La Resurrección de la Memoria and the Path of Re-Enchantment

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

in

Music

by

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The dissertation of Francisco Xavier Beteta is approved and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically:

Chair

University of California, San Diego

2017
DEDICATION

To the memory of my grandparents
Amalia Beltrán and Francisco Lima who created a world
of fantasy and enchantment during my childhood
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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

La Resurrección de la Memoria and the Path of Re-Enchantment

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La Resurrección de la Memoria is a work of music for a chamber ensemble of seven instruments (two pianos, two marimbas, two basses, and harp. In it, two approaches of composition are explored, the improvised and the planned approach. At the same time, the composition follows the postulates of the composer’s personal aesthetics called Re-Enchantment. As a result, this piece tries to depart from modernist ideologies, re-appropriate elements of the past
under a new mode, engage with themes such as the sacred, the mysterious, the magical, or the *duende*, and find enchantment at the inspiration level.
Introduction

La Resurrección de la Memoria (The Resurrection of Memory) is a piece that marks the end of my studies at UCSD. As a dissertation piece it seeks to try out two approaches to composition and it also seeks to test the postulates of my aesthetics of Re-Enchantment. The piece is 20 minutes long and is written for a septet of two pianos, two marimbas, two basses and harp. It was premiered at the Conrad Prebys Concert Hall on June 16, 2017 by a group of UCSD graduate students conducted by Matt Kline.

The piece is inspired by two ideas: resurrection and memory. Although there is not a program behind the piece, there are different levels at which these two concepts were present either consciously or subconsciously at the time of the gestation of the work. Central to this composition, and also to my late works, in general, is the idea of “coming back,” of “return,” of “reappearance.” A reappearance of what? A return to where? These are questions that I do not have definite answers to yet. However, I know this “return” which is also related to the idea of “resurrection” is a multifaceted enterprise that includes the formulation of my musical aesthetics, aspects of my personal life, and in a broader sense, aspects of our age.

Resurrection: a deeply Christian concept. The last section of the Apostles Creed reads: “I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.” Central to the tenants of the Christian faith is the idea of the resurrection of the body. And thus, there is
something inherently physical and material in the Christian creed, it is not only the soul or the spirit, it is: the resurrection of the body.

Resurrection is however not originally a Christian concept, it is also found in Judaism. In Daniel 12:2 we read: “And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.” The venerated 16th century Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzatto explains that the main function of the soul in the resurrection will be to purify the body.\(^1\) For me, the concept of resurrection also appears in Exodus. It happens when Moses descends from the mountain, sees the people given to idolatry and breaks the tablets of the law. But Moses goes back to the mountain for forty more days and “brings back” the law again. In other words, “the law returns,” the law is “resurrected.” Something that was thought to be lost reappears. What happened during that second time at the mountain? I think Moses alone had to remember the first law. This process of recollection for me is metaphorically an instance of “resurrection of memory.”

If we trace back the origins of Modernity to the Renaissance we can find a resurrection there as well. The Renaissance was a retrieval of something lost, a return to the ideals of the classics, a re-appropriation of the past. Arguably the Renaissance started when Petrarch discovered Cicero’s writings. Petrarch’s father gave him some writings of Cicero so he could learn the art of argument in hopes that he would become a lawyer.

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Petrarch did not pay attention to the structure of the arguments but instead to the beauty of the Latin prose.² Years later, Petrarch would write:

I would have preferred to have been born in any different time than our own; I try to forget completely about this, and I live in spirit, among the ancients.³

When we think of the Renaissance, we conceive it as a progressive age, however, this progress was articulated as a re-appropriation of the past; as a form of traditionalism, if it is possible to say it that way; that is, progress in the Renaissance does not look into the future but into the deep past it seems to me.

Another moment very similar to the Renaissance is the beginning of the 20th century with the arrival of Modernism. In this case, Modernism also has a connection with temporality, but in this case it seeks to annihilate the past, to start from zero, and to search new paths never explored before. Thus, progress is seen as a march toward the future rejecting anything that had to do with the past.

In my Qualifying Exam I have discussed the connection between the rejection of the past and the death of God announced by Nietzsche at the end of the 19th century. It is the idea of the death of God that fuels the rejection of tradition during the early 20th century; the so-called death of God marks a new beginning. Thus, for me it is important to consider these two moments in the history of Western discourse. In the Renaissance the past is retrieved. In Modernism, the past is completely rejected. If we find a resurrection in the Renaissance, that is, a resurrection of the classic forms, we find during

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³ Ibid.
Modernism a death, a collapse of the norms, a collapse of the tonal system in music, a collapse of figurative art in painting, and the breaking of what had been accepted as rules in the arts. This collapse is articulated as “the death of God,” which means, not only the death of the sacred, but the death of tradition, the death of metaphysics, and the collapse of the traditional artistic forms. Thus, it is possible to make a connection between the idea of resurrection in the Renaissance and the idea of the death of God in Modernism. In the first, there is a retrieval of the past, in the second; there is an annihilation of the past.

The idea of memory plays a crucial role as well in my dissertation, and it is somehow also connected to the idea of resurrection. If in a resurrection something lost returns physically or metaphorically, in the idea of memory, something is still there but it is not the actual thing, it is just a shadow or a reminiscence of the thing. Memory can be a sort of mental copy of a moment, of something past that remains in us. Plato in the *Phaedo* dialogue argues that knowledge is memory or a “recollection” from previous lives. As it says:

> Cebes added: Your favorite doctrine, Socrates, that knowledge is simply recollection, if true, also necessarily implies a previous time in which we have learned that which we now recollect. But this would be impossible unless our soul had been in some place before existing in the form of man; here then is another proof of the soul's immortality.4

Following Plato, knowledge is memory of something past. Couldn’t our art then be a recollection of something past? Could our compositions be recollections? If we would embrace Platonism couldn’t we say that perhaps our compositions existed before our present, somewhere else? Maybe in a world of ideas? And now we just retrieve them,

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however, imperfectly. We do not create, we only remember... Thus, under this view, creativity could also be related to memory. When we create, we remember something that already exists somewhere else.

Memories can also die. They die when they are forgotten. What is death if not oblivion? A beautiful paradox regarding this happens at the last supper when Christ instituted the rite of communion. He says “Do this in remembrance of me.” There is an important role for remembrance; it is an antidote to death and oblivion. For centuries the church repeated the rite of communion and up to this day, that event has not fallen into oblivion. And, thus, memory has the quality of keeping something alive. The paradox in the last supper is that what we are supposed to remember is a death, the death of Christ. We shall not let this death fall into oblivion. But death is oblivion, is the erasure of memory. Christ is asking a form of resurrection by remembering. Every time the bread and wine is shared, there is a remembrance, and this remembrance is a type of resurrection because the event has not been allowed to fade into oblivion. Metaphorically then, a resurrection of memory occurs in every communion as well.

Memory implies something that remains although not in its original form, and resurrection indicates something lost that comes back to its original form. And thus, there is an almost opposite relationship between these two concepts. In the first, something remains, in the second, nothing remains. In the first, the original form is no longer there, in the second, the original form comes back again. Memory is perhaps the mechanism by which resurrection becomes possible. If Moses had to recall the law on the mountain, it is the process of memory and recollection that allows the reappearance or “resurrection” of the law. It is the encounter with memory what allows the resurrection of the classics in
the Renaissance. It is perhaps the historical and collective memory of the Jewish people what allowed the resurrection of the State of Israel almost two thousand years later.

In the case of my dissertation, the ideas I just discussed were present at some level at the time of the composition of the piece, but primordially, the piece was inspired by the need to articulate a different style or stance with respect to the modernist, avant-garde, or experimental aesthetics that are part of the musical circle to which I belong. In other words, in this work, but also in my previous pieces, starting with *Tiene Duende*, I have tried to depart from the modernist path and have tried to articulate an aesthetic of my own called Re-Enchantment. Thus, my piece *La Resurrección de la Memoria* purposefully looks to the past and tries to re-appropriate elements from it. As an aesthetic, it is not primarily concerned with the newness of the medium, or trying to find novel ways of sounding, instead, it tries to engage with a certain mystery that seems to me to appear in some art, “that something unexplainable,” hence my term Re-Enchantment.

*La Resurrección de la Memoria* brings back elements from the past such as the use of consonance (thirds, sixths, octaves, etc.), the use of regular rhythmic patterns, of some traditional harmonies such as the C sharp minor chord, and the use of dramatic elements. Now, the recall of these elements does not serve as quotation or an actual return to writing tonal music, instead, these elements are put in an atonal and dissonant context, and thus the aesthetic also draw elements from Modernism.

One of the tenets of the piece is to try to test states of inspiration, that is, to find a sort of mystery at the inception of the work. For that, the use of recordings of my improvisations on the piano become important. What I am interested in is “the
experience” of such mystery from the first-person perspective. That is, I, as a composer, experience inspiration as “revelation” or as a state of “intuition” during the improvisations. The experience I have at the piano is thrilling and fuels my imagination. I believe it is possible to still experience enchantment within secularity, especially when confronted with the mystery of the creative process at its inception. In a way, this is beautifully synthesized by Lorca by believing in “duende” in the art process. As he says:

All that has dark sounds has “duende.” And there’s no deeper truth than that. Those dark sounds are the mystery, the roots that cling to the mire that we all know, that we all ignore, but from which comes the very substance of art. ‘Dark sounds’ said the man of the Spanish people, agreeing with Goethe, who in speaking of Paganini hit on a definition of the duende: ‘A mysterious force that everyone feels and no philosopher has explained’.

It is here, maybe, where the crux of Re-Enchantment can be found. Re-Enchantment is a purposeful return to the gods, to magic, to superstition, to mystery, and to those of us in the Spanish-speaking world, to *duende*. Yes, after the death of God, after humanism and after the disenchantment of the world, Re-Enchantment tries to find a way or return, but now, within a postmodern context. In a way, the mode is similar to a Renaissance sensibility where there is a conscious return to the past. The title of my piece, “The Resurrection of Memory,” tries to convey this idea as well.

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1. My Compositional Evolution

I started improvising and composing little pieces for piano when I was 10 years old at the same time that I started taking piano lessons in Guatemala. When I was a teenager I was composing complete sonatas in a classical tonal style without knowing much about the rules of harmony and counterpoint. Perhaps the method of improvising on the piano was prominent in me at that age because it would make up for the deficiency of not knowing the proper rules of tonal music. By not knowing intellectually how to connect chords, I was left with going to the piano and finding the progressions that closely resembled the harmonies used by Mozart or Beethoven. Thus, it was a very intuitive method and I always felt I was at the edge of the unknown. I didn’t really know how these progressions worked but they sounded good. At the same time, what seemed good and beautiful melodies would come to me. Sitting at the piano allowed my imagination to flow without interruption and this would trigger a state of inspiration.

This somehow was interrupted when I came to the United States at age 19. I came to study piano, and thus I focused mostly on learning pianistic repertoire. I stopped composing. At the same time I studied harmony and counterpoint and the mystery of tonal music was unveiled. When I would sit at the piano and try to compose something, I was no longer “at the edge.” Now that I knew the rules, it felt different.

During the summers I would go back to Guatemala and in 2001 I met composer Rodrigo Asturias, who was a serial composer. Perhaps he saw some talent in me and offered to give me composition lessons. And since then I met with him every summer. He was a very important mentor. He not only introduced me to serial composition, he
introduced me to a lot of contemporary music, literature, and French culture as he had lived in Europe for many years. Our afternoons were full of great conversations, listening to recordings and reading and playing music on the piano. Without question I owe him most of my musical formation.

His approach to composition was very methodical and involved a lot of planning as he would derive most of the material for a composition from a series. He used a lot of charts of chords, rhythms, and form plans. Everything was carefully planned beforehand. There was also a list of prohibitions, standard twelve-tone prohibitions to avoid writing music that sounded traditional. These prohibitions included avoidance of consonance (particularly the octave), avoidance of melody, avoidance of regular rhythms, and avoidance of repetition, among others.

I started writing in this style and my composition approach changed as I also started to plan most of the composition material beforehand. I was using this approach even when I first came to UCSD. My first two jury pieces were influenced by serial techniques and the material did not come from improvisation. After my second jury piece I enrolled in Professor Reynolds’s studio. During my studies with Professor Reynolds he questioned everything I did, and that also took me to question my own techniques.

My original plan at UCSD right after my second jury piece was to write a series of etude-pieces for solo instruments where I would research the different extended techniques these instruments could produce. Then, at the end of my studies, I was planning to write a piece using all these extended techniques. At that time I felt I had to compose with extended techniques as most of my peers were doing so. The first work I
planned to write was for solo cello. I started working on the piece, met with a cello performer, did a list of the possible extended techniques I could use, but somehow I could not finish the work. I realized that the composition was empty, it did not have inspiration or “mystery” and I was just writing a piece that had no essence. I never finished it. Perhaps it was the best piece I never wrote. After that I went into a sort of compositional crisis and stopped composing for about a year. Meanwhile I worked on my qualifying topics.

The first composition I wrote after this crisis was *Tiene Duende* (2014) for solo piano. It is a very dear piece to me because then I went back to compose as I used to do it when I was a teenager, that is, as an improvisation on the piano. Thus, this piece marks a “return” to me. It is also a piece where the stylistic features of my new aesthetic are gestated, there are long-held notes, the use of minor thirds, and strong and primitive blows without any further development. *Tiene Duende* was inspired by Lorca’s lecture *Theory and Play of the Duende* where he talks about that in the south of Spain, particularly in flamenco culture, people refer to *duende* (goblin) to designate that feeling of mystery produced by certain art.

The second piece I wrote using the approach of improvising on the piano was the piece *GOLEM* for an ensemble of five instruments. Thus, here, I first did several recordings of different improvisations that later became different sections of the piece. After these different recordings I started to look for a possible continuity of the segments, in other words, to give a dramatic shape to the whole piece, beginning in the low register, have a climatic point, and have a point of dissolution at the end of the piece. Once I had the order of the piece I did refinements of the material. I changed some rhythmic patterns
to avoid regularity and refined the harmonies to avoid monotony and repetition. Finally, I recorded the final work a second time to check for possible weak places where the discourse did not seem coherent or places where the material seemed to repeat unnecessarily. After that, I proceeded to orchestrate the piece for five instruments, flute, clarinet, violin, cello, and piano.

This piece was inspired by my trip to Prague in 2013 for the Dvorak Composition Competition. There I got acquainted with the legend of Golem. It tells the story of rabbi, Judah Loew, who makes a human-like being out of clay and is able to infuse him with life by a magic kabalistic combination of letters. The piece explores percussive effects very similar to “knocks” as a sort of primitive sound.

**Figure 1.** Percussive sounds simulating “knocks” in my piece GOLEM

The third work I wrote was *The Abandoned Cathedral* for an ensemble of eight players. It was a piece also written from improvisations on the piano, but this time the improvisations were elaborated and developed later by different compositional

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techniques. In other words, the raw material from the recordings was not just left intact but was altered to create variation. For this particular composition, I used the idea of held notes and incessant repetition of notes to convey the idea of bells. At the same time, the reiteration of the same note several times works as a “tonal center,” a note that remains in the same register and is immovable. This work was inspired by my trip to Strasbourg and its famous old cathedral Notre Dame, and also by a picture of a church in the middle of a river in Chiapas, México.

![Figure 2. Temple of Quechula in Chiapas, México. Photo David von Blohn, Associate Press.](image)

Finally the fourth work using this approach is my dissertation piece *La Resurrección de la Memoria* which will be explained in detail in the following sections of this paper. These four works share similarities in style and they establish the foundations for my current musical aesthetics which I call Re-Enchantment.

My studies at UCSD marked the beginning of a new style in my compositional output. When I came to UCSD I was still trying to find myself and was going after different trends. I was still very influenced by the modernist ideals of breaking with the
past and welcoming the new. I was trying specifically to go to an aesthetic in the style of Lachenmann. It was due to the tutelage of Professor Reynolds that I found my own voice and my own methods. This experience allowed me to start thinking of the possibility of formulating a new aesthetical route for my music. In the next sections I will discuss my dissertation work and my aesthetics.
2. Compositional Techniques in *La Resurrección de la Memoria*

In terms of compositional techniques this piece constitutes an experiment in two personal ways of approaching composition. The first one is a method that is more intuitive and that I used to employ when I was a teenager. It consists of improvising ideas on the piano and recording them. I will call this method the improvised approach because the phenomenological experience of it is that musical ideas just seem to “appear” to me.

The second method uses planning and conscious decision making. It consists of preparing beforehand some pre-compositional material, having defined ideas of how the music should behave, and following a defined plan. I will call this method the planned approach.

*La Resurrección de la Memoria* was composed using these two approaches. The first half of the piece up to measure 206 uses the first “improvised” approach while from measure 207 to the end, the piece uses “the planned” approach, except in two passages where there are parentheses.

2.1. The Improvised Approach

This method of composition consists of the following steps:

1) Sit at the piano and let ideas freely flow in an improvisatory way without any conscious restrictions or pre-conditions

2) Record these ideas

3) Later, listen to these passages and chose the ones that seem to be inspired or seem to have “something”
4) Then proceed to work out these ideas into more elaborated passages, extending them, creating variations, eventually orchestrating them, etc.

Because the piano allows testing sound right away, it allows for the creation of full compositions without having to plan too much or without having to stop to notate ideas. By recording my improvisations I am able to let my imagination flow freely and later on make compositional choices.

A limitation of this approach is that, since it is improvised at the piano, it is limited to the types of things I and my hands can do at the piano. Thus, some patterns recur regularly, such as anacrusic gestures, arpeggios that end on a held note or chord, fast passages in the high register, very low and slow notes, repeated notes, specific types of arpeggios and some preferred families of harmonies that I have developed and that have a “good” sound and fit my hands well. Yet, this set of devices allows my imagination and fantasy to flow and produce some material that I considered inspired.

**The Planned Approach**

As was discussed in the previous section, during my first studies of composition with Guatemalan composer Rodrigo Asturias, he would stress the need of working out pre-compositional material. This material consisted mainly of twelve-tone rows, matrixes, charts of derived chords from the rows, and charts of rhythms. As a result, I also learned to compose following a plan. The planned approach consists in deciding beforehand the form of the piece, number of sections, types of chords and techniques to be used. This approach contrasts with the improvisation approach in that there is an “a
priori” idea of what is wanted. In the improvisation approach I never know what I will get. So the approaches complement each other.

A possible disadvantage of this approach is that sometimes it can become arid, that is, following strictly a plan can sometimes feel constraining and if there is not enough variation in the processes it can become predictable. Thus, the key point in my music (and it is something I am still working on) is to find a balance between the two approaches, between freedom and constraint, between intuition and reason, or even to put it in a different way, between a Dionysian and Apollonian dichotomy.

2.2. Organization of the Work

2.2.1. First Half

The first half of the piece up to measure 207 was composed as an improvisation on the piano. This improvisation was done from beginning to end in one shot. Listen to recording No. 1. I have included this first recording so it is possible to compare it with the final product. As it can be perceived, I orchestrated the material from the improvisation. However, I also expanded the material. The original recording last 6:08 minutes while in the final piece this section lasts 9:20. Thus, by using varied repetition and making some chords longer I was able to stretch the material for 3 more minutes. Yet, there is really no new section in the final product; everything comes from the original recording.

Although it is hard to explain what happens in an improvisation because the process seems almost automatic, after listening to the recording, it is possible to define different regions or sections. Thus, this first half of the piece can be subdivided in seven
subsections. The first subsection goes from m. 1 to m. 52 and it comes with the tempo indication *Tranquilo* which conveys a serene, calm, and peaceful atmosphere. The opening idea is essentially based on the pitch set $[134]$ (C-Eb-E). This set has become very important in my music because it implies the major and minor triad at the same time. This is a way to make reference to the tonal system. By superimposing a major and minor third, the sonority is dissonant, yet, ambiguous. In the opening bars of *La Resurrección de la Memoria* we see that there is a low bass note E, and from this note little by little starts to emerge the minor third Eb-C in the Piano 2 at m. 16.

![Figure 3. Mm. 16-22: First section, use of the set [134]](image)

The work begins with the chord E-C-Eb. This is a reference to the past, to the major and minor modes. However, this particular combination of notes has a sense of mystery when it is placed in the register used here. It is as if when I improvise on the piano, sometimes I find these sonorities that have “something.” It constitutes a sort of re-discovery of sound. Of course, anybody who hears these notes probably hears a [134] set
and does not hear anything else. If you play on the piano the notes C, E, and Eb together as a cluster, it does not say much. But when you play the lowest E on the piano and the minor third two octaves higher, that particular disposition has a meaning. When played by itself, it sounds somber, like a bell, like an entrance into an old Church, like the sea at night, it is a dark, suggestive sonority.

The second section *Meno Mosso* starts at m. 52. Here, for the first time the marimbas are heard, and they are introduced to announce the entrance of a C-sharp minor chord. The note C-sharp and its minor chord have been very important in my late pieces. C-sharp is the incessant opening note of my piece *The Abandoned Cathedral* and it also has a prominent role in my piece *Tiene Duende*. I think the particularity of this chord lies precisely on the fact that is sharp; there is something about that specific tuning that makes the chord different to my ear. I think this chord has a certain mood or color that distinguishes it from other chords.

In the case of *La Resurrección* I use this particular chord to signal the entrance of a little light as if something starts to unveil. After the somber and dark low sounds of the beginning, the position of this chord in the middle register and its nature as a known sonority gives the idea of a concrete object that can be recognized. This is enhanced by placing the chord in the marimbas which have not been heard so far in the piece, thus it calls the attention of the listener to focus precisely on this object.

One of the questions I had was whether to use this chord because of its strong reference to tonality. But here, the way I hear it is totally different, is no longer a C-sharp minor in a tonal sense but the chord by itself has a very distinct property. It has a certain
personality and I think because of this maybe Beethoven chose it in the opening of the 

_Moonlight_ sonata. It creates a certain atmosphere.

![Music notation]

**Figure 4.** Mm. 50-53: Use of a C-sharp minor chord

The third section in m. 80 is labeled _Lento_ (quarter note at 46) and is a reminiscence of the first opening idea, but it is placed at this tempo so it can accelerate into the “knocks” in m. 94 where the tempo goes back to Tempo I (quarter note at 88). This section contrasts with the first section because it is written in minor sixths, thus, what in the first section was a minor third, has now become a more robust complex sonority. This area also has the purpose of building up energy to reach the “knocks” section by accelerating tempo and making the texture.
“Knocks” are very prominent in my music; to me they have the meaning of “someone knocking at the door” or “someone hammering on wood.” I want a primitive sound, a blow that is just a simple hit, at regular intervals, it has no sophistication at all, and it should resemble a banal sound from primitive times. These knocks appear in many of my pieces, *in Fragments of a Distant Dream*, *in Tiene Duende*, *in Golem*, and in the *Abandoned Cathedral*. What do they mean? The more I think about it, I think they mean knocking on a door, a metaphorical door. Since this continues to appear in my music, it might mean that this metaphorical door has not been opened yet. It might mean a metaphorical door that guards the path of the return, the return I have been looking for. The section with “knocks” appears in m. 94 going back to a *Tranquilo* tempo.
The fifth section starts at m. 118 with the tempo indication *Calmado*. This section is slow and it is placed in the high register after ascending from the “knocks” of the preceding section. In this section I play with the idea of multiple repetitive patterns in juxtaposition. Thus, there is the use of symmetrical constant beats, but little by little these patterns start to erode as other patterns start to appear. The idea here is to use traditional meter but in a new context. By superimposing different regular patterns, the regularity disappears and creates a “kaleidoscopic” rhythmic effect. So, the regular repetitive rhythmic patterns are an element of the past but within a new context. That is, I use regular rhythmic patterns such as 4/4 or 3/4 but not in the traditional way tonal music does but by superimposing them with certain delays or anticipations, new patterns are created. The different layers of regular patterns give the impression of a room of jagged mirrors where things start to get distorted as you move on.
The sixth section is a very contrasting section with the tempo indication *incisivo*. It is basically a solo section for Piano 1, with some interjections of Piano 2 and the double basses. This section is characterized by fast anacrusic gestures that end in thirds of different duration each time. It gives a sense of unpredictability and creates the idea of a jagged rhythm. At the same time, the section stresses a 3/4 meter and produces the effect of a reminiscence of a waltz. Thus, it is possible to hear a distorted waltz, especially when the second piano accentuates beats 2 and 3. This section because of its “incisive” character creates a good contrast with respect to the previous sections and prepares the listener for the second half of the piece where passages with more energy will come.

![Figure 8. Mm. 148-158: “Incisivo” patterns](image)

The final section starts at m.193 with a *Meno Mosso* tempo, and it is basically the dissolution of energy from the previous section. It is also a reminiscence of the repeated rhythmic patterns of the fifth section at m. 118 (*calmado tempo*) but this time, the middle range outlines the minor third D-F in a constant repetitve rhythm. This interval works as a good preparation for the next section which will start with a repeated middle D and also it is a good recapitulation of the initial idea that uses the C-Eb minor third. At the same time, while this repeated pattern is going, the marimbas and the harp play other minor thirds in the background, and the effect is that of a chiaroscuro that dissipates.
Thus, in conclusion, the first half of the piece was created as an improvisation on
the piano and exhibits seven different sections outlining distinct ideas. Prominent
elements are the use of minor thirds, primitive knocks, the use of regular repetitive
rhythmic patterns, and the reminiscence of a waltz, among others. As it can be seen, these
elements function as a conscious use of “elements from the past” but placed within a
dissonant context.
2.2.2. Second Half

The second half of the composition follows a defined structure that was pre-conceived beforehand (planned approach). The idea was to have different areas or sections where each section stresses a particular pitch as center. These centers are basically notes that have more prominence than the others. I then, figure out a different technique to stress these notes in each area.

First, I started with a scale that is very dear to me:

![Figure 10. Scale with symmetrical tetrachords](image)

This scale has the particularity that can be divided into two symmetrical tetrachords: D-Eb-F#-G and A-Bb-C#-D. At the same time, having a half step between the first degree and second degree it is a variant of a Phrygian mode but by raising the third degree it sounds more like the Jewish Freygish mode or the Spanish Gympsy scale with the difference that this augmented interval appears again in the second tetracord. From this scale I derived a twelve-tone row that starts in the same way but includes all the chromatic notes. The series is the following:
Figure 11. Original series taking the scale as a basis

Having the twelve-tone row I did a twelve-tone matrix. Then, I chose the Inversion I0 (D-C#-Bb-A-G-F#-Eb-C-B-G#-F-E) as the basic series to derive the different sections of the work:

Figure 12. Twelve-tone Matrix derived from the original series
Each individual note of this series gives birth to a section of about a minute long in the piece. In each of these sections the note of the series is chosen to be stressed in a particular way so each note can work as a pitch center. I chose a specific register for each note, and this register had to be respected in each section, which means, all the other notes could change register but the register set to each of the pitches of the series had to be invariable, in that way they become pitch centers. The register of each note of the series (D-C#-Bb-A-G-F#-Eb-C-B-G#-F-E) is as follows:

![Figure 13. Fixed register of pitches from the series](image)

There is only one note from the series that is not used, it is the last “E,” but I purposefully left it out because the piece starts on “E” and thus, it has been stressed enough at the beginning of the piece. The absence of this note points back to the past, to the beginning of the piece, and thus it is also a way of searching to bring back something from the past to achieve completeness. Here again, the idea of a metaphorical resurrection. Once I determined the register and the note that would be stressed, then I proceeded to determine what characteristics each area would have and how each note would be emphasized. Thus, I came up with ten areas, of about one minute each, where each note is emphasized in a particular way.
The first area stresses the “D4” as a center by using repeated 16th-notes. I chose this D because it is at the center of the register and thus its sound is prominent. At the same time, this section exhibits descending scale patterns in staccato and interruptions by arpeggios in 32nd notes. Thus, the repetition of the D4 works as a fixed event and contrasts with the arpeggios and ascending/descending patterns around it.

![Figure 14. Mm. 245-251: First area: repeated “D” and surrounding arpeggios and ascending/descending patterns.](image)

The material of the arpeggios and ascending/descending scale patterns come from the other series of the matrix. For example, in the above figure (Figure 12) in measure 250 in the Piano 1, it is possible to a segment of the series starting with left hand: D-D#-F#-G-A-A#-C#-E. Besides this, there is also free material that does not come from any series such as the chords in the left hand of Piano 1 in measures 248-250.

The second area stresses the “C#3.” This area features the same characteristics as the first area; that is, repeated C# in 16th-notes as a pitch center and contrasting surrounding arpeggios and ascending/descending scales. This section could be considered
an extension of the first, except that the pitch center now moves down. In both of these areas, the repeated notes and the fast arpeggios create a “toccata-like” section. My intention was to give the idea of virtuoso passages with a lot of energy and speed.

The third area stresses the “Bb5,” but this time the repetition comes in quintuplets (piano 2) with inserted rests at different intervals to create an asymmetrical effect. The effect is contrasting with respect to the repeated 16\textsuperscript{th}-notes of the previous sections because now it feels like the repetition is not constant and creates a sense of expectation. This area also features a “pointillist” writing in the other instruments. So, instead of accompanying the repeated notes with arpeggios and scales as in the previous sections, now a new texture is introduced. These short events create a “chaotic effect” giving the sense of unpredictable objects coming from different directions.
The fourth area stresses the “A5” by means of a trill. Thus, here for the first time, the note is stressed with a different technique other than repetition. Here, the stressed note is accompanied by a chordal texture in the other instruments. At the same time, the dynamics switch to the piano region. Thus, because of the chordal texture and the dynamic range, this area lowers down the energy of the previous sections and prepares the arrival of the next section which will be more mystical. This area is very important because it is a transition between the “toccata-like” and what will come next which will be a slower section.
The fifth area, stresses the “G” but this time as a pedal point. This sustained note gives the sense of a static, contemplative feeling while piano 2 presents a melodic line accompanied with the indication *misterioso e cantabile*. This melody however, is an exception to the planned approach as this was the product of an improvisation on the piano. What I wanted with this section was to have a sense of a sacred place. It had to be very simple. Originally I had thought of just having the melody by itself without the pedal point but I decided on the G to give a sense of a static feeling.

To me, this section works as a memory of Gregorian Chant in its simplicity, peaceful atmosphere and feeling of the sacred. At the same time, by adding some “comments” in Piano 1 with muted trills on the long notes, the atmosphere becomes more mystical as the muted trills give an “otherworldly” effect.

![Figure 18. Mm. 372-394: Fifth area, melodic line and “G” as pedal point](image-url)

The sixth area features a solo of the two pianos in the highest register using fast arpeggios where the “F#” is repeated at different speeds. In this case, it is no longer a consecutive repetition as in the first areas but it is stressed by frequency by appearing
more than the other notes. Thus, most of the phrases start, pass, or end on that “F#.” By placing this section in the high register it produces a nice contrast not only with the previous areas but with the whole first half as well, since for the first time, a section inhabits the high register for a longer period. Thus, what started as a “toccata-like” with violent outbursts of repeated notes and arpeggios, after reaching the mystical “sacred” section, has now become an ethereal and celestial area of high register. This is one of my favorite areas of the whole composition because the textures are delicate and whimsical.

Figure 19. Mm. 422-424: Sixth area: F# as pitch center

It is important to mention that this section includes a parenthesis. At measure 451 there is a passage that was actually inspired from a recording improvisation on the piano, and thus, this passage is related to the first part of the piece but it is placed here as a reminiscence of the first part. This part is a transfiguration of the C-sharp chord, now in the high register. This section produces also a “define object” after all the delicate arpeggios in the high register where it is difficult to point out exactly what is happening, now, the listener knows that this is a defined harmony that is a reminiscence of the first half.
The seventh area shows a different approach with respect to the previous sections. In this case, the “Eb” is stressed by being the only note in the middle register. All the material is in the very high register and in the very low register. It is like having two worlds, the underworld and the sky, and in the middle, the “Eb” alone. These high and low events are build by using intervals of a third in fast tremolos giving a sense of a dark mumble in the low register, and of bird-singing in the high register. By having these events happening in the high and low register the presence of the “Eb” in the middle is singled out as a stressed note. Thus, when the “Eb” is played creates a very contrasting, almost shocking, effect. So the stress here is not done by reiteration but by register contrast.
At the end of this section occurs a climatic point, “an explosion” represented by three blows of the ensemble to signify the birth of something. This idea came to me first, as a dream of a volcano erupting. At the same time, these blows are a reminiscence of the “knocks” in the first half of the piece, but now they have become an explosion of a bigger magnitude with a fortissimo dynamic and clusters in Piano 1. This moment could be interpreted as the actual point of the emergence of the resurrection of memory. It is also important to mention that these explosions happen without preparation; in fact, piano 1 has only fast figurations in the high register in the piannissimo region before these explosions happen. So they are completely unexpected and catch the listener by surprise.
The eighth area continues to stress the “Eb” but now adds the “C,” as well. So in this case, two notes from the series are stressed at the same time. The resultant interval of a sixth is played at different speeds in both pianos, giving the effect of an object changing slowly. To me this has the meaning of drops of water in a dark cave, as if there is a leak. To emphasize this texture I reduce the surrounding events to just little clusters in the marimbas, also as an analogy of drops.
The next area uses the same techniques as the previous one but this time stresses the notes “B” and “G#,” that is, the interval of a 10th. This area starts to slow down the energy to prepare for the end of the piece. Thus, this section is just an extension of the previous one which continues the effect of water drops. However, these drops start to slow down signaling that the end of the piece is near. Most of the surrounding elements start to dissipate and we are left with only one interval played by both pianos. A very simple device but which still carries an enigmatic feeling.

![Figure 24. Mm. 501-508: Ninth area, “B” and “G#” as pitch centers](image)

The last area stresses the note “F7,” but here, this note does not give rise to a full section, it is just played twice, as two blows, the second time, accompanied by a chord by the full ensemble before the final descend in the piano 2 that ends the piece. This section is like an epitaph or a short coda. The piece could have ended at the end of the previous area, but this last section (or coda) presents a descending line which does not follow a pattern and it is unpredictable, the listener does not know exactly when it will stop. This
line reinstates the idea of descending to the ground, as if searching for that last note E that will never come, the “E” of the beginning of the piece, as if searching for a return.

Figure 25. Mm. 513-end: “F” note and Coda section

In sum, _La Resurrección de la Memoria_ is a composition in which I explore two approaches to composition. The first half of the piece explores the improvised approach where the whole section was derived from an improvisation recording on the piano; while the second half was carefully planned to stress different notes of a series in different ways. Both halves are about the same length (about ten minutes each); the first half can be divided in seven sections while the second half has ten sections.

Comparing both approaches, I think the planned approach creates more variety as each section is shorter and uses a specific different technique to stress a note, thus it creates more contrast. The first half of the piece seems more monotonous not only because there is less change but also because it is slow. At the same time, by leaving it almost intact from the recording version, it shows the same type of gestures and it does not introduce variety. However, I think the first half is more mysterious, and to me it
seems to convey the original atmosphere produced in the solitude of the improvisation. It is precisely this kind of atmosphere the one I try to capture which seems to have a *je ne sais quoi*. Thus, a good advice for my next piece would be to use the material of the recording but refine it enough to avoid a certain monotony that can appear, especially when the section is long, but without destroying the atmosphere.
3. **Aesthetics of Re-Enchantment**

One of the main purposes of my PhD was to find a way to articulate an aesthetic (a personal style) that would move away from the avant-garde. When I first arrived to UCSD I had all the intentions of becoming a radical, experimental composer, but as my studies progressed I started to realize that the route of the avant-garde was reaching exhaustion. This does not mean that the avant-garde and the value of the new are passé. I believe composers will continue to do experimental and avant-garde music for many years. What I mean is that once you have come to the realization that there is another path it is impossible to keep doing the same thing. That path, for me, is Re-Enchantment.

I think of Re-Enchantment as a sort of antidote to disenchantment. Max Weber in *Science as a Vocation* says: “The fate of our times is characterized by rationalization and intellectualization, and above all, by the disenchantment of the world.”⁷ Kristina Shull in her essay *Is the Magic Gone? Weber’s ‘Disenchantment of the World’ and its Implications for Art in Today’s World* gives a clear definition of disenchantment:

Max Weber describes the “disenchantment of the world” as it results from the intersection of the Protestant Reformation and the scientific revolution in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. In *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Weber explains that these paradigm shifts have inaugurated a more rational understanding of events as people began to rely more on scientific investigations as the way to truth. This ultimately resulted in a decline of the use and belief in magic, God, and myth and a rise of secularization and bureaucracy.⁸

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Thus, disenchantment is the decline of belief in magic, myth, superstition, and the sacred. The climatic point of the disenchantment of the world for me is reached with the death of God at the end of the 19th century. One of the questions I have is: after the disenchantment of the world, is it possible to find enchantment again? In other words, is it possible a return of the sacred? The sociologist Daniel Bell answers that question in the affirmative in his essay of 1978 *The Return of the Sacred: the Argument about the Future of Religion*. In that essay Bell states that:

If there are to be new religions - and I think they will arise - they will, contrary to previous experience, return to the past, to seek for tradition and to search for those threads which can give a person a set of ties that place him in the continuity of the dead and the living and those still to be born. Unlike romanticism, it will not be a turn to nature, and unlike modernity it will not be the involuted self; it will be the resurrection of Memory.9

Bell sees then, that the return of the sacred will be a re-appropriation of the past and he even calls it “the resurrection of memory.” Thus, I started to think that my own aesthetics should focus on engaging with ideas that somehow Modernism seemed to have opposed such as the sacred, and the past. Thus, an aesthetic of Re-Enchantment would have as a preeminent premise the search for a mysterious essence in art. This search for magic and mystery opposes the idea of disenchantment and thus it also reacts against some aspects of Modernism. Particularly, the ideologies of rejection of the past, progress, and the “new as value” would be substituted for other ideologies. In this case, the ideologies of Re-Enchantment would be closer to the ideologies of the Renaissance in the fact that Re-Enchantment looks openly to the past to re-appropriate and to resurrect aspects of it under a new mode.

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How would Re-Enchantment apply to my music? An aesthetic of Re-Enchantment would have the following goals:

1) Depart from the Modernist ideologies
2) Re-appropriate elements of the past
3) Engage with themes such as the mysterious, the sacred, the superstitious, or the duende.
4) Find enchantment at the inspiration level

*La Resurrección de la Memoria* is the first piece where I try to address all the goals of these aesthetics. Regarding the first goal, *La Resurrección de la Memoria* renounces the value of the new as a core value. In other words, in this piece I am no longer interested in finding novel sounds or techniques; I am not interested in destroying anything or “moving forward” into the future. It is a piece that does not try to be modern and is not concerned with the current trends of experimental music.

Instead, following the second goal, the piece looks face to face into the past and it tries to re-appropriate elements from the past under a new mode. These elements, as it was explained, are the use of consonance, the use of regular rhythmic patterns, the use of some traditional harmonies (such as the C-sharp minor chord), the use of a melodic line, the use of pitch centers, and the use of a narrativic-dramatic form. These elements however, are not used in the traditional way, as obviously the piece does not sound tonal, instead they are put within an atonal and dissonant context, and hence, this reappearance of elements of the past obeys a postmodern approach.
Regarding the third goal, searching for mystery, magic, and the sacred has been a feature of my music since my piece *Tiene Duende*. In pieces such as *Golem, The Abandoned Cathedral, Escenas del Sombrerón* there is a need to search into superstitious or mystical topics. This need to re-activate “the magical” obeys to a certain personal need to go against the current scientific and technological influences in the arts. In the case of *La Resurrección de la Memoria*, the work is infused with several mysterious moments that convey a sense of the ineffable and the divine such as the moment of the “G” pedal point accompanied by a melody, or the passage of the “transfiguration” of the C-sharp minor chord in the high register.

Finally, in *La Resurrección de la Memoria* I test two approaches of composition. The improvised approach used in the first half is the one that I think could open a door for Re-Enchantment because it allows for the possibility of revelation; of course, revelation not as something supernatural, but revelation as a subjective experience. Improvisation allows having the experience of “as if something is revealed.” This process of revelation occurs precisely at the very inception of the compositional process, that is, at the inspiration stage. Because the improvisation process is almost an automatic process it allows experiencing the birth of a piece “as if” it were “revealed,” or “as if” it came from a “different place.” If enchantment is to be found (or re-found) it is probably at the stage of the inception of the piece where it will happen.
Conclusion

My dissertation piece *La Resurrección de la Memoria* constitutes a synthesis of my musical studies at UCSD under Professor Reynolds. As it was presented, although my compositional goals at the beginning of my studies in 2011 were to become a composer following one of the current avant-garde trends, this changed as I advanced in my studies. By questioning and engaging in fruitful discussions, Professor Reynolds was able to point me in the right direction to find my true voice and what really mattered for my music.

Pieces such as *Tiene Duende*, *Golem*, and *The Abandoned Cathedral* started to emerge as a consequence of my search for *duende* and the sacred. *La Resurrección de la Memoria* which is the fourth piece in this cycle, follows the same principles, but in this piece I tested two approaches to composition: the improvised and the planned. The improvised approach uses free improvisation on the piano to produce original ideas, while the planned approach starts from the outset with a defined plan. These pieces, but particularly the last one, try to align themselves with my own aesthetic proposal.

Re-Enchantment, as a personal aesthetic, tries to be a reaction to the Modernist principles and ideologies. It tries to re-appropriate elements of the past and openly searches for enchantment (magic, superstition, the sacred, the mysterious, the sublime, the divine, etc.) I believe that enchantment, if it is to be found, is at the very inception of the piece, at the inspiration level. It is here where the improvised approach becomes useful as it can trigger magical moments of inspiration that could be experienced phenomenologically as “revelation.”
Thinking of an aesthetic of Re-Enchantment, at least as a personal aesthetic, allows me to search a path where my music can be authentic and at the same time propose a different route with respect to the multiple possibilities of aesthetics in our current times.
Bibliography


Appendix

Score of *La Resurrección de la Memoria*
Xavier Beteta

La Resurrección
de la Memoria

2017
Performance Notes

- Accidentals affect only the note they precede except in repeated notes

Harp: If the note does not have an staccato, let it vibrate

Piano: The plus sign (+) means to mute the string with the hand

Double Bass: In measure 487 it is required to play with over pressure
La Resurrección de la Memoria

To the memory of my grandparents
Amalia Beltrán and Francisco Lima

Xavier Beteta