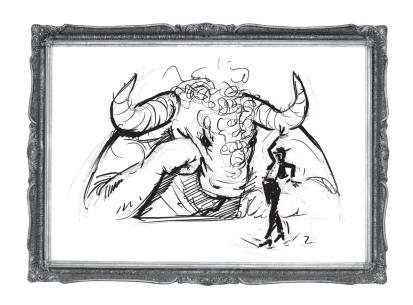


Cover: original drawing by Jean-Pierre Blanchard entitled *Pour mon ami Antonio* 

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ISMN: 979-0-9016510-9-8



# El Jardín de la Vida y la Muerte

Liturgy for dancers and orchestra opus 76

Music: Robert Casteels

# Commissioned by

NUS Centre For the Arts, National University of Singapore

# First performance:

3 April 2010, in the Conservatory Concert Hall of the Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music, National University of Singapore during a concert titled "Strings of Time 30 Years of GENUS" in celebration of the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Niibori Guitar Orchestra of the National University of Singapore, set against a ballet choreographed by Antonio Vargas

# Performers of the first performance:

Toreador: Toshiaki Konno/ Toro bravo: Antonio Vargas/ Dance company: Flamenco Sin Fronteras/ Mezzo-soprano: Satsuki Nagatome/ Solo percussion: Michael Tan/ Electric guitar: Edward Cornelius Abraham/ Synthesizer guitar: Balraj Gopal/ Harpsichord: Michelle Lim/ Guzheng: Ow Liangshan/ Trumpet quartet from the Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music/NUSChoir, GENUS and XPOSÉ!, being the choir, Niibori Guitar orchestra and alumni guitar ensemble of the National University of Singapore respectively/ Conductor: Robert Casteels

## **Poem:**

El Silencio, by Frederico Garcia Lorca (from Poema de La Siguiriya Gitana, from Poema del Cante Jondo) (written in 1921, first published in 1931).

"Oye, hijo mío, el silencio./ Es un silencio ondulado,/ un silencio,/ donde resbalan valles y ecos/ y que inclina las frentes/ hacia el suelo".

Listen, my son: the silence./ It's a rolling silence,/ a silence/ where valleys and echoes slip,/ and it bends foreheads/ down towards the ground.

(translation by Carlos Bauer, reproduced with the permission of City Lights Books San Francisco).

## M Duration: 20'

### **Characters:**

- Toreador
- Toro bravo
- Minotaur, the Mother and the Spirit of the Toro bravo
- Novilleros
- Banderilleros
- Picador
- Valet of the toreador
- Spectators

### Instrumentation:

- 4 trumpets in B flat with straight and cup mutes
- Percussion:
  - player 1 on bass drum, 4 timpani, snare drum, cajón, pair of cymbals, 1 suspended cymbal and geophone
  - player 2 on vibraphone with variable speeds (soft, soft/hard and hard mallets), glockenspiel and xylophone
- Niibori guitar orchestra: soprano (at least 2), alto 1 and 2, prime 1 and 2, bass, contrabass and guitarrón
- Harpsichord (with two manuals so as to cover a compass of 5 octaves)
- 21-string guzheng (one player on two instruments, each tuned differently)
- 1 electric guitar
- 1 synthesizer guitar
- Solo mezzo-soprano (in the last movement)
- 3-part vocal ensemble of 12 voices (cum lithophones, or pairs of stones of varied sizes, textures and sounds)

## **Performance Notes:**

Full score in C.

All instruments sound loco except glockenspiel (sounding 2 octaves higher than notated) and xylophone (sounding 1 octave higher than notated).

All Niibori guitar parts (ISMN: 979-0-9016511-2-8) are notated in treble clef, with their respective standard transposition: sopranos sound as written, altos sound a perfect 4th lower than notated, primes sound a perfect octave lower than notated,

basses sound a perfect octave and 4th lower than notated, contrabasses and guitarrón sound two octaves lower than notated. The parts contain fingerings and cues, but no titles of movements.

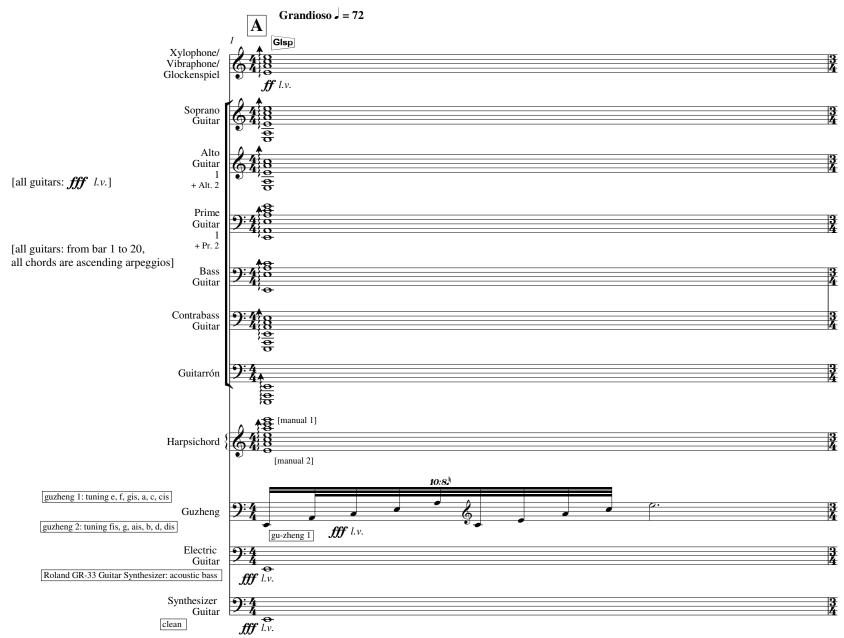
Slurs with dotted lines indicate the phrasing. Double bars delineate cycles of 12.

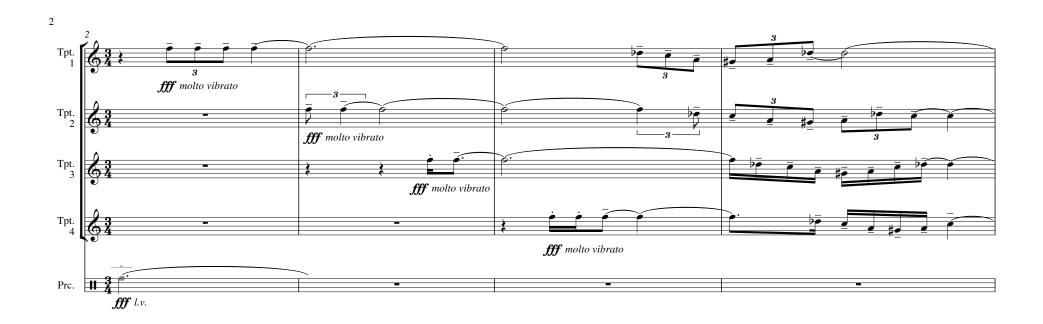
Dancers and solo percussionist are at liberty to extemporize during the Faruca.

# El Jardín de la Vida y la Muerte

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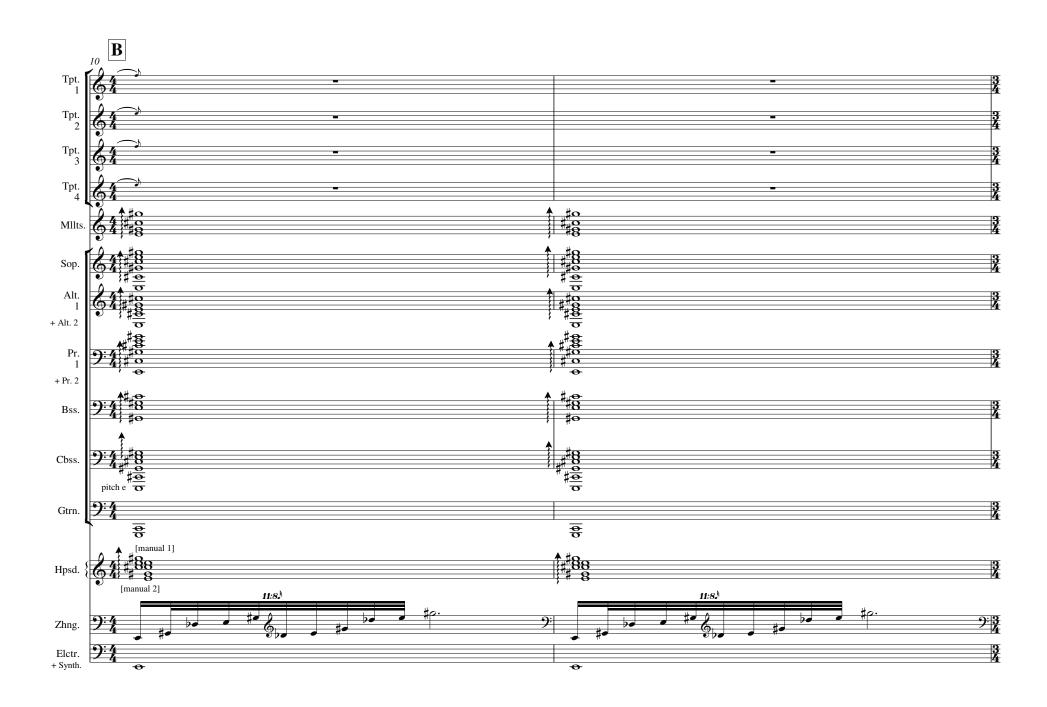
1. Canto de invocación [88"] Invocation to the Gods. The bullfighter or toreador is assisted by his valet to wear the elaborate costume or trajes de luces.









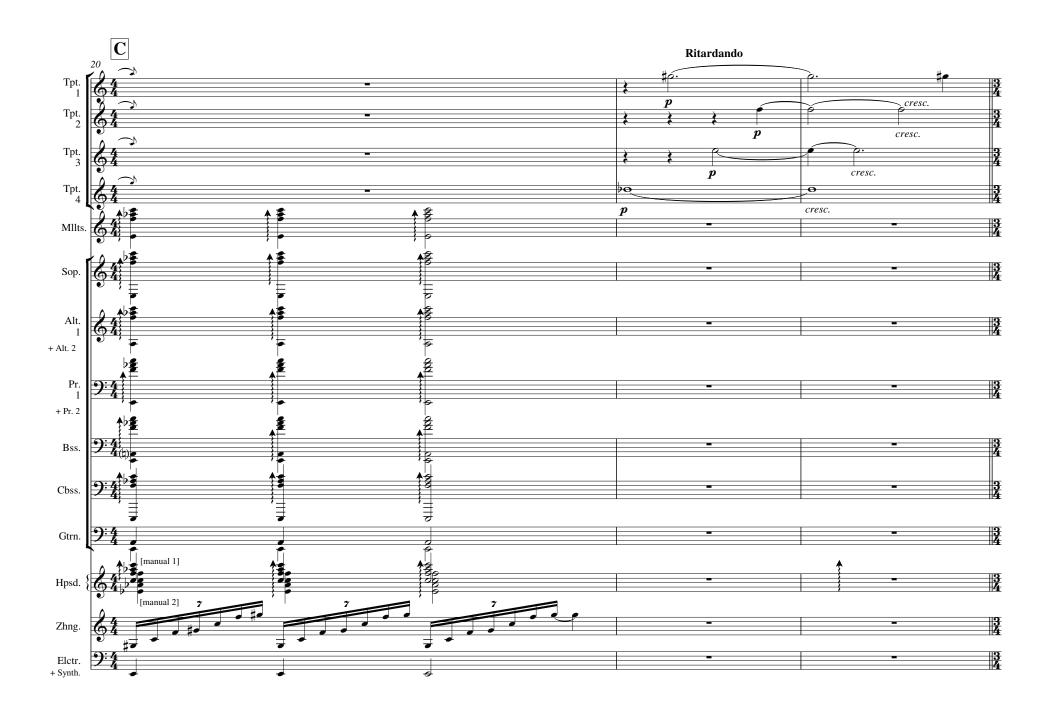


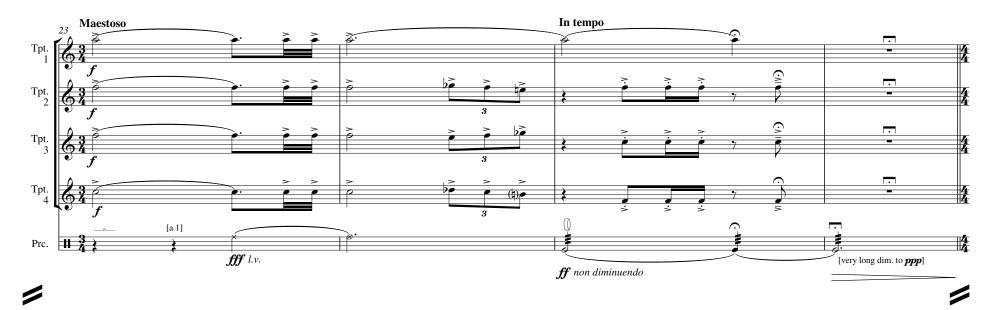




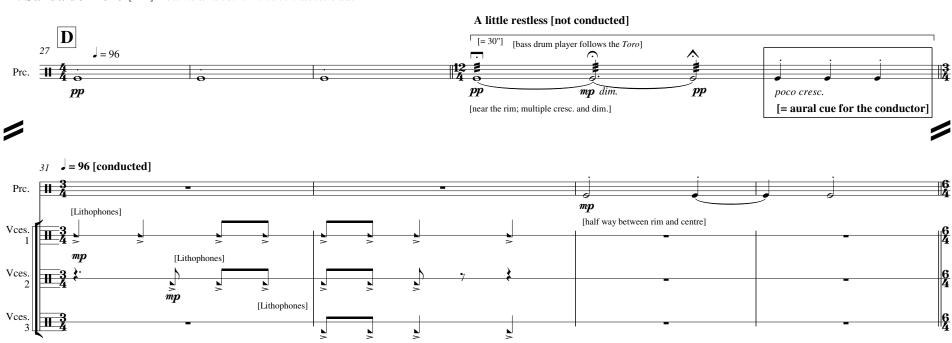
#### [note to the conductor: each trumpet crescendo starts at a different moment]

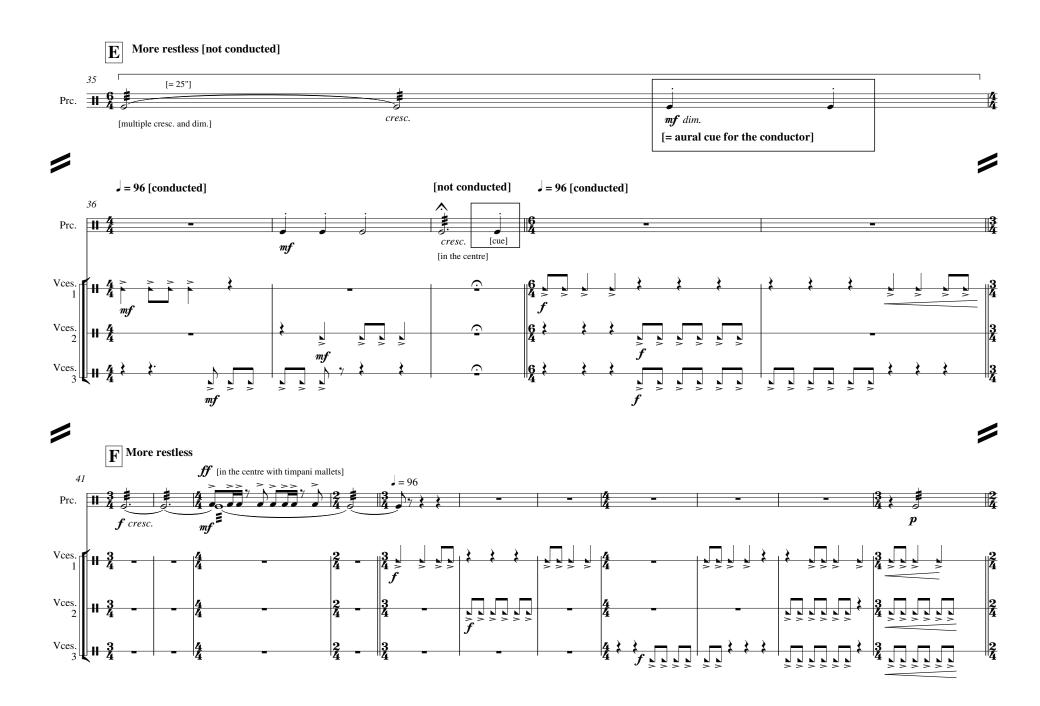






2. Salida del Toro [144"] The bull rushes into the unfamiliar arena and feels disorientated.





#### 3. Tercio de Varas: Tentado del Toro [72"] The bull's strength is assessed by the bullfighting apprentices or novilleros.













4. La Faena del Picador [29"] Exit of the banderilleros. Thrice the bull charges. To further weaken him, two picadores perform their duty, or faena, which is to jab the bull with a lance called la vara.

 $\boldsymbol{p}$ 





5. Tercio de Banderillas [60"] As artistically and cleanly as possible, banderilleros 1, then banderilleros 2, then the toreador plants into the bull's shoulder metal spikes called banderillas. The Minotaur enters.





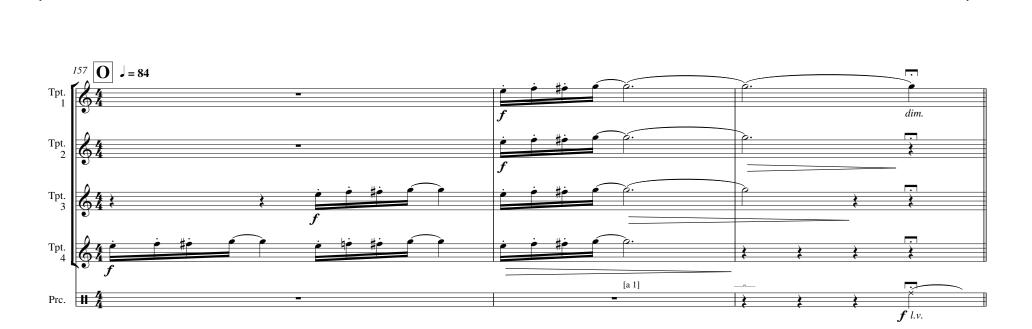




#### **6. El Espíritu de la Madre** [72"] To alleviate the bull's suffering, the *Minotaur* takes the lance and dances with the *matador*.

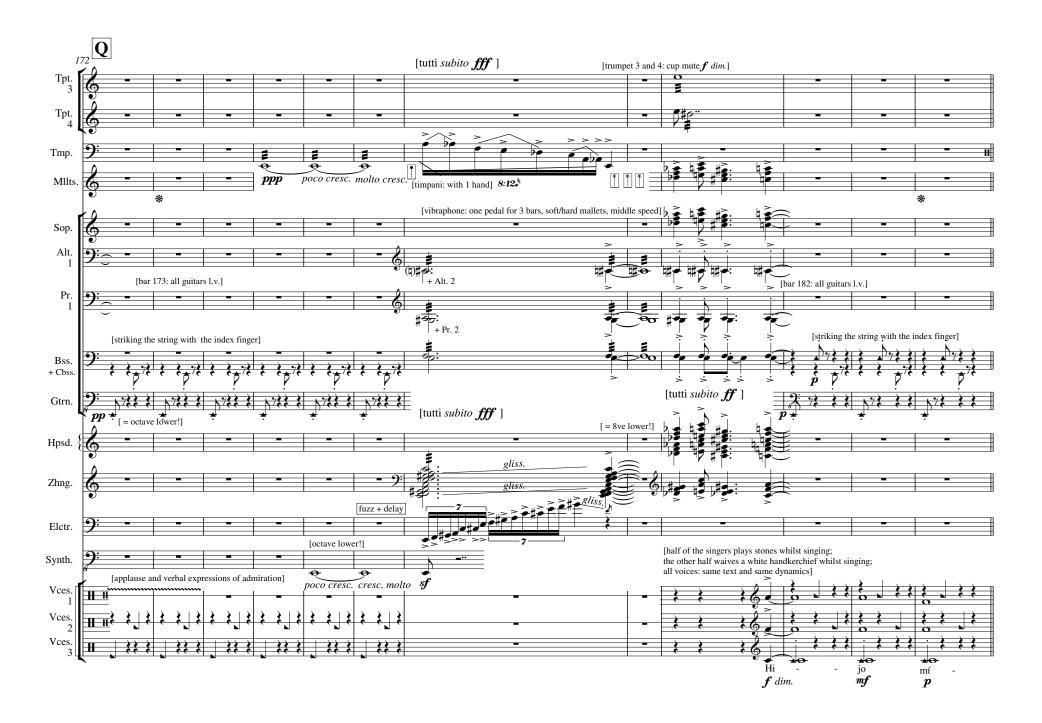


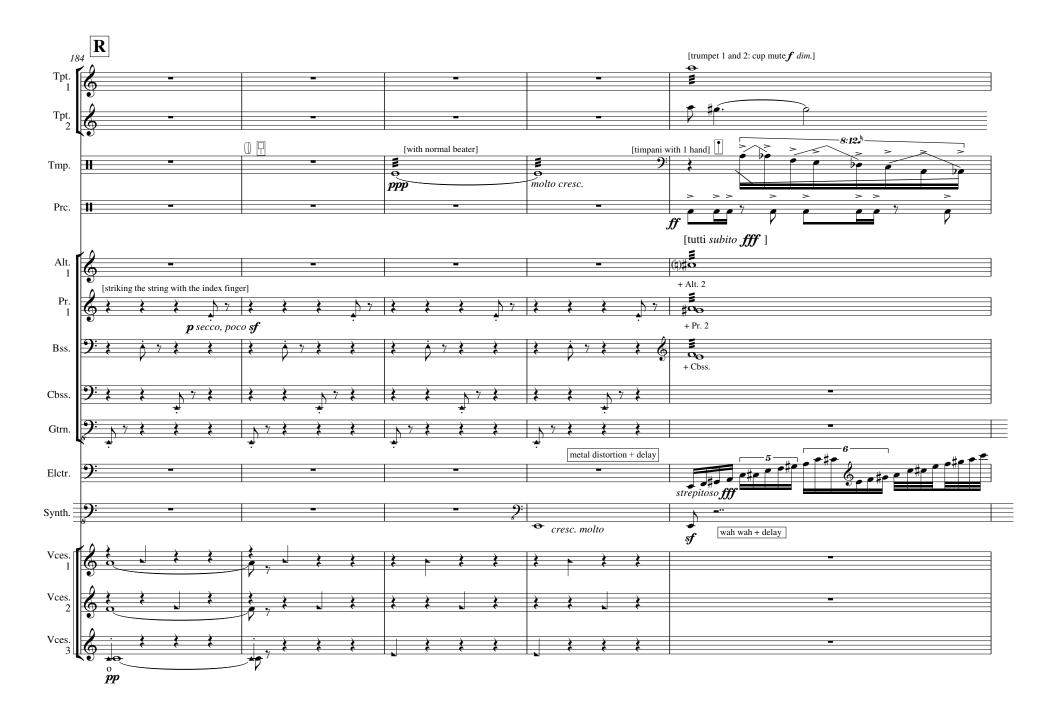




7. Tercio de la Muleta [84"] The torero becomes the matador, the only participant allowed to kill the bull. Thrice the bull charges. Using the red cape omuletta, the matador maneuvers the bull until his death.



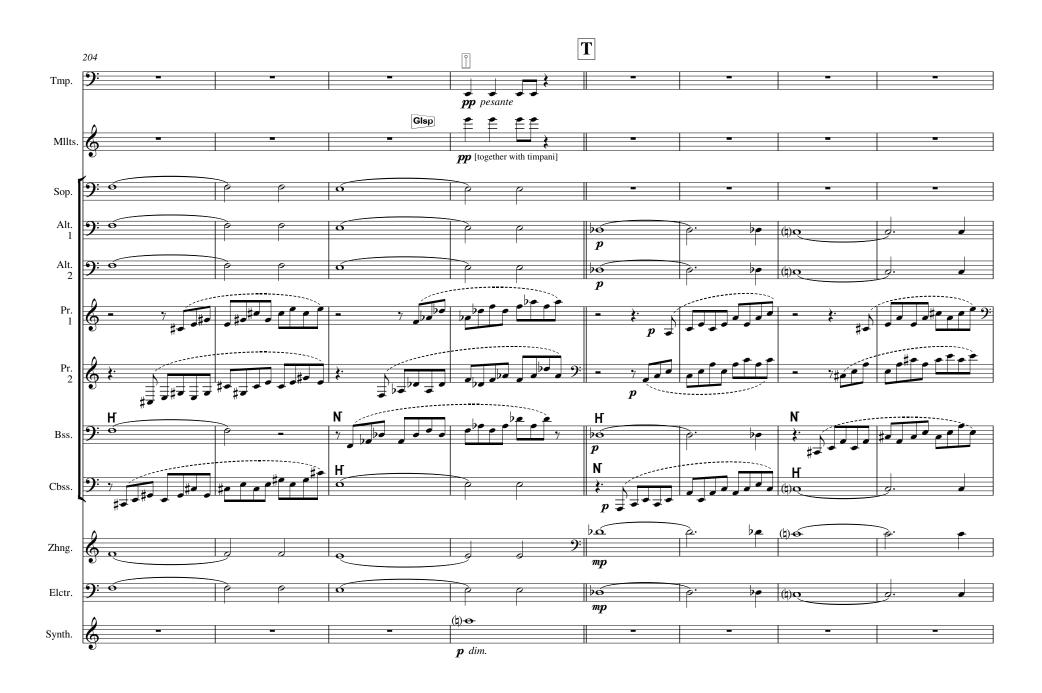






#### 8. El Pañuelo blanco [84"] The bull dies. The crowd demonstrates its approval by waving white handkerchiefs which are a signal to the President of the corridor to award the matador a trophy, such as an ear or tail. The bull's soul ascends.







#### 9. La Rueda [2'] The ears of the bull are given to the matador.

















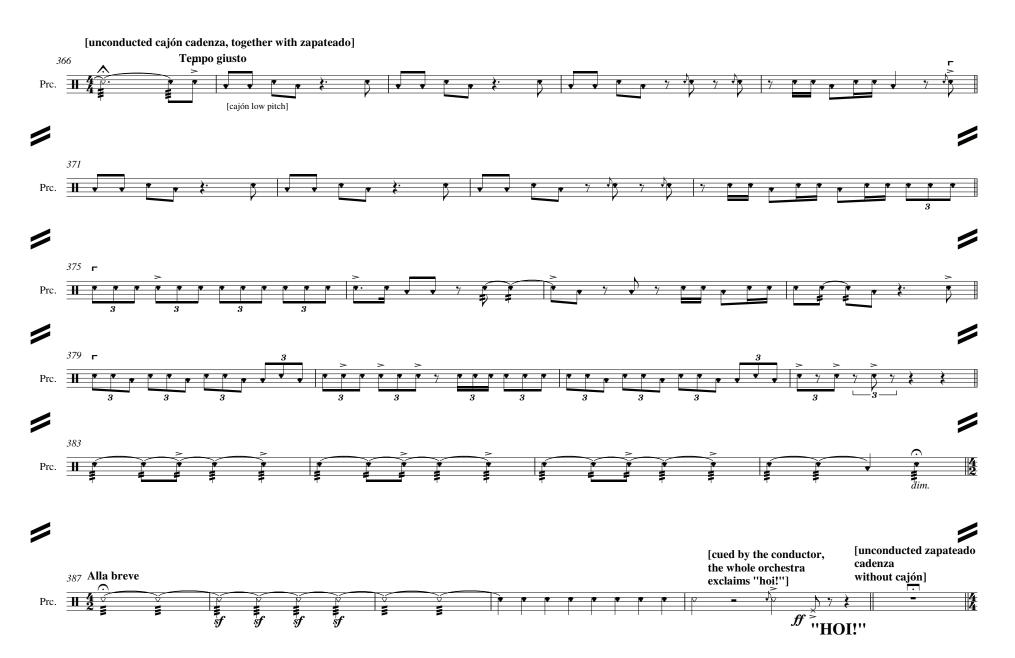




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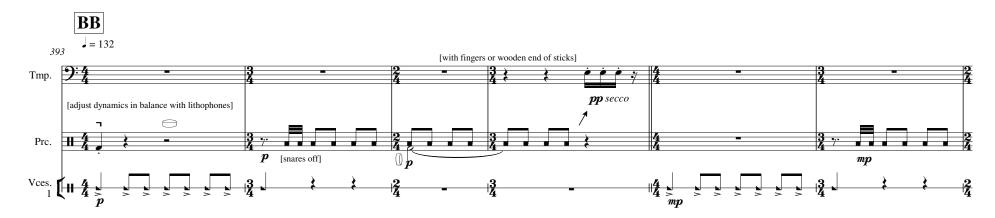


#### 10. La Faruca [65"] Final dance of the *matador* and spectators. The *faruca* is a fast flamenco male dance.



#### 44 | El Jardín de la Vida y la Muerte

### 11. El Espíritu del Toro [24"] Minotaur removes her bull's head and cuts her own ears.



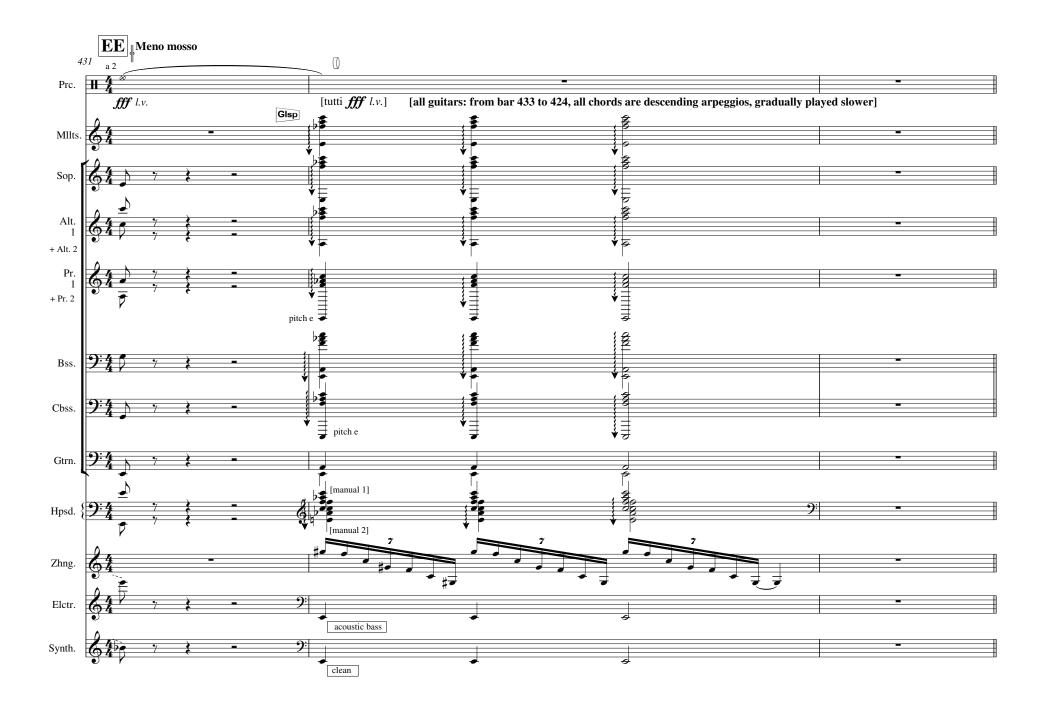


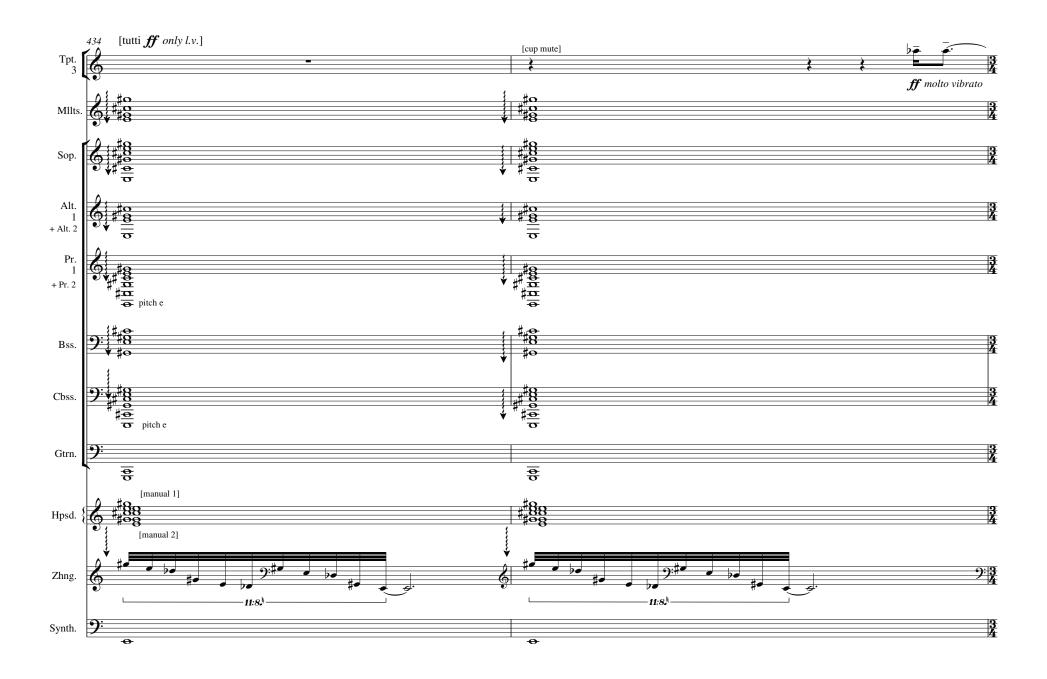
## 9B. La Rueda [84"]









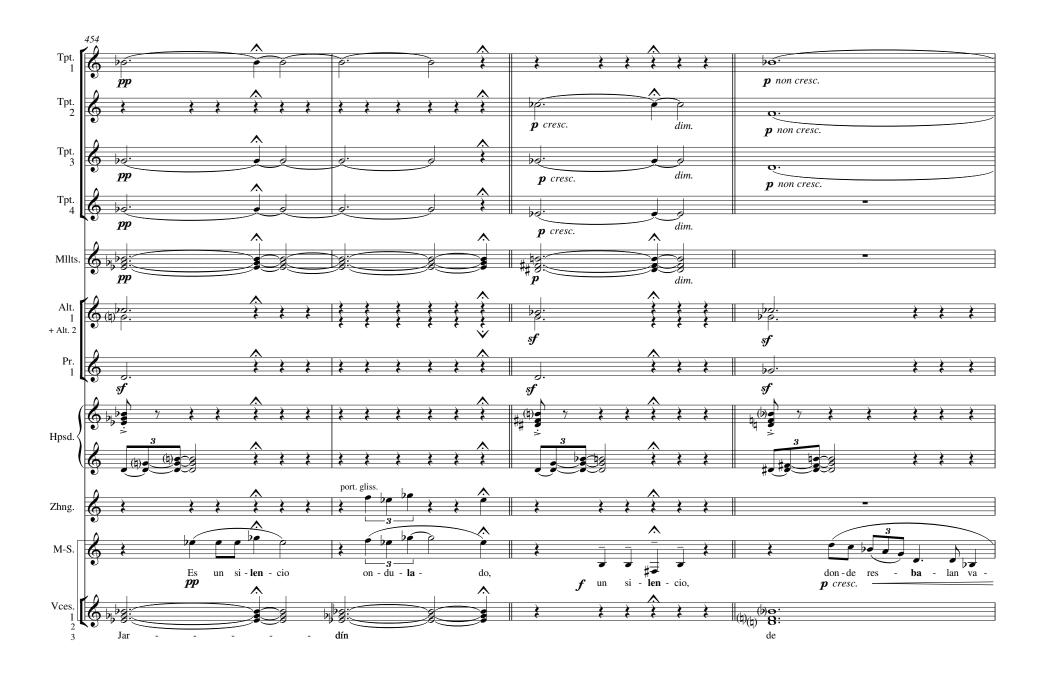


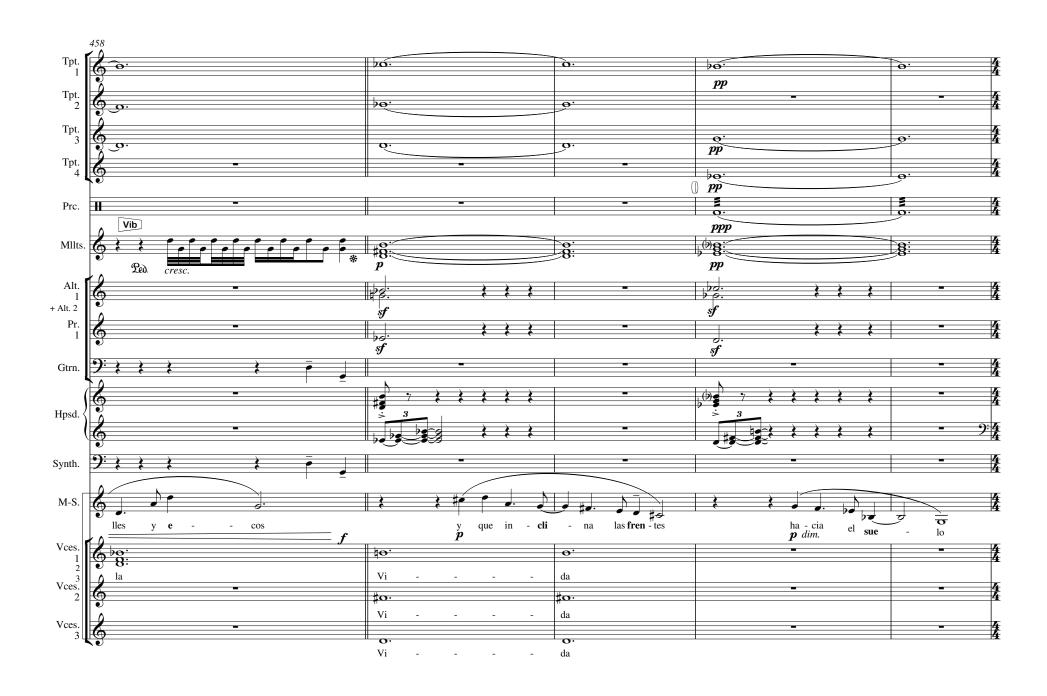


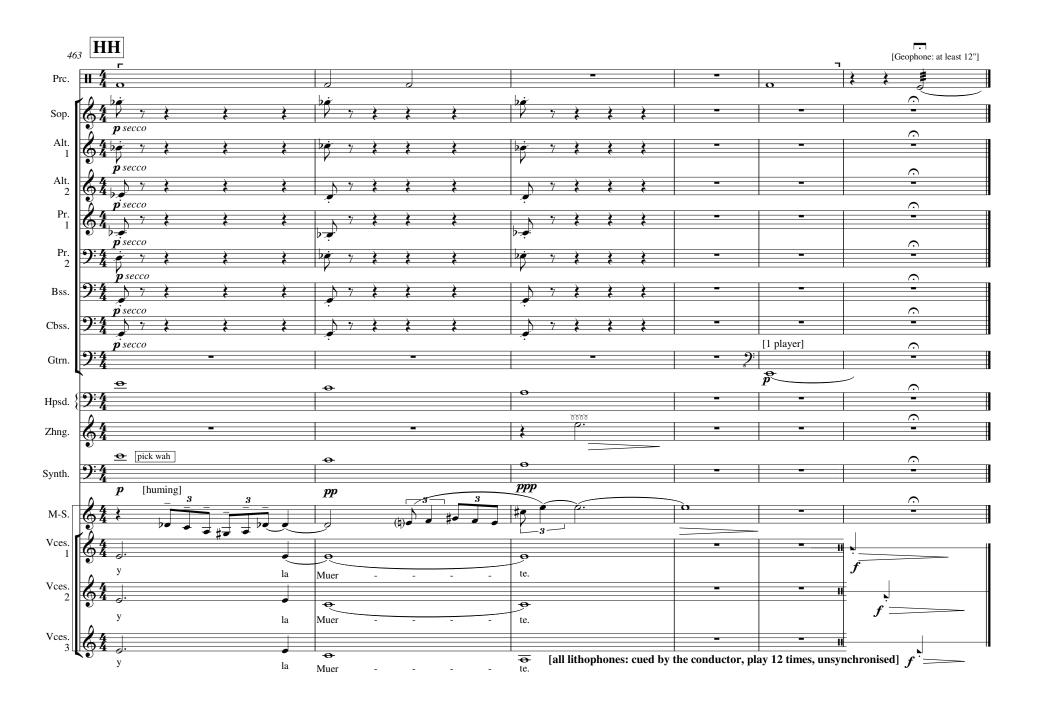


## 12. Cante jondo [2'48"] The Minotaur sings a threnody on poem "El Silencio" by Lorca.









# Melodic language:

I avoided the ubiquitous flamenco Phrygian tonality on pitch E with its chord progression from a minor to G Major to F Major and to E Major, in which the two chords that demand a resolution to the tonic are the supertonic and the subtonic. I felt no compelling reason to turn to dodecaphonism. Instead I opted for a modal language. Mode 1 is constituted of a triple pair of semitones with pitches e/f, gis/a and c/cis. Crucial parts 6 and 12 with the cante jondo are based on mode 2, with pitches fis/g, ais/b and d/dis. Modes 1 and 2 are the concave and convex form of each other. From mode 1 emerge the following six tonalities: a minor and A Major, f minor and F Major, cis minor and Des Major. Three of these tonalities appear in part 1, 9B and 12. Four of these tonalities appear in part 7. All six appear in parts 3, 5, 6 and 8. The melodic theme of part 4 returns in part 9A at rehearsal letter W and in part 11. A second melodic theme appears in part 5, 9A and 9B.

# **Rhythmic language:**

Flamenco's cherished number twelve led me to divide the whole composition in twelve parts. The beginning of each part is heralded by trumpets. Tempo markings and total duration are based on multiples of twelve. Rhythmic cycles are also organised on the figure twelve. In the score, double bar lines delineate a cycle of twelve. In the rueda, I used the sesquialtera pattern, or the hemiola, an alternation of bars in  $\frac{6}{8}$  and in  $\frac{3}{4}$ . A rhythmic cell (quaver, 2 semiquavers, quaver rest, quaver) appears in its original form as in various degree of augmentations at the end of part 1, throughout part 2 and 3, in part 7 and 8, and at the end of part 5 and 12.

# **Structure:**

I did not choose the corrida as the subject matter of a folkloric sonic postcard out of some atavistic inheritance of my Castilian ancestors. Yet, my composition comprises the three element of flamenco art: the song or cante, the dance or baile and the guitar playing or toque.

Title of movements	Plot	Rehear-sal letter/ Bar number	Tempo/ Duration	Cycles/ Compositional material	transition	Dominant instrumental timbre
1. Canto de invocación	Invocation to the Gods, whilst the bullfighter or toreador is assisted by his valet to wear the elaborate costume or trajes de luces.	Letter A; Bar 1	72; = 88"	(part 1 ↔ part end of 9B)  4 + two cycles of 12 (= 8 x 3)/ 4 + 4 + two cycles of 12 (= 7 x 3 + 3)/ two cycles of 12 (4 + 4 + 4, 3 x 4);  Mode 1: e/f, gis/a and c c/cis;  3 minor tonalities are derived from mode 1: a, c# and f with coda in F Major;  CANTE d' INVOCACIÓN by 4 trumpets on focal pitch f then pitch as, then pitch a;  Rhythmic cell 1 in trumpets 2, 3 and 4 at 2 bars before letter D		Chordal texture. 4 trumpets. 2 cymbal crashes.
		Bar 26			Bass drum fermata	
2. Salida del Toro	The bull rushes into the unfamiliar arena and feels disorientated.	Letter D; Bar 27	96 ; = 144"	(part 2 $\leftrightarrow$ part 7) Eight and a half cycles of 12 crotchets alternate between bass drum and lithophones, that is: $4 \times 3 / 12 / 3 \times 4 / 6 / 4 \times 3 / 6 + 6 / 3 + 3 + 4 + 2 / 3 \times 3 + 4 \times 3 + 3$ ; Rhythmic cell 1 in bar 43; Shifting rhythmic cell 2 by lithophones		Percussion only: the bass drum expresses the growing unease of the massive bull and the lithophone his heartbeat.
		Letter G; Bar 52 to 54		Colotomic bugle call 1 by 2 trumpets in unison in quavers in one cycle of 12 quavers on mode 1 + suspended cymbal punctuation	Seamless	

3. Tercio de Varas: Tentado del Toro	The bull's strength is assessed by the bullfighting apprentice or novilleros. In turn, the 1st novilleros, then the 2nd and finally the toreador himself use the capote de breja, a magenta yellow cape to bait the bull into tiring charges.	Bar 52	84; = 72"	(part $3 \leftrightarrow part 8$ ) three cycles of 12 bars each (i.e. 2 bars in $^2_4$ + 3 bars in $^3_4$ + 4 bars in $^2_4$ + 3 bars in $^3_4$ ); 6 tonalities in chordal descending motion (a m/M; f m/M; c# m/M, all derived from mode 1); Ascending countermelody in mode 1; On arrival, rhythmic cell 1, once in bar 66, then twice in bar 76 and 77, then thrice in bars 88 to 90		Guitars and bass drum. Changing colour of harpsichord and synth guitar to harpsichord and electric guitar (bar 67) to harpsichord and guzheng (bar 79). Choral exclamations in bar 88.
		Letter J; Bar 91 to 93		Colotomic bugle call 2 by 3 trumpets in unison in quaver triplets on 4 pitches of mode 2 (ais, b, d and dis) in 1 cycle of 12 crochets with suspended cymbal punctuation	Seamless	
4. La Faena del Picador	Exit of the banderilleros. The bull charges thrice. To further weaken him, two picadores perform their duty, or faena, which is to jab the bull with a lance called la vara.	Bar 94	132; = 29"	(part $4 \leftrightarrow$ part 9) Four cycles of 12 crotchets each (that is $4+3+2+3/4+3+2+3/4+2+4+2/4+4+4$ fermata = 12); Melodic theme 1 with gradual superimposition of four perfect $5^{ths}$		Guitars, vibes and snare drum.
					Seamless	
5. Tercio de Banderillas	As artistically and cleanly as possible, banderilleros 1, then banderilleros 2, and finally the toreador plant metal spikes called banderillas into the bull's shoulders. The Minotaur, a bull-headed creature, enters.	Letter K; Bar 108	96/ 108/ 120; = 60"	(part 5 ↔ part 11)  Eight cycles of 12 crotchets each (that is 2 + 3 + 2 + 2 + 3 x 2 followed by 4 + 4 + 4 of trumpets' first descent in quavers/2 + 3 + 2 + 2 + 3 x 2 followed by 4 + 4 + 4 of trumpets' second descent in triplet quavers/2 + 3 + 2 + 2 + 3 followed by trumpets' third descent in semiquavers followed by 2 + 3 + 2 + 2 + 3);  Pedal point on e and f; 6 tonalities in vibes, harpsichord, guzheng (bar 118, 131 and 138);  Mode 1 ascending in guitars and descending canon in trumpets; each beginning trumpet note starts higher;  Melodic theme 2		Guitars, trumpets and bass drum. The trumpets' descending figure mirrors the toreador's action.
		Letter N; Bar 144 and 145		Augmentation of rhythmic cell 2	Transiti-onal litho-phones	

6. El Espíritu de la Madre	To alleviate the bull's suffering, the <i>Minotaur</i> takes the lance and dances with the <i>matador</i> .	Bar 146 Letter O;	rubato; = 72"	(part 6 ↔ part 12) 5 and a half cycles of 12 crotchets, that is: 6 x 2 + 6 x 2 + 6 + 6 x 2 + 6 x 2 + 6 x 2; 6 tonalities in harpsichord; CANTE JONDO in mode 2: fis/g, ais/b and d/dis  Colotomic chromatic bugle call 3 by 4 trumpets in unison in	Seamless	Quartet harpsichord, guzheng, electric and synthesizer guitars.
		Bar 157 to 161		semiquavers in one cycle of 12 semiquavers with suspended cymbal punctuation	Seamless	
7. Tercio de la Muleta	The torero becomes the matador, the only participant allowed to kill the bull. The bull charges thrice. Using the red cape or muletta, the matador manoeuvres the bull until his death.	Letter P; Bar 160	84; = 84"	(part 7 ↔ part 2) Three cycle of 12 crotchets each; E pedal point; Ascending mode 1 in electric guitar soli and descending mode 2 in timpani soli; Bar 193: ascending mode 1 trumpets and synth guitar; Ternary structure with three tutti explosions, each shifting 1 octave up; Thrice shifting rhythmic cell 2 and four tonalities (bar 171, 180 and 189); Rhythmic cell 1 in bass drum bar 188		Tutti. Guitar and timpani soli. Xylophone and stones. Choir sings twice the filial exhortation.
8. El Pañuelo blanco	The bull dies. The crowd demonstrates its approval by waving white handkerchiefs which are a signal to the President of the corrida to award the matador a trophy, such as an ear or tail. The bull's soul ascends.	Letter S; Bar 196	48; = 84"	(part 8 ↔ part 3)  Eight cycles of 12 crotchets, that is ½ x 12 + ½ x 12 + ½ x 12 + ½ x 12 + 6 x 4); 6 tonalities;  Descending countermelody in mode 1 (= reverse of part 3); Structure = A1, A2, A3, B1, B2, B3  At the end of every phrase, (bar 207, 219 and 230) shifting rhythmic cell 2 by the timpani and glockenspiel; Bass drum bar 228sq: twice rhythmic cell 1, in simple then in double then in quadruple augmentation	Seamless	Guitars. Timpani and glock- enspiel. Vibraphone.
					Seamless	

9.A La Rueda	The bull's ears are given to the matador.	Letter V; Bar 234	96/ 104/ 112/ 120; = 120"	(part 9A ↔ part 4) Twenty-four cycles of 12 crotchets each (additional crotchet of bar 317 = breath); Building up of a chord of 5 <sup>ths</sup> with a superimposition of seven 5 <sup>ths</sup> reached at rehearsal letter W followed by liquidation from bar 291 to 298 and building up again from bar 310 to 316; 8 times melodic theme 3		Tutti
		Bar 365			Fermata	
10. La Faruca	Final dance of the <i>matador</i> and spectators. The <i>faruca</i> is a fast flamenco male dance.	Bar 366	65"	exception with cycles of four bars of 4 beats each		Cajón and zapateado cadenza
11. El Espíritu del Toro	Minotaur removes her bull's head and cuts off her own ears.	Letter BB; Bar 393	132; = 24"	(part 11 $\leftrightarrow$ part 5) Four cycles of 12 crotchets each, that is: $4+3+2+3/4+3+2+3/4+2+4+2/4+2+3+3$	Seamless (with 6 crotchet rests)	Percussion only
		Bar 408			Seamless	
9.B La Rueda	La <i>rueda</i> resumes	Letter CC; Bar 409	132; = 84"	(part 9B ↔ part 1) From rehearsal letter CC, five cycles only of 24 quavers each and superimposition of themes 2 and 3 with pedal point e and dis; From rehearsal letter EE till bar 447, amount of crotchets = five cycles of 12 crotchets each and 3 minor tonalities derived from mode 1 (a, c# and f without cod or reverse order of part 1) and CANTE d' INVOCACIÓN by 4 trumpets on focal pitch as, then pitch f (= reverse order of part 1)		Tutti
		Letter GG; Bar 448		(transition ↔ part 2) 1 cycle of 3 x 4	Seamless	
12. Cante jondo	The Minotaur sings a threnody on the poem "El Silencio" by Lorca.	Bar 452	60; = 2'48"	(part 12 ↔ part 6) Seven and a half cycles of 12 crotchets each final fermata bar; Chords of 3rds with 3 major tonalities; CANTE JONDO in mode 2 with poem)// Hummed codetta CANTE JONDO 1 on mode 2; (melodically by voice and harmonically by guitars); Rhythmic cell 1 in quadruple augmentation		Choir sings the title. Mezzo-soprano sings the poem.
	The bull's heartbeat is faintly heard by the lithophones.	Bar 468		Geophone only "played" by the Minotaur via the solo percussionist.	Geophone fermata	Timeless timbre of the geophone
		20' (or 100 x	12")			

## **Thoughts:**

The title El Jardín de la Vida y la Muerte means The Garden of Life and Death. This garden is a microcosm of society we live in. Just as the torero and the bull are physically trapped within the confines of the bullfighting arena, we are likewise stifled by social strictures constituted by society as a whole. When considered in his or her own individuality, each human being is unique and refined. However, when these same gentle individuals happen to come together in an anonymous collectivity, they become selfish and indifferent to each other. Taking a step further, when herded together as a collectivity with a common enemy, humans become cruel and feral, just like in the context of the corrida where the cruelest participant is its audience. Jean-Paul Sartre sums up this idea best in his famous quote "L'enfer, c'est les autres" ("Hell is the Other"), which forms the central idea of his existentialist play huis clos (No Exit). The "Other", an alien entity from the" Self", is another point of reference around which judgments of the "Self" may be formed. Hence, the sheer presence of the collective Other becomes a force that can threaten one into conforming to certain expectations.

The same process takes place between genders, as gender roles are structures in which an external "Other" may threaten one's

individuality by imposing definitions of being. Human beings are also trapped by gender-related roles. Movie directors have drawn a parallel in which the fight between matador and bull mirrors the power struggle between genders. In Pedro Almodóvar's 1986 movie entitled *Matador*, the men appear to dominate, whereas it is the women who actually do, thereby symbolically taking the role of the matador. Catherine Creillat's 1999 sexually-explicit movie entitled Romance starts with a very symbolic scene of a bull fight photo shoot between a man and a woman, and ends with both sides being the losers. In Menno Meyies's 2007 movie entitled Manolete, the woman is the downfall of the toreador, who can only have one mistress, Death. This is because the torero's job demands his acceptance of toying with danger, and hence it is only the morbid fascination with death that can drive one to take up such a role.

The subtitle *Liturgy for dancers and orchestra* hints at the fact that this composition is by no means a eulogy of tauromachy. The French Alliance Anti-corrida and the Irish Council Against Blood Sports take the stance against tauromachy, as they hold an anthropomorphic vision of bulls suffering human feelings in front of bestialized humans in the form of an abhorrent and outdated spectacle. Aficionados of tauromachy, on the other hand, argue that the activity of tauroboly (or bull sacrifice) as executed by the bullfighter or torero is one that is deeply enshrined in a code of honour. Butchers murder bulls, whereas the matador, the only person authorised to kill a bull, takes the bull's life in a highly ritualised act of sacrifice. France's southern region of Camargue has its own non-lethal version of bullfighting, during which young men attempt to pluck a rosette from between the horns of the bull. The corrida de toros literally means the "bull race": "bullfighting" is an inaccurate translation.

Despite the multi-million business it generates, bullfighting is not a hobby. Despite the strict rules involved (such as the weight and the age of the bull) as well as the occasional scandals (such as weakening taurine bloodlines, horn shaving or tapering), bullfighting is not a sport. Despite its dazzling display of virtuosity greeted by shouts of iOlé!, and despite Hemingway's reference to it as "the only art in which the artist is in danger of death" in his 1932 novel Death in the Afternoon, bullfighting is not an art.

Since tauromachy is not a hobby, nor a sport, nor an art, what is it? My subtitle Liturgy for dancers and orchestra refers to the fact that tauromachy is essentially a sacrificial and cathartic liturgy in a Judeo-Christian context, with its pagan roots tracing

back to dravidian India, Sumerian and Assyro-Babylonian civilisations, Minoan Creta, Pharaonic Egypt and Mithridatic Rome. The etymologies of the names 'Europe' and 'Italy' are even closely related to tauromachy: 'Europa' is the name of a princess seduced by the tauromorphic god Zeus and mother Cretan king Minos; 'Italy' means the "land of young cattle".

Are animals humans? The bull is colour-blind, has no stereoscopic vision and charges forward, deeper and deeper into the inescapable reality of his palpable hell. Are humans animals? We create our own hell by running meaningless rat races that bleed our blue planet to death. Our survival instinct urges us to conform to expectations. This survival strategy leads to self-destruction, a sort of ontological liposuction. The chasm between the reality of dreams and the appearances of reality deepens our emotional wounds. Like the torero and the bull facing fear and suffering, we wander and wonder in the garden of life. At the end of El Jardín, the deep mezzo-soprano voice, the spirit of the mother of the bull, sings a cante jondo (literally the "deep song of flamenco"), a song that spouts out of the souls' depth. The text of this cante jondo is Frederico Garcia Lorca's poem entitled El Silencio: Listen, my son: the silence. It is a rolling silence. A silence where valleys and echoes slip. And it bends foreheads, down towards the ground. Life and Death? La Vida o la Muerte? Eros and Thanatos.

With thanks to Tan Hejing, Chua Jon Lin and Jolie Giouw

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