

Carlos Sandoval

Carlos Sandoval Mendoza (b. 1956, Mexico City) Is a Mexican/German freelance composer and multimedia artist, mostly recognized for his work joining technology, nature and art.

Biography and Work

Born in an archetypal "barrio" in Mexico city's downtown, Carlos Sandoval was used to deal with harrowing, extreme social and cultural situations already from his childhood, a fact to be later reflected in his work.^[1] He has lived mainly in Mexico City (1956–64), Cuernavaca City (1964–78 and 1983–03), New York City (1979), Vienna, Austria (1980–82), Los Angeles CA (1983) and Berlin, Germany (2003–). He is also a German citizen since 2009. Dissident at the Escuela Nacional de Música UNAM 1976–79 (classical guitar and composition) studied later composition, analysis and theory privately with Julio Estrada (1985–90). He assisted also to several courses and private sessions with Brian Ferneyhough, Joji Yuasa, Peter Garland, Lorenc Barber, Leo Brower, François Bernard Mâche, James Tenney, Stefano Scodanibio, Iannis Xenakis and Conlon Nancarrow. Nevertheless, he is one of the few active Mexican composers of his generation that did not studied in Europe or the United States and does not have an academic degree in composition. Later he studied indeed in Europe: Piano tuning and building at the Bösendorfer Klavier Fabrik in Vienna (1980–82). These studies ("and not the Vienna School")^[2] changed his vision about music in general. As photo and videographer he studied with Fabri (Austria), Sirgo (Mexico), Grierfer, Michalak, Fathi, Schopp and Schütke (Germany). His work has been premiered or exposed mostly in Germany but also in Mexico, France, UK and The Netherlands. He has been fellow of the SNCA (the highest Mexican Government recognition for Mexican artists) since 1999 with no interruption. He has been invited to countless activities and contemporary music festivals like Donaueschingen Musik Tage (1994, Germany), Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival (2009, UK, festival's highlight) and the Darmstadt Summer Courses (1990) in Germany, among others. He writes articles and essays on music and lately has been focused in the joint of music and video, "Lips" being his last piece.

Early Work — Estradian-Xenakian period (1987-1990)

Carlos Sandoval has been exploring several ways of music making. Early works can be identified with Julio Estrada's Techniques and the Xenakian school: Use of Cartesian graphics representing sonic trajectories and its evolutions, multi parametrics (the use of several simultaneous performance and compositional resources in a single line or stave) and internal sonic imagination analysis.^[3] "Ginantria", for cello solo, 1990, is the best example of this period. Few out-of-catalogue pieces do belong also to this stage:

- "Traepes", 1985, 4:58", Glissandi studies, made before his studies). Chamula harp and tuning forks.
- "Filos", 1987–89, 12:00" Chamber concert, never premiered.
- "Lomos", 1989, 7:35" UPIC System
- "Ginantria", 1990, 12:05" Violoncello.^[4]
- "Homenaje", 1991, 7:39" UPIC system^[5]

Postmodern-Synthesis Period (1993-04)

In 1991 Sandoval get acquainted with Conlon Nancarrow. He works as his assistant (1991–94).^[6] In this period Sandoval expands and combines his resources. The influence of Nancarrow's music is strong and some remains of the Xenakian school are also present. Sandoval's musical thinking does begin to lose channelization.^[7] This lack of "school", "channeled impulse" or "Style" ("Style is just a super thin ham slice between your "freedom" and your own limitations (Sandoval, 2009)"^[8]) is still a characteristic of his work and can be easily identified with a radical postmodern approach. Besides this, it took him almost 4 years to assimilate and sinthesize the extreme bipolar

Estrada-Nancarrow influences.^[9] The list of 16 postmodern music characteristics defined by Kramer (Kramer 2002, 16–17) suite well to Sandoval's music from this period.^[10] Between 2002 and 2003, just about moving to Germany, Sandoval published two of his "manifestos": "Imaginación, análisis y posmodernismo"^[11] and "De la fenomenología al ejercicio estético, o una apología del cinismo".^[12]

- "Slow piece for Player Piano", 1993, Player piano.
- "Fast Piece for Player Piano", 1993, 6:23" Player piano^[13]
- "Fast Piece for computer controlled acoustical instruments", 1994, 6:23", pf., xil., barrel organ, vib. and acordion.
- "Negative Study for Sensible Hands", 1996, Sensors on Hands, first gloves prototype.
- "Suite Antimodem", 1997, 50:00", ETC-ETC Ensemble. Bio-energetics, disposition and improvisation.
- "Pf-01", 1998, 7:58", Piano,^[14]
- "Pf-02", 1999, 7:49", (Huitzilac period) Piano,^[15]
- "La Pasión Según la Gente", 1999, 25:27" Indian Brass band, Cl, B.cl, percusión and tape^[16]
- "8to-01", 2000-01: Ca. 15:00" (Fellini's Circus Series), Flute, G FLute, Cl., B. Cl., Pf and string quitent.
- "CcPf-01", 2001, 7:49" (Fellini's Circus Series), String Quartet and piano.
- "CcPf-02", 2001, 7:49" (Fellini's Circus Series),String Quartet and piano.
- "FICIPf-01", 2001, 7:49"(Fellini's Circus Series), Flute, Clarinet and Piano.
- "FICIPf-02", 2001, 7:49" (Fellini's Circus Series), Flute, Clarinet and Piano.
- "FICl-01", 2001, 7:49" (Fellini's Circus Series), Flute, Clarinet.
- "PfMd-01", 2001, 16:35" (Fellini's Circus Series), Piano and CD.
- "CcMd-01", 2002, 13:47" String quartet and CD. Premiered by the Arditti String Quartet.
- "Pf-03", 2002, 7:49" (Fellini's Circus Series), Piano.
- "Bcl-01", 2002, 7:49" (Fellini's Circus Series), Bass Clarinet.
- "KPmd01", 2002-03, Ca. 15:00" (Fellini's Circus Series), Orchestra, piano and tape.
- "K-02" 2004, Ca. 10:00" (Fellini's Circus Series), Orchestra and toy airplanes.
- "K-03" 2005, Ca. 9:00" (Fellini's Circus Series), Orchestra.

German Period 1 (2003-2007)

Carlos Sandoval moves to Berlin, Germany in September 2003. His first German project was "Mextoys", 2003–04, 80:00", premiered at the prestigious Hochschule für Musik und Theater in Hamburg, commissioned by the *Festival Eigenarten* and the Culture Ministry in Hamburg. This piece is a break-point in Sandoval's work, his first truly multimedia piece and a first attempt to join video and music into a single conceptual and constructive layer. In general, Sandoval begins to forsake traditional score writing and deterministic thinking to start developing either a "non-fictional" approach to music (as a result of countless acoustical and cultural sound-recordings made in Mexico), and a cognitive Piagetian one to animism towards music and life in general: "A video camera is not just a tool, it is also an animal. If we animalize our tools, we will finally stop talking about them, in the academic sense of talking"^[17] Jean Piaget's theories about language as an object and a cognitive inability to distinguish the external world from one's own psyche, made a strong impact in Sandoval's pieces in this period.^[18]

- "Mex-toys", 2003–04, three movements., 80:00", percussion, dance, video and tape. Video takes and concepts to be animated by performers in sequence at stage.
- "The Birth of a Ship", 2006, 25:00", Ships as living organisms and percussion instruments. *Lange Nacht der Museen*, Senatsverwaltung für Wissenschaft, Forschung und Kultur, the Deutsches Technikmuseum Berlin and the *TU Studio* Berlin.
- "Die Schaukel", 2007, 3:08:06" Improvised ritual, sound installation, stage actions and live electronics. Bauhaus Naunynstr. Interaktion Festival, Initiative Neue Music, The Tilt.
- "Petenera", 2004, 11:50", guitar, toy guitar, tuning-fork, tape and stage action, in two movements. The guitarist becomes a mother, the toy guitar the baby.
- "Qu Vara", 2004, 10:14" trombone, water, saliva, tape and stage actions

- "Qu Trompa", 2007, 10:14" Trumpet, water, saliva, tape and stage actions

German Period 2 (2006-2010)

"The use of computers may allow scientists to better understand creative processes, but not always may allow artists to better understand science. The idealized joint science-artistic abstraction is a myth. Nevertheless, I believe in deterministic dreams and imaginary landscapes of rational thoughts."^[19] In Berlin, Sandoval meets some computer-science specialists and starts developing his work with sensors. His third "manifesto", published in Germany in 2009^[20] interpose cultural, artistic and political values to the pure act of sonification using technology. His work with living trees with accelerometers and hands with tactile sensors are based on random-picking software, giving objective transduction of physical phenomena a "mystic" character. "The first time I used the gloves (...) I was analyzing continuous information coming from each tactile sensor and realized that, despite being "free", I had a "style", my own syntax expressed in patterns (...). The same way, the trees as "free" entities generate patterns since they are systemic too. Pattern-recognition, artificial intelligence, cliches and prejudgements belong to the same order, that's why I prefer just random picking instead of pattern recognition methodologies to generate musical materials."^[21]

- "Sotavento", 2006 , no duration. International network of sounding trees. Tree installation in Florence, Italy, Berlin, Germany and San Luis Potosi, Mexico. With the support of the TU electronic studio, Berlin, the GSLI in Florence and the Festival de San Luis in Mexico.
- "Baumberauschen", 2007, No duration. Three networked trees. Commissioned by the European Union's "Soziale Stadt" program, throughout the "Kunst : Identität" project.
- "The body", 2007 Gloves with sensors and a female body as a musical instrument, Ca 20:00"
- "Mosaicos" 1 and 2", 2008, Ca. 20:00" Chamber ensemble, any instruments and gloves with tactile sensors.
- "Die basta-Zeiten sind vorbei", 2008 , Ca. 22:00" Chamber ensemble, any instruments and gloves with tactile sensors.
- "Baumberauschen 2", 2009, Sound installation. Trees with accelerometers.
- "Klangkaskaden", 2010, Sound installation. Trees with accelerometers.
- "8to-02", 2010-11, 6:22", String quartet, 2 trombones, 2 double basses.
- "The forest is above the man", in four independent parts: 2008-09 Part I: "The myth of Globalization", open duration. Fl, Ob, Cl, Bss, Trp 1 and 2, Sx ten, Sx Bar, Trb1 and 2, Piano and perc. Part II: "The myth of Alienation", open duration. Fl, Ob, Cl, Percussion, Piano, String quintet and piano.
- "The forest is above the man", in four independent parts: Part III: 2009-10 "The myth of lacking of time", open duration Fl, Cl, Ob, Bs, P, String quartet Percussions 1 and 2. Part IV: "The myth of relativity", open duration, string quartet.

Video works

- "Lips" (Video, Color, HD, 13:57", edited and modified voice improvisations by Almut Kühne, Germany 2011).
- "Hidden 2" (Video, Color, HD, 4:57", featuring Charlote Grude, Germany 2011).
- "Ursula" (Video, Color & BW, HD, 30:00", Germany, 2010).
- "Hidden 1" (3:29", Color, Video HD, Mexico-Germany, 2010).
- "Doña Soco, her Mother and the chicken. Three non-fiction portraits" (16:05", Video, Color, Mexico-Germany, 2003–09).
- "Dream" (6:05", Video, Mexico-Germany, 2001–2009).
- "La Pasión según la gente" (18:05", video, Color, Mexico 2001-2003).
- "Mextoys 1" (5:00", video, Color, Mexico 2004).
- "Mextoys 2" (5:00", video, color, Mexico 2004).

Discography

- "Fast Piece", 1994, in *Donaueschinger MusikTage 1994*, Col Legno Produktion, WWE-3CD-31882, track 1, Germany.
- "Homenaje", in *De vez en vez*, 2002, SACM, Quindecim, track 4, Mexico
- "La Pasión Según la Gente", 2002, in "La Pasión según la gente y otras obras", Quindecim, PACMyC, Sireña, monographic CD, México
- "Chillida", 2004, continuous loop, electroacoustic piece using a never-repeating simultaneous 2-CDs looping, in *Danilo Veras, puntos Comas Acentos Palabras*, DVD, Facultad de Arquitectura, Palmera Films, Universidad Veracruzana.
- "PfMd 01, por piano et band", 2009, in *17 Mars 2009, Théâtre d'Orléans*, Concours International de piano d'Orleans.
- "Liz-Mix" Electroacoustic piece, 2009, in *Ready Media: hacia una arqueología de los medios y la invención en México*, Laboratorio de Arte Alameda, Mexico City,
- "Petenera", 2011, in *Pages acoustiques*, Christelle Sery, Guitar. SACM, XTL001/1, France.

Writings

- "Heimat? Identität?" *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, 1 - 2009 p.p. 40-45. The German translation of "Composición y Colonialismo hoy?"
- "Composición y colonialismo hoy?" *Pauta*, Music Magazine, 2008.
- "Música electrónica en vivo: gesto, inexpresividad y cinismo en la música del siglo XXI" *Pauta*, 100, p.p. 37-47, 2006.
- "De la fenomenología al ejercicio estético, o una apología del cinismo" *Artelugio* 2002, versión revisada y publicada en *Pauta*, 2005.
- "Imaginación, análisis y posmodernismo" *Artelugio* 2002; (versión revisada, *Pauta*, 2005).
- "Suenan el tambor, ladran los perros", in *La pasión según la gente*, booklet, 2001, Quindecim Recordings

External links

- Carlos Sandoval 's personal website ^[22] With catalog, activities, sound-examples and video.
- Nature, Art and Technology ^[23] Music with trees and sensors
- Gloves with sensors ^[24] Development, images, video, sound-examples.
- Audio-portrait of Carlos Sandoval ^[25] Produced by CastYourArt.com
- Carlos Sandoval's Nancarrow's site ^[26] Specific information on Nancarrow's studio, music library (databased) and other very specific issues regarding his work with Conlon Nancarrow.

References

- [1] Enriquez Maru, "Interview Carlos Sandoval (Deutsche Untertiteln), HD Video, 2010, 24:15", <http://vimeo.com/17957124>
- [2] *Ibid.*, Enriquez, Maru, 2010
- [3] Sandoval, Carlos: "Los Yuunohui: un acercamiento al continuo en la obra de Julio Estrada", 80pp, DGAPA/IIMAS/IIIE, UNAM, 1992.
- [4] Sandoval, Carlos: "Ginatria", in *La Pasión según la gente*, Quindecim, QDO 1153, PACMyC, Sireña, México.
- [5] Sandoval, Carlos: "Homenaje", in *De vez en Vez*, Quindecim, SACM, 2002.
- [6] Hocker, Jürgen, *Begegnungen mit Conlon Nancarrow* Schott Musik International, Mainz 2002. 294pp.
- [7] Tosi, Michèle, "...une pièce mixte au titre très énigmatique – l'absence de notes de programme préserve tout le mystère ! - du compositeur mexicain présent dans la salle Carlos Sandoval Mendoza. PfMd-01 se nourrit des contrastes plus ou moins radicaux entre une partie de piano aux ambiances pastorales et légèrement «détempérées», diffusée en continu par les hauts parleurs, et les interventions du pianiste dont la brillanteur du jeu et la fulgurance du geste rehaussent l'intérêt d'une écriture parfois peu canalisée" in "Grands Prix « Piano d'Orléans » 2009" <http://www.resmusica.com/2009/03/19/grands-prix-piano-dorleans/>
- [8] Woschnick, Thomas, "Carlos Sandoval: setting in Motion", interview in *Cast your Art* <http://www.castyourart.com/en/2009/04/08/carlos-sandoval-setting-in-motion/>

- [9] *Ibid*, Enriquez, Maru.
- [10] Kramer, Jonathan. 2002. "The Nature and Origins of Musical Postmodernism." In *Postmodern Music/Postmodern Thought*, edited by Judy Lochhead and Joseph Auer, 13–26. New York: Routledge. ISBN 0-8153-3820-1 Reprinted from *Current Musicology* no. 66 (Spring 1999): 7–20. "1. Is not simply a repudiation of modernism or its continuation, but has aspects of both a break and an extension 2. Is, on some level and in some way, ironic. 3. Does not respect boundaries between sonorities and procedures of the past and of the present 4. Challenges barriers between 'high' and 'low' styles. 5. Shows disdain for the often unquestioned value of structural unity. 6. Questions the mutual exclusivity of elitist and populist values. 7. Avoids totalizing forms (e.g., does not want entire pieces to be tonal or serial or cast in a prescribed formal mold). 8. Considers music not as autonomous but as relevant to cultural, social, and political contexts. 9. Includes quotations of or references to music of many traditions and cultures. 10. Considers technology not only as a way to preserve and transmit music but also as deeply implicated in the production and essence of music. 11. Embraces contradictions. 12. Distrusts binary oppositions. 13. Includes fragmentations and discontinuities. 14. Encompasses pluralism and eclecticism. 15. Presents multiple meanings and multiple temporalities. 16. Locates meaning and even structure in listeners, more than in scores, performances, or composers.
- [11] Sandoval, Carlos, "Imaginación, Análisis y Posmodernismo" *Artelugio Magazine*, Querétaro City, 2002. Revised version: *Pauta Magazine*. Mexico City, 2005.
- [12] Sandoval, Carlos, "De la fenomenología al ejercicio estético, o una apología del cinismo", *Artelugio Magazine*, Querétaro City, 2002. (Revised edition in *Pauta Magazine*, Mexico City, 2005). http://www.carlos-sandoval.de/pdf/La_catastrofe_web.pdf
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- [15] Sandoval, Carlos: "Pf-02", in *La Pasión según la gente*, Quindecim, QDO 1153, PACMyC, Sireña, México.
- [16] "La Pasión Según la Gente" SACM, Quindecim Recordings QD01153, PACMYC, Mexico, Sireña, Track 01.
- [17] Rivero, Antonio, interview "Carlos Sandoval", Part 1, *Clon Magazine*, "Arte y pensamiento contemporáneo series, Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, 2008. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nZ8ZH4V3JkE>
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- [19] *Ibid.*, del Rivero, Antonio, interview 2008.
- [20] Sandoval, Carlos, "Heimat, Identität?", *Neue zeitschrift für Musik*, 1-2009, p. 40-45. Germany
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- [22] <http://www.carlos-sandoval.de>
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