Un sol negro A dark sun

For large ensemble

Piccolo, Piccolo, Clarinet, Bass Clarinet, Trombone, Trombone, Drum Set, Percussion Set, Alto, Tenor, Violin and Viola

A composition by Alejandro Franco-Briones

The present work is based in two contrasting ideas; in the one hand, the formal unity of the oeuvre is based in a mathematical concept that the old Mexicans used to explain the time-space continuum and defined how reality in itself was constructed before the turn to European idiosyncrasies. In the other hand the words for the singers are taken from the poem "Mi tema es la matanza" (My topic is the slaughter) by Osvaldo Lamborghini; an Argentinian socialist writer that experienced the worst episodes of the military dictatorship of his country, a period known as the "Process of National Reorganization". The juxtaposed and contrasting ideas that originate the work are enmeshed in certain aspects, but overall fail to properly integrate. They rather seem to be antagonistic prescriptions of reality and it is only possible to understand them as one predating over the other.

Both notions revolve around the numbers 13 and 7; 13 is the number of 'circles in heaven' in Mexicah cosmogony and 7 represents the human body as 4 is the symbol of the flesh and 3 is the symbol of the blood (4 + 3 = 7). Seven times thirteen derives in another sacred number, 91. Four juxtaposed sections of 91 represent the four directions of the universe as well as the four seasons of the year. In this case 91 is the outcome of a process of recursion that closely resembles a pyramid; if a count is made from 13 to 1 (13,12,11..1) and you add up all the resulting numbers you will get 91. The two mathematical notions will be used as structural and formal constrains in the two sections respectively.

The words were taken from a poem that formally tends to emphasises the numbers 7, 13 and 14 in the number of syllables per verse; formally the work by Lamborghini coincides with the cosmological vision of the *Mexicah*. Nevertheless is not the convergence but the divergence points that I consider most relevant.

The sections in which the voices predominate are presented as mirroring images of the instrumental ones at the beginning of the piece; gradually the vocal parts penetrate the topological space created by the instrumental force. Finally, after the pyramidal recursion process culminates the vocal parts take over the discursive thread until the coda of the work. The words of the poem strongly reflect the brutality and cold-blooded ideological stances of the colonial and post-colonial governments of the American continent.

Performance instructions by instrumental family.

Piccolo flutes



1. Aeolian sounds. The white square on the stem of the note means the sound should be fully aeolian (air sound). The black square means normal sound, the line that joins both symbols means the flutist should interpolate between states.



2. Semi-aeolian sound. Black and white rectangle over the notehead means half aeolian sound without any interpolation.



Aeolian sound II. A white square over the note means aeolian sound without interpolation. The change should be produced as abruptly as possible.



3. Tongue Ram. A percussive sound effect produced by sealing the embouchure hole completely with the lips and strongly propelling the tongue into the embouchure hole. The written pitch \bigstar corresponds to the right position (it should sound a minor 7^{th} lower than written).



4. A consonant letter between brackets should mean the flutist must attack such consonant sound substituting the conventional [t] at the same time he/she produces a real tone in the flute. If a horizontal line extends from the letter it indicates the duration of the vocal sound should last as long as it is indicated. If no line is marked, the consonant letter should apply only in the attack of such sound. The particular sound for the letters used are properly described in the table of phonetic equivalence in the instructions for the singers.



5. Width pitch vibrato.



6. Slap tongue. The 'pop' sound effect is produced by building up a strong pressure behind the tongue and then rapidly snap the tongue down/away from the teeth/lips.



7. Flutter tongue. The letters ft and a tremolo sign indicate a flutter tongue effect. The effect is produced by allowing the tongue to vibrate in a rolled [r] phoneme while blowing a fast, steady airstream.



8. Key clicks. This effect should be produced by strongly clicking the keys of the instrument to produce a pitch resonance. The position of the sound is written in the octave closer to the \overrightarrow{m} adjacent tones of the instrument so the flow of ideas is not visually interrupted.



10. Diamond-shaped small notehead means a note should be produced singing the approximate pitch and in the most comfortable octave for the instrumentalist. Precision is not a priority, however the balance between the real tone and the sung tone should be noticeable.

Bass and Bb clarinets

Both instruments are written in transposed pitch, this means that the written pitch in Bb clarinet sound a major 2nd lower than the written note and the Bass clarinet sound a 2nd major + an octave lower.



1. Air sounds. These are produces by blowing air into the body of the instrument without producing any real tones. It should be always made as loud as possible and the air should always be exhaled. Sometimes a rhythmic value between parenthesis may be written over the notehead that indicates the rhythmic value of the note.



2. The letters ft and a tremolo sign indicate a flutter tongue effect should be made. The effect is produced by allowing the tongue to vibrate in a rolled [r] phoneme while blowing a fast, steady airstream. It can be produced with real tone or with air sounds.



3. Growl effect. The effect is achieved by singing a growling sound in the back of the throat while producing real tones or blowing air into the instrument. The symbol over the stem of the note should not be confused with the 'squeak effect' symbol.



4. Multiphonic. When two or more notes are organised as a chord and one or more of the noteheads are smaller a multiphonic sound should be produce in which the lower note gives the position and the generator tone, and the one or more notes over it represent the approximate pitch of the additional tones produced. The fingering is described in the scheme above and to the left of the notes.



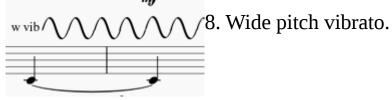
5. Slap tongue. The 'pop' sound effect is produced by building up a strong pressure behind the tongue and then rapidly snap the tongue down/away from the teeth/lips.



6. Squeak effect. By applying excessive pressure to the reed a 'squeaky' sound should be produced.

7.

Smorzato. A single stroke vibrato produced by pulling the jaw away from the reed.



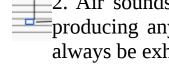


9. Diamond-shaped small notehead means a note should be produced singing the approximate pitch and in the most comfortable octave for the instrumentalist. Precision is not a priority but the balance between the real tone and the sung tone should be noticeable.

Trombones



1. Flutter tongue. The letters ft and a tremolo sign indicate a flutter tongue effect. The effect is produced by allowing the tongue to vibrate in a rolled [r] phoneme while blowing a fast, steady airstream.



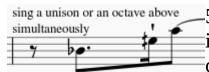
2. Air sounds. These are produces by blowing air into the body of the instrument without producing any real tones. It should be always made as loud as possible and the air should always be exhaled. Sometimes a note between parenthesis may be written over the notehead that indicates the rhythmic value of the note.



3. Growl effect. The effect is achieved by singing a growling sound in the back of the throat while producing real tones or blowing air into the instrument.

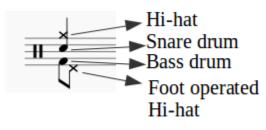


4. Diamond-shaped small notehead means a note should be produced singing the approximate pitch and in the most comfortable octave for the instrumentalist. Precision is not a priority but the balance between the real tone and the sung tone should be noticeable.



-5. When singing a unison simultaneously with the real tone, the balance is very important. The intonation does not need to be precise, but the real notes should not cover the sung notes.

Drum set



The set proposed is a rather simple one; hi-hat, snare drum and bass drum. It should be played as in rock or jazz music. Conventionally, the bass drum is operated with the right foot and the hi-hat is partially operated with the left foot. The noteheads of the bass drum and the hi-hat are always the same (round and a cross respectively) however the snare drum may vary. Only drumsticks and brushes are necessary for the present work.

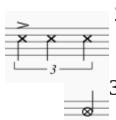
• Hi-hat

The hi-hat is notated in the space below the first line of the staff when it is activated with the left foot and it appears in the space above the last line of the staff when it is hit with the drumstick or brush.



1. The '+' sign over the hi-hat line indicates that the mechanism of the instrument should be fully closed, the '0' means it should be fully open. When both symbols are ' • ' combined as the state of the instrument should be in-between allowing some long decay but not freely resonating. The line between the two symbols means that there should be a gradual change of state as indicated.

Snare drum



2. Cross-head. Hit the rim of the drum producing a metallic sound.

- 3. Rim shot. Hit simultaneously the rim and the patch of the instrument.
- 4. Brushes' sweeping technique. Sweep the brush over the patch of the snare drum producing a sound similar to a gentle white noise.

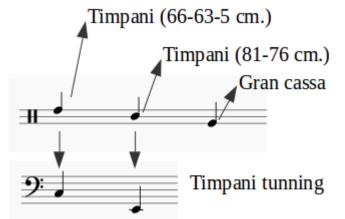


5. The additional line over the staff represent one drumstick stopped over the centre of the patch pressing only with the tip. The cross head noteheads over it means that the performer should hit with the other drumstick the body of the stick. The whole note followed with a thick line represents the tip of the drumstick over the patch, the thiner line that crosses the thick one represents

the pressure and the angle applied to to the snare drum. Varying the pressure and the angle causes a 'pitch bend' by activating different harmonic partials of the instrument.

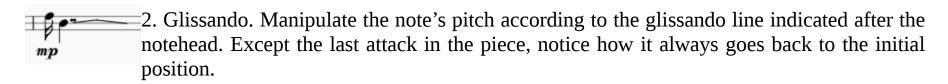
Percussion set

The percussion set mutates between a 3 line staff with two timpani and a gran cassa and a 1 line staff for the tam-tam.

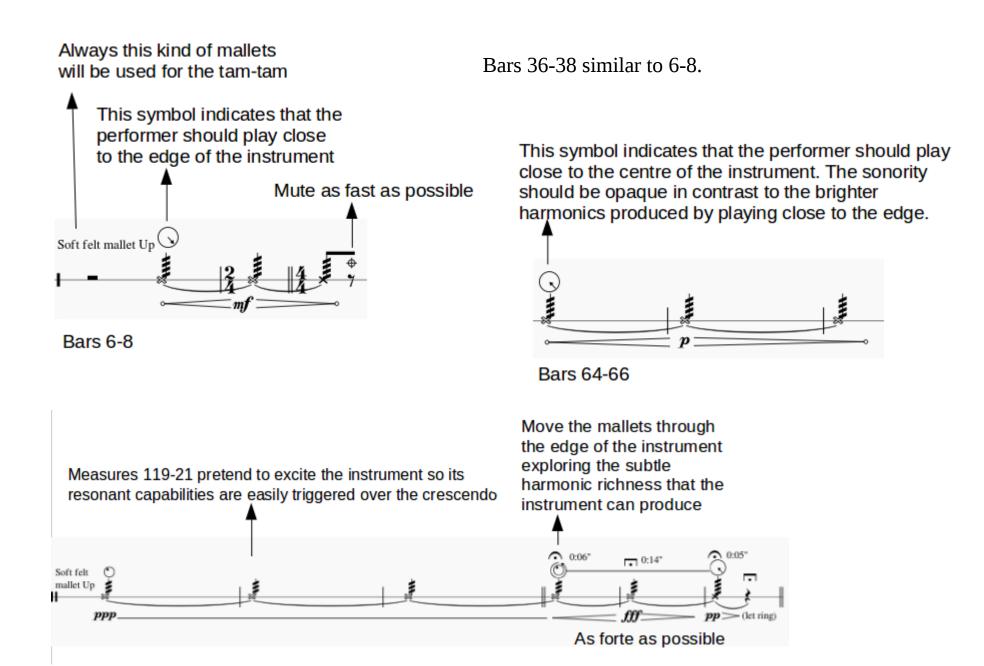


Every time the timpani or the gran cassa are used they will be stroked with the timpani mallets or any other that may suit well the nature of the present music. The three instruments are notated in a 3 line staff as specified in the image to the left.

1. Jeté. Let the mallet bounce freely over the patch of the instrument imitating the violin and viola.



The tam-tam should be considered a different sound entity of the work. Its interventions are sporadic and very specific. I will describe the specific sound effects and the symbology involvein each one of them.



Singers

The words of the sung voices are as follows. The right column is a approximate translation made by the composer.

Mi tema es la matanza¹

Mi topic is the slaughter

Mi tema es la matanza

es claro: la matanza,

y no importa

nada y para nada

a qué muerte me refiero

ni de qué

muertos hablo, menos aún

si la guerra como efecto de la matanza

o a la inversa (estas minucias,

no tengo tiempo).

Pienso en mi mirada.

En qué campo de batalla nacieron mis ojos

y allí se estrenaron

para ver así,

y mirar de otro modo.

Como si hubiera modos.

Mentira es la palabra.

La palabra mentira,

¿por qué no enredarnos?

Mi topic is the slaughter

it is clear: the slaughter

and it does not matter

nothing or for no one

whose death I am talking about

neither does it matter

of which dead I am referring, even less

if war is an effect of the slaughter

or the opposite (for this insignificances,

I do not have time).

I think in my sight

In which battlefield my eyes were born

and there debuted

to look like that,

and behold in another way.

As if there are many ways.

Lie is the word.

The word lie,

why not to complicate ourselves?

¹ Aira, Cesar (editor). "Poemas, 1969-1985 Osvaldo Lamborghini; edición al cuidado de César Aira." (Argentina, Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana, 2004)

The words should be evoked with cold-blooded indifference and even irony. The facial expression of the singers should reflect such mood. There is no vibrato unless indicated otherwise.

The following is a comprehensive list of the phonetic properties of the Spanish alphabet emphasasing the Argentinian variants².

Vowels (I	Vocales)							
a	e	i	О	u	y			
[a]	[e]	[i]	[0]	[u]	[i]			
Consona	nts (<i>Conso</i>	nantes)						
b	c	ch	d	f	g	gu	gü	h
[b/β]	[8/k]	[ʧ]	[d/ð]	[f]	[x,g/ɣ]	[g/gw]	[gw]	silent
j	k	1	11	m	n	ñ	p	q
[x]	[k]	[1]	[j/ʤ, ʎ]	[m]	[n/ŋ]	[n]	[p]	[k]
r	rr	S	t	\mathbf{v}	\mathbf{w}	X	у	Z
[r/r]	[r]	[s]	[t]	[b/β]	[w/β/b]	[ks]	[j/ʤ]	[8]

c = [s] before i or e, but [k] elsewhere

g = [x] before i or e, [g] or [x] elsewhere

gu = [g] before i or e, but [gw] elsewhere

ll = [[] or [3] in Argentina

 $n = [\eta]$ before g, e.g. 'tengo,' [n] elsewhere.

r = [f] between vowels, [r] elsewhere. At the end of syllables (not followed by a vowel)

 $rr = [\chi]$

s = [h] at the ends of words and syllables in Argentina and Chile, e.g. peces = /'peseh/.

x = [s] at the beginning of words, [ks] elsewhere.

y = [i] at the end of syllables, such as *hay*, *buey* and *muy*, [j] as a consonant or semiconsonant. In emphatic speech in Argentina = [ʒ].

k and w appear mainly in loan words.

All the words in the score are written in Spanish (Argentinian dialect) unless they are between [], in that case the phonetic alphabet should be employed.

Sometimes superimposed letters are written suggesting that the consonant letter should be compensated with a veiled vowel.

When a consonant sound appears in **bold** it should be exaggerated. In such case, the sound -r turns to -rr $[\chi]$ always.

Microtonal inflections.

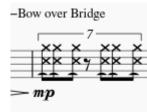
- The note should be lower than the indicated pitch by approximately $\frac{1}{4}$ tone.
- \uparrow The note should be higher than the indicated pitch by approximately $\frac{1}{4}$ tone.
- Precisely ¼ tone higher than natural and ¼ tone lower than sharp tones. Always using as a reference the pitch from the viola or violin.

² Omniglot, online encyclpedia of writing systems and languages, http://www.omniglot.com/writing/spanish.htm Consulted 29th of May, 2017

Violin and Viola

- 1. Bow position: xP (extremo ponticello) molto sul ponticello. Play almost over the bridge. XT (extremo tasto) play over the fingerboard. Ord. Normal position. If a line connects two indications the performer should interpolate between the two states.
- 2. Bow part. CRIN play with the hair of the bow. CLT (col legno tratto) play with the wooden part of the bow. CLB (col legno battuto) attack percussively the string(s) with the wooden part of the bow.
- 3. Off string. Stop the bow and separate it from the instrument. On string. Stop the bow without separating it from the instrument.
- 4. Flautato. Very light pressure, producing a light sonority. Overpressure. Playing with a heavy amount of pressure distorting the sound and producing noise.
 - 5. Circular bow. One quick circular motion over the indicated strings that should add noise to the indicated pitch.
 - 6. Circular bow + jeté (left image). A quick circular motion over the string at the same time making the bow bounce of and on. Circular bow + tremolo (right image). Repeat the circular motion throughout the duration of the note producing a 'ostinato' effect.





- 7. Bow over the bridge (OTB indicated in some cases). Performer should play over the bridge producing a hight pitch and subtle noise without any pitch. The indicated position should suggest certain strings (in this case, I and II) at the same time the discursive flow of the work is not interrupted.
- 8. Pizzicato Bartok / snap pizzicato. To produce this effect the performer should pinch the string pulling vertically upwards and releasing creating the snap against the fingerboard.
- 9. Jeté. With the crin of the bow attack the indicated string percussively letting the bow bounce on and off freely.
- 10. Left-hand pizzicato (+).
- 11. Mute the sound previously produced.



General articulation signs.

- 1. Staccato. Reduces the duration of the note by half. Symbol:
- 2. Staccatissimo. Play as short as possible. Symbol:
- 3. Non-legato. The whole duration of the note and avoid articulating with the following or previous one. Symbol:
- 4. Unstress. Actively try not to emphasise such notes by diminishing dynamic level slightly and/or . Symbol:
- 5. Martelatto / Marcato. Heavy and percussive attack a slight decay and keep the dynamic level straight throughout the whole duration of the note. Symbol:
- 6. Sforzando. A slow attack followed by a slightly unstable sustain, forcefully. Symbol: **
- 7. No vibrato unless indicated otherwise.











































