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Avant-Garde Music, Political Commitment and Narratives of Resistance: A Perspective from Catalonia (1959–1978)¹

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It was three years of war and thirty-six of dictatorship. For the older generation, these were years of exile, resignation, collaboration, silent resistance² or impossible struggle. For those born during this period, they became years of assimilation, critical awareness³, interior rebellion or subversive alliances. This was part of a process of dramatic social mutation that emerged in Catalonia against an unavoidable background of identity, with cultural, linguistic and political demands⁴ in perpetual contradiction to the repressive strategies of the Franco regime in Catalonia⁵.

Belonging to the music system inevitably entails interacting with the public, critics and music institutions. Doing so within the determining factors of a *sui generis* authoritarian political culture such as that developed by the Franco regime, with notable internal and chronological nuances, forced its actors to manage this belonging with disparate attitudes and proposals⁶. Furthermore, participation in the music avant-garde requires a repositioning in the face of tradition and the music system itself, from stances of interference, discussion or contradiction with this institutional, ideological and political environment⁷. It is precisely when power seems to entirely capture the art and music ecosystem that a narrative begins to appear on the possibility of resistance. This narrative during the latter period of Franco's dictatorship and the early years of the democratic transition is the subject of the concise attempt at interpretation in the following pages. It is supported by some milestones in Catalonia in the creation and diffusion of music that was more or less modern and, in some cases, really 'avant-garde'.

First resist... from the memory of the Republican past

Ignacio goes up the tiers
with all his death on his shoulders.
He sought for the dawn
but the dawn was no more.
He seeks for his confident profile
and the dream bewilders him
He sought for his beautiful body
and encountered his opened blood
I will not see it!

Federico García Lorca, *Llanto por Ignacio Sánchez Mejías*, 1935⁸

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The original text in Spanish, as well as the quotes that were originally written in Spanish and Catalan have been translated into English by Lucille Banham.

² GRACIA 2004A.

³ GRACIA 2004B.

⁴ SANTACANA 2018; CASANOVAS – CORRETGER – SALVADOR 2019.

⁵ MARÍN 2019.

⁶ PÉREZ ZALDUONDO – GAN-QUESADA 2013; CONTRERAS 2021.

⁷ PÉREZ CASTILLO 2014.

⁸ «Por las gradas sube Ignacio / con toda su muerte a costas. / Buscaba el amanecer, / y el amanecer no era. / Busca su perfil seguro / y el sueño lo desorienta. / Buscaba su hermoso cuerpo / y encontró su sangre abierta. / ¡No me digáis que la vea!». GARCÍA LORCA 2005, pp. 140–141.

Exiled composers, like so many other Spanish political refugees abroad, believed that the end of the Second World War and the allied victory would mean the end of fascism in Europe and consequently the fall of General Franco's dictatorship. However, Franco held on and took advantage of the Cold War situation to become a solid partner of the United States of America, particularly after the signing of commercial and military agreements between both countries in 1953. The regime was willing to accept the return of most of the exiled artists to capitalise on their prestige, as long as they respected the rules of forgetting and avoided the issue of why they had left. In the press, which was always controlled by the structures of the regime, returns were often noted with a laconic «who has been outside of Spain for several years».

From Spain, exiles in other countries could be seen as beacons of ethics or traitors of the fatherland, depending on the political perspective with which they were viewed. Naturally, for some Republican sectors in 'interior exile', the first way of resisting Franco was to programme music that recalled the Generation of the Republic, even if the results varied⁹. A notable example of this attitude, with only relative results, would be the gradual presentation to Barcelona's public of the work of Robert Gerhard (1896–1970), especially from the mid-1950s onwards¹⁰. Gerhard was a leading figure in modern music in Catalonia during the 1930s. The visibility of Gerhard in the political-cultural panorama of the republican Catalan government, added to his position as an avant-garde composer, explain why it was hard to recover his work and why he was often overlooked or treated in a partial, misleading way by historiography and Spanish music critics of the period¹¹.

Continuing in the area of programming what we could call an uncomfortable repertoire, a key role was played by Swiss-Spanish conductor Jacques Bodmer (1924–2014), who had trained with Hermann Scherchen (1891–1966). Perhaps because of his Swiss passport, Bodmer took some concerts to the limit of what was allowed. This was especially true when he entered the genre of music for voice, as the Franco dictatorship was very concerned about lyrics.

One example is how extremely difficult it was to perform works with texts by Federico García Lorca (1898–1936). The poet from Granada had been illegally executed by Francoist authorities in the city at the start of the Spanish Civil War, but Franco's regime never recognised its participation in the execution and there was a profound institutional silence regarding the figure of Lorca¹². Only when the Pact of Madrid was signed in 1953 between Spain and the United States of America was the censored publication of the *Complete Works* of Lorca permitted, in an attempt to show that the Franco regime did not have a problem with publishing this work in Spain, as long as it had been totally depoliticised.

However, García Lorca continued to inspire artists¹³. In 1950, the French composer Maurice Ohana (1913–1992) composed the oratorio *Llanto por Ignacio Sánchez Mejías* on the poem of the same name by García Lorca. Soon afterwards, in 1956, a recording was released that the Spanish conductor Ataúlfo Argenta (1913–1958) had made in March 1954 in France¹⁴. However, Argenta did not manage to premiere the work in Spain. Only the efforts of Jacques Bodmer, after «exasperating struggles with censorship¹⁵», led to the work being premiered in Barcelona on 4 December 1959. Bodmer conducted the Orquesta Filarmónica de Barcelona, which had rented the Palau de la Música Catalana, in a concert that we can only describe as symptomatic. The exquisite, disturbing *Llanto* failed to arouse the interest of a public that did

⁹ MOREDA 2020.

¹⁰ GAN-QUESADA 2014.

¹¹ PÉREZ CASTILLO 2020.

¹² DELGADO 2015.

¹³ TINNELL 1993; GAN-QUESADA 2021.

¹⁴ OHANA 1956; GONZÁLEZ-CASTELAO 2008, p. 259.

¹⁵ «Sólo conseguí programarla al precio de exasperantes peleas con la censura». BODMER 1977.

not even bother to go to the concert hall. Perhaps they preferred to forget the meaning of Lorca or not to give him any meaning¹⁶. In any case, according to Bodmer, «the *Llanto* was dangerous¹⁷». During the 1960s, Bodmer took advantage of the periods he spent in Montevideo and Buenos Aires to contact two great voices of Spanish exile, Margarita Xirgu and Rafael Alberti, to try to get them to recite the *Llanto*¹⁸. According to Bodmer, the performance in Montevideo with Margarita Xirgu «sparked the anger of the Spanish ambassador¹⁹».

As we can see, the ‘resistant spirit’ was only faintly perceived in strictly musical circles. In contrast, the 1950s marked the start of what was called independent theatre, which was much more daring about political issues. José Bergamín (1895–1983) was one of the most renowned writers of the literary avant-garde from the Republican Generation. When he returned to Spain at the end of 1958²⁰, the performance of his plays led to the creation of a small space for like-minded intellectuals to meet again. The dramatist Ricard Salvat (1934–2009) was commissioned by Dido: Pequeño Teatro to direct two works by Bergamín—*Medea, la encantadora* (1954) and *Hamlet, solista* (1927)—in the Teatro de la Comedia of Madrid on 5 June 1963. *Hamlet, solista* was performed with music by Gustavo Pittaluga (1906–1975), who was a composer of the Republic Generation in full ‘inside exile’. For this performance, Salvat incorporated the mezzo-soprano Anna Ricci (1930–2001) in the role of Apache. Ricci, a singer with a solid career that started at the beginning of the 1950s, became an indisputable figure in the Catalan music scene whose commitment to resistance increased as the 1970s approached. Just a few months after the performance, 102 intellectuals signed a manifesto for the Minister of Information and Tourism, Manuel Fraga, condemning the repression of the Asturian miners. This led to the immediate expulsion of Bergamín from Spain²¹. The only thing the dictatorship accepted was subjugation.

We should note that we are describing small skirmishes that sought in the cracks of the authoritarian state a space in which to introduce a dissenting gesture, an insignificant victory over censorship, a prickle of discomfort for the authorities that did not feel ‘well-liked’. And, unfortunately, this situation continued until well into the 1970s. In 1972, the Spanish premiere of *Guernica* (1966) by Barcelona composer Leonardo Balada (b. 1933), who had settled in the USA, was to be performed by the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra. However, the performance was cancelled in the end, supposedly due to a lack of rehearsal time²². Prior to this, the problematic reference to Picasso’s work in the title had been prudently changed for the neutral, rather uninspired title of *Música en rojo y negro* – colours that were of course associated with anarcho-syndicalist ideology. This was just a few months after another “compromising” work by Balada, his *Sinfonía en negro – Homenaje a Martin Luther King* (1968), would have been included in the US tour of the Spanish Radio and Television Symphony Orchestra, which promoted his commission and premiere²³...

¹⁶ ARNAU 1959.

¹⁷ «El *Llanto* era peligroso». BODMER 1977.

¹⁸ Of these collaborations, a record has survived that Bodmer recorded with Rafael Alberti and the Orquesta Sinfónica del SODRE of Montevideo in 1962. OHANA 1962.

¹⁹ «[...] que provocó las iras de la embajada de España». BODMER 1977.

²⁰ MUÑOZ 2010, pp. 62–67.

²¹ *Ibidem*, p. 59.

²² DIOS HERNÁNDEZ 2012, p. 149.

²³ A short film of the rehearsals of this work for its performance in the Kennedy Center of Washington, can be seen in INFORMACIONES 1971.

Music and collective identity in resistant Catalan culture

The Most High: In this learned and romantic century of ours, when malice is the general rule, anything can get you branded as a criminal, in a second—the language you speak, your ideas, having money, not having money, the look on your face, the way you breathe, the chilblains on your feet, the colour of your skin.

Salvador Espriu, *Primera història d'Esther*, 1947²⁴

Franco's repression in Barcelona had both anti-left and anti-Catalan dimensions. In statements made to foreign correspondents during the Spanish Civil War in February 1937, Franco was categorical about his objectives: «In terms of the future fate of Catalonia, we should say that this is precisely one of the fundamental reasons for our uprising. If we were to leave Catalonia to its own destiny, it would end up being a serious threat to the integrity of the Fatherland²⁵». As a consequence, at the reopening of the Palau de la Música Catalana, the most important auditorium for classical music in the city, the following statement appeared in the press in 1939: «On its incorporation into the activities of New Spain, that addition of 'Catalan' has been removed from the name of the Palacio de la Música. It had appeared to mean the exclusion of composers from neighbouring regions, though luckily this was not fully implemented²⁶».

In these conditions, for a sector of the population of Catalonia that was well-off, bourgeois, Catholic and silent, resistance involved speaking, publishing, reading or singing in Catalan, even if the texts were or seemed to be totally inoffensive. It was a question of collective identity.

The poet Salvador Espriu (1913–1985) wrote *Primera història d'Esther* in 1947. This was a farce for puppets in Catalan that transposed the biblical story of Esther to a mythical present in which, before the first barrier that imposed an overwhelming richness of language, plays of associations were possible, typical of a seriously resistant attitude. The text passed the preliminary censorship with the rating of 'not censurable'. A first public reading was held in the protective space of the Institut Français de Barcelone and the work was published in 1948. Some time passed before an independent theatre company, the Agrupació Dramàtica de Barcelona that had emerged under the protection of the conservative Cercle Artístic de Sant Lluc, could premiere the work on 13 March 1957 at the Palau de la Música Catalana, under the stage direction of Jordi Sarsanedas (1924–2006)²⁷.

The great friendship and trust of Salvador Espriu with the musician Manuel Valls (1920–1984), known as Nani Valls to his close friends, led Espriu to count on Valls for the music. Memorably, Espriu invoked the composer's music in *The Most High*: «Hey there, Dai Band! Get cracking with the bassoons and kettledrums! Provide some suitable tin-pan alley music to enhance the splendour of the great monarch, the glory of a day that really is... apothecotic²⁸». Valls used an ensemble of piano, oboe, clarinet, bassoon and percussion, with a solo guitar performance²⁹. In

²⁴ «Al nostre segle erudit i romàntic, sense més norma que els mals sentiments, et defineixen com a figures de delictes, en un parpelleig, llengües, idees, pistrincs, inòpies, gestos, raneres, penellons i races». ESPRIU 1989, pp. 78–81.

²⁵ «En cuanto a la suerte futura de Cataluña, hemos de decir que ésta es precisamente una de las causas fundamentales de nuestro levantamiento. Si abandonásemos Cataluña a su propio destino, llegaría a ser un grave peligro para la integridad de la Patria». Cited by BENET 1978, p. 96.

²⁶ «Al ser incorporado a las actividades de la Nueva España, se ha hecho desaparecer del nombre del Palacio de la Música aquel aditamento de 'Catalana', que parecía significar una exclusión, afortunadamente no realizada por completo, de los compositores de las regiones hermanas». LA VANGUARDIA ESPAÑOLA 1939.

²⁷ GALLÉN 2014.

²⁸ «Altíssim: Ah, Nani Valls, arrenca de fagot i timbales! Guarneix i subratlla amb xim-xim condigne la magnificència del gran monarca, la pompa d'un jorn apoteòtic». ESPRIU 1989, pp. 22–23.

²⁹ The musicians who took part on the premiere were Jordi Giró (cond, pf), Domènec Segú (ob), Rodolf Giménez (cl), Joan Carbonell (bn), Miquel Armengol (perc) and Mercè Crehuet (gtr). A holograph score has been conserved in Documentació de Manuel Valls Gorina, 1931–1987, Biblioteca de Catalunya, Barcelona.

the Song of Esther³⁰, the lead lamented in this way with the clear phrasing of a melody of popular simplicity, in the last verse:

Sad people, the cities burned
Are fuel to your mind.
The road ahead is bleak,
No warming fireside gleams;
For welcome you must seek
In my eyes for dreams³¹.

Why not presume that at this time the Catalan ‘people’ would have identified with the misfortunes of the Hebrew people? This is the interpretation that was retrospectively proposed by historian Josep Benet (1920–2008) in the programme of the revival of 1982: «It is therefore natural that some would consider its premiere as [...] an invitation to hope, in the midst of the desperation of many, in the survival of a people who were enslaved and an incitement to construct a fairer society that is freer and more human³²».

The fight for the Catalan language formed an essential aspect of the resistance of the identity of middle classes, professionals and a sector of the bourgeois. To the despair of the dictatorship, these groups did not support the regime as hoped.

The foundation in Barcelona of *Juventudes Musicales de Barcelona* in 1952, affiliated to *Jeunesses Musicales*, increased the interest in twentieth century music³³. In 1959, Jacques Bodmer conducted *Histoire du soldat*³⁴. Here the problem was not Stravinsky’s music or Ramuz’s libretto; the challenge was that they wanted to perform the Catalan translation by the composer Narcís Bonet (1933–2019)³⁵. From the 1950s, the dictatorship had allowed publications of authors in Catalan, although in dribs and drabs. However, it still disapproved of translations of foreign texts in Catalan, as this implied acceptance of Catalan as a refined language that was comparable to Spanish³⁶. A close look at the concert programme shows the title of Stravinsky’s work written in the original in French. Only on the bottom right margin, in small letters, is it indicated that a Catalan translation was presented. The press was perfectly aware of the margins of freedom at the time, and only fleetingly mentioned Bonet’s translation³⁷.

Finally, an unfortunate event permanently strained the relations of the regime with the conservative bourgeois. The editor-in-chief of the newspaper *La Vanguardia Española*, who was appointed directly by Franco, attended a mass in June 1959 at which the parish priest gave the sermon in Catalan. The newspaper editor-in-chief tried to stop it with xenophobic shouts. Immediately, the Catalan Catholics (CC) group started a campaign that led to a fall in sales and a 50% drop in advertising. The editor-in-chief was dismissed and the situation forced the regime

³⁰ An excellent recording of the Song of Esther by Anna Ricci in VALLS 1995.

³¹ «Poble trist, amb record / de ciutats molt cremades. / No t’aculi cap repòs / d’ombra bona, de casa. / Només somnis, al fons / de la meva mirada». ESPRIU 1989, pp. 56–57.

³² «És natural, doncs, que alguns consideréssim la seva estrena com [...] una invitació d’esperança, enmig de la desesperança de molts, en la sobrevivència d’un poble esclavitzat i una incitació a construir una societat menys injusta, més lliure i més humana». Cited by SABAT 2010, p. 270.

³³ CAPDEVILA 1998.

³⁴ The musicians who performed the work were: Jacques Bodmer (cond), Juli Panyella (cl), Ramon Isbert (bn), Amadeu Rovira (tpt), Miquel Badia (tbn), Robert Armengol (perc), Jaume Llecha (vn) and Ferran Sala (db).

³⁵ Bonet, son of architect Lluís Bonet Garí, was from a conservative, Catalanist family that was very active in the post-war period. In a year as difficult as 1941, the 25th anniversary of the death of bishop Josep Torras i Bages was celebrated at his home. Bages had been one of the mainstays of conservative Catalanism at the end of the nineteenth century and the start of the twentieth century. Bonet also celebrated at his house the centenary of a manifesto in defence of the Catalan language by Joaquim Rubió i Ors. SAMSÓ 1994, p. 50.

³⁶ ARBONÈS 1995.

³⁷ LLAUDER 1959, MONTSALVATGE 1959.

to try to get closer to this bourgeois in what was called ‘Operation Catalonia’. Between 30 April and 24 May 1960, Franco and almost all the ministers of his government went to Catalonia for a busy schedule of openings and sessions that ended abruptly with the *Fets del Palau* (Events of the Palau), in which new, unexpected interference occurred between modern Catalan music creation and the exacerbated political climate. There were few indications that in May 1960, the Palau de la Música Catalana would experience an act of protest that would, from that point on, become one of the founding myths of anti-Franco political resistance in Catalonia.

The same year, as a part of the commemoration of the Centenary of the Birth of poet Joan Maragall (1860–1911) who was the highest representative of the *Renaixença*, the Orfeó Català had announced a composition competition. A prize was given to *Cant espiritual* (1958) by Xavier Montsalvatge (1912–2002) on one of Maragall’s best known poems, a «tremendous expression of faith and rebellion at the same time» in the words of the composer³⁸. Its successful premiere in April 1960 was followed by a second performance on 19 May of the same year. At this concert it shared a programme with the choral work *El cant de la Senyera*, which had a text by Maragall put to music by the founder of Orfeó Català, Lluís Millet i Pagès (1867–1941). However, this work was prohibited by civil authorities due to its connection with pre-war Catalan nationalism. The suppression of this piece caused a tumultuous reaction among around a hundred young Catalan nationalists, who demanded the singing of the hymn, as had been announced, at the start of the third part of the concert. They began to perform it before the Minister of National Education, Jesús Rubio. This resulted in a public scandal and a large number of detentions and imprisonments. The other element that was greatly affected by this occurrence (in purely musical terms) was the *Cant espiritual* by Montsalvatge, which was performed between increasing murmurs of expectation, as for hours there had been rumours of the possibility of a protest. Montsalvatge’s work was concluded «with difficulty», before the «tremendous show» was transferred from the stage to the auditorium³⁹.

For its part, the institution that was responsible for such ‘ill-judged’ programming of *El cant de la Senyera* continued to navigate in political ambiguity and did not take long to recover the official *status* that it had enjoyed as one of the main ambassadors of Catalan choral music in Franco’s Spain. Recordings of other works by Millet had been extensively disseminated for years⁴⁰. Orfeó Català itself did not turn down official invitations such as that of its third visit to Madrid in spring 1963 to perform Beethoven’s *Missa solemnis* with the Orquesta Nacional de España (15 and 17 May) and an entire choral Catalan music programme on 16 May, with the support of the Ministry of Information and Tourism and the choreographic participation of Esbart of the Círculo Catalán de Madrid. This programme was praised by the influential critic Antonio Fernández-Cid (1916–1995) as evidence of the «[...] continuous contribution [of Orfeó Català] to the essential, harmonious unity of the peoples and lands of Spain⁴¹». Even *El cant de la Senyera* itself, once the echoes of the *Fets del Palau* had faded, was commercially recorded in the midst of the Franco dictatorship⁴² as part of the ‘Antologia històrica de la música catalana’ promoted by the record label Edigsa. It was even released in Madrid by the semi-official music publisher of the time, Unión Musical Española, in 1967.

To return to the timeline, the failure of ‘Operation Catalonia’ meant that contact was permanently lost between Franco’s regime and the moderate Catholic-Catalanist sectors. It is significant that three years later out of the Agrupació Dramàtica de Barcelona, which had

³⁸ «[...] tremenda manifestación de fe y de rebeldía al mismo tiempo». Cited by GUERRERO MARÍN 2012, p. 342.

³⁹ *Ibidem*, pp. 344–345.

⁴⁰ See MILLET 1959.

⁴¹ «[...] continua contribución [del Orfeó Català] a la esencial y armónica unidad de los pueblos y las tierras de España». FERNÁNDEZ-CID 1963.

⁴² MILLET 1968.

premiered Espriu, emerged the desire to interpret a work that leaned a lot further to the left: *Die Dreigroschenoper* (1928) by Bertolt Brecht and Kurt Weill. Of course! It was decided that a Catalan version (*L'òpera de tres rals*) should be prepared that would be performed under the stage direction of Frederic Roda (1924–2006). Joan Oliver (1899–1986) translated the dialogues and Feliu Formosa (b. 1934) the lyrics of the songs⁴³, while Antoni Ros Marbà (b. 1937) arranged and conducted an orchestral reduction for electronic organ, piano, double bass and percussion⁴⁴.

Following the events that Jordi Coca⁴⁵ recorded in chronological order helps to understand the great effort that was made by the theatre company. On 16 October 1962, the company asked the Ministry of Information and Tourism if it had any objection to them performing Brecht. The same month, the company was given approval. In December, a Spanish version was sent to ensure the feasibility of the operation. In March 1963, the Catalan translation by Oliver was submitted for censorship. At this time, the premiere was planned for 29 May but it was delayed until 19 June due to problems with Brecht's copyright agency. However, on 15 June, when permission for the performance had already been received, a message was sent stating that consultations were being carried out in Madrid. One day before the premiere, the company was notified by a letter, falsely, that the text had not been censored and the performance could not go ahead. Two hours before the premiere, the performance was cancelled. In July 1963, a new date was applied for, and in October authorisation was received again. Two performances were programmed for the 12 and 13 November 1963 in the Palau de la Música Catalana. The premiere could finally take place. In the programme, Frederic Roda wrote gravely:

Today a play by Bertolt Brecht will be performed for the first time on the Peninsula, precisely in Catalonia and by our Agrupació, we would like all those who are involved in this event actively or passively to maintain an attitude of gravid restraint: for the responsibility that the event represents, for the pleasure of accomplishing it, for the emotion that always accompanies those who in good faith and with full awareness start a noble, risky adventure⁴⁶.

And he concluded with the hope that «That this night will be for everyone, rich in suggestion and hope⁴⁷». And the night became cathartic. It is difficult to perceive the public's emotion in the pro-government press, but between the lines the «delirious⁴⁸» success that it represented can be sensed: «The public, which filled the venue to bursting, applauded several times and gave the entire company a standing ovation at the end⁴⁹», or «an audience that was not very Brechtian in fact, not only gave the work a standing ovation as a whole, but also highlighted half a dozen phrases that could be deemed impertinent⁵⁰».

However, fifteen days later, on 2 December 1963, the police closed the premises of the Agrupació Dramàtica de Barcelona and the civil governor broke up the company. The success of Brecht had been too resounding. The dictatorship could reluctantly accept an event with a small audience, but not a great success in a packed Palau.

⁴³ BRECHT 1963.

⁴⁴ The musicians who participated in the premiere were Antoni Ros Marbà (cond), Lleó Borrell (pf, kbd), Ferran Sala (db) and Robert Armengol (perc), ALBET 1963. There is an original recording made during the general rehearsal, WEILL 1963.

⁴⁵ COCA 1978, pp. 161–164.

⁴⁶ «Avui que una obra de Bertolt Brecht és representada per primer cop a la Península, precisament a Catalunya i per la nostra Agrupació, voldriem que tots els qui intervenim, activament o passivament, en aquest acte, mantinguéssim una actitud de gràvida contenció: per la responsabilitat que el fet implica, pel goig d'acomplir-lo, per l'emoció que sempre acompanya els qui de bona fe i amb plena consciència emprenen una aventura noble i arriscada». RODA 1963.

⁴⁷ «Que aquesta nit sigui per a tots, rica en suggeriments i en esperança». *Ibidem*.

⁴⁸ COCA 1978, p. 164.

⁴⁹ «El público, que llenaba a rebosar el local, aplaudió varias veces y al final dedicó una gran ovación a toda la compañía». PEDRET 1963.

⁵⁰ «[...] un auditorio bien poco brechtiano por cierto, no sólo ovacionó la obra en su intencionalidad conjunta, sino que subrayó incluso media docena de frases llamémoslas disolventes». FARRERAS 1963.

Musical avant-garde: from criticism of the establishment to political resistance

While the pianist plays a piece accompanied by the singer-actress and makes technical comments out loud, to the right enters a moustachioed soldier—grotesque, like Frégoli—and ties the pianist hands behind his back; then covers the woman's mouth with a scarf that he ties at the back of her neck, and then leaves with a commotion. The pianist plays with his elbows. She vocalises confusedly.

Joan Brossa, *Concert irregular*, 1968⁵¹

In Barcelona in the 1950s and 1960s, the most enthusiastic admirers of avant-garde music met in other extramusical spaces very different from those that we have just mentioned: in private houses, in foreign culture institutes⁵² or in two private associations funded by their members: Club 49 and Juventudes Musicales de Barcelona. These were real bastions of freedom, where it was possible to listen to another kind of music.

For example, in Club 49⁵³ some of the most politically committed works of Luigi Nono (1924–1990) were heard. On 23 March 1960, a record-listening was held of his anti-fascist works, *Il canto sospeso* (1956) or *Diario polacco* (1959), and on 30 June 1961 a reading of a risky article by Giulio Carlo Argan on the work *Intolleranza 1960* (1961)⁵⁴.

Also in the same year, Club 49 decided to promote some cycles for disseminating avant-garde music called 'Música oberta' (Open Music), under the direction of the composers Juan Hidalgo (1927–2018) and Josep Maria Mestres Quadreny (1929–2021). The opening concert was held on 11 May 1960 in the Chapel of Santa Àgata. An instrumental ensemble conducted by Jacques Bodmer⁵⁵ played, in order of performance, *Música per a 7 instruments* (1960) by Joaquim Homs (1906–2003), *Continuïtats* (1960) by Josep Cercós (1925–1989), *Comentarios a dos textos de Gerardo Diego* (1958) by Luis de Pablo (1930–2021), *Cuarteto 1958* by Juan Hidalgo and *Música de cambra núm. 1* (1960) by Josep Maria Mestres Quadreny. However, these dates coincided with 'Operation Catalonia' and, at the last moment and without prior warning, the organisers found the «presence of the Minister of Education, who appeared alongside Luis de Pablo, which irritated the people of Club 49 extremely⁵⁶». In the presence of Minister Jesús Rubio, a cycle of concerts was opened that aspired to bring the most innovative music to the city.

In the environment of Club 49, various works emerged of criticism resisting the establishment. Notable is the collaboration between the poet Joan Brossa (1919–1998) and Mestres Quadreny in the preparation of *Suite bufa* (1966), a musical action that satirised the classical format of the recital in which Carles Santos (1940–2017) performed as pianist, Anna Ricci as singer-actress, and Terri Mestres as classical dancer⁵⁷. The work was premiered in the Festival Sigma 2 of

⁵¹ «Mentre el pianista toca una peça amb intervenció de la cantatriu i fa comentaris tècnics en veu alta, entra per la dreta un militar bigotut —grotesc, a la manera de Frègoli— i li lliga les mans a l'esquena; després tapa la boca de la noia amb un mocador, que li nua al clatell, i se'n torna amb una revolada. El pianista toca amb els colzes. Ella vocalitza confusament». BROSSA 1975, p. 37.

⁵² MARTÍN-NIEVA 2019.

⁵³ BONET – PERAN 2000.

⁵⁴ ARGAN 1961.

⁵⁵ Jacques Bodmer (cond), Anna Ricci (mez), Salvador Gratacós (fl), Pedro Espinosa (pf), Manuel Calsina (vn), Pablo Dini (vn), Mateu Valero (va), Mario Vergé (vc), Ferran Sala (db) and Robert Armengol (perc).

⁵⁶ «[...] la presència del ministre d'Educació, que aparegué de la mà de Luis de Pablo, cosa que irrità en extrem la gent del Club 49». MESTRES 2000, p. 55.

⁵⁷ GAN-QUESADA – MARTÍN-NIEVA 2014.

Bordeaux, on 4 November 1966, under the stage direction of Lluís Solà (b. 1940). It was warmly received.

At the same time, *No compteu amb els dits* (1967) was being developed, a film by Pere Portabella (b. 1927) with a script by Portabella and Brossa and music by Mestres Quadreny. Among other things, Brossa's anticlericalism emerged in the film. A parish priest carried out an activity as everyday as leaving the church and going into a barber's shop to get a shave. In the barber's, Brossa himself, now as an actor, looked at the scene out of the corner of his eye while he leafed through a newspaper. The silence gave way to the sound of some solitary scissors, to which more and more blades were added. The beating of the blades *in crescendo* ended abruptly with a tense silence. A close up showed the razor shaving the cheek of the parish priest, while the amplified sound of the cutting of the beard's hairs was reproduced. This was a marvellous fusion of *musique concrète* and film that activated the imagination of the spectator and the play of relations: why couldn't ecclesiastic power be at the mercy of an artisan?

Joan Brossa's fascination with the performance capacity of Carles Santos and Anna Ricci led him to go deeper into the subversive possibilities of radical criticism of music institutions. The composer Josep Maria Mestres Quadreny no longer followed Brossa on this path and distanced himself from the poet for almost ten years. Driven by the revolutionary atmosphere of 1968, Brossa, Portabella, Santos and Ricci prepared the *Concert irregular*, another parody of a concert for voice and piano, to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the painter Joan Miró (1893–1983) in the Foundation Maeght of Saint-Paul-de-Vence, on 22 July 1968. The last act included a 'Homage to the Viet Cong'. Anything was possible in France, although the act caused the United States ambassador to leave the performance and triggered the ire of Aimé Maeght (1906–1981)⁵⁸.

When, three months later, on 7 October 1968, the *Concert irregular* was premiered at the Teatre Romea of Barcelona, as part of the Sixth International Festival of Music of Barcelona, the 'Homage to the Viet Cong' had been transformed into a less explicit 'Homage to Vietnam'. At least three acts in the work were a courageous gesture of resistance and subversion. The first was a reference to the Inquisition. Brossa wrote:

The pianist enters with his sleeves rolled up and a black briefcase that he leaves on the floor. He closes the piano. From the briefcase, he takes out successively an axe and two hands made from plaster. He leaves everything on top of the piano, on the side and in good view of the public. Then, very slowly, he rolls down his sleeves, which are long to cover his hands. He sits at the piano, and, handless, gesticulates at the keys as if he were playing a brilliant piece⁵⁹.

The second was an explicit criticism of censorship as we can read in the quotation at the start of this section, and the third was a criticism of Franco's Yankee friend and his war in Vietnam. The concert ended with shouting, stamping of feet and fierce criticism by the conservative sector of the public, as expected, but also by the progressive sector that demanded 'popular culture', instead of avant-garde⁶⁰. The environment was politicised to the extreme.

When, one year later, on 26 November 1969, Anna Ricci presented a concert at the Saló del Tinell, a medieval space that belongs to the City Council, the scandal of the *Concert irregular* was still reverberating. The programme included a first part of Troubadour songs and a second part with the following musical actions, in order of performance: an excerpt from *We* (1969) by Luis de Pablo, *Aria with Fontana Mix* (1958) by John Cage (1912–1992), *Para Anna, un dúo*

⁵⁸ FANÉS 2010, p. 477.

⁵⁹ «Entra el pianista amb les mànigues arremangades i amb un maletí negre que deixa a terra. Tanca el piano. Del maletí en treu successivament una destrat i dues mans de guix; tot ho deixa damunt el piano, de costat i ben visible per al públic. Després, a poc a poc, s'abaixa les mànigues, que són llargues per tal que li cobreixin les mans. S'asseu al piano i, manc, gesticula el teclat com si toqués una peça brillant». BROSSA 1975, p. 30.

⁶⁰ FANÉS 2010, p. 477.

(1969) by Juan Hidalgo and *Per tante cose* (1969) by Anna Ricci. At the last moment, the City Council became scared of a new scandal and cancelled the second part of the show. So, at the end of the first part, before a public of 500 spectators, Anna Ricci announced that the second part could not be performed due to administrative suspension, which was met by cries and indignation and press items about the scandal⁶¹. In one of the contradictions of the regime, two months later, on 19 January 1970, Anna Ricci managed to programme the same works in the Teatre Romea, with a full audience.

As Franco got older, the repression increased. On 28 October 1973, 113 representatives of the Assemblea de Catalunya were arrested by Franco's police at a clandestine meeting in Barcelona. Portabella and Santos were at the meeting and were put into the Modelo prison of Barcelona, where they shared a cell. Portabella still remembered with emotion how, in the prison:

I had discovered that there was a piano near where we were [...] We found it in a large warehouse that was euphemistically considered the school and library. It was an upright piano that was totally out of tune. At the other end of the room, four prisoners were playing a game of cards and they did not react when we came in or when they heard the piano. Carles played a sonata by Bach, all the way through and ignoring the tuning of the instrument. The only audience were the card players and myself. It is hard to transmit the emotion felt when listening to Bach in prison during the Franco dictatorship. It was a revolutionary cultural action. I have never forgotten it⁶².

Catalan musical avant-garde and the Franco state

The Minotaur is an important figure in history and current times. It is Power. Sometimes it disguises itself and adopts benevolent, pacific forms [...]. This is the exception. Generally, it distances itself and commands respect, and every day that passes, more [...]. Abstract in theory, it is a daily reality that we must know how to handle. Some peoples are familiar with it, others do not know how to get used to it. The latter is the historical case of Catalonia.

Jaume Vicens Vives, *Notícia de Catalunya*, 1960⁶³

Should an avant-garde composer refuse to premiere works in spaces controlled by the dictatorship, to participate in calls for awards, grants and competitions promoted by the dictatorship or accept commissions from it? In practice, the dictatorship had been consolidated at all levels of the administration; the regime was aware of its position and used it. From very early on, it organised music festivals in different formats to project a modern image of the country. However, from the Catalan perspective, the situation was seen from slightly off centre. Although it was the same thing, in the particular 'Catalan' view it would not be exactly the same participating in a festival organised by Barcelona City Council as participating in one organised by a ministry of Franco's government. From Barcelona, Madrid was seen as, in the words of historian Jaume Vicens Vives (1910–1960), «something different, unattainable⁶⁴». Didn't the Orquesta Municipal de Barcelona perform all of its concerts in the Palau de la Música

⁶¹ SOLIUS 1969.

⁶² «M'havia assabentat que prop d'on érem hi havia un piano [...] El vam trobar en una gran nau eufemísticament considerada escola i biblioteca. Era un piano vertical absolutament desafinat. A l'altre extrem de la sala, quatre interns jugaven una partida de cartes i no es van immutar quan vam entrar ni tampoc en sentir el piano. En Carles va tocar una sonata de Bach, sencera i fent cas omís de l'afinació de l'instrument. L'únic públic érem els jugadors de cartes i jo mateix. És difícil transmetre l'emoció en sentir Bach dins la presó sota la dictadura franquista. Va ser una acció cultural revolucionària. No ho hem oblidat mai». PORTABELLA 2006, p. 79.

⁶³ «El Minotaure és un personatge important de la història i de l'actualitat. És el Poder. A vegades s'emmarca i adopta formes benivolents i pacífiques [...]. Això és l'excepció. Generalment s'allunya i es fa respectar, i cada dia que passa, més [...]. Abstracte en teoria, és una realitat quotidiana que cal saber manejar. Hi ha pobles que hi estan familiaritzats, d'altres que no saben com fer-s'hi. Aquest darrer és el cas històric de Catalunya». VICENS VIVES 1960, p. 171.

⁶⁴ VICENS VIVES 1960, p. 176.

Catalana, paid for from the municipal budget? Without any remorse, Catalan composers were eager for the Orchestra to programme their compositions. However, whatever they thought in private, most Catalan composers hesitated before the opportunity to participate in festivals organised by the dictatorship. In any case, each composer had different individual, uncoordinated attitudes ranging from assent to the use of irony and infiltration.

With the vivid memory of the scandal of the *Fets del Palau* in 1960, Minister Jesús Rubio decided to hold a concert of avant-garde Spanish music on 27 June 1961 in the Palau de la Música Catalana. This is what he explained to the local organiser: «By express desire of the Minister of National Education, the Second Festival of Young Spanish Music was held in Barcelona, organised by the National Board of Juventudes Musicales Españolas⁶⁵». Without any qualms, the avant-garde composers Carmelo Bernaola (1929–2002), Juan Hidalgo, Josep Maria Mestres Quadreny and Luis de Pablo contributed with their works⁶⁶ to the formulation of the Francoist narrative of a modern and advanced Spain, as shown in this official publicity: «In many countries, the output of young Spanish composers has attracted attention, and is considered one of the most advanced current trends⁶⁷».

In this context of possibility—as long as the structures of Franco’s regime were considered—Juventudes Musicales de Barcelona tried to activate the resources of the municipal government. This was achieved with the involvement of Esteve Bassols (1923–1986), who was responsible for Public Relations and Tourism in Barcelona City Council. As a result, in 1963 the International Festival of Music of Barcelona emerged, to be carried out between the months of September and October every year. The festival was organised by Juventudes Musicales with the patronage of Barcelona City Council. Between 1963 and 1975, relevant orchestras and performers passed through Barcelona and a space was always left for contemporary music⁶⁸.

We will not discuss the majority of avant-garde contributions that at no point questioned the institution in itself. Perhaps due to its fine irony we should mention the performance of *Els preceptes* (1967) by Manuel Valls, in the Fifth International Festival of Music of Barcelona (1967). This was an original work that used extracts from regulations from different historical moments, on displacement and widowhood rights. The music alternates between song and recitation, combining solemn and playful phrases, and comically decontextualising the word⁶⁹. The soprano recited imperturbably three legal texts, as cold and impenetrable as Franco’s government.

Just one year earlier, the stir caused by the ousting of the constituent assembly of the Sindicato Democrático de Estudiantes of the University of Barcelona—known as the *Caputxinada* (9 to 11 March 1966)⁷⁰—had put the ‘Catalan problem’ on the academic agenda again. Possibilistic attitudes promoted dialogue on linguistic and cultural issues, skirting around a political dimension⁷¹ that could be traced back to the rupture of civil coexistence after the Civil War⁷². Aware that they belonged to a generation that, to a great extent, dissociated them from this

⁶⁵ «Por voluntad expresa del Señor Ministro de Educación Nacional, el II Festival de Música Joven Española radicó en Barcelona, organizado por la Junta Nacional de J.M.E.». JUVENTUDES MUSICALES 1961.

⁶⁶ In order of performance: *Concerto per clavicembalo* (1926) by Manuel de Falla, *Tres moviments per a orquestra de cambra* (1960) by Mestres Quadreny, *Caurga* (1957) by Juan Hidalgo, *Sinfonietta progresiva* (1961) by Carmelo A. Bernaola and *Radial* (1960) by Luis de Pablo.

⁶⁷ «En muchos países ha llamado la atención la producción de los jóvenes compositores españoles, siendo considerada como una de las más avanzadas tendencias actuales». LA VANGUARDIA ESPAÑOLA 1961.

⁶⁸ AVIÑO 2002, pp. 17–22.

⁶⁹ Barcelona, Palau de la Música Catalana, 15 October 1967; *Diabolus in Musica*, Joan Guinjoan (cond), Francesca Callao (sop).

⁷⁰ CREIXELL 1987.

⁷¹ MARÍAS 1966; SERRAHIMA 1967.

⁷² DÍAZ PLAJA 1966.

tough legacy, some members of conservative Catholic Catalan nationalism had been becoming more radicalized for some time. This was the case of Narcís Bonet, who in 1960 reflected on the ethical responsibility of Catalan youth in the new context of the latter period of the Franco dictatorship⁷³. Soon afterwards, he left for forced exile in Paris where he would become the secretary of the Catalan nationalist organization Òmnium Cultural, founded in 1961.

However, from his French residence, Bonet did not stop accepting official commissions in Spain. One of these premiered at the II Festival de Música de América y España (1967), organized by the Instituto de Cultura Hispánica. For that performance, as a veiled act of relative rebellion, the composer selected texts from the book *La pell de brau*⁷⁴, published by Salvador Espriu in 1960 and converted into a symbol of condemnation of the lack of freedom in the country, identified with the medieval Sepharad jews⁷⁵. However, in the programme notes for the festival, which included Espriu's poems in original version and in a translation by the composer himself⁷⁶, the presentation of the work was limited to highlighting the dramatic potential of Espriu's verses and a long digression on the harmonic decisions taken in the composition⁷⁷. It would not be until our century that Bonet would reveal two «keys of resistance» that were omitted at that time. The first was the allusion in the final part of the piece to the Catalan song *El cant dels ocells*, which was recognized worldwide due to such a significant figure of Spanish Republican exile as Pau Casals⁷⁸. The second was the reproving look that, according to Bonet's account, he gave to the portrait of Franco that presided over the auditorium in which *La pell de brau* premiered, at the point when he read the powerful start of the last poem to be recited⁷⁹.

Although this last piece of information cannot be verified, it is true that some critics of the premiere highlighted the «Catalanism» of the composer as a reason for his preference for the «song of freedom» that Espriu's texts represented for his new work⁸⁰. Despite the ambiguous tone of this statement, a strictly political interpretation of *La pell de brau* would not take long to be reinforced, two years after its premiere. For the cover of the LP record—on whose notes Bonet omitted any mention of the circumstances of commissioning and premiering the work—the illustrator Jordi Fornas, who was associated with cultural initiatives such as the magazine *Serra d'Or* and Edicions 62, chose an image in which the iconic Spanish «bull skin» (*pell de brau*) was conceived as a structure of a broken metallic mesh tensed at its four geographic extremes. Thus all of Spain was shown as the wire of an immense concentration camp⁸¹...

⁷³ BONET 1960.

⁷⁴ Title of the same name of Bonet's work, premiered in the Ateneo of Madrid on 20 October 1967. Orquesta de Cámara de Madrid, José María Franco Gil (cond), Narcís Bonet (nar).

⁷⁵ Espriu's verses would jump into the musical foreground in the area of the «nova cançó», due to the LP *Cançons de la roda del temps*, by Raimon (RAIMON 1966).

⁷⁶ A bilingual edition of *La pell de brau* already existed (ESPRIU 1963), and would be followed by another five years later (ESPRIU 1968).

⁷⁷ BONET 1967.

⁷⁸ In the introductory notes to the edition of the score (BONET 2014).

⁷⁹ «Sometimes it is necessary and right / for a man to die for a people. / But a whole people must never die / for a single man: / remember this, Sepharad» = «A vegades és necessari i forçós / que un home mori per un poble, / però mai no ha de morir tot un poble / per un home sol: / recorda sempre això, Sepharad», ESPRIU 1985 (*La pell de brau*, LXVI). The composer mentioned this inculpatory gesture in BONET 2009.

⁸⁰ «Narcís Bonet does not fool anybody, and even in the title he displays a Catalan nationalism that would have influenced the choice of this song of freedom that are the beautiful poems 'La pell de brau' by Salvador Espriu» = «Narcís Bonet no engaña a nadie, y hasta en el nombre propio hace gala de un catalanismo que habrá dictado ahora la elección de ese canto de libertad que son los bellos poemas 'La pell de brau', de Salvador Espriu». FERNÁNDEZ-CID 1967.

⁸¹ BONET 1969.

Unlike Bonet's approach, attitudes in Catalan composers' work that were more explicitly associated with political resistance could only be expected in cases in which there was greater geographic and spiritual distance from Catalonia, added to a less conciliatory ideological position. Distance favoured a broader exercise of freedom of expression. In this regard, José Luis de Delás (1928–2018) must be mentioned. Delás had left Barcelona in 1957 to settle for several decades in Cologne, where he came into close contact with the milieu of the leftist German avant-garde and its characteristic «rhetoric of commitment⁸²». As a result, Delás claimed the possibility of forming a «[...] truly renewing moment, a precise factor of opposition against everything conventional, petrified and authoritarian⁸³». He contributed to this in his works, in which he reflected intensely on the Spanish political situation, past and present, through the use of sound materials taken from Spanish broadcasters in exile (*textes*, 1967) and revolutionary hymns from the Civil War period (*Aube*, 1970; *Conjuntos*, 1976), or by dedicating *Frons*, which premiered in Witten in 1972, «to Spanish workers assassinated by Franco's police⁸⁴».

Meanwhile, in Catalan territory, the music critics proposed approaches that were much more distant from an (in)possible political commitment in Catalan avant-garde creation. Thus, in September 1970, Manuel Valls considered in a rather simplistic way only two alternatives for Catalan composers in his speech to open the exhibition «Una dècada de música catalana», which coincided with the Eighth International Festival of Music of Barcelona. These were: to remain in a dead end because of their 'localist' nature; or to aspire to full internationalization, even if this meant rejecting their own historical legacy and avoiding all associations with problems outside of the area of music⁸⁵.

Not all Catalan composers accepted this 'neutralization' of contents. This was clear in the premiere of the cantata *Arbor* by Xavier Benguerel (1931–2017), which closed the monographic concert dedicated to him in the Palau de la Música Catalana during the 1972 edition of the same festival⁸⁶. Radio Nacional de España commissioned Benguerel this work for Prix Italia and the author situated the composition of *Arbor* in an abstract framework of personal creative monitoring of «[...] scientific discoveries, sociological movements and even political changes⁸⁷». However, in his choice of texts for the work, the composer did not limit himself to this abstract concept. Instead, he developed a dramatic programme based on the fundamental opposition between love and violence throughout human history. Despite the Latin name of the title and the presence as a guiding figure of the medieval mystic Ramon Llull, the work contained quotations of texts by Adolf Hitler, Benito Mussolini, Martin Luther King and Che Guevara. This cast the programme into 'spaces of violence' that were much more contemporary and every day, as the *collage* on the cover of the first recording of *Arbor* in 1972 illustrated⁸⁸.

Was this underlying programme a stark example of a «demagogic trend⁸⁹» or merely of Benguerel's adoption of the «[...] rather propagandist spirit of other cantatas and odes that are

⁸² KUTSCHKE 2009.

⁸³ «[...] momento verdaderamente renovador, un preciso factor de oposición contra todo lo convencional, petrificado y autoritario». ALMAZÁN 1974, p. 31.

⁸⁴ METZGER – RIEHN 2001. For a late reflection of Delás on this period of his works, see GARCÍA KARMAN 2013.

⁸⁵ VALLS 1970, p. 127.

⁸⁶ Barcelona, 22 October 1972; Orquesta Ciudad de Barcelona and Cor Madrigal, Andrzej Markowski (cond), María del Carmen Bustamante (sop), Anna Ricci (mez), Francesc Chico (bar).

⁸⁷ «[...] descubrimientos científicos, de los movimientos sociológicos y aun de los avatares políticos». LA VANGUARDIA ESPAÑOLA 1972.

⁸⁸ BENGUEREL 1972.

⁸⁹ «[...] tendencia demagógica». MONTSALVATGE 1972.

in full fashion⁹⁰», according to critics of the time? Or, in more recent and even harsher words, did this «cacophony of universal discomfort» hide a deeper ethical question, the simple legitimacy «[...] of having these thoughts in 1972, when there was still a cold war between the main political blocs and Catalonia, like Spain, was under the Franco dictatorship⁹¹?».

Narratives of a ‘possible’ musical resistance during the Early Democratic Transition

The real lack of official attention to music, to promoting the great proliferation of its derivatives, has contributed to a progressive deterioration in collective sensitivity. In any case, musical activity has only been programmed essentially as an instrument of propaganda and external prestige of a regime that has manipulated educational and formative values.

Excerpt from the Manifesto of the Congress of Catalan Culture (1977)⁹²

Potential solutions to this immediate decontextualization of Catalan music creation and, by extension, decontextualization of the musical life of avant-garde repertoires in Catalunya, would still have to wait and would occur from complementary angles that would still need, for the most part, a detailed and unprejudiced discussion. Gradually, a more evident connection between the political situation and music composition would be established extremely carefully. For example, *Apuntava l'alba*, by Josep Soler (b. 1935), did not hide in its presentation to the public in the Sixth Week of New Music of Barcelona a process of writing whose culmination at the end of September 1975—as well as the title of the work itself—could be directly associated with the widely rejected last death sentences passed by the Franco regime the same month. However, the composer achieved this by putting his political intention within a conceptual framework of a broad, timeless humanism⁹³.

Other paths of resistance began to open up in the new context of the problematic, uncertain steps that began to be taken in the almost forgotten land of democracy in Spain. One of these was the start of an unstoppable process of recovering and revaluating innumerable figures from Catalan republican exile. This was not so much due to their actual return to Catalonia—which was still impossible for many in 1976—, but through claims of their civic exemplary nature and artistic value. For example, the poet Josep Carner (1884–1970) was exiled in Mexico and Belgium from 1939. His unexpected, brief return to Catalonia in April 1970—just two months before his death—left a strong mark on Catalan cultural settings⁹⁴. As a distant reflection of this presence and its recovery for Catalan avant-garde composition, Joan Guinjoan (1931–2019) returned to Carner’s verses in 1976 to write the only choral work *a cappella* in his catalogue:

⁹⁰ «[...] espíritu un poco panfletario de otras cantatas y odas que están en plena moda». CASANOVAS 1972.

⁹¹ «[...] cacofonia del desconcert universal? [...] de tenir aquests pensaments l’any 1972, quan hi ha encara la guerra freda entre els grans blocs polítics i Catalunya, com Espanya, està sota la dictadura franquista?». GUINOVART 1991, pp. 34-35.

⁹² «La manca autèntica d’atenció oficial per a la música, en fonamentar la proliferació massiva dels seus sub-productes, ha contribuït a una progressiva degradació de la sensibilitat col·lectiva. Només, en tot cas, s’ha programat l’activitat musical com a instrument essencialment propagandístic i de prestigi extern d’un règim que n’ha manipulat els valors pedagògics i formatius». CONGRÉS 1978, vol. 4, pp. 106-107.

⁹³ SOLER 1976. For a more detailed discussion of the context of writing this work and its premiere, as well as a short analytical commentary on *Apuntava l'alba*, see SOLÍS 2020, pp. 62-69, 608-617.

⁹⁴ Recently recalled by Carles Casajuana in his novel *Retorn* (CASAJUANA 2017).

Retorn a Catalunya. The title could not be more revealing of the new sociocultural and political situation, although the date of publication of Carner's poem was back in 1913⁹⁵.

As a musical analogy of Carner in this process of recovery of Catalan culture in exile, the figure of Robert Gerhard emerged strongly, and overcame the issues mentioned at the start of this text. Over time, he became in a way the «guiding figure» of Catalan contemporary music, as for decades composers such as Joaquim Homs and Josep Maria Mestres Quadreny had proposed. It was Mestres who created the graphic score of the *Homenatge a Robert Gerhard* (1976). Together with other works that explicitly recognized the composer from Valls, this would be premiered in January 1977 by the newly formed Grup Instrumental Català (GIC)⁹⁶, a later incarnation of the Conjunt Català de Música Contemporània that since 1968 had promoted in Barcelona the performance of works by Gerhard. Only two months later, the workdays of the Congress of Catalan Culture in Palma would claim as one of their priority objectives the diffusion of the composer's musicographic work⁹⁷.

In fact, these two initiatives were part of a larger project to demand increasing cultural and political autonomy of Catalonia from the still not fully democratic structures of the central government. This demand included, without restrictions, the proposal of an exclusively Catalan music policy, as presented in the music area of the Congress of Catalan Culture (1975–1977)⁹⁸, with the backing of Joventuts Musicals and Orfeó Català, the coordination of Manuel Valls and the participation as speakers of Mestres, Benguerel and Guinjoan⁹⁹. According to the plenary meeting held in Montserrat on 19 May 1977, the decisions included the need to establish their own music policy, promote music education, delve into the socio-political dimension of the 'nova cançó' and, in drastic terms, control the diffusion of music in the media, publishing companies and record labels. With this road map in mind, it is not surprising that the aforementioned GIC would recover a leading role. It focused on the repertoire of the Catalan avant-garde, for example through its participation in the «Catalan weeks in Berlin» (1 July 1978) as part of the Internationale Sommerfestspiele of the German city. GIC combined this focus with its use as a vehicle for music activity in political propaganda. The first and only record of GIC¹⁰⁰ recovered some of the legendary revolutionary songs of the Spanish Civil War whose recording had been promoted by the republican government in Paris in 1937–1938 and that in 1963, with the iconic image of Picasso's *Guernica*, had been published by *Le Chant du Monde*¹⁰¹.

In an environment that was so immense and radically politicized, there was not much space for scepticism, or at least distancing, from the real capacity of Spanish and Catalan society to face the extremely profound changes required to introduce a democratic system in the country. However, there was a certain margin for irony, even in the music of the avant-garde. In the midst of a parliamentary discussion on the Law for Political Reform, which was finally approved in December 1976 without including the Catalan demands for political amnesty and autonomy, Joan Guinjoan undertook the composition of *El Diari*, which premiered in March

⁹⁵ Indeed, "Retorn a Catalunya" headed a recording of eight of Carner's poems recorded by the poet himself in exile in Brussels, and published by the Edigsa label in 1963, CARNER 1963. See also TODO 2021.

⁹⁶ Barcelona, Fundació Joan Miró, 31 January 1977. Along with the work by Mestres and *Libra* by Gerhard, a further five compositions were premiered, by Josep Cercós (*Text, context i pretext*), Andrés Lewin-Richter (*Collage*), Joaquim Homs (*Sagitari*), Anna Bofill (*Quarter*) and Carles Santos (*Piano sol*).

⁹⁷ CONGRÉS 1978, vol. 2, p. 240.

⁹⁸ CASASSAS 2018.

⁹⁹ ALMACELLAS 2017.

¹⁰⁰ MÚSICA 1977.

¹⁰¹ CHANTS 1963.

1977¹⁰². In the text by Josep Maria Espinàs (b. 1927), the verbosity and technical affectation attributed to an imaginary president in his appeal to citizens' prudence and resignation before the political panorama¹⁰³ was as impenetrable as the legal precepts used by Valls ten years earlier in *Els preceptes*.

More than two years would have to pass for Catalonia to be granted the Statute of Autonomy in December 1979. Finally, this statute permitted and promoted the national cultural policy with international reach that had been desired for such a long time, in which contemporary Catalan music—precisely that described in these pages—occupied a privileged place. It was not a coincidence that the cycle of exhibitions, conferences and concerts «La Catalogne aujourd'hui» presented in Paris in 1981 by the Government of Catalonia and the Spanish embassies for France and the UNESCO included a concert with *La pell de brau* and *El Diari*, conducted by their own creators¹⁰⁴, as representative pieces of this musical 'Catalonia of today'.

Catalan avant-garde music had finally got «its own room», carefully constructed by a contradictory network of open and hidden rebellions, fluctuating or firm commitments, pragmatic or radical attitudes, and ephemeral or laboriously maintained initiatives, which we have tried to illustrate for this period. Another period was coming, that of the construction by its own leading figures of a «narrative of resistance» to the Franco dictatorship, which legitimized individual actions and initiatives of cultural activities in the composition and interpretation of the avant-garde repertoire, as part of the achievement of longer-term political objectives that are still pending today. These include the confirmation or refutation—to use the conclusive words of Mestres, spoken in 1979 and published three years later—of the extent to which «the more Catalonia advances on the path of its autonomous government and its full national realization, the more our cultural activity will be boosted and with it our music activity¹⁰⁵».

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¹⁰² Paris, Musée d'Art Moderne, 2 March 1977; Solar Vortices, Jacques Mercier (cond), Esperanza Abad (sop). Barcelona, Palau de la Música Catalana, 29 October 1979; Diabolus in Musica, Joan Guinjoan (cond), Anna Ricci (mez).

¹⁰³ «The Paper, The Paper, The Paper... Today's Paper / Suggestions of a president for a model country / The President has said: the future depends on integration, pluri-coordination and hyperpotentiation of all resources, and if citizens are aware, prudent and patient, we will construct a modelic, hyperbolic and chlorophyllic country (if it rains)» = «El Diari, El Diari, El Diari... El Diari d'avui / Suggeriments d'un president per a un país modelic / El President ha dit: el futur depèn de la integració, la pluri-coordinació i la hiperpotenciació de tots els recursos, i si els ciutadans tenen consciència, prudència i paciència, construirem un país modelic, hiperbòlic i clorofil·lic (si es que plou)». GUINJOAN 1999.

¹⁰⁴ Paris, Palais de l'UNESCO, 25 March 1981; Diabolus in Musica, Narcís Bonet (cond), Josep Maria Flotats (nar); Joan Guinjoan (cond), Anna Ricci (mez).

¹⁰⁵ «[...] cuanto más avance Cataluña en el camino de su gobierno autonómico y de su plena realización nacional, más se potenciará nuestro hecho cultural y, con él, el musical». MESTRES 1982, p. 387.

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Illustrations:

ILL. 1: The audience in the Palau de la Música Catalana, with their arms raised in the fascist salute in 1939. Carlos Pérez de Rozas, photographer. Arxiu Fotogràfic de Barcelona.

ILL. 2: Premiere of *Primera història d'Esther* in the Palau de la Música Catalana of Barcelona, in 1957. Pau Barceló, photographer. MAE – Institut del Teatre, Barcelona.

ILL. 3: Poster, announcing the tribute to Joan Maragall in the Palau de la Música Catalana, which led to the *Fets del Palau* on 19 May 1960. Centre de Documentació de l'Orfeó Català (CEDOC), Barcelona.

ILL. 4: Performance in Catalan of *Die Dreigroschenoper* by Bertolt Brecht and Kurt Weill at the Palau de la Música Catalana, in 1963. Pau Barceló, photographer. MAE – Institut del Teatre, Barcelona.

ILL. 5: Still from the barber's scene in the film *No compteu amb els dits* by Pere Portabella (1967). © Pere Portabella – Films 59, Barcelona.

ILL. 6: Carles Santos, Anna Ricci and Marc Costa perform the act "Land of nocturne" in the *Concert Irregular* by Joan Brossa at the Teatre Romea of Barcelona, in 1968. Romea Archive. MAE – Institut del Teatre, Barcelona.

ILL. 7: Cover of the LP with the recording of *La pell de brau* by Narcís Bonet after a poem by Salvador Espriu (1969). Germán Gan-Quesada Collection.

ILL. 8: The composer Joan Guinjoan conducted the mezzo-soprano Anna Ricci and the instrumental ensemble Diabolus in Musica at the Palau de la Música Catalana in the performance of *El Diari*, in 1979. Pau Barceló, photographer. Fundació Joan Guinjoan.