous rehearsal/trainings, the recently exhausted category of “avant-garde,” even of beauty, by those more suggestive ones of community and efficacy, an efficacy of a sort that we ambiguously wanted intense, and at once urban and public as well as intimate and singular. If, in these unequal fights, I discovered —*objet trouvé*— an old piece of junk covered with dust and myths — the bell, Miranda happened to discover a voice which rebounded off the other side of an unknown life, took her hand and began to sound loaded with already tired wisdoms and memories.

If the ***Taller de Música Mundana*** was her school of improvisation, of auscultation of materials (water, calls, stones, shells, and above all paper, from which a concert and even an opera were born), of sounding and going on stage in exceptional contexts (gyms, gardens, crystal palaces, lakes, etc.), later on, ***Flatus Vocis Trio*** (1986) would become her school in the arduous delights of *speech as music*, with its fugatos, its accumulations, its chorales, discussions, lullabies, metalinguistic and even polyglot happenings, in which Fátima’s oral discipline raised the heights of phonetic poetry up to frenzy.

But the most decisive time in Fátima Miranda’s training was yet to come: Paris (1987-88) with Yumi Nara and Tran Quang Hai, and especially India with the eminent Dagar brothers (1989-90) and with Uday Bhawalkar (1992-93), and the consequences of entering that exigent and disciplined *total university* that Dhrupad chant is, with its infinite subtleties of modality and microtonality orally spilled since the seventeenth century.

It is from this rare triple schooling [*aprender trimegísto*] that the thinking-while-sounding of the then budding composer matures. If her tapestries, which are rich in resonances of the jungle and the sea (seagulls and even whales, in a task close to the interspecies music of California composer Jim Nollman), derive from the ***Taller de Música Mundana***, the thousand characters her voice draws with an ironical touch, and her uneven speeches —in between those of a fishwife and an angel— come from the ***Flatus Vocis Trio***. But, above all, from Dhrupad singing springs the security, rigour and precision in everything this ear-throat utters, due to its training in the Kharach discipline (a breathing and low singing exercise done one or two hours before sunrise, aimed at opening and increasing the vocal register to the highest and most beautiful sounds that a human body can utter and... listen to).

The forthrightness and assurance of this triple birth to singing became incarnated in a character as unique and creative as Fátima Miranda’s, provoking her sudden appearance in the most prestigious programs of Europe and America. Her first solo concert took place in the “Festival d’Automne” of Paris (1989) with a solo work written specially for her by Jean Claude Eloy.

Soon, her own surprising, spring-like composing would come, with *Las Voces de la Voz* (1991), followed by *Concierto en Canto* (1995), which, together with *ArteSonado*, crown a rising and colossal trilogy or trisony.

A voice for an other paradigm

Miranda's native land is sounding. That is her bet. She uses to say, referring to the stones of walls "the stones sing to me" [*los cantos me cantan*], and perhaps that singing of the stones, so strange for us, is what makes her singing so familiar, because it is somehow known, to the point that her composing may not seem invention (although it really is, and to what extent!), but essential translation of that sound which already exists in every one, similar to hers, with the same throbs, faltering avalanches of sensations, wastes of emotions, pains, vulgarities and ecstasy. This may partially explain the extraordinary acceptance that her foreign singing awakens in us.

Fátima's composing does not make an issue of language, form or structure at all. Her music simply incites to the *plenitude of the senses*, and for this purpose, she draws from every beautiful resource, of the many she keeps in her arsenal: a rich composing with an air of improvised "dropped there," a forthright and versatile melodic inspiration, an infinitely refined, virtuosistic and surprising instrument, and a modal base related to all the Indoeuropean tradition, and, by extension, to all the ethnomusics of the wide globe, a modality which sounds familiar because of its ethnic perfumes (*cante jondo* included) as well as by its beautiful (re)appearance in current programs (I do not like the vexed term *contemporary*) of musics of the continuum (associated to certain minimalisms, to the best of Xenakis, of Ligeti, of Julio Estrada, or of certain spectral musics).

Wound round the rich and long tradition of experimental voices like those of Roy Hart, the best of Meredith Monk, Diamanda Galás, Demetrio Stratos or Joan La Barbara, Fátima's voice does not remain in fields sown with *phonometric* [fonómetras] musics, the heritage of the old and modern Satie, but it is a synesthetic and dreamy calling on unusual liberties and new, bold postulates, because for Miranda *the avant-garde as theology has died*, but the need and desire to glimpse, to auscultate and to dream the present, which is future, can just never be given up.

Paradigm shift and "ordo novo"

Perhaps the big paradigm shift that the last decades have intoned has been the alleged depletion of self-called avant-gardist creativity. Fátima Miranda, like many others, has lived through it, not as a pathetic escape in search of shelters and warm securities, but as a new impulse towards a trip which does not renounce to any curiosity, but rather incites to read (outside Eurocentrisms) the most attractive vocal practices of the labyrinthine ethnoworld, today threatened more by pandemias and selfish globalities than by necessity and aesthetic ambition.

Thus, being the heiress of an *ethnominimal sensitivity*, Fátima Miranda's music does not necessarily pass through staves, but it goes directly to listening as a daring, intimate activity, yet loaded with ancestral dreams and memories. It is, thus, a music linked to that discursivity, or better *oral humanity*, which accompanies all the authentic musical traditions that exist worldwide.

And this oblique composing of Fátima Miranda's (i.e., composing with the ear stuck to the sounding of all outer lands and peripheries) is so with all doors open. Her swimming in modal matter confers on her thin and agile composing a convincing flow. Hence, the purple side that slashes and splashes her *sempre arioso* singing does not get any off-beat [*contra-tiempo*] nesting there, such is the naturalness it distills. Because of this, in some way, all her works are one unique, versatile work, one astonishing and finished world where *the whispering of stars* comes closer to the late murmuring of tongues already dead, and where the songs of despair ally to those of common sense and wisdom in order to laugh, enjoy or cry on multitrack. MULTITRACK, this is the key word to understand this coffered sonic art [*artesonado/arte sonado*], a compositional cycle in which music springs from *composing with the tape-recorder as an allied*

instrument, a multiplier of the voice (always in real time and with no manipulation), of a voice that, thanks to it, gains *other* dimensions and resonances. So refinedly used, the recorder allows the voice to choreograph itself, to highlight encounters and colours, to stretch its breath [*fáto*], to collide, to double, to unfold... A whole instrumental and polyphonic world with which the voice creates and orchestrates itself: padded and rocked by one's own voice.

Once the myth-making illusion of the ex-avant-gardes is finished, Fátima Miranda's appearance with her singular inquiry represents a sudden *alteration of the order of compositional references* among us, and an evident widening of the imaginative possibilities in both musical and linguistic realms. Furthermore, the fact of being a singer and a woman presupposed for some colleagues her acquiescence to the *ordo*, that she will not accept, generating surprise, even irritation never digested by certain hegemonic rethorics and their somewhat pathetic, almost one-track schemes.

Fátima Miranda is perhaps (together with the theatrical Carles Santos and maybe also with my city concerts of bells) the most lucid representative of that shift of discourse and aesthetic coordinates produced (also among us) when the allegedly avant-gardist proposals, which emerged in the 60s, end up in grey licking-repertoire [*lamerepertorio*] of auditorium and orchestra-as-usual.

To exit perplexity: words and incantations

Helmut Lachenmann (a composer with many questions strung to his sounding proposals of recent years) tells us that "music lost its innocence", only singing, although mortally injured, is able to relink oneself to a world of magic.

And that world irremediably comes on top of us every time Fátima throws to us, through the mouth's breach, her very peculiar *stream of idols* ("men exchange words like invisible idols," says V. Novarina), which at times are not words, but phonemes or syllables that support her coloured singing, and other times —for example in *A inciertas edades* ("At uncertain ages")— are almost words or incantations ("manu, maru") abounding in curtains that veil a language too obscene and depleted. And these quasi words (they are imitated, suggested, transformed, etc.) create quasi phrases and situations, articulating vocality and its *cantabile* phonetization to paint friezes of intense, always disturbing emotion, because Fátima's music contains a virus with both unstable action and sinking effect that seems to touch our darker insides.

On the contrary, other works become rivers of full words, and even phrases, that she burps or outbursts at the speed of a meteorite, as in *Esto es de lo que no tiene nombre* ("This is off the wall / This is unspeakable"). In these works, Fátima bites and undermines the world with her very invisible, but audible, throwable idols.

In any case, Fátima's childlike-singing is a womb of lives which, with their *uncertain* ages, hit us and misteriously drill us, touching our gaps, or rather producing them with their *die voice* [*voz troquel*] to make them breathe, to fill them with secret and halitus [*sopló*]. There are sounds, like those of Fátima's, which, upon arriving, work on us for some time, coaching us, so that we can get (used to) them, thus maturing us, and filling us with *virtus* and subtleties.

"The body, my home, is the voice . My voice is me"

Even the most transparent voice asks for a face. And the face hangs from a body, and the body asks to dwell in a *locus* where the fountains sing, where the crockery and the winds dictate, where heaven becomes silent, and that body is the home where the voice dwells.

Bacon, the painter, says "the body is nothing but bones and flesh," but he overlooks that the body is also a tube, a tube full of secret resonators, sphincters, muscles, gaps, mumblings and puffings. And, right there, people like Fátima intervene to extract colour and mystery, to make them sound.

At times, Fátima says “My voice is me. Everything one is, is present in one’s own voice. You only need to adopt the attitude of a sound potholer to obtain a portrait of a speaker, just listening”. And this power of introspection (also of others), precise as a microscope handler, grows in the singer Fátima Miranda through a patient and penetrating self-listening, by incorporating unusual vocal techniques integrated in her body-furniture, and after seeking and finding points of support, opening resonators, straining and relaxing specific areas. All this aims at making conscious the subjective perception of complex sounding mechanisms and the location of subtle vibrations. This conscious (I insist) self-analysis will allow her to drive and dosify with precision certain amounts of air in between particular muscles, openings, and more or less wet mucoses, as well as to enjoy great freedom while singing.

In fact, Bacon’s simple “bones and flesh” is a very precise instrument of energies and blows, which, after long discipline, is acquired and administered with enormous self-control. And Fátima is a master of studying, inventing and accumulating: a form of transformation, of metamorphosis. “By changing your voice, you change”, Fátima says, and often it is slow and painful, like giving birth. Very beautiful, but only at the end, and forever.

Fátima tells how, in the late 80s, she was touched by the exquisiteness of *Tharir*, a vocal technique of classic Iranian singing, and how she thought of learning it some day. Years later (Paris 1995) she received intensive lessons. The change in vocal sound making this practice required was enormous. The excitement associated to the early, revealing results led her to try to perfect it for hours and hours. This effort, together with the humid Parisian Autumn, hit her with a strong and lasting hoarseness, which kept her from practicing right away the recently *em-bodied* technique.

Months passed and she, already calm knowing that in some part of her body she hoarded *Tharir*, did not worry about researching it. Fátima says that, once learnt, you have to forget the technique so that it comes back to you light and fresh. One day, already in Berlin (Spring of 1996), working at the new house (new resonance) the DAAD had given her, the magnificent acoustics of the studio induced her to sing. Suddenly, something very strange and startling happened, a sort of darker and rougher *Tharir* —yet bright at the same time— “gushed forth” up there [“borbotó”] (a beautiful term coined among us by Alain Limoges) from her inside, as a stream. That way “*Asaeteada*” came to her, unavoidably. She took what she had at hand (a minicassette dictaphone for emergencies) and, right away, began to sing and record that *cantus misus*, before it could escape. “Emotioned by myself” —she says— “I began to cry.” “I did not know where it came from, but I had the impression that I was being sung by that new space.” Here again, the stones sing to me [*Los cantos me cantan*], as mentioned above. So it is. After a digestion hatched by the sediment and oblivion of months, a new voice, already mature, whole and personal, was born, already hers, different from *Tharir*, but one that would have never emerged without the impulse and inspiration taken from it.

The work in its scenic place

Fátima is a whole constellation of singing, technique, music, propositive thinking and performative [*performativa*] action of careful synesthetic effects. Her concerts are a sum of things and emotions which she conceives as a spectacular whole. Her proposal is singular and always multisenses. This is, composed — with irony and humour— of diverse stimuli and also spilled over multiple writings: graphics, strokes, colours, staves, notes, phrases, etc., which detail and tune infinite nuances in her working scores.

Nevertheless, Fátima’s works are already works. But she conceives them as a whole, that is, with gestures —sometimes free, other times very precise ones— which give her a body in the space. She conceives each work to be presented with one colour, one suit, and succinct —yet effective and singular— properties. All this dipped in very determined lights, which conform an adequate *global scenic environment* that covers the air with a suggestive and integral cadence. A dressing of the space with contributing synesthetic connotations that cannot avoid making us think of, among others, Marian Zazeela and La Monte Young, *mutatis mutandis*.

Fátima, your time or your life

In Fátima's musics, "time rains without forgiveness," as Guillermo Carnero says. The time scale—the pouring of things, sounds and their quasi repetitions and echoes—is determining. Being as she is a composer of atmospheres and situations, largesse in the splendid minutes becomes essential: in fact, notes will never learn that sounds exist in their own time clouds, and time often does not get along with the chronometer and its reckoned tick-tock. An instance of this is the splendid ending of *A inciertas edades*, in which the bellows of breath seems to be endless, or even more, it grows titanically when, biologically, i. e., by lung capacity, it should decrease and cease. This is a small and deceptive victory over the body-time by means of light.

In fact, the rare stripping of Fátima's voice has the saving ability to stop a time that passes at full gallop, fixing eternities and freezing them in a nuance, in a glissando, in a repeated melisma. With just a brief listening, her tone of voice becomes unmistakable, and persists in our memory as something palpable. That seems to be Fátima's goal: to harass the desert of all vulgarities with the humidity of her blow. Only for this reason, she disciplines herself (the punitive way), she amuses herself with poetry (the contemplative way), embraces sound (the unitive way), as the classic treatises on mysticism would say.

And this ill-tempered world still welcomes compositional efforts like hers, where the dodges of sound acquire a value of certainty, a value of query, or just "value" as opposed to "confusion." Because, for Fátima, music is life that fills with transparencies a plentiful living, yet heading for loss and dark silence which can be glimpsed already in its whole variety of melancholies. Along these lines, for me, *ArteSonado* is sacred territory, a filling with yellow satin, with vigorous beauty and poetry of ordinary life, where everything is scrawny and imperfect. But it is also a big scream against *no-silence-land*, from where we come and to where we go.

On that obstinate taste of Fátima in these tasteless times of shows

"Life is a constant drone," Fátima repeats. "Everything sings, the environment sings to me and encourages me to sing". "The kitchen"—she insists—"is a beautiful cell of drones... I get particularly enthusiastic about the microwave oven's drone. Although, objectively, it always gives the same note, each day our listening is different, because each day, due to multiple daily factors, whether atmospheric or emotional, the environment sounds subtly different".

Listening to Fátima's music one has the impression that she does not even compose. She just enters the sea of sounds that the world is (for those who, like her, practice sharp ultralisting) and, outspokenly, begins to practice a sort of gliding *surf* on the multiphonic matter itself, which is sound, life. Her osmotic and syncretic compositional proposing profusely waters us with Paradise shavings, causing the tactile impression that the sonic material itself glides without being pushed by nothing-nobody. Everything here is fluid and light.

Goodbye to stereotypes, to stridencies, to useless complications: a pure homeopathic composing which develops *that extended, abundant singing*, in these times of voice (Daniel Charles told us) which still can delight us so much. At the same time, Miranda's singing (multiphonic and always slipping on itself) is paved with thoroughness (for years she has been a librarian and architecture researcher as proven by her books, an obliged reference on those subjects), synesthesias (each speed is self-choreographed with gestures, colours, etc.), splashing of virtuosisms and even vulgarities without restraint or dosage. Not in vain, this is crosscultural music (melting pot?), *music in red-hot fusion* within the strange pot that Fátima is. Her music is a smiling, stripped—never cold—claim against stylistic purity, therefore, it is always on the edge of everything: of sonic skit, of mystic abuse, of scatological anecdote, of the transitory ecstasy caused by mortal wounds, or of the most immaculate, inexplicable perfection. In fact, unbelievable heights, glissandos of an almost impossible rallentando (which can only be understood after Miranda's bathing in the unhurried Dhrupad chant), isorhythmic exactitude, attacks of such a solid making as it was never heard before (the body, rather than a resonating tube, seems the test tube of a laboratory in the

hands of an expert in deoxyribonucleic art): a *colouring in constant tremor* that flows, never being the same, like the river of illustrious Heraclitus.

As a result of all this, a voice-chant grows among us, pregnant with strange melodies (never just notes), a strongly evocative load, and anti-fear incantations. To what? To the singular freedom of the human being who lives/breathes, seeking to give us his/her note, trying to settle his/her coloured (singular) sound, his/her wavelength, his/her own, in this jungle of apparent globalities.

But, please, allow me a final anecdote, a small wicked note. In no Spanish bouquet of women composers appears our Miranda. Also here, as a woman, Miranda is a *compositora bastardilla* [a little bastard composer]. Her composing, the offspring of an exceptional level of perception close to what musicians, with admiration, call *perfect pitch* [oído absoluto]; her constant being there, living out in the openness of the stage and not near the stove of the staff, of the post, or of academia; or her writing, forged with pictorial details, with subtle colours, phrases and specifications worth of ISBN, make Fátima a *composer under suspicion*, for so many emasculated musicians, the children of prejudices and bureaucratic considerations rather than of a listening capable of understanding, *entendre*, as the French beautifully say.

But let us move on to the works. Let us review them, although not at length, to continue discovering Fátima.

“Diapassion”, the colours of the sun

Fátima tells that, in India, the tambura is considered a sacred instrument. In conversation with the acoustics of the space, the tambura shapes and accentuates harmonics and resonances related to each moment, and its sound dictates to the ear of the initiate musician the predominant notes on which he or she should sing. This is the compositional finding here: to build a complex drone that feels like a *tambura effect*, with its glints, its glitters (more or less lacquered), and its pinches. And Fátima attains that feeling of bellows of the cosmos on a *solar day*, by means of a very refined, elaborated and singular superposition of eight voices or tracks, each one with its concrete intonation, timbre, texture and register (on the pitches F-sharp, C-sharp, and A-sharp, in different octaves), which, jointly emitted, create a “melancholic and intimate expressiveness” with a hypnotic grasp on the listener, whose listening is lightly shaken by frequent, irregular and bright winks. Consequently, his or her perception will be *sharper and more subtle*.

In the score, sown with symbols, the author describes each one of the eight utterances that will shape this tambura drone, summarized as follows. The first one will sing a cautious, kind “a”, on a sigh, without intention, somewhat dull, timid and gentle (I am quoting from her scores). The second one will be a powerful, profound sound-ship, a dark, glossy, emerald green velvet voice placed on the rhinofront. The third one will utter a dark F-sharp, powerful but not overbearing, almost a ship’s siren, but timid. The fourth one, high soprano, very timid, the right lacquer, a shine on the sigh. The fifth one, a feminine centre, a light, discrete lacquer, almost angelical..., a smooooooth entry, the mouth swinging along the microphone’s axis. The sixth one, a brilliant *velour*, yet hidden inside and behind speech..., semiclosed mouth, a clear, not nasal internal resonance. Inner smile.... The seventh, metal, diamond, a riding attack right after track six, it lasts only an instant, just like a blink... The eighth, metal centre C-sharp, very discrete, somewhat dull, the right lacquered gloss... do not rush the end... innerly counting two and a half pulses.

And on top of this orchestration of iridescent subtleties, an infinite melody, “sung on the breath,” in melismatic, stretched glissando, revealing the continuous microtones that dwell the unhurried distance in between two notes.

Two things are to be noted: first, in an earlier version, Fátima solved the drone with the bellows of an Indian hand-operated harmonium played in the fashion of breathing. Besides, in some moments, the main voice suffered a weird metamorphosis when Fátima approached a disposable aluminium dish to her mouth and sang on the edge. In this way, voice and dish, by empathy, vibrated together, and that resonance coloured the voice with metallic and startling high sounds. Miranda owes this gimmick of

vocal orchestration (the well-prepared voice) to her working in *Ópera para papel* (“The paper opera”) with the barbarian *Taller de Música Mundana*. And second: although discretely, in this drone of eight voices a very characteristic utterance of Fátima appears, the one she calls *thin wire* [*bilo metálico*] or *crystal voice*. To this winged voice, in octave or even in 15th, redoubling of a normal soprano register, Fátima already dedicated two earlier works: *Hálito* (“Halitus”) and *Alankara Skin*. But to speak of now, in this cycle *ArteSonado*, this extraordinary technique she invented, without precedents in the history of singing, will just humbly appear, surprising us and adding nuances, but decisive like here, although lightly and subtly presented (in tracks seven and eight), barely sticking out, or later in the *seagulls* of *Palimpsiesta*, or as superimposed waves, one riding another, entwining themselves in a garland-canon as we can hear in *HORAdada* (“Pierced / The given HOUR”), or in the accompaniment of *Desasosiego* (“Restlessness”) and *Nila Blue*.

In the crystalline vibration and glacial impression of this peculiar utterance, something of the old, futurist Theremin reappears. The effect of this “thin wire” is also reinforced by her accompanying with an undulating gesture of the hands, in the Dagar’s age-old style, a drawing, with the hands on the air, of sounding. Something similar to what the performers of the electromagnetic waves of the Theremin — so called after its inventor— did, since with the light dance of the hands on the air they modulated the waves in glissando. A curious and symbolic coincidence which joins ancestral traditions with the Futurist years of speed and the machine and with this precarious, evasive end of the millenium.

“Desasosiego” (“Restlessness”), a flow of crossbreedings

“Danubes flow like a navigable tear without an end or destination.” *Desasosiego* converts the mouth in a paddling of percussions and humidities, to sing all those crossbreedings born in the most passionate river (East-West) of this roady Europe.

Hence, the rich 12-voice accompaniment that Fátima composes for this work has been dipped in humid tastings, in clicking tongues [*chascarolas*], in trotting and galloping horses by means of palatal clicks and rapid labial “paralalán” (I am quoting annotations from her working scores). A beating of mouth-tongue and “consumptive coughs” or “faint laughs” which become weird irony and insolence when they turn into “chiaroscuro laments” or “little chokes of happiness” flooding that flow of danubes of palatalities which sound like santurs, psalteries, cimbals, “little spasms,” mandolins, balalaikas and contrabasses. Playful variations on “thin wires” are occasionally ornamented by means of a fast beating of the index finger in between the lips and the teeth, and they become full of harmonics and humidities between her tight lips which insist in flutter-uttering in “kissing position”.

On top of this rich river, the voice waves back and forth, always restless (we say *desfici* in Valencian), laughing and crying while almost praying enigmas that say “savitri, sanmari, sanmoreio”, in conversation with “tangoconsumptive” [*tangotísicas*] laughter. The solo voice imposes itself with solemnness, in *bel canto* style (that voice of all looks and mufflers which helps us to know and drill the mysteries of the unattainable reality) to end up, surpassing all operas, in a wolf howl.

“Palimpsiesta”, (“Palimsest / siesta”) a piece of dog days

An archaic music, a presenting us *the nap* [*siesta*] of the times before time existed. Erased times, but not completely, and sounds equally half perceived, regenerated, regurgitated, of second birth, and rescued by a sounding that walks back the way it walked, namely, sounds literally in *palimfemos*: sounds that give out or give back the sound.

It is a work of whispers of our memory, which sings close to our ears, very close and gently, in intimacy.

It is also the *feast of the ultrasounds*, of couplings, of those sounds never produced by anyone. But here they are, and they sound in a whining throat, of sounds that perhaps existed in other throats of some anonymous faces.

Nonetheless, this is not a piece for boasting and showing off, but one of containment, of the innermost least, also of the voice, which swims in incantatory flights. It is a piece of nothingness, or rather almost nothingness, because something, very little, but very close (we almost feel the breath) lightly warms up our ears.

Fátima works not only with the sounds, but also with their aura, with that *cottony not sounding in full* which envelops them, and she produces that not-empty (that we call silence due to our deaf, superficial laziness) by composing, at times, the most minimal music ever: a weft populated by very diverse whispers, in which she dandles us to catch us there, and rock us in dizzying listening enveloped by her voice a solo. A voice that flies over our brief, superficial hypnosis where, finally, less is more and more is less for an unattentive attention carried away by emotions which sow us with no resistance on our part, caught and abandoned as we are in the fist of a time made sound, which dances tempestuous gígues and pavanas of defunct habanas.

What is this piece of dog days [*canículas*] then, that she titles *Palimpsesta*? Pure music almost not sounded, but tiredly ejaculated, with neither contrasts nor edges, pure rub that fulminates all backs, rallentandos [*ralentis*], and gestures gestated by brief but accurate glottis strokes in the fashion of amazements which are fertile in mysteries. *Palimpsesta* is only time, left there on an indigenous throat, time tightened by the soft hand of a feathery angel, so that we can sit on the *nap of the times*. A brief, immense space this is. Night of the day, of the disordered desire, of restlessness, of floating without a tick-tock, of falling without dimensions, of the vanishing of the self and the others. A rehearsal of insecure deads. A composition of slownesses: of invisible objects, of sprung sounds, of ghosts.

Fátima touches the inhuman core of humans with this tired and dead sounding which brings to our imagination all the more-than-dead Rulfos, so that Julio Estrada may compose for us *Doloritas*, a radio opera which Estrada conceived for a voice and a person we know by the name of Fátima Miranda. Maybe she is nothing but a Mexican incarnation of the archaic Susana San Juan, also dead-locked in the half-dead time of all the naps, forever and never-ever.

“LLAMAda” (“Call/FLAMEgives”). The expanded limit of singing

Fátima’s music is pure sabotage, pure dose of anti-resignation that goes out to the open field and expands, in the border and overflowing, the fixed idea of the limit. Indeed, by means of *worked out training* [trabajado entrene] (a term coined in times of the *Taller de Música Mundana*, faced up to “rehearsal” [ensayo]) Fátima Miranda erases every boundary between what is spontaneous and artificial. There is no delight in the technique, only in the goal. The previous process will remain hidden, as if it had never existed in the long accumulation of tries, studies, sacrifices, scraps, errors, doubts, cuts and detours, already rejected and piled up in a can of sounding trash. She cites Zeami’s treatise of *Nô* theatre: “However hard the trip was, technique should never be perceived; to show it would be like letting the threads of the puppet be seen.”

In private, Fátima comments how the act of singing implies a very complex control of dozens of movements and muscles, of pushing, supporting, opening, minuscule rubbings or vibrations on many different parts of the body, everything being very subtle, subjective, simultaneous and precise. Since all these mechanisms manifest only in feelings located in invisible zones of the body, she has to be guided by a great concentration and attentive practice, inspired in images and graphs that help her to visualize and perceive so many distant and distinct mechanisms (not in vain, Fátima’s working scores teem with drawings that are teeth, lips, palates, glottis, etc.).

Fátima insists on how these elements which are loose, controlled, learnt and integrated through a thorough process of years, have to be completely forgotten and transcended, so that, once they are liberated, she can focus on other things: the whole, creation. A whole which has to sound (to us) natural and easy, yet pregnant with nuances and iridescences, made in such a way that, as the silk of the Far East, we cannot know where does the green begin and where does the orange.

Fátima's extreme and tidy generosity makes her repeat (it is useless to repeat myself) that the public "probably does not perceive the thousand nuances, harmonics or microtones, maybe they do not hear them, but they do LISTEN to them, and this is what attracts them, they perceive the difference not consciously but from their core, and *that touches them.*" Perhaps Fátima's universality is rooted here, and explains why publics of all kinds like her: even though, as an *artist of cult*, she is in the antipodes of the bureaucratized occasional (or seasonal) art that is so much promoted.

Fátima's work touches, among other limits, the limit of word, and this is a shifting and fertile land, because, as María Zambrano reminds us, "if it is not word it is dream," and Fátima labors in *intermediate land* (as Dick Higgins from "Fluxus" would say), as the one of this brief excursus that LLAMADA is: a surprising sounding produced by putting in the mouth a plastic tube that spins in circles around her head, generating shakes, swings and light turns of accelerandos and ritardandos. Thus, the long mouth gets longer and flies, circulating in circles, rolling over space and shaking up our ears left to right.

The muffled orchestra, or the study of couplings - combination tones - in "A inciertas edades" ("At uncertain ages")

We live speared by the unknown, and this does not even wane at this age in which the hunger of syntactic or formal innovations seems to be finished, hence that sacking in the adjective (something Miranda wonderfully does) to explode her virtue, her hidden captivating power. And she does it without ceremony or fear, without any preconceived ideas or program. We are guided by intuition, by the fortuitous encounter and by the enjoyment of unusual acceptances, since no dogma or barrier neither limits nor lessens us. This is why Miranda accepts to be composed, as she writes "from the conscious training of the same, which by accumulation and a slow, hard succession becomes something else." Can anybody think of a more beautiful definition of the intensifying and multiplying power of the most ascetic minimalism anyone could ever dream of?

And Miranda, loaded with unavoidable voice, here in the form of multitrack, begins to perforate the air amalgamating still alive resonances, and getting, by means of attacks of superimposed simultaneities, seditious couplings and false voices (false because nobody supplied a body or a glottis, they appeared as a result of the happy, ferocious encounter of voices, by empathy, by the rubbing of reflecting resonances), but voices, because, although apparently not sung, they grow like spectres, like somewhat strident, hallucinogenic, yet edible and certainly volatile mushrooms.

A master of uncertainties or doubts, she nevertheless appears here in *puris naturabilis*, i.e. in common language: stark naked. Fátima Miranda launches into building pampered quasi unisons, or, if you wish, almost identical duos, since each one loves the other so much, they are so microtonal, and so tight. This resource produces rare volumes and intriguing shades which fill her utterance with a very real illusion. A beautiful *orchestrating* which resembles the most subtle tone-blending techniques of Ravel and Ligeti, which Miranda unreservedly uses in her works, as we can hear in this preliminary *A inciertas edades*, in which the two initial voices soon become four, not duplicating themselves mechanically, but in reality, this is, with falsity, as follows: a voice sings as the shadow of the main one, creating a fluffy cotton on which the other one circulates, supplying a strange, floating density that, at times, will become furtive flash and gloss, an accomplice that will keep sticking out and hiding, freely, larkily or discreetly.

And this *game of falsities that are true* continues with intensities and couplings up to the great final scream of endless breathing. A string of five-voice screams on a rich A natural, which little by little become a semiclustre (G natural, G natural, F, E natural, E natural), and just when it seemed to come to an end, it will progressively spread, against all odds, like a fan [*abanico*] of nine hullabaloes in dazzling glissando, one very rich in couplings, resonances or bird-like, sparkling and sliding accumulations, to end in uncertain (like the title) G-sharp, coupled with beautiful sparkles of F sharp and D sharp.

It is, perhaps, the most luminous ending ever sung in this end of the millenium. Just for this prodigious ending, Miranda's should be cited among the richest compositional proposals of current creation.

In the end, this is, for me, the final goal of *ArteSonado*, to catch what is beyond, to guess and enjoy what cannot be grasped and its evanescent mermaid songs, even if it is fleetingly, as we catch the shape of the desired body by carefully amusing our eyes around the folds of the outfit that covers it.

The die-casting action of the beautiful “HORAdada” (“Pierced / The givenHOUR”)

The landscape of passions that *ArteSonado* constitutes becomes decomposition in this *HORAdada* which cries our tragic stigma: we are, like sounding, a composed and fragmented subject, and “the world’s youth has to break out of our decomposition again,” as Hölderlin wrote. Indeed, these litanymusics are a touch of death and rip, a sowing of ows, laments, insisting demands and lacerated requests to, on top of them, gorge on [jartarse] raging, begging, and protesting, in the most beautiful and crazy way ever imagined. The piece begins with a G natural contested by a protodrone ornated with crystalline tremolos in decomposed and augmented fifth, that is, a C natural and a G which, above its perfectness, is deliberately *caressed against the grain* by a G sharp a quarter tone below, aiming at snatching from mere sounding (given the high register in which all this happens) a reverberating coupling which (metamorphosing and decomposing the voice) will display its interiors, showing to us a *rich rubbing between harmony and timbre* which, by far, escapes the simple representation in poor notes of a famished staff.

The *ordo sonoris* —which our schematic and Western Solfège never paid attention to until today— is now broken in amalgams and frays of what for us is a *new solfège of solfèges* with a sharper edge. A solfège of colours which Schönberg, with his *klangfarbenmelodie* (melody of timbres), beautifully yet primarily, glimpsed. In this solfège, Fátima dives with her accurate, profound glottis strokes, her “thin wires” full of resonance and a sort of echoes an octave and fifteenth above, in enjoyment of glissandos that shed tears sliding down that continuum already noteless which is a deviated question. Because darkness speaks clearly in Fátima’s voice, what is vocal becomes mental and takes angelical accents, even the sinister too. Hence, at last, these letamusics end among “splashes of little accents” and sewn utterances of “little frights and jumpy little sparks of china and crystal”.

Her singing is guided by scores that are a multiphonic assortment of annotations, graphisms, pictograms, vignettes, poetic-descriptive explanations or mouth-physiological drawings, that are also sown with fermatas, notes, alterations, glissandos, arabesques and links. Multiplied and pierced, her voice gets to the listener like a human living full of hopes arrives at a final port *in spite of*, of questions, divertimentos, and wishes at any price. Her singing is an *Ecce homo* that, nevertheless, oozes a strange and permanent *ordo amoris*.

The shadow of speech. “RePERCUSSIONS” or “This is off the wall”

To my knowledge, Mauricio Kagel is the composer most interested in getting juice from *jingles*, its result being, once again, an attractive white coat music, that is, a laboratory product partially filled with the kitch grace of the studied product.

For Fátima, the music of commercials is not an object for analysis, but a subject of fertile dailies in more or less cumbersome encounters where the creative dream grows, indeed, springing from *a whole market of voices* which are collective identity (composer Julio Estrada says that Fátima’s is “a voice like everybody’s”) expressed in a pop language full of porous conventionalities (think of the celebrated three female voices that form the unflinching chorus of every song that pretends to win the *Eurovision* contest or be the *number one summer hit*).

Former compositional approaches by Fátima dealt with the assumption of pop language as a ductile matter used to bring about a personal world without borders or limitations. Let us remember her celebrated game of superpositions “chico, chica” (in *El Principio del Fin* [“The beginning of the end”]), although here her fishwife-ish singing is filled with charms and psalms, slogans and sayings which, thus

emptied, rub and massage (oh, omnipresent McLuhan!) the inattentive listening of whoever lives immersed in radios and TVs which vomit, no wonder! a sea of plural and inexhaustible advertisements [*propaganda*]. A real stage animal, Fátima shows us here her face of the finest sense of humour, the most shameless, loaded with ironies on “the vacuous disguised as modern, ” a theme that, in one way or another, is present in so many of her works as it is also in her discussions and writings, like in her recent *Revelación-revolución* (“Revelation-revolution”).

But whereas Kagel’s approach to the subject is, as said above, a laboratory approach, Fátima’s, as everything in her, has a *passionate and intuitive* side which, supremely, seasons and illuminates with singular subjectivity her composing. A composing which is curative, yes, but above all (re)creative. To this end, Fátima will resort to *spoken music* techniques that she invented and practised for years in the bosom of ***Flatus Vocis Trío***. A trio (together with Bartolomé Ferrando and myself) that practises an uninhibited accumulation of phonetisms extracted from the experimental tradition, but voluntarily dipped in the indispensability of meaning, this is, of the surprising *collision of denotations* found in the surreal table of the performance as a unique, unrepeatable event. Thus, stubborn Miranda, extracts life from death, this is, from common ground, since the whole world revives in her never-mute-mouth, converting this *RePercusiones* (“RePercussions”) into a compulsive and impudent covering the mouth with shameless, impossible dialogues. Because, here, there is no recess (that *diastema* so absent and so well studied by Gillo Dorfles), there is nothing but indulgent self-intoxication (“you’ll feel like someone else, you’ll feel good” - from a TV commercial -). *Esto es de lo que no tiene nombre* (“This is unspeakable / This is off the wall”) remotely reminds us of the classic by Laurie Anderson *Oh superman!*, although if that isorhythmic pulse of a flustered heart had, in the latter, a somewhat intimate, solipsistic surrendering to confessions through an imaginary telephone in a bedroom rich in intimacies, which did not renounce to the electroacoustic transformation of the voice, here, on the contrary, the voice is never manipulated, just channeled and fitted like handmade lace on the adequate tracks. On the other side, Anderson’s telephone-confessional-box has become in the hands of Fátima Miranda an ubiquitous pocket *telephonino* infested with superficialities and sayings which will be scrapped and vomited in such brazenness that there will be no room for reflections. Here, what J. A. Marina would audaciously call “the apotheosis of chatter” is reached.

That beautiful and frenetic going back and forth, that yielding to the borders, and those mixtures, so advanced and so characteristic of Miranda’s proposal, lead us, with grace, with an extraordinary and even Caribbean sense of rhythm, and with a reflexive humour, to enter nobody’s land: “unspeakable.”

To go is to return: “Nila Blue”

To Fátima, singing is wondering, and wandering after the shadow of doubting, of I don’t accept it, of desiring the impossible, of I’d want, of desiring what I don’t desire... In Fátima’s composed singing there is no messianism, no silly affirmation of anything, only a cry which is intuition of solitudes, only strangeness and restlessness which is maturity and a refuge of humanity in perpetual uneasiness whose remains —dried time— nest on the humid resonance of the voice, still potent in this somewhat Jibarized context of today.

Nila Blue is cry in blue, in the end the voice will be left alone like a trumpet of an enlarged mute-lips solo in lament, “I do mind the mind” [*lamento la mente*].

So it begins: a dreaming (a dreaming-sounding [*soñar-sonar*]) distills a melody, so sad and intense, that it awakens the dreamer, and dreaming dies there and then. And that same melody is put here in such a swing that masks and borders the endlessly spinning sound. Like the good old minimalist musics this music does not end either. How could it end when the cry is so bitter? It only moves away letting go, little by little, to disguise the forced, not wanted, interruptus: we hold on to sound to avoid the end. And that is Fátima Miranda, a burst of aching, yet positive and enthusiastic, creative life. Fátima is a solitary faith witness of the transforming value of art. Fátima Miranda lives as a drunken of sensible living. Her proposing exemplifies a no to experimentalism as an end to itself, and a yes to singing as *entendre*, this is,

as deep listening with which to explore a world that changed, that has become another, as another is our genuine experience of it after all this listening.