

*With hope and heartfelt appreciation,
we return to the concert stage.*

Cabrillo Festival of Contemporary Music presents

Tapestry of Uncertainties

DONORS CONCERT

Sunday, July 25, 2021, 3:30pm

*When there was no future
we learned to live in the simple present
sometimes continuous, rarely perfect.*

—Nieves Vázquez Recio

featuring
Kathleen Balfe, cello



in the Sanctuary
at 1440 Multiversity



Tapestry of Uncertainties is an intimate and reflective mixed media performance created by cellist Kathleen Balfe in collaboration with ten composers who participated in the 2020 Women Composers Workshop of the Spanish Music Festival of Cádiz, a coastal town in southern Spain.

Each composition was originally inspired by a poem written in either Spanish or Italian, the poet's mother tongue. English translations of the poems are provided in these program notes. Each composition is the composers' transformation of the poem's essence into sound. Some of these unique solo cello soundscapes also include an electroacoustic accompaniment.

Diversity is one of the cornerstones of this project. Tapestry of Uncertainties features a collection of texts and works created by remarkable women who are still not widely known or celebrated in the world of composition.

The concept of uncertainty is the common thread woven through each poem and composition, and when these pieces are experienced as a whole, a complex pattern of doubt and hesitation is created. In these times, uncertainty is the weft that binds together not only this concert, but the whole complex tapestry of our own lives.

Program

Los tiempos del porvenir (2020)

María José Arenas Martín (b. 1983)

Stunt Fall V (2020)

María del Pilar Miralles Castillo (b. 1997)

Policronías de las sibilas (2020)

Beatriz Arzamendi (b. 1961)

La senda (2020)

Consuelo Díez (b. 1958)

Funambudumbre: cuando todo se apaga (2020)

Dolores Serrano Cueto (b. 1967)

Viajar es lo que importa (2020)

Anna Bofill Levi (b. 1944)

Vivir en Aporesis (... o Turbulencias...) (2020)

Ana Teruel Medina (b. 1981)

Veritas Vincit (2020)

Reyes Oteo (b. 1982)

- I. The ocean in the mirror
- II. The routes of Sagittarius
- III. Atlas
- IV. Weeping in unison
- V. On the horns of the moon
- VI. Epilogue of the river over the Ahedo

Questo tremito, questo vacillamento (2020)

María del Carmen Asenjo-Marrodán (b. 1978)

Un mundo sin bocas y con olor a desinfectante (2020)

Diana Pérez Custodio (b. 1970)

Los tiempos del porvenir (2020)

María José Arenas Martín (b. 1983)

based on *Cuando no había futuro*

by Nieves Vázquez Recio

*Cuando no había futuro
aprendimos a vivir en el presente simple,
a veces era continuo, rara vez fue perfecto.
Aquellos días variábamos el rumbo de la conjugación
como niños perdidos en viejos manuales de gramática
-esa lista insensata de palabras en negro,
rojas de sangre las terminaciones-.
Entonces nos saltamos los tiempos del porvenir.
El destino, de cara a la pared, aguardaba el más leve movimiento
para señalarnos con su dedo de pollo inglés fatídico.
Allí nos tuvo, en el gélido patio de rodillas gastadas,
donde los escolares caen y vuelven a caer sobre sus postillas.
Allí estuvimos, quietos en la casilla de la espera,
jugando a la ruleta rusa de la continuación.*

Translation:

*When there was no future
we learned to live in the simple present
sometimes continuous, rarely perfect.
In those days we would change the course of the conjugation
like children lost in old grammar books
- that senseless list of words in black,
with blood-red endings.
Back then we would skip over the future tenses.
Fate, facing the wall, was waiting for the slightest movement
to catch us statues with its fateful finger.
There it had us, on the chilly patio with our worn-out knees,
where school children fall on their scabs again and again.
There we were, standing at square one,
playing the Russian roulette of continuation.*

“Los tiempos del porvenir” (“The future tenses” or “The future times”) is created from musical components that pose a great technical challenge to the performer. The composition is based on a formal, hermeneutic, prosodic and grammatical reconstruction of the elements that make up the poem. Thus, it is harsh, rough and may be difficult to listen to, reflecting the rawness of the times we live in, where uncertainty is our only lifeline amid the chaos.

Stunt Fall V (2020)

María del Pilar Miralles Castillo (b. 1997)

In Memoriam Galina Ustvolskaya

based on a poem by Ricardo Dávila

*¿Cuántos insomnios me hacen falta para
derrumbar el muro de la duda?
¿Cuántas sombras? ¿Cuántas luchas?
Hoy tengo que saber -antes que despiertes- si
la mañana es la que alumbra,
o si eres tú la que alumbra la mañana.*

Translation:

*How many sleepless nights will I need
to topple the wall of doubt?
How many shadows? How many struggles?
Today I must know -before you wake- whether
it is the morning that brings light,
or you who brings light to the morning.*

Stunt Fall is the name of a famous roller coaster in the Spanish capital, Madrid. It was the inspiration behind a piece written for solo alto saxophone, and later became the name of a collection of pieces for solo instruments. This collection features compositions for alto saxophone, accordion, horn, bass clarinet, cello and flute, aiming to explore the language of each particular instrument.

This five-minute piece is Pilar Miralles' tribute to Galina Ustvolskaya (1919-2006). Galina Ustvolskaya was one of the most exceptional composers of the Soviet generation that composed between the 1920s and 1990s. She developed a unique language that had no link to any existing or pre-existing musical idioms. Pilar Miralles was inspired by Ustvolskaya's sense of aesthetic and the musical experience that she creates using a unique expressivity. Her music is raw, dry, harsh and strong, as well as spiritual and contemplative at the same time. This is represented by the systematic repetition of motifs throughout the first section of the piece, the extreme force required in some passages to achieve overpressure and distortion, and the contemplative feeling conveyed at other times.

Policronías de las sibilas (2020)

Beatriz Arzamendi (b. 1961)

based on a poem by María Rosal

Translation:

Descifrar los augurios

Deciphering the auguries

de la espiral perdida.

of the lost spiral.

Sumergirme en la entraña

I dive into the bowels

del azar y sus lizas.

of fate and its threads.

Interpretar prodigios,

Interpreting omens,

inciertas letanías.

uncertain litanies.

Alimentar la llama

Fanning the secret

secreta de la vida...

flame of life...

Ese es mi oficio. Al fin,

That is my profession. Ultimately,

sibila día a día.

a sibyl day by day.

This work is based on the figures of the sibyls, who were prophetesses in ancient Greek and Roman mythology. Since ancient times, legends tell of various sibyls, of which a dozen are currently recognized. They possessed the ability to unravel the future and foretell all kinds of events, providing support in the face of uncertainty. Their prestige and the respect society had for these female figures' intelligence is an exception for that era and subsequent times.

"Policronías de las sibilas" ("Polychronies of the sibyls") is constructed on the basis of different sequences – what appears can disappear in an instant, with changes of speed, diverse states and emotions, and sudden, radical mutations in which the element of surprise plays an important role. These elements travel from one section of the music to another, bringing multiple time layers into the score.

La senda (2020)

Consuelo Díez (b. 1958)

based on *La senda* by Antonio Martín-Carrillo Domínguez

Translation:

<i>Sopla un viento muy frío,</i>	<i>A chilly wind blows</i>
<i>y la soledad acecha</i>	<i>and loneliness lurks</i>
<i>al fondo del camino.</i>	<i>at the end of the road.</i>
<i>De nada vale</i>	<i>There is no sense</i>
<i>comenzar a caminar</i>	<i>in starting to walk</i>
<i>si no sabes a dónde vas.</i>	<i>if you don't know where to go.</i>
<i>De nada vale</i>	<i>There is no sense</i>
<i>andar y andar</i>	<i>in walking and walking</i>
<i>sin rumbo establecido.</i>	<i>without a known course.</i>
<i>Sigue la senda del amor,</i>	<i>Follow the path of love,</i>
<i>recorre el camino,</i>	<i>walk the road,</i>
<i>busca tu destino.</i>	<i>seek your goal.</i>

“La senda” (“The path” or “The trail”) is inspired by a poem of the same title by Spanish author Antonio Martín-Carrillo. The composition is based on a popular melody that emerges little by little, gradually becoming more concrete and specific, until it finally bursts out completely, full of energy.

This piece brings a positive note in this troubled, difficult and strange period we are living through due to the pandemic, full of uncertainties, doubts and restrictions on our usual way of life. It is a breath of fresh air in the midst of this atypical situation that came about so unexpectedly, and that we have had to get used to with no choice in the matter.

Funambudumbre: cuando todo se apaga (2020)

Dolores Serrano Cueto (b. 1967)

based on *Funambulismo*

by Antonio Serrano Cueto

Translation:

<i>La vida va tensando sus alambres</i>	<i>Life keeps tensing the wire</i>
<i>bajo los pies hendidos del funámbulo.</i>	<i>under the cracked feet of the tightrope walker.</i>
<i>Cuando en el menoscabo de la luz</i>	<i>When the light begins to dim,</i>
<i>se apagan los contornos de las cosas</i>	<i>the outlines of things fade</i>
<i>y los soles someten sus cristales</i>	<i>and the suns surrender their crystals</i>
<i>a la gris mordedura de la tarde,</i>	<i>to the grey maw of evening,</i>
<i>no bastan la pericia ni la pértiga,</i>	<i>neither skill nor pole will be enough,</i>
<i>no la senda volátil del cordel.</i>	<i>nor the volatile path over the cord.</i>
<i>La región vespertina sólo atiende</i>	<i>The vespertine region only pays heed</i>
<i>a grávidas razones.</i>	<i>to grave reasons.</i>
<i>¿Qué acrobacia</i>	<i>What acrobatics</i>
<i>prosperaría sobre el curvo signo</i>	<i>would carry them over the curve</i>
<i>de la interrogación?</i>	<i>of the question mark?</i>

The sounds intrinsically linked to the sea fascinate me: the squawking of seagulls, the ship sirens, the swell of the waves. It's not the first time I have wanted to reflect my affinity to these sounds in my compositions, such as in 'La travesía – Sinfonía inacabada' ('The voyage – Unfinished symphony').

In 'Funambudumbre,' the sounds of the horns and sirens of tugboats and ships docked in the port seem to be real, just as they sounded in April during the lockdown. It was a synchrony of so much sound that it kept ringing afterwards in the silence. I had never heard them like that. I had never cried when hearing the sirens.

That singular moment became the sound base for this composition, the sound of uncertainty and solidarity at the same time – the sound of a tightrope that is placed uninvited under our feet while at the same time revealing a net that can catch us.

Another of the compositional pillars of this piece is the poem 'Funambulismo,' by Antonio Serrano, published in the collection of poems *No quieras ver el páramo* (Seville, 2010), and the fact is that we were all tightrope walkers during those long days. To be a tightrope walker is to live in the uncertainty of balance or to experience uncertainty in balance. This, for me, is one of the messages of the poem, which I used to steer my work. At the end, the sounds of an early morning in lockdown emerge: a symbol of life.

The title is a combination of the Spanish words *funambulismo* (tightrope walking or funambulism) and *incertidumbre* (uncertainty).

Viajar es lo que importa (2020)

Anna Bofill Levi (b. 1944)

based on *Al paso de los años*

by María Cinta Montagut

Translation:

<i>Al paso de los años</i>	<i>With the passing of the years</i>
<i>he aprendido a vivir sin dogmas,</i>	<i>I have learned to live without dogmas,</i>
<i>a ignorar la posesión de la verdad,</i>	<i>to ignore the truth holders,</i>
<i>la fe del converso,</i>	<i>the faith of the convert,</i>
<i>las grandes palabras</i>	<i>the grand words</i>
<i>que hacen pequeño el mundo,</i>	<i>that make the world small,</i>
<i>la obediencia ciega,</i>	<i>blind obedience,</i>
<i>la justicia de las injusticias.</i>	<i>the justice of injustices.</i>
<i>Al paso de los años</i>	<i>With the passing of the years</i>
<i>viajar es lo que importa</i>	<i>traveling is what matters</i>
<i>y estar de pie</i>	<i>and facing the uncertainty of tomorrow</i>
<i>frente a lo incierto de mañana.</i>	<i>on our feet.</i>

I based 'Viajar es lo que importa' ('Traveling is what matters') on this poem by Maria Cinta Montagut, structuring the piece into twelve fragments corresponding to the number of lines in the poem and with a duration proportional to the length of each line.

The electroacoustic material uses cello fragments from my work 'Aialik' (2019), recorded in a studio and performed by Jean-Baptiste Texier. I processed those cello sounds in order to produce rough and chaotic sonorities with varying thicknesses and densities. These are kept in constant or stable tessituras in order to reduce the complexity, and are then used to produce variations by transposing their tessituras.

The polyphonic parts in fragments 6 and 7 combine two or more sounds, always based on the timbre of the cello. At one point (fragment 10) corresponding to the verse 'traveling is what matters,' I include a recording of a fracturing glacier (the Aialik in Alaska), which has been electronically processed. In this fragment, the sound of the breaking glacier is unaccompanied by the cello.

In short, my concept was to produce live cello sounds over previously recorded and processed cello sounds.

"Le doute, morne oiseau, nous frappe de son aile..."

—Arthur Rimbaud

Vivir en Aporexis (... o Turbulencias...) (2020)

Ana Teruel Medina (b. 1981)

based on *La misma incertidumbre*

by Rosana Acquaroni

Translation:

La misma incertidumbre

con la que un día preciso

que ya fuiste acordando sin saberlo,

comienza a desprenderse

la leve gasa que ocultara

la trama de tu herida,

una herida reciente que late sin hablar

y está tan dentro

que tu vida depende de mantenerla viva.

Con la misma sultura

con la que cada órgano se acomoda para el part

y se abre un trecho de luz

en mitad de tu cuerpo,

una tarde descubres

que no puedes contar tus cicatrices

pues sus bordes te unen a fragmentos de otros,

a vidas paralelas,

a bálsamos de humo.

Y es entonces

que esa herida se cumple

y es más cierta que el mundo,

nos regresa al origen,

sus lámparas de arena,

la palabra en el vientre,

cuando todos vivíamos

recíprocos y juntos

cuidando las heridas.

The same uncertainty

with which on a certain day

you'd already unknowingly been arranging

the gauze hiding

the story of your wound

starts to come undone,

a recent wound that throbs without a word

so deep within

that your life depends on keeping it alive.

As skillfully

as each organ rearranges itself to give birth

and a beam of light emerges

at your body's core,

one afternoon you find

that you can't count your scars

because their edges join you to fragments of others,

to parallel lives,

to salves of smoke.

It is then

that the wound is fulfilled

and is more certain than the world,

taking us back to the source,

its sand lamps,

the word in the womb,

when we all lived

reciprocally and together

tending to our wounds.

Aporia, also known as dubitatio, is a rhetorical or literary device used to express doubt or uncertainty. Aporia, doubt... This is our new life partner who has arrived uninvited and seems to have come to stay. How couldn't I devote time and energy to it and create a composition... The proposed subject matter, uncertainty, and the current times led me to delve deeper into this topic.

The title itself is a play on words. ' Vivir en Aporeisis ('Living in Aporia') does not indicate a place, but a state of mind, a way of life. ' Turbulencias' ('Turbulences') is added as a nod to my children – a reference to a game we like to play. Doubt is the core and essence, not only of the title, but of the piece itself as a reflection of our current reality.

Musical rhetoric is a subject I have always been passionate about. Doubt is often expressed with an abrupt change of key, sometimes including a broken cadence in the target key.

In this piece I use a freer language to try to express doubt in different ways: with open endings, laying out two sound worlds, live instrument and prerecorded audio tracks, which coexist without seeking to complement each other; using different instrumental techniques that are interrupted without giving way to each other, looking for radical differences in the use of dynamics and articulations.

The poet Rosana Acquaroni, in her immense generosity, has allowed me to use her poem ' La misma incertidumbre' ('The same uncertainty') and her voice, which sounds on several occasions on the audio tracks. My greatest thanks to her.

Veritas Vincit (2020)

Reyes Oteo (b. 1982)

based on a poem by María Cinta Montagut
and the legend of Ludovico Angulo

Translation:

<i>Desconozco el sentido de los días</i>	<i>I do not know the meaning of the days</i>
<i>que transcurren inciertos,</i>	<i>that pass by in uncertainty,</i>
<i>como los tigres buscan entre ortiga:</i>	<i>as tigers search amongst the nettles</i>
<i>la textura del ser</i>	<i>for the texture of being</i>
<i>y con indiferencia ven el agua</i>	<i>and with indifference they see the water</i>
<i>que busca sin saberlo</i>	<i>which unknowingly seeks</i>
<i>una salida, un dique, una alberca</i>	<i>an outlet, a dam, a pool</i>
<i>que la haga existir,</i>	<i>that makes it exist,</i>
<i>aún sabiendo,</i>	<i>still knowing,</i>
<i>que nada nunca es lo que parece.</i>	<i>that nothing is ever what it seems.</i>

This mixed media piece for electroacoustic tape and solo cello demands a highly expressive technique. It is the first score ever written using Reyes Oteo's own compositional system, which is a technique affecting registers, durations and functions using the concept of the Cantor set fractals. The electroacoustics are based on field recordings, which have been technically modified through sound synthesis and filtering.

The story behind the piece is the legend of Ludovico Angulo, a twelfth-century ancestor of Reyes Oteo who lived in the Angulo Valley in Burgos, a region in northern Spain. The legend is told in *Leyendas genealógicas de España* (*Genealogical Legends of Spain*), by Antonio de Trueba (1887), and in *Vergel de nobles y linajes de España* (*Compendium of Nobles and Lineages of Spain*) by Pedro Gratia Dei, chronicler of the Catholic Monarchs and Charles I of Spain.

Reference text: *legend of the Angulo family* (Rosario F. Cartes)

Ludovico, the second son of an Anglo-Norman knight who reigned in the barony of Navan, in Ireland, was condemned by John the Landless to lose his life for going against his father's laws and orders. The nobles of the kingdom interceded for the infant, and the king was content with banishing him to a desert island.

Movements:

I. The ocean in the mirror

Snakes... wild beasts... doomed island

Ludovico left to meet his destiny accompanied by a squire he had in his service. Upon their arrival, the prince and the squire found, to their dismay, that the island was inhabited by monstrous beasts and provided no sustenance.

II. The routes of Sagittarius

Monstrous griffins appeared out of thin air

They put themselves in the hands of God and the Virgin Mary, and even managed to win their first combat against great serpents that attacked them on the ground and monstrous griffins, half eagle and half lion, that attacked them from the air.

III. Atlas

As tigers search amongst the nettles

They flew over those seas

By trickery, they managed to outwit the monsters and were carried by the griffins in their claws across the seas. So, they flew and flew, until they landed in the Pyrenees Mountains, between France and Navarre (then a kingdom in northern Spain).

IV. Weeping in unison

A hellish cold

...and it kept them properly warm, both within and without

Aided by a shepherd, who gave them food and shelter, they journeyed down to Navarre, where war was being waged against the Moors, and they joined the Christians and fought bravely.

V. On the horns of the moon

...on the horns of the moon

Such exploits earned them the king's favor and trust. Ludovico, having changed his name to Don Luis, declared his lineage before the king, as the son of a Scot lord.

VI. Epilogue of the river over the Ahedo

A robust castle rose in the valley where the river splashes

Don Luis married as befitted his rank and lineage and, with his children, built a castle in the Angulo Valley. His successors spread throughout the Valley of Mena and places like Oteo, in the Valley of Losa, acquiring a reputation as excellent knights.

"In a moment of uncertain destiny that occurs on the uninhabitable island, when the infant and his squire come close to dying of hunger and thirst, I imagined their reverie, described in the imagery of the poem by Cinta Montagut." —Reyes Oteo

Questo tremito, questo vacillamento (2020)

María del Carmen Asenjo-Marrodán (b. 1978)

based on *Città dispersa tra gli inciseri*,
a poem by Maria Attanasio

*Città dispersa tra gli incensieri
il battito il vocio
la vita che fu notte barocca paramento
era transito d'ombra casa al vento
tra galletti ferrigni e banderuole
verderamina d'antenati che ritorna fiamma.
"Questo tremito, adesso, questo vacillamento."*

Translation:

*A city scattered amongst the censers
the throbbing the cacophony
life that was baroque night vestments
that were transit of shadow home to the wind
amongst ferrous cockerels and weathervanes
ancestral patina that returns as flame.
"This trembling, now, this wavering."*

"Questo tremito, adesso, questo vacillamento" ("This trembling, now, this wavering") is the line that closes this highly intense poem by Maria Attanasio and gives the piece its title. Although I have often used literature as a source of inspiration for my sound worlds, in this case I could say that the link is even closer: evocative images such as "baroque night", "transit of shadow", "the throbbing the cacophony" or that "trembling" that seems to be present throughout are at the foundation of the material that strings together the narrative. In turn, the text, recited in its original language, creates a parallel dialogue with the flow of the cello's line.

In short, it could be said that this piece aspires to create a ductile, malleable and flexible sound capable of reflecting the refinement, richness and expressive intensity together with the emotion contained in this poem.

***Un mundo sin bocas y con olor a desinfectante* (2020)**

Diana Pérez Custodio (b. 1970)

based on *Oigo el cuchillo azul de las sirenas*,
a poem by María Cinta Montagut

Translation:

*Oigo el cuchillo azul de las sirenas
el ulular del aire sin pupilas
en el asombro de las avenidas.*

*Sopla el viento en la noche
que no se piensa
que no se puede ver.*

*I hear the blue knife of the sirens
the howling of the air without pupils
in the shock of the avenues.*

*The wind blows at night
unthought
unseen.*

No words. No mouths. Just eyes looking out of their sockets trying to decipher a future that is more uncertain than usual. Meanwhile, hands shed their skin like growing snakes, exhaling sanitizer vapors.

Tapestry of Uncertainties

This concert was created by the Women Composers Workshop,
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Chris Butler, sound and technical engineer

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