**Blanco [Rodríguez], Juan [Pedro] (1919-2008)**

Marysol Quevedo

Cuban composer known for his work in the field of electroacoustic music. He did not limit himself to electroacoustic music composition, creating works for a variety of performing forces and settings, including chamber ensembles, choir and orchestra, symphonic orchestra, film music, ballet and theater. After 1959, he was an active figure in the cultural institutions established by the Revolutionary government. He not only promoted modern and avant-garde music, but he was also influential in the promotion of Cuban popular music and musicians.

**Biography**

Born 29 June 1919, Mariel, Pinar del Río [today Havana province], Cuba. BLANCO moved to Havana in 1935, receiving a bachelorette at the Instituto de Segunda Enseñanza in Havana. In 1942 he received his Law Degree from the Universidad de La Habana. He initially studied piano, solfege and music theory with Leonor Feliú, and later harmony and counterpoint with Manuel Llanes at the Conservatorio Peyrellade. In 1949, with the foundation of the Sociedad Cultural Nuestro Tiempo, Blanco is named secretary of the group, a position he filled until the group was dissolved. He was in charge of the group’s Music Section and he administered the Revista Nuestro Tiempo. The Sociedad and its magazine was one of the main outlets for progressive intellectuals and for those interested in culture and the promotion of new literature, music, theater and visual arts in Havana society to meet and debate new trends in the arts.

After the triumph of the Revolution in 1959, BLANCO became more involved in national cultura institutions, acting as Music Director of the Ministry of Education’s radio station CMZ, where he was responsible for the creation of the CMZ Symphony Orchestra, string quartet, woodwind quintet, choir, and other music ensembles, founding the National Symphony Orchestra, and co-foudning the Unión Nacional de Escritores y Artistas de Cuba (UNEAC), acting as president of the Music Section of the UNEAC. He also serves as music professor at the Conservatoria Alejandro García Caturla, and director of the music band of the State of the Ejército Rebelde. Serving for the UENAC he created and organized the Brigadas Hermanos Saíz, a cultural organization that promotes the advancement of young artists. He was assigned by the president of the Republic, OSVALDO DORTICÓS, to direct, along with Lisandro Otero and Roberto Fernández Retamar, the cultural section, “Arte y Literatura,” of the magazine *Bohemia*, for which managed all content related to music.

In 1967 he was named National Director of Music of the Consejo Naiconal de Cultura, and organized the First International Popular Music Festival at Playa de Varadero. In 1971 he became music advisor for Casa de las Américas, where he co-organized the First Joranda de Música Latinoamericana in Cuba. In 1980 he established the Icap Workshop for Electroacoustic Music, today the National Laboratory of Electracoustic Music. In 1981 he organized the First International Electroacoustic Music Meeting, “Primavera en Varadero,” which is still celebrated biannually as an International Festival, although today it takes place in Havana. He served as Juror for the International Electroacoustic Music Competition in Bourges, France, in 1983, 1984, 1986 and 1987. He served as President of the Federación Nacional Cubana de Música Electroacúsitca of the CIME-UNESCO and Vice-president of the Cuban Section of the International Music Council (IMC-UNESCO). In 1984 he began to organize and teach courses in electroacoustic music composition. In 1987 he furthered his studies in electracoustic music by participating in the course “Processeur Numerique de Signaux DMX 1000,” taught by Gerald Benett at the GMEB in Bourges, France. In 1998 he participated in the workshop “Nuevas Tecnologías – Nuevas Músicas,” administered by Estudios Abdala under the Spanish professors JESÚS PARDO and JAVIER VACAS. In 1998 his piece *CIRCUS TOCCATA*, was performed in New York in the American Composers Orchestra Festival dedicated to Cuban composers. In 2000 the Eighth International Electroacoustic Music Festival “Primavera en La Habana” was dedicated to him, in recognition for his life’s work, and his work *ESPACIOS IX* for Theremin and tape, was premiered.

**Music**

In 1942 he registered with the Registro de Marcas y Patentes the description and design of a musical instrument of his invention that the named “Multiórgano.” In 1961 he composed his first electroacoustic work, *MÚSICA PARA DANZA*. In 5 February 1964 Blanco presented the first concert of electroacoustic music in Cuba. In 1983 he was invited to create a work at the electroacoustic music studios of the GMEB in Bourges, where he created *SUITE DE LOS NIÑOS*. Blanco composed music for a variety of performing forces and functions. He wrote music for film, theater, ballet, and several other multimedia works in collaboration with other artists, such as the *POEMAS ESPACIALES* (1967 and 1970), which were performed in large, outdoor spaces, with lights, images and body forms designed by painter Sandú Darié. In 1968 Blanco composed a work in celebration of the Cultural Congress in Havana, *AMBIENTACIÓN SONORA AVE. LA RAMPA*, where he created an electroacoustic soundtrack that was played through amplifiers placed on telephone poles through La Rampa Ave., providing ambient music through La Rampa for thirty nights. Many of his compositions combine live acoustic and, or electronic instrument performance with electroacoustic tapes or recordings with which the performers must synchronize. His music is also known for the use of performance space, many of his music scores containing diagrams for the placement of musicians and amplifiers in relation to the performance space and the audience. Some of his compositions call for actors as part of the performance, such as *CONTRAPUNTO ESPACIAL III* (1969). Some of the scores themselves have instructions for how to place or look at the music, and use color and shapes to indicate formal structures, making the written music score an art piece within itself. Another key feature of his compositions is the use of aleatoric passages within a composition.

Juan Blanco is regarded as the father of electroacoustic music in Cuba, and has influenced subsequent generations of Cuban and Latin American composers, not only through his electroacoustic compositions, but through his legacy as an avant-garde artist. Blanco received commissions from ensembles and organizations throughout the world and participated in several international music and arts festivals.

**Awards**

1986-UNEAC, annual prize for his work

2000-Honorary Member of the Asociación de Música Electracustica Española

2001-Honorary Director of the Twenty-seventh International Conference of Computer Music ICMC 2001, held in Havana in September 2001

Distinción Félix Varela, from the Cuban State Department, highest distinction given to an artist in Cuba en the field of cultural production and for his work as creator.

**Works list**

*Son para Turistas*, ballet, chamber ensmble (1948)

*Cantata de la Paz*, solo bass, chorus and symphonic orchestra (1950)

*La Obstinación de las Mujeres*, theater(1951)

*El Mégano,* film music (1955)

*Elegía. (Homenaje a los caídos en la lucha revolucionaria)*, symphonic orchestra (1956)

Film music for “Esta Tierra Nuestra” , symphonic orchestra (ca. 1959-60)

*Música para Danza,* first electroacoustic work (1961)

*Ensamble V*, musique concrete (1962-63)

*Texturas*, symphonic orchestra and magnetic tape (1963-64)

*Música para teatro televisado*, electroacoustic (1964)

*Contrapunto Espacial I*, for three wind groups, four percussion groups and organ (1965)

*Music for the Fifth Gymnastics Sports Parade*, symphonic orchestra and sound toys orchestra(1966)

Ballet “La Partida Viviente” , symphonic orchestra and magnetic tape (1966)

Ambientaciones sonoras de pabellones cubanos, Expo 67 (Montreal) and Expo 70 (Osaka).

Ballet “El Guije”, first ballet with exclusively electroacoustic music (1967)

*5 Poemas Espaciales,* multimedia spectacles(1967-1970)

Ambientación sonora Ave. La Rampa de La Habana, electroacoustic music (1968)

*Contrapunto Espacial II* (Erotofonías), three magnetic tapes, sixty string instruments divided into two groups, five percussion groups, solo guitar and solo saxophone (1968)

*Contrapunto Espacial III,* for twenty-four groups of instruments, twenty actors, a child a saxophone and three magnetic tracks (1969)

*Imprecación*, symphonic orchestra (1973)

Segunda ambientación sonora de la Ave. La Rampa, electroacoustic music (1970)

*Estímulos para Sonar*, various (1971)

Ambientación Sonora del Hospital Hermanos Amejeiras (1982)

*Concertante* for live computer and magnetic tape (1988)

*Ella (pastoral erótica)* (1987)

Ambientación Sonora de “Expo-Cuba” (1989)

“1789-1989”, electroacoustic music (1989)

*Texturas Americanas* (1989)

*El Milagro (versión I,)*, multimedia (1993)

Música para La Clepsidra (1997)

*El Milagro (versión II),* multimedia, four magnetic tracks (1998)

*Ciclón*, tape (1999)

*Canción,* computer (1998)

*Tecnotrónicas*, live Theremin, computers and electronics (2002)

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