Resistance and Endurance: Music from Colonial Latin America, the Sephardic Diaspora, and the Convivencia

Program Notes

Our concert brings together music from colonial-era Peru and Guatemala, medieval and Renaissance Spain, and from the Sephardic diaspora in the Mediterranean region. We begin with a traditional Peruvian flute tune on the quena, a kind of notch flute. This song was published on a Nonesuch Explorer Series LP called “Kingdom of the Sun.”

Songs Honoring the Virgin Mary

We then turn to several songs honoring the Virgin Mary, including Cantigas de Santa Maria #200 and #303 (13 th century), which are attributed to Alfonso X (“the Wise”), King of Castille and Leon from 1252-1284. He brought together Christian, Jewish, and Muslim intellectuals at his court, emphasizing religious tolerance and cultural development, and this period became known as La Convivencia, or Coexistence. The Cantigas combine a secular Galician-Portuguese poetic form with a religious and moral message, at the same time drawing on both sacred and secular music from all three cultures. The Cantigas we perform show the influence of Arab music in their asymmetrical and shifting rhythm of seven counts.

In Latin America, many sacred works by native composers also honor Mary, who became a syncretic representation of the indigenous mother-earth goddess. Hanacpachap Cussicuinin, a hymn in Quechua, the Incan language, was used for church processions on Lady Day (The Feast of the Annunciation, celebrated on March 25) at the church in San Pedro de Antahualla, Peru. The presumably indigenous composer is unknown. It was the first piece of vocal polyphony that appears in the New World, published in Cuzco in 1631 by Juan Pérez de Bocanegra.

We also close our program with two songs honoring Mary. De la sagrada María is by Tomás Pascual (ca. 1595-1635), a Guatemalan-born Native American who converted to Catholicism. It emphasizes both Mary as mother-earth, and the image of the sun, which represents the highest god. The Cachua Serranita is in celebration of the feast day of the Virgin of Carmen, patron saint of the Peruvian city of Paucartambo, which features a myriad of traditional street dances, fireworks and parades.

Songs About War

The second set of songs on our program is about war. The theme was introduced at the end of the first set in the text of Cantiga #200, which praises Mary primarily in relation to how she has helped the author defeat his enemies in war. After many centuries of both conflict and collaboration, the Jews and Muslims were expelled from Spain by the Catholic monarchs starting in 1492, following the fall of the Nasrid Kingdom of Granada. Many of the Jews settled in the Mediterranean; others went to Holland, and some went to the New World as secret Jews. They maintained their Spanish language and culture, while incorporating musical elements from their new homes. The songs are in Ladino, an archaic form of Spanish that incorporates words from other languages, such as Hebrew and Arabic. The songs in our program are from the Greece and Bosnia, where many Sephardim settled after being expelled from Spain. The previously flourishing communities in those countries were decimated by the Holocaust, and post-war antisemitism led many of the survivors to emigrate to Israel. Very small Sephardic populations live in those countries today.

Arvoles lloran por lluvia draws on the image of dying in a foreign land, which is common in Spanish poetry. The imagery is based on Psalm 137, which expresses the

Israelites' grief over their captivity and the destruction of Jerusalem. This poignant and well-known song became a song of resistance and lament in the concentration camps of WWII, where prisoners sang the song, but replaced "in foreign lands" with "in Poland" Una noche al lunar and Yo parti para la gera were composed by Flory Jagoda, a renowned performer and composer of Bosnian-style Sephardic music who emigrated to the U.S. after the war. The former uses a melodic mode with origins in Arabic music that is common in Sephardic music. The latter is interesting musically because it juxtaposes very rhythmically free, highly ornamented verses with a waltz-like refrain. These two songs tell the sorrow of lovers separated by war, the first from the perspective of the person who is waiting at home for news of the war, hoping that the news will be that it is ended. The second is from the perspective of a soldier going to war, leaving behind his mother and his beloved.

The last song in this set is a song about soldiers drinking and going out on the town, although we perform it as an instrumental piece. It serves as a bridge to the third set of songs, which are from post-conquest Peru.

The Betrayal and Death of Atahualpa

The Baltasar Jaime Martinez Compañón manuscript is an ethnographic collection compiled by the Bishop of Trujillo, Peru, in the 1780s. It includes watercolors depicting scenes of colonial life, including musical performances and instruments, as well as transcriptions of 20 pieces of music performed at the time. Each musical score includes performance instructions; many of them are to be danced. They often juxtapose slow vocal sections with lively instrumental sections. The five pieces in this set are from the point of view of Atahualpa, the last Inca. In 1532, Atahualpa was invited to meet with Francisco Pizarro in the town of Cajamarca, where the Spaniards set up an ambush and captured him, killing many of his companions. During the 18 th century, the death of

the Inca was presented in Andean theatrical presentations with musical accompaniment as part of reclaiming Incan history by the conquered community. One focus was on ceremonial grieving, which was associated with a traditional poetic and musical genre, the harawi. Most of these songs have dance sections, particularly drawing on the cachua, which is a lively circle dance. Other songs or sections are tonadas, which are slow and melancholy.

Colonization and Slavery

The fourth set of pieces includes two instrumental dances, a Sephardic song, and two songs from colonial Latin America. The Zarabande collected by Antonio Martín y Coll and the Canarios by Gaspar Sanz are based on dances that were brought from the new world—the Canary Islands and an unknown Spanish colony—back to Spain. The dances were originally considered to be scandalous, but over time they became widely popular in Spain and in the rest of Europe. Both men were composers, performers, and priests. Sanz is known for his pedagogical works for guitar and Martín y Coll is best known for his collection and transcription of popular keyboard works.

Las hermanas reinas y cautivas was collected in Greece by Alberto Hemsi (1898-1975), a Turkish Sephardic composer and collector of traditional Sephardic music and verse. The song is about the switching of two children at birth in order to provide the King with a male heir; but another layer of the story is that the two mothers are sisters, one of whom had been taken captive from her family and then brought back into Spain many years later as a slave. Because of the centuries-long conflicts between the Spanish and the Moors, many songs speak of captivity and lost identities. The song captures the harsh treatment of both slaves and women.

Tonada el Congo para baylar cantando, E. 178 addresses the transatlantic slave trade, with the narrator sharing that they were carried across the sea and taken from their mother.

Son de la ma Teodora was handed down through oral tradition. It is attributed to Téodora Ginés, who was born a slave in the Dominican Republic. She (a bandola and bowed bass player) and her sister (a singer) were freed in order to devote their musical talents to the Cathedral at Santiago in Cuba. Characteristics such as the use of call and response pattern, the alternation of 3/4 and 6/8, and the use of a plucked bass line led to the characterization of Ginés as the “mother of modern Cuban folkloric music.” The text of the piece derives from a Spanish romance, or poetic ballad, about St. Catherine, who was tortured on a wheel for refusing to deny her faith; Ginés describes her own musical career as a similar kind of disobedience to parents in obedience to a higher calling.

The Convivencia

Before the final set of songs about Mary, we perform a melody that epitomizes the Convivencia. Arabic culture was strongly influential in the development of the Spanish vernacular poetry and music. Qalbi bi qalbi is the oldest kharja, or closing couplet, for which the music is preserved, having been cited by Francisco Salinas (1513-1590) in his treatise, De musica libri septem. The Arab melody was later used for

the popular Spanish folk song Rey don Alonso. Arab melodies were also used for Hebrew texts, and the final text in our arrangement is a Hebrew translation of the Arab text. This song features an asymmetrical rhythm of 5 counts (3+2), which is typical of much Arab music.

Translations

Flute Tune from Apurimac, Peru
Instrumental

Hanacpachap Cussicuinin
Joy from Heaven I shall adore you a thousand times
and I will honor you deeply because of the abundance of your fruits.
Man trusts in you, awaiting the strength of your power, supported in your name.

Listen to our plea, adored and revered powerful God and Mother of God.
May the darkness become light! Secure is the salt for our cattle.
We trust and hope that your Son will appear.

Cantigas de Santa Maria #200: Santa Maria loei and #303: Por fol tenno quen na Virgen non á mui grand' asperança

Ref.: I have praised and praise and shall ever praise Holy Mary.

For among all the most honored men alive today, She has shown me more blessings, which I shall now relate.

She caused me to descend from good lineage and willed that I should justly reign and be king.

And with her mercies She aided me in my grave illnesses, therefore, rest assured, I shall serve Her in return.

And to those who bore me ill will and conspired and plotted against me She gave what they deserved, as I shall prove.

She freed me from great poverty and gave me wealth, for which I shall name all Her great attributes that I can.

For she who does not err nor ever erred made me lord of a fine land and helped me in every war when I called on Her.

She delivered me from misfortunes, death, and injury. Therefore know, good men, that I shall die for her.

All you join with me now to pray with all our hearts that She may help me in Her great mercy, for I have need.

And whenever She so wills, may She take me from the turmoil of this world, and may I look upon Her whom I have always loved.
Cantiga #303 is performed instrumentally.

Arvoles lloran por Lluvia
Trees weep for rain and mountains for breezes.
Likewise my eyes weep for you, dear beloved.
I turn and ask, what will become of me?
In foreign lands I will die.

It rained, and the street and the farmhouse got soaked.
Go, tell my beloved that the water came from my eyes.
I turn and ask, what will become of me?
In foreign lands I will die.

Una noche al lunar
One moonlit night I went walking,
walking and searching where the sea meets the land.

My eyes swelled from looking so hard at the sea.
Steamships come and go, but there are no letters for me.

Happy letters would revive us,
and we would see again the faces of our loved ones.
We would sleep together in a nest.

Oh mother, I dreamed a dream.
I dreamed that the war was over.

Yo parti para la gera
I left for war; I blew two kisses into the air.
One is for my mother, and the other is for you,
girl of my heart, the other is for you.

Whoever thinks of falling in love should flee the moonlight,
because the moon is a liar and knows how to trick you.

Don’t cry, beautiful daughter. My son will return to us.
The kiss he gave me, I leave for you.
Daughter, full of pain, I leave it for you.

Whoever thinks of falling in love should flee the moonlight,
because the moon is a liar and knows how to trick you.

Tonada la Lata
Instrumental arrangement

Tonada la brugita para cantar de Guamachuco, E.190
He has already been deceived. I wish it wasn't so!
For he would live deceived with a "maybe it won't be"

Tonada el Tuppamaro de Caxamarca, E.191
From the baths where I was,
I came at once to your call,
feeling your approach,
confused by your arrival.

Cachua la despedida de Guamachuco, E.191
Of bronze I must be, of diamond or ruby,
or death fears me, or there is no death for me.

Tonada el diamante para baylar cantando de Chachapoias, E.187
My sorrowful eyes,
stop tormenting me with this weeping,
for these torrents that you shed
are mirrors in which I see my affronts.

Tonada el Tuppamaro de Caxamarca, E.188
When the sorrow within encounters reason,
A sigh is the sound that results from that encounter.

Zarabande
Instrumental

Las hermanas reina y cautiva
The Moors bring a little captive slave girl,
who should not be of noble birth nor from Pastoría*
They brought the slave to the king.
When her confinement was completed, she gave birth.
The slave gave birth to a son,
the queen gave birth to a daughter.
[the slave says to the Queen]:
"Sister, my dear one, don't be deceived by your company."
The deceitful midwives switched the children.
[the slave says to the baby girl]:
"If your grandfather knew, you would have a golden carriage."

They brought the queen to a luxurious bed,
while they put the slave on a bench in the kitchen.
They brought the queen finely prepared chicken,
while they brought the slave soup made from lye.

[the slave says to the baby girl]:
“From my breasts you were raised,
though you didn’t come from my womb;
Sleep, sleep, my daughter,
I brought you up but did not give birth to you.”
*implying she should not be related to the queen

Tonada el Congo
To the sea they carry me without reason,
leaving the mother of my heart.
Ay, this is what the Congo says.
He commands it, the Congo.
Cu-su-cu, go see, there they are; cu-su-cu.
Go, there’s nothing new.
For the syringe’s plunger goes directly to its spot.

Son de la Ma Teodora
Search France, Montesino; search the city of Paris;
search the waters of the Duero River where it meets the sea.
Where is she, that I don’t see her? She’d better not have left for Havana
with her bandola and conducting baton, she’s strumming her instrument

In Galicia there’s a girl named Téodora.
Every feast day her mother scolds her:
“Don’t go to your Havana where your sister is,
with your conducting baton and your bandola!” she’s strumming her instrument

Because she didn’t want to do what her father told her to do.
Her father ordered her to make a circle
of knives and razors and to kneel on them.
With her bandola and conducting baton, she’s strumming her instrument

And in the middle of the circle, she knelt down
An angel came down from heaven to save Téodora
“Rise up, rise up Téodora, the King of Heaven calls!
Bring your conducting baton and bandola!” she’s strumming her instrument
Where is Téodora?
she’s strumming her instrument
With her conducting baton and bandola
she’s strumming her instrument
Where is she, that I don’t see her?
she’s strumming her instrument
With her conducting baton and bandola
she’s strumming her instrument

* literally, chopping wood; it's a colloquialism perhaps related to the up and down strumming of the bandola.

Canarios
Instrumental

Qalbi vi/Don Alonso/Kol libi
Arab text:
My heart is inside my heart; my heart is Arab.
Spanish text:
King Alonso, King among Kings, the emperor.
Four mounted soldiers of King Alonso's; four soldiers killed a bear.
King Alonso, King among Kings, the emperor.
Three soldiers killed a bear; soldiers they are of King Alonso
King Alonso, King among Kings, the emperor.
Hebrew text:
All of my heart

De la sagrada Maria
From sacred Mary today was born the sun whom God sent us.
The sun in its birth expels the shadows.
Mary who bore him, a god without corruption,
from which he gained contentment that today is born the sun whom God sent us.

Through the power of the love of loves, God sent, full of grace, to Mary.
He chose the sovereign, the cleanest, the most beautiful—
more than the lily or the rose—and in her he made God human,
He is God and our brother, who he sends, full of grace to Maria.

Cachua Serranita
No human understanding is capable of telling your glories today,
And it only suffices to say that you are the Mother of God.
Ref: A na na…
In the mind of God the Father you were chosen as Mother
of the Word that became human, taking on our flesh in you.
Ref: A na na…
One you are in substance, and many in advocations.
But you, Carmen Refuge*, are the consoler of Souls.
Ref: A na na…
Your mantle appeases the flames of purgatory,
and because we acclaim you as our mother, you rescue us.
Ref: A na na…
There is no better help to be claimed than yours,
for you liberate us from the most holy judgment.

Ref: A na na…

More and more mercy you show towards those who call on you;
and because we are your children, carry us to our heavenly home.

Ref: A na na…