



PRIVATE MUSIC

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The general concept of *Casa Bonita*, where music is inextricably joined to a specific artistic space, offers the spectator-listener a new way of perceiving music outside the traditional contexts. In *Casa Bonita* we find a musical creation that works like an object, in that the audience is free to relate to it in the most personal and individual way possible. Eduardo Marturet has composed what he calls Private Music, where the listener's freedom to encounter the composition moves beyond the conventional boundaries of the concert hall and the composer's search for personal expression has led him to do away with the restrictions imposed by more widely accepted forms of composition. Private Music is a continuum that, in theory, has no beginning or end, where the participant joins in depending on his or her convenience, taste and free time.

Throughout the musical fragments making up *Casa Bonita* we can see the superhuman wish to dominate time, bring it to a standstill. The composer's intention become one of the most interesting conceptual challenges we find in this piece: in music (as in life) time cannot be halted; nevertheless, Marturet, by means of a methodic manipulation of the themes, structures and densities of the music, manages to create the illusion of time suspended, where sound seems to float in the atmosphere jointly with the plastic art. Sound invades and amalgamates with space, it becomes environment. Contrary to what is traditionally heard in the concert hall, where music is successful to the extent that it prevails and makes us forget our surroundings, the

environmental music in *Casa Bonita* seeks to “disappear,” merging completely with the space and, by doing so, producing constant and subtle changes in that space.

The “private” aspect of this music is obvious as the listener becomes aware of palpable creation of an intemporality characteristic of spacious mental ambiances, in this case those in the mind of the composer.

The most intimate sensations and feelings are poured into a personal dialogue with the keyboards, where they become musical figures that seem to take on an independent life and evolve from their own inertia, although the truth is that they never cease follow strict laws of organization. For those immersed in the acoustic –plastic spaces of *Casa Bonita*, the musical presence creates a live experience of the senses, evoking a wide range of emotional states that cause subjective perception of the environment to shift from one moment to the next.

For instance, *Bar Celestial*, created by Jorge Pizzani can be frivolously playful or deeply neurotic, depending on whether the musical environment at the time is *Febrero 30, Opera en el acto* or *Las Amazonas de Neón*. If Marcos Salazar’s *Patio* resonates with the deep chords of *¿Cabré?*, the earthly sensation will be entirely different from that of mysterious environment evoked by *Desierto de Juguete*; just as there are extremely different nuances in the various remembrances present in *Salón*, the work of Rafael Barrios, where we hear *Casa Bonita*’s music for piano alone. This ability to bring about psychological and physical changes in the quality of space is proof of the inventive wealth and descriptive power of Marturet’s music.

The organizational parameters that provide this work with its coherence and order, whose magnitude and expansiveness make it a “music to be” rather than simply “music to be heard,” have a delicate subtlety. In the same way that we intuitively recognize some sort of order in the universe, even when we neither know nor understand the laws that govern it, Marturet has chosen certain organizational keys that allow the listener, at times merely unconsciously and intuitively, to grasp the relations that provide the foundation for the sound space of *Casa Bonita*. One of the principal keys is the use of the Fibonacci numbers or Golden Section¹ as the basis for determining the different parameters of the work. The presence of these constant numbers, the

basis of so-called Golden Section, works as a guiding principle, a fixed reference that allows for unlimited development of a musical theme while, at the same time, offering a road back so that the musical theme will never lose its identity. In *Casa Bonita*, the Golden Section is organically present in many of the melodies; the same is true of the ratio of melodies and themes within the work as a whole. Since it has been scientifically proven that, biologically, even we human beings follow the principle of the Golden Section, according to Marturet the presence of these numbers in music produces an empathetic connection between music and listeners.

Most of the pieces in this work share a common structure: thus, it begins by presenting a fairly simple melody or rhythmic figure that, by means of systematic variations, evolves, becoming more complex and dense. The musical pieces often reach a climax, where they stop abruptly and then return to the original theme in order to begin developing anew. *Nostalgia de Plomo*, for example, first offers us a simple melody of great sentimental feeling that then leads to a conversation of timbre, where the theme is spread out among the many crystalline textures of the instruments. At times, the melody seems to dissolve, to be left hanging in pauses that delicately thread together the attention of the work.

Glue for a Broken Heart is built, basically, on the tension between a syncopated rhythmic figure that acts as the antithesis to the tight glissandi that mark the erratic rhythm of the lower notes.

In general, throughout the work, the listener is exposed to music that seems to emerge spontaneously in his or her presence, where each theme explores and exploits every possible development, exceeding all expectations and submerging the audience in an attitude of meditation, where the reality of sound is “viewed” as it evolves melismatically.

This meditative response to the music of *Casa Bonita* is due to a merging of Eastern and Western philosophies of composition. Most of the tonal material in the work follows the Western tradition (the work’s basic tonal centers are F major, D minor, D major and G minor); the ways in which these tones are arranged in time, however, is closely linked to the Eastern system of composition. The traditional development of music in the West is based on an intentionally created tension

between consonance and dissonance. The movement away from or towards the tonal center creates a “dramatic” plot that the composer skillfully weaves and then resolves in a triumphant *dénouement* by returning decisively to the dominant tone. In Eastern countries (meaning India, China, Japan and Indonesia), however, music is viewed as a geometric construction, a game of adding and subtracting sound elements to create structures that are more or less symmetrical. That is why this type of music and, in our case, a considerable part of the music in *Casa Bonita*, seem static in tone in benefit of great rhythmic and figurative richness. Many of the themes work like the ragas in Hindu music, which are used by the performer to improvise intricate combinations and unanticipated effects. In other cases, the Eastern influence is felt in the system of modulation, as happens in some movements of *Volver, volver, volver*, where the shift of the sensitive note in the A major chord creates a tonal ambiguity that reminds us of Middle Eastern music; or directly in rhythmic accents and instrumentation, for instance in *Acid Garden*, which comes from the Japanese koto music. I would even dare say that it is this fusion between East and West that has made possible the very special and interesting character of the music in *Casa Bonita*, which, by being “par with life” and playing on infinitely, speaks of the perception of the cosmos (and the plastic/sound nature of *Casa Bonita*) as an indivisible unit of time and space that is perpetually moving and changing. On a totalizing philosophical scale, this view is shared by the mystical Eastern religions, by the theory of relativity and quantum mechanics, the latter being physical concepts that are among the most advanced of intellectual development in the West.

Marturet has coined the term “sound-landscape architecture” to describe this musical environment, which is not the first in his career. There was the project for a Venezuelan pavilion at the Epcot Center, that was never built, and a proposal for a musical environment for the Caracas Metro. It is only now, with *Casa Bonita*, that 15 years of research and study have borne fruit in the creation of this “Private Music,” with the composition of this music for an entire day, music that shifts depending on the time and place. For Marturet the ideal evolution of these ideas would lead him to write personal music for each individual, for each house, domestic music that would require no specific conditions to be enjoyed, music that would unfold to merge perfectly and inconspicuously with each space. This artistic house, built with imagination and creativity in the Museum of Contemporary Art in Caracas is a model of the composer’s fundamental idea.

¹ The number series discovered by the Italian mathematician Leonardo Fibonacci in the 13th Century is a sequence of numbers in which each is the sum of the two preceding numbers (0, 1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, 21,...). In the 17th century it was discovered that, as the sequence advances, the ratio of two successive numbers (5/8, 8/13,...) gives us ϕ (Pi), a constant irrational number known as the Golden Section. This number (which is 0.618...) has its origins in the ratio of two numbers (A and B) in which $A/B = B/A + B$. Since ancient classical times, artists and architects have used this ratio to create works and geometrical shapes that are aesthetically pleasing. In the early 19th century scientists began discovering this ratio in many shapes in nature, for instance in pine cones, the spiral shells of many snails, and the distribution of genetic information in the hereditary lines of certain insects. More recently, it has been found that the Golden Section also applies to sections of DNA spirals.