

## DEBATE: JUAN HIDALGO

Although Juan Hidalgo's instrumental work started out in Europe, amidst the setting of the European avant-garde, the far-reaching transformations of his musical activity probably began as a result of his contact with America; in particular, his friendships with David Tudor and John Cage, whom he met in 1956 and 1958 respectively. Hidalgo has often said that his encounters with these two composers was decisive in his musical development, although we shall not go into the historical circumstances since they have been more than amply discussed elsewhere.

The American experience undoubtedly strengthened Hidalgo's musical career, in which he had begun composing with a conventional system of notes and then developed towards serial, electro-acoustic and concrete techniques. The change began in 1957 with *Ukanga* (his first piece to involve the spatial elements of sound) and *Caurga*, in which he discovered the enigmatic link between pre-determined systems and the results of chance and non-determination (which marked the beginning of open music). 1959 was the most productive year in terms of the quantity of compositions, with numerous pieces of 'action music': the aesthetic and operational embryo of ZAJ and sign of the move towards electro-acoustic music which, although resulting in relatively few compositions, signalled a distinct change in Hidalgo's instrumental music.

Structural serialism, chance and non-determination, open compositions and concrete music all appeared in the strictly instrumental sense in 1964, with *Aulaga 2*, and culminated in the ZAJ period. When Hidalgo reappeared ten years later, with *Tamarán* in 1974 and *Rrose Selavy* in 1975, his music had already moved towards the less banal aspects of minimalism and the philosophy of transfiguration of the identical, as well as his great Orientalist phase, rooted in his study of Chinese, Japanese and Eastern culture in Milan and Rome between 1962 and 1964. The Orientalist influence is greatest in Hidalgo's latest instrumental pieces, *Zajrit* of 1983 and *Palpiti* of 1984, in

# Chance, Time and Space in the Music of Juan Hidalgo

which he returns to the use of conventional notes after the parametric writing of much of his former work. This Orientalist atmosphere was also sought after by John Cage: a Zen approach which led Hidalgo to the analysis and trans-codification of poetic laws and metres.

Whereas the retrospective exhibition "*De Juan Hidalgo*" at the CAAM covers 40 years of artistic creation, the instrumental musical composition spans only 27, with a break of 10 years in the middle. The pre-1957 work was not catalogued by the composer, although much of it is of great interest and has therefore been included in the catalogue by Lothar Siemens. Although valuable, these pieces are examples of his work as a student and are therefore quite different from his work over the last 40 years.

### 1. The tautology of art as art

Both in his instrumental and non-instrumental work, Hidalgo, like Cage,

interprets life as a material, an accumulation of events and circumstances to be collected in the different forms of art; these forms are therefore no more than general symptoms of life. A. Bonito Oliva describes this idea as "the acceptance of the urban world as a unique historical space". What inspires us to situate this in the American context is the tautological treatment of Hidalgo's language. In both Europe and America experimental art is based on the conviction that language is the object of art, and investigation concerns analysing linguistic methods more than experimenting with new techniques. However, America restricts art more strictly to the language used, and that is where art is defined, tautologically, as art. Without adding more concepts.

In this atmosphere Hidalgo acquired a considerable amount of pragmatic confidence in the methods he used; questioning only the correspondence between his compositions and the idea of art rather than the mere specifics of his own work. The maximal expression of this conceptual art arose, with no preconceptions whatever, from the phenomenal acquisition of language. And although in principle the conceptual artist attempts to question the very definition of art, he is actually guided by tautology or, more specifically, by the affirmation of a language which refers only to itself.

It is perhaps this attitude which led to Juan Hidalgo's innovative instincts, not only in the Spanish context where he was clearly the first to make experiments of this kind, but also in Europe as a whole. This is true for the whole period of his participation in the two first courses/festivals held at Darmstadt, with the success of *Ukanga* in 1957 and Luciano Berio's commission for the Contemporary Festival in Naples in 1958, and his contract with the ORTF which resulted in the piece *Etude de stage* (1961). This latter piece was chosen by Pierre Schaffer as the basis for a group piece which brought together composers such as Xenakis, Luc Ferrari

and François Bayle. Electro-acoustic music was unheard of then in Spain, and was only gradually making headway in the rest of Europe, despite the ground-breaking masterpiece *Canto de los adolescentes* produced by Stockhausen at the Cologne Studio.

The concerts of the 50's and early 60's, and later the ZAJ events, graphisms, cards and books, were internationally recognised as conceptual expression linked to American-style tautology, and they prefigured a specific chapter of modernity. At one time the well-known group Fluxus tried to persuade Juan Hidalgo to join them. But the ZAJ concerts created their own independent atmosphere, rejecting the ambiguity of associating with more mainstream currents; they chose to express themselves with actions using everyday gestures, sounds and noises. These gestures represented a change of focus towards the basic realm of existence; a privileged position in a complex system of relationships which, to quote Oliva again, "accepts both sound and silence, musical instruments and the lack of instruments, the coded seriousness of concerts and the ironic value of silence in place of sound".

Juan Hidalgo's radical stance in the development of his career makes him Spain's most international artist, at least in the field of aesthetic innovation. Likewise, he is the musician who has made the greatest contribution to the avant-garde. His work before, during and after ZAJ appears in every compendium of contemporary creation. In this light, Spanish aesthetic experimentalism, through the work of Juan Hidalgo, has contributed to enriching international thought rather than being limited to merely reacting to external movements with a greater or lesser degree of genius and originality. With Hidalgo, it is a Spanish name which takes an innovative step of worldwide importance.

## 2. Systems and chance; transgressive premises

Equally as important as Juan Hidalgo's innovative work, which paved the way for others, is his indifference to the dogmas which, to a greater or lesser

extent, have dictated the development of contemporary art. Surprisingly, having made his first impact on the European scene at the Darmstadt courses, Hidalgo rapidly abandoned both the structural serialism which had been the hallmark of these events since the teachings of Boulez, Stockhausen and Berio, and the integral serialism which had been imposed by Boulez for decades. It is important to recognise the suffocating influence of these doctrines in order to fully evaluate Hidalgo's freedom in choosing to move towards a more American-style tautology, which enabled him to evolve constantly from within his own imagination, rather than conform to external rules. This freedom of choice may even have unfairly blackened his reputation on an international level, and even led to criticisms of his not strictly instrumental pieces as actions wholly lacking in musical interest (a criticism to which John Cage's work was also submitted by the prejudices of Eurocentric superiority).

In *Ukanga*, Hidalgo rehearsed the mathematical rigour of serialism with great success. Mathematics is, of course, the basis of serial music; borne of Schönberg's dodecaphonic system which was limited to the pitch and frequency of sound. Serialisation was concerned primarily with the duration and dimension of time in metres and rhythms which, along with pitch and intensity, form the main organisational parameters of musical sound. The simultaneous permutations and combinations of these series led to what was known as integral serialism.

But as well as the central element, mathematics was also the downfall of serialism. Juan Hidalgo discovered this when composing *Caurga*, also in 1957. He admits that this piece was, in serial terms, "less strict than *Ukanga*, although I also worked the sound material 'strictly' for more or less the first half of the piece. From then on, I decided there was no reason to maintain strict loyalty to any taboo or technical procedure. Gods also die. I then decided to continue 'freehand' until the end, inventing a structure for the material note by note. Paradoxically, when I had finished that second half, the result was just as homogenous as the first. Nobody

would know where I finished with one process and where I started with another; the process of 'inspiration'. From then on, I lost all interest in serial-structural music".

This discovery of the affinity between hermetic structure and non-structure, and the adoption of an attitude like Hidalgo's, was considered pure transgression in 1957, since it rejected a priori what could amount to many years of European and American musical creation with less imperialistic serial dogmas. Mathematics is the operational console of serial rotation, but it is also its ruin. The serialists eliminated the last remains of traditional language and, consequently, "arbitrary" freedom; for them, the subject's emotion generates emotion in the language, which is unacceptable. They therefore incorporate rhythm, intervals, longitudes, grades of intensity, automated bells as melodies, etc., into the strict order of the dodecaphonic process of pitches: a mathematical rationalisation which had never before been attempted in music.

The inconsistency of these norms, which are only superficially objective in a strictly ordained system, becomes clear in their inadequacy with respect to structural relations in the course of music, which they are wholly incapable of altering. The principle is a linear and static idea of music: the exact equivalencies and correspondences imposed by total rationalisation are based on the prior supposition that what is identical in music is also identical in reality, in a sort of schematic spatial representation which excludes all expressive diversity. This is quite the opposite to the path chosen by Hidalgo who, in his reaction against the machine-based utopia of serial automatism, dedicated himself to open forms and non-determined aspects, although he did not completely exclude electronic and mathematical principles. In this sense, he shared the reactions of Varese and Xenakis.

The French engineer Edgar Varese proved that the experiences of a technological world can be communicated musically to great effect and with no misgivings about the 'scientification' of art. Although Varese

contributed substantial technological aspects to composition, his aim was not to achieve puerile scientific content but to create a space in which to express the tensions that new music was on the point of losing. Varese was the first to undertake a bold, methodical exploration of the undiscovered territory revealed by Schönberg's dodecaphony, the bruitists and other pioneers. The revolutionary pieces he produced after his emigration to the United States culminated in *Ionización*. While he was working on this piece, he had the idea of creating a musical laboratory where experiments might lead to the discovery of new methods in the conscious or chance-based manipulation of acoustic material. This plan, which did not see the light until 20 years later in Paris, provided the framework for Hidalgo's experimentation and led to the creation of his two electro-acoustic pieces in 1961: *Etude de stage* and *Música en cinta*.

However, it was the investigations of the Greek musician Iannis Xenakis which put mathematics and sound engineering at the heart of musical creation. He was concerned with musical time and space from a mathematical point of view, and particularly in terms of the calculation of probabilities. He invented estocastic music, based on serial events, and symbolic music, founded on the theory of wholes and mathematical logic, and he introduced scientific chance into his work, as a factor capable of being a constructive principle. Chance, which is not scientific but spontaneous and consciously provoked as a constructive principle, is present in all Hidalgo's open music and in the electro-acoustic pieces he developed, both during his friendship with Xenakis and under the guidance of Pierre Schaeffer in Paris.

It is worth pointing out that this factor of non-determination appeared in Hidalgo's work at a time when music was primarily concerned with the rationalisation of logical processes. Hidalgo was one of the first to recognise the seed of self-destruction in the growing complexity of serialism's linear micro-polyphony, precisely because it was acoustically identical to the discourse of chance. In pieces like *Ciu-*

*music Quartet*, both *Offenes Trio* and *Wuppertal 2 Pianos* (all composed in 1959); *Kuutamo* (1961), *Roma 2 Pianos* (1963) and the two 1961 electro-acoustic pieces quoted previously, Hidalgo follows Varese in the effects of juxtaposing rhythms, bells and dynamic intensities which produce the macroscopic level that the linear categories of serial composition were unable to achieve. The arithmetic of the relations between intervals and bells, and the geometry of the spatial surroundings, produce expression without necessarily revealing a half-intuitive, half-analysed calculation of probabilities. The listener hears a "global acoustic occurrence"; an art of pure reason because it incorporates both intuition and emotion.

"The Gods also Die", wrote Hidalgo in the programme notes for *Caurga*, referring to the system and perhaps also to the gurus of serial structuralism (in particular, to the great figure of Boulezism, since Stockhausen and Berio had already moved away from serialism before the French composer). We cannot underestimate the historic value of Hidalgo's contacts with the first crisis of integral serialism, which resulted from the fact that the new types of sounds were too extensive to be delimited. Hidalgo's experience with *Caurga* showed him that the composer who prepares his material mathematically beforehand deprives himself of the possibility of changing the general form, and therefore of controlling the material. The use of free, creative gestures is therefore not a stubborn bid for control, but a desire to fulfil the poetic potential resulting from a rupture with method. Hidalgo spoke of his experiences in following and breaking the rules, which led him to discover the possibilities of chance. In short, the parametric combinations of frequency and pitch, duration, intensity, bells or rhythm, seem more appropriate to computers and not to human composers who can, and must, choose between the vast range of possibilities. Obviously, their selection depends on personal subjectivity, and therein lies the creative personalisation of music. Absolute predetermination inevitably leads to a new irrationalism, since the

dream of the theorists of ultra-precision can only come true in the realm of irrationality.

Chance, intuition and luck are always factors in the work of the human mind, and even more so in Juan Hidalgo's "open" music and his pre-ZAJ action music, the 1959 *Armónicos Series* which, from the first to the sixth action gradually eliminate instruments from the total of six with which it began, maintaining the visual and scenic tension surrounding each of them for identical lengths of time (one hour and three minutes each); the *Carta para David Tudor* (1961); the four *Armandias* (1964), of unspecified duration except one fixed at 13 minutes, which involve one or two grand pianos and between three and eight pianists...

Chance, intuition and luck are central elements in the ZAJ period, in the *Etceteras* and, above all, in *Los holas* of 1966, which use instruments of any sort, in any quantity, and making any kind of sound.

### 3. The theory of space

Years ago, Hidalgo wrote the text "Time and Space in My Musical Instrumental Process" which has now been reproduced in the CAAM catalogue. In the first few lines he defines music as "a temporal-auditory process of sonorous objects, with a conventional beginning and end partly determined by the composer and partly by the sonorous material used. Hence we can deduce that the characteristic of this process of presentation and linking (language) of sonorous objects implies, sine qua non, its temporality; TIME is therefore the most important and inevitable vehicle of sonorous material and musical grammar. But in order to expand physically, sound also requires another essential atmospheric factor: SPACE. Therefore, to expand on our previous definition, we could say that music is a temporal-auditory-spatial process of sonorous objects with a conventional beginning and end partly determined by the composer and partly by the sonorous material used".

This is a worthy definition. Temporality is obviously an essential part of the nature of music, whereas

spatiality is not, since the original idea of space emanates from sight or touch more than sound. The concept of space in terms of the opposition between 'full' and 'empty' has existed since time immemorial; space, then, is a pure receptacle, a continuum without individual properties. To put it another way, things are not partially made of space; it is space which emanates from them. Therefore, space is not a reality in itself, but something defined by the position and order of bodies, be they material or immaterial (like sound). Except in functional models which do not uphold an ideology of sound in space (for example, the position of choral and instrumental groups in Baroque oratorios), the spatial dimension was generally irrelevant in music. Not until the 20th century did the conceptual development of this dimension begin; particularly with the impulse of electro-acoustic music. It is worth studying this in greater depth since it constitutes one of the most characteristic traits of Hidalgo's work.

Ahead of its time (like all Hidalgo's intuitions and experiments), *Ukanga* gave equal value to space and time. The score, written for five instrumental groups, prescribes the physical position of each group so that the sounds "move, pass from one group to another, interfere with or complement each other during this movement, bump into each other and strengthen each other", to quote Hidalgo. These movements, inextricably linked to the idea of space, were inspired by the diversification of sound sources in electro-acoustics, and then began to take shape with instrumental sources. Like a "universal container" of physical bodies (of which sound is one), Hidalgo's space breaks through the barrier of visual and tactile perception and actually becomes audible. The elements of distance, capacity, immensity, etc., are therefore enriched with new operational content, such as the movement of sound organised in artistic groups. The difference between mathematical and sensitive space is no longer exclusively empirical, since there is no longer a clear distinction between two series of things (one stationary and the other mobile), but between two possible series of

operations. The operation in acoustic space, which is inseparable from the operation of time as a duration and process, also opens up new horizons for imaginary space as opposed to real space. Whereas real space is finite, and limited by the universe of things, imaginary space goes far beyond the things present, and contains a vast number of other possibilities. In this sense it is potentially infinite. What is decisive musically speaking is that the spatium as a distance between two points (the interval or void) can be filled by the operational movement of sound and by its own norms of interval, which is not only sound but the pure correlation of space and time.

During the 50's, Juan Hidalgo sensed the space-time continuum in Einstein's theory of relativity, and incorporated it into his work. It was only in 1953, 4 years before Hidalgo wrote *Ukanga*, that Einstein had succeeded in adding the electromagnetic field to the four-dimensional space-time continuum which already included matter and gravity, thereby completing one of the most brilliant scientific breakthroughs of the century. This historical reference is essential in order to situate Juan Hidalgo's concerns and instincts in an ideological and scientific framework, during the first years of his avant-garde experiments, which were undertaken along with other remarkable European and American composers.

Here we shall not go into detail of this early assimilation of the time-space process in Hidalgo's open work, of his experiments with non-determination and chance, or the hints of it which were already present in his parametric scores, the concrete music mentioned previously, all his pieces of action music and, above all, the concerts and events of the ZAJ period. Yet in all these pieces we can see the embryo of an explicitly visual and spatial language which has been Hidalgo's primary concern during many of his creative periods. Perhaps my opinion is coloured by my affinity with music, but I have always believed that the inspiration for all Hidalgo's work stems from his musical creation, and that he has achieved his most impressive creations as a composer above all else.

The spatial factor continued to play an important role in instrumental pieces such as Ciu music quartet and the two *Offenes Trio* (open trios), although in both these cases the position of the instruments is undetermined rather than fixed by the composer; at each performance the material can change according to the distribution of the sound sources. *Milán Piano*, *Wuppertal Dos Pianos*, the very interesting *Roma Dos Pianos* and *Aulaga 2*, composed between 1959 and 1964, all incorporate spatial elements and, sometimes, by means of assimilation, they also incorporate noises made by the performers using undetermined sound sources (which naturally involve visual action), as well as all the sounds present in the segment of space in which the performance takes place.

These pieces fuse symbolic discourse and expressive discourse. The former conveys references (notes or indications in the score), and the latter adds the emotions or attitudes of the performers who are influenced directly or indirectly by the composer.

In a note about *Palpiti*, Hidalgo says: "I realise that I have not explained anything about the technical side of this music, or about its structure, nor about how I used the Japanese texts as its base: all that is just the mechanics. Music is only for listening to". This tautology is characteristic of the American influence generally attributed to Juan Hidalgo, but it also shows his resistance to describe methodology in a way that would remove the magic or mysterious aura of his music. Wittgenstein has said that what can be demonstrated cannot be said. "What language reflects cannot be represented by language" and "we cannot use language to express what we mean in language". These ideas evoke metaphors, a meta-language which reinforces the mystery behind the way the 'concrete' expresses the 'abstract'. For Hidalgo, the process of discourse is always supported by intuitive thought. Intuition provides the content of truth, and discourse gives it form. If music is just for listening to, then its form must reveal the truth of the content and make it intelligible: this truth of content is what language can reflect but not represent.

Hidalgo's spatial experimentalism can be seen in *Intermezzo*, his most recent piece, which he composed in 1986 for four large bands situated between 20 and 30 metres apart. The public sit all around the first band, between the first and the second, the second and the third, and all around the fourth. The bands play the same piece in unison, and the score is completely closed, excluding all elements of non-determination. Each band has a conductor, and on each music stand there is a flashing light which acts as a metronome. In spite of the planned exactitude of time, the spatial situation of the bands and the public is a dynamic factor which transforms what in theory is rigid and unified into mobility and displacement. The different distances between all the points of acoustic reception (the members of the audience) redefine the space based on sound in an operational series which is closely linked to the idea of space as an "incubator" inside which the different positions of the bodies and their relationships are dissolved.

Another invention of this century which Hidalgo developed ahead of its time was parametric writing. When graphism abandoned traditional note-writing, it could either invent a new form which would inevitably suffer from the same limits, or else it could be reduced to one or several space-time parameters with no need for the deceptive array of symbolic writing. Of course parametric writing is open by definition, and leaves great scope for invention by the performer. In the pre-ZAJ period, Hidalgo invented his own form of note-writing on a five-lined frame in pieces such as *Milán Piano* and the two *Aulagas*. All the parameters are represented by Hidalgo's own graphic symbols, which are not radically different from classical notation. Selective parametric writing also appears in *Etude de stage*, which specifies sounds, silences and just five orders of duration for both. It also appears in *Música en cinta*, where four magnetic strips, each over 11 metres long, record the alternating silence or sounds in centimetres. The score for *Roma dos pianos* establishes the number of sounds for each piano in sequences of minutes

and seconds. The only sound source is the whole piano keyboard: 88 sounds in all, in time sequences of ascending and descending scales. There is not a single note in this score, which contains only words and numbers. Each performance inevitably results in a new, entirely different piece, which is precisely the composer's aim. This is achieved, on the one hand, by manipulating the parameters of duration and frequency (which are specifically time-related) and, on the other hand, by altering the dimension (such as the centimetres on the magnetic tape) which translates time into space.

In the pre-ZAJ years, Hidalgo's imagination and methods of expression involved a whole range of different instruments and systems. Towards the end of this period he created *Ja-U-La* (1964), inspired by three readings of the Chinese poet Wang-Wei. This piece was perhaps the first to use the exact measures and epigrammatic concision of Orientalist aesthetics. It consists of four verses, each containing seven Chinese ideograms, making a total of 28 ideograms. The number and order of verses imply three readings, which lead to the three movements of *Ja-U-La*; Hidalgo's most refined, concentrated and perfect piece of chamber music from this period. Whether or not it is dedicated to John Cage, the title is the Spanish translation of his surname, and in the short bursts of sound in the first movement, the syllable Ja is clearly audible: a nervous, jolted sound which contrasts starkly with the progressively static nature and the increasing pitch of the next two movements, U and La. The contemplative nature of these last movements, with their indisputably spatial elements clearly visible in the end notes and metaphors, balances the dynamic fleetingness of the first, clearly temporal piece. Five bows, two woodwind instruments and a small Afro-Cuban drum called a tumba are sufficient to highlight another typically spatial element: bells in movement.

#### 4. Theory of time

After the important ZAJ years, Hidalgo returned to instrumental music with a piece I am particularly fond of:

*Tamarán*, or *Gotas de esperma para doce pianos de cola*, which was created in 1974, a decade after *Aulaga 2* and *Ja-U-La*. During this long gap, Hidalgo was dedicated mainly to the activities of ZAJ; the use of everyday gestures, attitudes, sounds and noises which, as we mentioned previously, represent a sort of focus on the basic realm of existence.

Significantly, *Tamarán* picks up the thread of space-time experimentation in the parametric score from 10 or 15 years previously. The piece lasts 40 minutes, plus the 15 seconds of the final harmonic resonance, and ideally it requires 12 pianists and 12 grand pianos situated in a circle, like the numbers on a clock face, with the audience in the middle. The rainfall of notes resulting from the pressing of keys and the direct suspension of sound on the strings, bombard the listener and create a highly effective sound pattern. In practice, it is difficult to use 12 grand pianos and so Juan Hidalgo usually performs *Tamarán* live as the 13th pianist, with 12 previously recorded sound sources positioned in a circle.

He performed this mixed version (recorded and live) in Las Palmas in 1990. As well as its spectacular spatial aspect, the piece is particularly interesting in that it presents the counter-type of the romantic grand piano's acoustic principle: the non-resonance of notes. The action of the hammers on strings is immediately suspended by placing a hand on the strings, and the scale of notes remains floating in the air; a process which inverts the relation of cause and effect. The liberated resonance gives no consistency or physical perspective to the note played, which is reduced to a 'hammering' of the harmonious melody. And the melody consists of alternatively vague or defined elements, which encourage the sequence of motives (due to the dominant intensities of the harmonic base itself), or else spray the sound spectrum haphazardly with expansive pitches and decreasing volumes.

However, this esoteric language organises the apparent chance of the "hidden side" of the instrument in an almost mathematical way; something

which had hardly ever been attempted before. What is more, the relation between the suspended string and the free string becomes dialectic in a musical field which had been limited to the linear relation between the note played and the harmonic result. In this way, the single discourse becomes dual and conflictive. Perception can split and follow the most satisfactory course, or else effect a synthesis in the course of the 40-minute piece, during which Hidalgo undauntedly stands, with one hand on the keyboard, the other on the strings and his eye constantly on the chronometer, expressing one aspect of his instrumental thought.

The score develops to the maximum the time parameter, which is essential to order the polyphony of sounds from 12 theoretic sources. And just as we have spoken of the importance of space in Hidalgo's work, his ideas and experience of musical time are equally evocative. To a certain extent, his thought echoes what is academically known as Hebraic. The Hebrews conceived time as a series of temporal perceptions in the form of beats, thereby internalising time and turning it into what we normally call duration and temporality. *Beats* is, in fact, the translation of one of Hidalgo's latest instrumental pieces, *Palpiti*, which he composed in 1984. But the time factor is equally important in *Rrose Selavy* (1975) and *Zajrit* (1983), in a sense which, in order to differentiate, we could call Greek. These titles bring Hidalgo's musical catalogue to an end. Rather than consider it from a purely chronological point of view, I prefer to study it in blocks of global ideas, which are present in some or all of his creative periods.

Without going into too much detail, I would like to look at how *Rrose Selavy* (*Tamarán's* correlative piece) reflects the Greek criteria of time in terms of the concepts of 'here and now', cyclically-repeating series, and even the idea that eternity is superior to mere temporality. This *poliedricité* of Greek mentality (as the Italians say), is the structure of *Rrose Selavy*; "six old pieces for six sound sources", which are played on a xylophone, a grand piano and, finally, an electronic 'feed-back' system. The score

is purely numerical. Five notes, from C to G, are the only material of pitch, and they are represented by the numbers 1 to 5. The various combinations and repetitions of these numbers are the basic structure of the xylophone music, which is unashamedly repetitive for the 42 minutes of the piece. This represents the here and now, whereas the sounds of the piano (first played on the keys, then in pizzicatti on the strings, 'muted', played with drumsticks on the wooden sound-box and finally played back with an electro-acoustic 'feed-back' system) represent cyclic repetition. The eternal is in continuity until the infinite; a concept which it is perfectly possible to represent in the structure of the piece. In fact, *Rrose Selavy* is subtitled *Un etcétera sin fin*.

The impact of this polyedric music is inseparable from a complex perception of time, which can express a wide polyphony of pitches, duration and rhythms, in juxtaposition with the feelings of the piano player as the only structural pattern. Strictly speaking, the score only stipulates the xylophone piece, leaving the piano freedom in terms of the duration of each number or note, as long as it abides by the octaves indicated.

In a sense this is time as a mobile image of eternity, or the passing course of a presence which does not end. Time and movement come together in this music and revive the idea of time as movement or as something closely related to movement. The numeric score of *Rrose Selavy* is a surprising echo of Aristotle when he says that time is not exactly a number, but it is a kind of number since it can be measured, and it can only be measured numerically. Such references would take us too deeply into the links between graphism, sound and philosophical debates. Suffice to say that Hidalgo's intuition makes reference to these intellectual concepts spontaneously, without leaning on them. Perhaps Hidalgo is not concerned with the acoustic demonstration of a particular concept of time, but his music is, and it therefore lends a certain intelligibility to these ideas. This is the case because the image of time resides in the soul and could even be considered the life of the soul. "The time of the soul

rises from its depths, and therefore from the depths of Intelligence" (Plotino).

## 5. Self-will and autonomy of the material

Let us first recall Hidalgo's definition of music which we quoted previously: "a temporal-auditory-spatial process of sonorous objects with a conventional beginning and end determined partly by the composer and partly by the sonorous material used". Of great importance is Hidalgo's emphasis on the dual influence of the duration: one which is voluntary and can be controlled by the composer, and the other which belongs entirely to the material and can not be controlled. This recognition that the material has a life of its own, that it moves with its own time and duration, is an instinct which leaves scope for unpredictable, unrehearsed outcomes. By this I do not mean the unpredictable results of accidental music or the innumerable diverse outcomes of open music; instead I refer to the recognition that any musical piece has a hypothetically autonomous life and duration. Musical time (and, by extension, abstract time) is a past which is no longer, a present whose course can not be stopped, and a future which does not yet exist. Time, strictly speaking, does not exist. In his *Confessions*, Saint Agustín refers to the past as what one remembers, the future as what one hopes for, and the present as what holds one's attention; past, future and present are therefore synonymous of memory, hope and attention. Could there be any better way to define the temporality of music, or any more eloquent explanation of material first as memory and then as hope? Hidalgo's music, which is often entrusted to the moment of performance and the co-creative capacity of the musicians, is pure motion and changeability: its aim is not to become something different from what it was originally and therefore remain frozen in a new state, but to be constantly different. Therein lies the enlightening idea of the material constituting a third source of will: external but not unrelated to the composer and performer.

Those who are concerned about the potential historical 'cataloguing' of

Hidalgo's work should take into consideration the durability of his music, which results from the autonomy of the material, its radical non-determination and consequent transformational dynamism. It would be impossible for this music to suffer from being 'fixed' historically or converted into a 'museum piece', since its duration can never be frozen in a succession of identical moments. It simply lasts until it ceases to live, being transformed every time, and its space-time reality is instantaneous. If we compare several recordings of the same piece from different dates, we can see that the same title does not mean that the pieces are identical. In the later versions, the different interpretations and performances also incorporate the more recent elements of culture, taste and sensitivity. It would be erroneous and pretentious to claim that Hidalgo's music (as well as Cage's) belongs to a specific moment in history which has now passed. Its openness means that it is imbued with the spirit of time, in such a way that it belongs in the category of classics (as inevitably as its increase in social recognition) which defy all 'petrification'; its continual innovation is limitless. Although Hidalgo's revolutionary work suffered rejection and discomfort among the critics and general public when it was first performed, its saving grace resides in its resistance to Nietzsche's test of eternity, disregarding the alternatives of fame or oblivion in the cruel world of permanence which goes beyond temporary trends.

## 6. Beauty as a result

Here I would like to refer to the last instrumental pieces, which were inspired by Hidalgo's interest in Eastern culture. *Zajrit* and *Palpiti* were written between 1983 and 1984, and their structure is based, respectively, on the first fifty and last fifty short poems, called *wakas* or *tankas*, in a collection of poetry attributed to Fujiwara Teika, a Japanese poet of the 12th and 13th century, whose work Hidalgo had encountered in a phonetic Italian translation called *La centuria poética*.

In these pieces, Hidalgo returns to

the conventional system of note-writing, thereby linking up with his first pieces of chamber music, although he retains some open elements which depend on the moment of performance.

*Zajrit* is written for a percussionist (with vibraphone, three tom-toms –low, medium and high– and one steel drum). As well as playing the instruments, the performer is required to use his own voice to make characteristically Japanese utterances which act as another percussive element. The poet's 50 *tankas* are converted into the musician's numerous *zajrit*. This word, made up of ZAJ and rit (alluding to rite or ritual), symbolises the meaning of the piece. All the written notes, chromatic half-tones in different octaves, represent one syllable of the poetic text. Each *zajrit* is both a self-contained element and an integral part of the overall process. The extremely refined sounds, the *comodo ma fermo* tempo indicated by the composer and translated into slow movement, and the infinite, open spatial perspective all create a magical musical trans-codification of zen thought, like a gesture of contemplative nature. From a theoretical point of view, the greatest impact lies in the syllabic combinations of poetic language which are then changed into the syllabic combinations of musical sound. In each of the 50 pages, the original poem is like a basic series which unfolds polyphonically, or a minimalist element repeated in the trans-figurative perspective of this series, without displacing the rhythm. Time seems to give itself up to the horizontal vastness of space. The hypnotic effect and the swing between the sonorous image and a kind of drowsiness which seems to multiply it, are broken only by the beating of the drum at the end of each poem, as if to signify a new paragraph. The score alludes to everything, although it is not all directly stipulated. The indeterminate elements lose their radical nature in order to heighten the poetic charge of one of the most beautiful pieces of music created in recent times.

*Palpiti* was written for a clarinet, vibraphone, cello, piano and violin. The last 50 *wakas* in Fujiwara Teika's selection are ordered in a numerical code of series of ten, each introduced by one

of the different instruments. The piece unfolds in this way until it reaches the 100th poem, which is the absolute centre of the composition, and then is played again, inverting the order of the poems and instruments. The poetic sense of this inversion stems from the powerful field of gravity between the centre and the extremes. Once more in Hidalgo's work, chance and calculation are parallel; previous control and the mystery of casual results turn out to be a false pair of opposites in the sense that they are in fact acoustically similar. It is like a rediscovery of *Caurga*, 30 years on. Although this later piece specifies the indications of time and intensity and indicates the exact metric values on the musical score, it still retains an element of improvisation.

Why do these beats have such an impact on us? Mainly because of a sense of security in their polyphonic proportions which exclude mathematics and are based entirely on an apparently simple, even playful structure, like almost all of Hidalgo's work. The instinct of musical beauty springs both from the trust in the material and the skill with which it is performed, as well, in this case, as the effectiveness of the instructions given to the performers. In many ways, *Palpiti* is another of the greatest pieces of chamber music created during the last part of the 20th century.

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I would like to conclude with a short summary of the ideological parameters on which this article was based: the radical tautology of Hidalgo's musical art, his personal discovery of the parallels between closed systems and the results of chance, and the idea of time and space as operational factors in music. Henry Moore called time and space *Sensoria Dei*: the senses of God, or the sensorial organs of divinity. In short, ideal entities with no clear physical existence, in which an instant becomes a duration and what is fixed tends towards movement. All in all, I think I have good reason to repeat that Juan Hidalgo's most important work has been created in the field of music.