



Keyla Orozco. Photo: Erik Pezarro

THE ART OF DECONSTRUCTING

Since composer Manuel Saumell Robredo had the fortunate notion to bring dance music, transfigured, to concert halls in the mid-nineteenth century, giving birth to Cuban musical nationalism, almost every Cuban composer to date has been attracted by the grace, strength, wealth and fantasy of our natural music.

Composers working with folklore and popular music have approached their source in dissimilar ways. A couple of examples: Some follow their models to the letter and simply compose another 'joropo', another 'son', another 'bambuco'. Others appropriate essential elements of a specific genre and recreate it with varying imaginative freedom: enriching harmonies, transforming the original musical structure, juxtaposing elements of different genres, different techniques. There are composers who delve into the essence and discover the principles that define the chosen genre or even the principles that define an entire specific culture and based on it create a new artistic product, etc.

Keyla Orozco Alemán has gone almost all roads. Heir to a Cuban tradition of modern composition that began in the early twentieth century and was transferred to her by her teacher Harold Gramatges, having drunk directly from the source, enjoys a solid technique that allows her to expound almost any idea successfully. Today, she has gone beyond recreating Cuban music in her work, unstoppable traveler that she is; she has become a chronicler of cultures, which in her compositions is resulting in a 'transmusical syncretism' with many of the signs of postmodern creation.

She has written for solo instruments and combinations of instruments. She has incorporated technology in her work and experimented with sounds of common objects. She has written for chorus and for orchestra. And in the ocean of composers working today, mass-produced by conservatories, Keyla's music is distinguished by her sense of humor, her constant reference to traditions, her ability to absorb and organically incorporate the new into her aesthetic language and above all because of that passion of hers to transform and reinvent by "... *de-composing, de-sanctifying, de-ranging everything that is 'arreglao and cuadrao' (arranged and shaped) ...*" "...

Give me a theme and I'll break it down to my liking ... " that's what she prefers, she wrote at some point.

I know that to describe music is as vague and illusory as describing smells, but I am taking the risk of presenting a couple of examples anyway:

'Variaciones infantiles sobre un tema popular' (Children's variations on a popular theme), a didactic work that causes the student to transit through several moments in the history of music through the Baroque counterpoint, Bartokian harmonies, the blues, the fuga, polytonality, etc.

'De chismes y confidencias' (About gossip and confidences), 'danzón', Cuban nineteenth century genre in a rondo form where a main theme is alternated with new themes or episodes throughout the piece to end with a very rhythmic or 'montuno' section: Tribute-parody of the Cuban piano tradition and European chordal polytonality of the early twentieth century, where very traditional melodies are dissonantly rarefied creating the feeling of disharmony and imbalance of gossip and certain confidences.

'Won't Blue', where two traditions of black origin (Afro-Cuban and Afro-American) weave the musical discourse. Keyla reproduces the tone heights of membranophones in quick, syncopated succession initially presented as brief cells that become more complex as the piece progresses; and melancholic harmonies of blues, beginning as a fragile sound line that develops into chordal clots spreading and growing to the point of becoming almost percussive in a parallel climax between the two.

'Traveling Shoe Stories', suite of short pieces for violin, bass clarinet, piano, percussion and tap dancer, where Keyla more or less makes the viewer experience what she's undergone in the course of her travels around the world while she was writing the piece. Work in which she causes her characteristic sense of humor, Cuban folklore, European musical tradition, jazz, pop, free improvisation and tap to coexist. A musical self-portrait that might as well have been entitled *'Keyla, or the strength of fragility'* that we will premiere in Amsterdam on March 22, 2015.