

## Poetics for the Multi-opera *Murmullos del páramo* by Julio Estrada

**Abstract.** The art of creation for the genre of opera in the 21st century is characterized by the fusion of contemporary approaches for artistic subjects and the tradition of what opera represents in music history. Julio Estrada's opera *Murmullos del páramo* presented in this paper provides us with a quite unique approach in dealing with the libretto as a literary source for sonority. The paper discusses facets of pre-Hispanic cultures embracing knowledge of mythology, cosmology and transcendental aspects that influenced the literary works corresponding to magical-realism in Latin America in the 20th century. A second discussion is focused on the construction of the opera, the structure and the symbolization of the musical material, addressing the problem of the so-called *macro timbre* – a new methodology of creation that rejects the traditional treatment of all musical components of rhythm and sound. The analysis presented here provides evidence of how this new transcription methodology is able to transform a literary text into a chant for death with the absence of words as musical material. In order to enrich the issue, new evidence is presented regarding the strong connection from ancestral mythology with literary symbolism, and later on with a musical composition, where the unification of these three main sources combine in the listener's imagination and touch our deepest emotions with unique means regarding the realization a vocal-instrumental dramatization of the libretto. The evidence presented here provides an opportunity to evaluate the level of aesthetical procedures proposed by Estrada, his techniques and methods of musical transcription, leaving an open discussion for further research related to this subject.

**Keywords:** Julio Estrada, *macro timbre*, multi-opera, Juan Rulfo, Pedro Páramo.

### Introduction

The trajectory of this paper is two-fold. (1) An investigation of the aesthetics and cultural aspects connected as external influences that affected the process of composition by Julio Estrada is proposed. Mainly, it held two sources of inspiration: firstly, the novel *Pedro Páramo* by Juan Rulfo (1917–1986), a tale that submerges the reader into an imaginary and real world stipulated by audible perceptions of images in Rulfo's prose and poetry; secondly, mythology that belonged to pre-Hispanic cultures in ancient Mexico. Mystical tales from ancient civilizations, cosmological knowledge and cultural aspects influenced the role of life, religion and artistic expressions in ancient Mesoamerica for hundreds of years. (2) A discussion related with the process of creation the multi-opera *Murmullos del páramo* is developed, departing from the imagination of Estrada's perception of the prose and poetry in Rulfo's narrative, continuing to the elaboration of the musical work, where new techniques for vocal expression regarding the correlation between text and music are applied for the opera of the 21st century by Julio Estrada.

### Myths

The poetics of the multi-opera *Murmullos del páramo* (1992–2006) connects us with an echo from the mythology and cosmology that belonged to the ancient Mexicans and Mayas from the pre-Hispanic cultures, an old myth that ruled an entire civilization from the oldest pre-Hispanic civilizations known until today: the Olmecas (500 B.C.). The myth was reflected in their artistic representations like architecture, sculpture and literature. Because of the massive destruction during the Spanish conquest (1525–1697), it is not possible to determine with accuracy in which texts these cultures have left all their knowledge about cosmology together with their mythology. What we know until today is the *Dresden Codex*, which, according to scholars, specialized in Mayan culture, is a copy of an old text, probably 400 years older than the codex. The information found in this text is related to planetary calculations of their orbits around the Earth, Venus, Moon, and Mars, as well as Solar and Lunar eclipses are predicted with exact accuracy. A second text known as the *Codex Borgia* also written before the Spanish conquest is considered a manuscript which reveals information about the rituals and divinatory context. Here we can find a description of a dark place named *Mictlan*, governed by the god of the death *Mictlantecuhctli*. A third source of knowledge was discovered in the 18th century by the priest Fray Francisco Ximenez (1666–1722), from the Order of Santo Domingo. Fray Ximenez contacted with the Quiches in Guatemala, which allowed him to access a manuscript written a few years after the Spaniards arrived in the Mayan land. The original title that Quiches gave to this manuscript is unknown as well as his author(s). What is known for certain, is that before the conquest began, there was a collection of tales known as *Popol Vuh* (from quiche *popol*-common house, *vuh*-book). Fray Ximenez got involved in the translation into the Spanish language with the assistance of native Quiches who had already learned Spanish. Thanks to Fray Ximenez's translation and his collaborators, the myth survived and continues to engage more scholars

interested in the study of Mesoamerican cultures. The book could be divided into three main parts. The first part provides with detailed explanations the creation of the world together and the origin of human-kind by the hand of *Gucumatz* (in Mayan language) or *Quetzalcoatl* (in Nahuatl language), who created human race from a corn seed. The second part refers to adventures of *Hunahpu* and *Ixbalanque*. The scenario takes place in the underworld commonly known as *Xibalba* or *Mictlan*, governed by the god *Mictlantecubtli*. The third part refers to the origin of the quiche culture, their wars, territories and achievements that took place before the Spanish conquest.

### **The connection between pre-Hispanic mythology and *Pedro Páramo***

Juan Rulfo's narrative in *Pedro Páramo* is transitional between poetry and prose. It describes a ghost tale from the world of the dead. Here the author decided to refer to the ghost town Comala, in a clear reference to *Mictlan* in the *Popol Vuh*. The main character of the novel is Juan Preciado's soul, who has just departed from the living world and has begun his journey into *Mictlan* in order to find his father whom he has never met.

Inside *Mictlan*: According to Martin Lienhard (1992: 842–851), the cosmology of the ancient Mexican culture has clearly defined two different places where the soul might be sent to after death. Lienhard explained the difference between *Tlalocan* and *Mictlan*. The first refers to the place where the soul ascends, a similarity to the conception of Heaven in the Christian religion; the second one refers to a place where the soul descends and experiences suffering and torture, similar to the conception of hell in the Christian religion. In the *Popol Vuh* as well as in the *Codex Borgia*, clear references can be observed of *Gucumatz* or *Quetzalcoatl* descending into the *Mictlan*, in order to confront *Mictlantecubtli*. In *Pedro Páramo* the connection with Juan Preciado and *Gucumatz* is evident from the very beginning in the novel where Juan Preciado ordered by his mother who is dying must go to Comala to look for his father, a demoniacal figure who is referred to as a man of no empathy or emotions for suffering:

Vine a Comala porque me dijeron que acá vivía mi padre, un tal Pedro Páramo. Mi Madre me lo dijo ... 'No dejes de ir a visitarlo' ... 'Exígele lo nuestro. Lo que estuvo obligado a darme y nunca me dio... El olvido en el que nos tuvo, mi hijo, cóbraselo caro' (Rulfo 1955: 5).<sup>1</sup>

In the previous example two aspects are of interest. Firstly: Rulfo never clarifies in which moment of the journey the novel begins. This aspect reflects Rulfo's intentions to manipulate the element of time in his narrative, creating a world that fluctuates between reality and the imaginary. Secondly: Comala refers to *Mictlan*, and Juan Preciado is the representation of *Quetzalcoatl's* and Pedro Páramo, Preciado's father, is the representation of pain, hell, suffering and sadness, the god of the underworld – *Mictlantecubtli*. Rulfo's intentions to connect ancient cosmology in his novel is more evident in the fact that in Comala the same as in *Mictlan* it is not possible to avoid torture of the inner world. This can be reflected by constant pain to which Juan Preciado and Susanna San Juan – the main characters in the novel – are subjected. Another aspect which could connect Comala and *Mictlan* is the long distance that exists from the point where Juan Preciado has begun his journey and when he finally arrives to Comala. A long journey in extremely hot temperatures with no possibility to breathe is concurrent with endless pain. In *Mictlan*, for the Mexicans and Mayas, the loneliness and torture were an essential part to be experienced in it. In *Pedro Páramo* this element can be observed during Juan Preciado's descend into Comala:

– Esta seguro de que ya es Comala?  
– Seguro, Señor.  
– Y por que se ve esto tan triste? (Rulfo 1955: 6)<sup>2</sup>

– Habíamos dejado el aire caliente allá arriba y nos íbamos hundiendo en el puro calor ...  
– Ya lo sentirá mas fuerte cuando llegemos a Comala. Aquello esta sobre las brasas de la tierra, en la mera boca del infierno. (Rulfo 1955: 8)<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Translation to English by Armand F. Baker: "I came to Comala because I was told that my father, a man called Pedro Páramo, was living there. It was what my mother had told me ... 'Don't fail to go and see him' ... 'Demand that he gives you what is ours. What he should have given me and never did... Make him pay dearly, my son, for the way he has neglected us'".

<sup>2</sup> Translation to English by Armand F. Baker: "Are you sure it is Comala?" "Yes, I am sure, sr." "And why does it look so sad?"

<sup>3</sup> Translation to English by Armand F. Baker: "We had left warm air up higher and we were sinking deeper and deeper into the heat ... You will feel it even more when we get to Comala. That place sits on the coals of the earth at the very mouth of hell".

### ***Pedro Páramo* and the multi-opera *Murmillos del páramo***

Julio Estrada's first encounter with Rulfo's literature took place in 1960, while listening to the radio audition where the author himself narrated the tale *Diles que no me maten!* [Tell them not to kill me!], from the novel *El Llano en Llamas* (1953). Later on Estrada once again picked up Rulfo's novels *El Llano en Llamas* and *Pedro Páramo* and began a journey for six days in Tapalpa, Jalisco, a few kilometers from the land where Rulfo was born, Sayula, Jalisco. There, while reading and observing the landscape, Estrada could perceive the images and sounds implanted in Rulfo's narrative. He began to capture the essence of the text as an audible phenomena, where the evocation of multiple sounds, whispers and laments from the death world transformed into a complex musical textures. These fictional sonograms inspired Estrada to continue an aesthetic investigation which ended up in becoming a book written in 1990: *El Sonido en Rulfo* (with a second edition in 2008 – *El Sonido en Rulfo: "el ruido ese"*). The title for the book was taken from an emblematic dialog that can be found in the tale *Luvina*, from *El Llano en Llamas*:

- Qué es? – me dijo.
- Qué es qué? – le pregunté.
- Eso, el ruido ese.
- Es el silencio ... (Rulfo 1953: 90)<sup>4</sup>

During the time of elaboration *El Sonido en Rulfo*, Estrada experimented with a dialectic process between Rulfo's texts and introspected audible perception from the novel, which germinated the beginning of his opera. One of the main aspects that influenced the construction of his musical work is found in four sonority layers, which, for Estrada, is a way to assimilate Rulfo's treatment of sonority in his poetry and prose. These four basic sound imageries correspond to literary, environmental, musical, and temporal dimensions and are organized in Estrada's book as it follows (2008: 18):

- I. Sonority of the speech: evocative words of poetic and dramatic character.
- II. Sonority of the environment: audible description of the reality in nature.
- III. Sonority of the music: music in the novel, as songs, instruments.
- IV. Sonority of the time: the manipulation of the form and its close relation to the musical form.

The aesthetics conducted by Estrada during the process of creation his multi-opera can be highlighted by the conjunction between investigation and creation that derived into a literary work quoted before – *El sonido en Rulfo: "el ruido ese"* – and a musical work – multi-opera *Murmillos del páramo* – both concerning the sonority in Rulfo's literature. The first one focuses on the investigation and assimilation of the sonority in the novel, while the second one crystallizes the whole musical creation from the novel. The creation of both works represents a model of understanding and listening to Rulfo's poetry and prose. This innovatory and unique way to operate based on the complexity and richness of musical images, propose a new form of the fusion of music and libretto, as Estrada has mentioned (2008: 18): "It offers a new model of musical creation that comes from literary fantasy."

More connections between the opera, the novel and the mythology of *Mictlan* are observed in the following aspects:

a) The significance of the word *páramo*, the protagonist's father's surname in Rulfo's novel, and the personification of Juan Preciado's father is *Pedro Páramo*. What in the book refers to *Páramo*, is the character himself, in contrast to the opera, where it is more than a character: semantically it converges myth, hell, suffering, love and most of all, unique sounds from the lost souls in a ghost town called *Comala*.

b) The relation between myth and language is found in one of his darkest textures in the opera: *hum*, for soprano, mezzo soprano, contralto, tenor and bass. It becomes the point of an eternal returning where all characters from the novel conjunct in it, as has been explained by Estrada: "The voices of all the personae included in the libretto of the opera appear in *hum*, a meeting place for solitary presences: Doloritas Páramo, the wife of the village tyrant and mother of Juan Preciado; Juan himself; the tyrant [whose name is used for the title of the novel by Rulfo], father of Abundio Martínez the muleteer and of Miguel Páramo, among others; Susana San Juan, an object of desire of the master of Comala; an old woman; the mother of Pedro Páramo; and Eduviges Dyada, Damiana Cisneros, and Dorotea" (2004: 84–85).

c) A conjunction of language and myth is found in *Miqui' nahual* for female voice, noisemaker and double bass. Here the eternal battle between life and death of Juan Preciado can be perceived by means of demoniacal evocations with laments and a *grotesque* representation of a human body suffering in *Mictlan* realized by the

<sup>4</sup> Translation to English by Armand F. Baker: "What is it? – he said." "What is what? – I asked." "That, that noise." "That is silence ...".

double bass symbolizing Preciado’s dead corpse. Another important element that unifies Rulfo’s narration and Estrada’s music is the audible presence of Rulfo’s voice narrating fragments from the novel. His genuine way to narrate his own texts implanted a non-dramatic expression of the voices from the ancient pre-Hispanic cultures in the opera as was mentioned by Estrada: “Rulfo’s voice spoke of an extraordinary indigenous world, a world full of sadness of non-dramatized expression” (Semichon 2014).

**SECUENCIA I.**  
**00:00” JUAN PRECIADO**  
 –Vine a Comala porque me dijeron  
 que acá vivía mi padre, un tal Pedro  
 Páramo. Mi madre me lo dijo.  
**00:10”**  
 Y yo le prometí que vendría  
 a verlo en cuanto ella muriera.

**00:14”**  
 [mictlan A, voz, ruid,  
 cb: 112 u. n=38. Cc. 2’54” Llega a Cc. 03:08”

**p. 1...** **2**

**♩ = 38**

**MICTLAN**

The image shows a musical score for the opening of the module 'Mictlan'. It features a vocal line for 'Juan Preciado' and an accompaniment for 'Mictlan'. The score is written on a grand staff with multiple staves. The tempo is marked as ♩ = 38. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings. The text above the score provides the lyrics and the sequence number.

Figure 1. Rulfo’s voice in the opening of the module *Mictlan* (Estrada 1992)

### Multi-opera *Murmulllos del páramo* (1992–2006)

It took Estrada fourteen years to compose his largest musical work for a multi-ensemble combining vocal, instrumental and electro-acoustical music. The opera consists of two parts, “*Doloritas*” and “*Susana San Juan*”. The premier took place on 12 May 2006 at Teatro Español in Madrid, Spain, with the participation of the following personae: Fatima Miranda and Sarah Maria Sun, female vocal soloists; Stefano Scodanibbio, double bass; Llorenç Barber, noisemaker; Ko Ishikawa, sho; Magnus Anderson, guitar; Mike Svoboda, trombone; five members of the *Neue Vocal solisten*; Sergio Vela, scenography and Julio Estrada, the musical director and also as vocal soloist performing Abundio Martínez the muleteer.

An aesthetic observation demands the analysis of the methodology employed by the artist in order to assimilate the process where Estrada confront his own artistic challenge by the use of his aural imagination to absorb all the sonorities in Rulfo’s text. In previous musical works since 1980s until actual time Estrada has been applying systematical procedures of notation where all musical material has to express all qualities of sound layers, this involved unique methodology of creation, the so-called *macro timbre* (from Greek *macro* – big; and *timbre* – quality of sound). This methodology is based on the concept of space-time as a single phenomenon of the sound. Estrada understands the entire audible spectrum as a big mass of infinitive conjunction between rhythm and sound that rises from the lowest to the highest frequencies inside a continuum transition of *space-time* or tone-rhythm. Estrada has explained: “Rhythmic and sonic vibrations can be unified as a continuum” (2002: 72). In this *macro timbre* Estrada proposed homogenization of all components of the acoustic phenomena and organized it in three main groups according to the rhythmic and sonic physical components of each one, as Estrada explained (2002: 72–73):

- A. frequency: in rhythm – duration, in tone – pitch;
- B. amplitude: in rhythm – global intensity (where attack is perceived as primary), in tone – global intensity (envelope);
- C. harmonic content: in rhythm – microstructures of duration (similar to vibrato); in tone – timbre (in the sense of pitch colour).

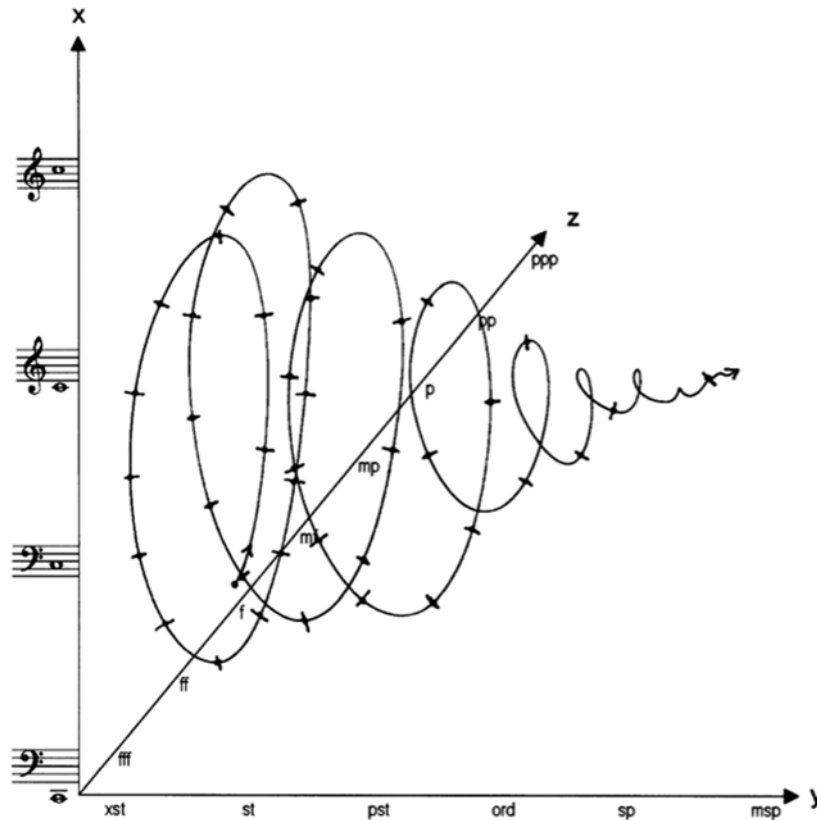


Figure 2. Three-dimensional trajectory: X – Frequency; Y – Harmonic content; Z – Amplitude (Estrada 2002)

In order to apply this methodology Estrada proposed a chromo-graphical technique which allows him to register the movements of the imaginary and to convert those into a musical score. This system of notation is based on draws made manually or digitally with the application of a musical program created by himself at the Institute of Applied Mathematics and Systems (Instituto de Investigaciones en Matemáticas Aplicadas y en Sistemas, IIMAS) in UNAM (Universidad Autónoma de México), called *eua'oolin* system (in the Nahuatl language, *eua* – to fly away; *oolin* – movement). From the transcription of both methods (manual or digital), Estrada classified the components of rhythm and tone and transposed them into a musical score obtaining different kinds of transition from *discontinuum* ones to *continuum*. This way of operation allowed him to project an unlimited number of parameters involving several layers of contrapuntal technique that go beyond the borders of harmony and intervallic relations. The result of this large and systematical method lands in the creation of music that is hard to define by any context previous to its existence, at least by the European tradition of musical material organization. It is inspired by the idea of Mexican Native American music, which tends to observe the movements in nature or in the imagination and to express them through the chants and rhythms that are not based on the mathematical division of pitch or pulse.

Estrada's compositional procedures for vocal music offer a new paradigm in musical creation regarding the genre of opera. We face a vocal-instrumental work where the role of the text is minimized almost to its totality in order to be amalgamated within the sonority in Rulfo's text and the musical sound layer, which is fulfilled by several components in the *macro timbre* between instruments and human voice. Up to Estrada's opera, most of the musical works ascribed to this genre have used the text from the libretto as the only way to connect action with music. *Murmullos del páramo* detached itself from this traditional way of operation and proposed the sonority from the imaginary – which is extracted from the libretto – as the connector between action and musical performance. In a continuous vocal *macro timbre* (Estrada 2004), Estrada proposed an extended list of twenty-four components which expressed the multiple possibilities in highest resolution, where the *macro-voice* is “capable of admitting new procedures of representation and of thriving in virtuoso performance situations” (Estrada 2004: 100).

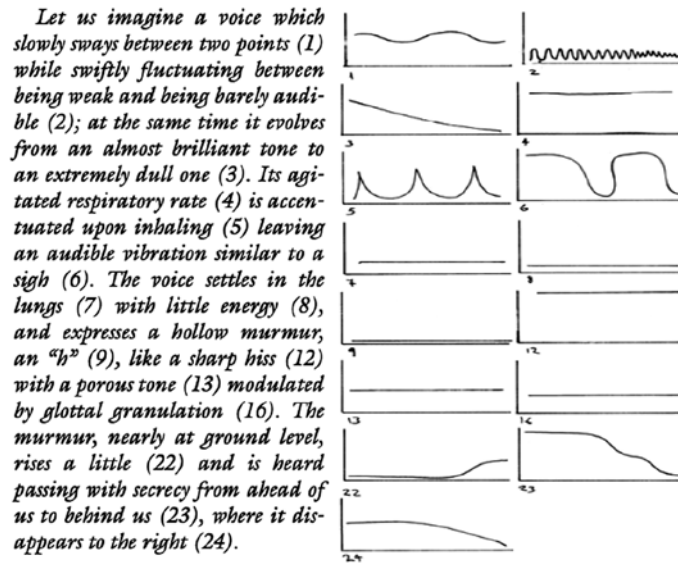


Figure 3. 24 components for the *macro voice* (Estrada 2004: 103)

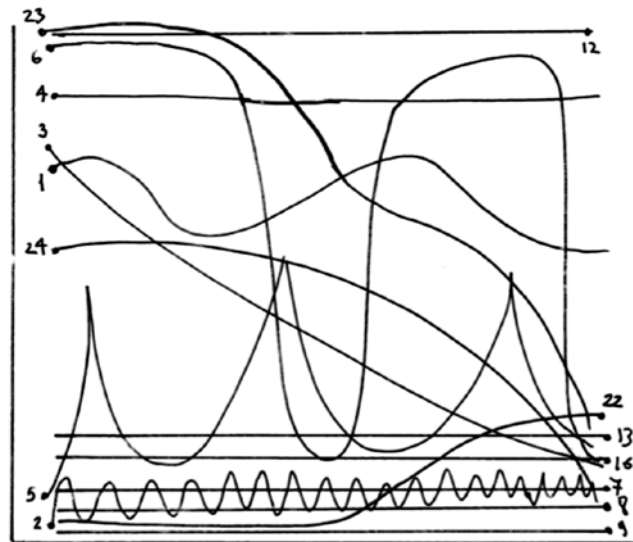


Figure 4. *Macro timbre* with 24 components for the *macro voice* (Estrada 2004: 104)

The construction of the opera is correlated with the four layers which Estrada identified in Rulfo’s literal sonority, as Estrada explained (2014): “The first layer is Rulfo’s text spoken by the actors, the second layer corresponds to the environmental recordings, the third layer is all the music and the fourth layer is a dramatic, free representation of the Butoh dancer”. Comparing the four layers in Rulfo’s sonority with Estrada’s construction of the opera, we can observe the strong correlation between poetry and prose together with music and action.

Rulfo’s sonority:

- Sonority of the speech.
- Sonority of the environment.
- Sonority of the music.
- Sonority of the time.

Estrada’s layers for the opera:

- Rulfo’s text.
- Environmental recordings.
- Music (in performance and recorded).
- Butoh dancer.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> The correlation between the sonority of time in Rulfo’s sonority and the Butoh dancer shows that Juan Preciado is in a world where dreams and illusions are the only thing that he can experience. Such a psycho-emotional stage always confuses the sensation of time. For that reason the Butoh dancer is the representation of Preciado’s soul transiting in the continuity of space-time in *Mictlan*.

In an aesthetic sense the opera confronts the drama between life and death in an unusual procedure. The transitions from the real world and infra-world can be observed by two main aspects. The first aspect is observed by the use of sound material and not by different scenarios. In order to create an elastic and continuous transmutation of sound layers, Estrada applied twelve speakers that surrounded the audience creating a tridimensional moving space, where sounds travel in it, coming from the upper part – as belonging to the reality, and those coming from the lower one – as belonging to the infra-world – *Mictlan*. Estrada also presents a completely new way to manipulate the events by the sounds of actors' voices or the environmental noises to the musical voices. We can observe this process by identifying a dimorphism between the instrumentalists and instruments, where each instrument is linked with a singer or a dancer and each singer is related to an instrument: the noisemaker is the identity of the Páramo, Abundio; the double bass is the inert body of Juan Preciado in search of his father; the Sho is the priest Renteria; the guitar is Susana San Juan, the woman loved by the cacique, and the trombone, symbol of strength and power, the lord of Comala, Pedro Páramo or the Lord of the world of death is *Mictlantecuhli*.

The second aspect is founded in the open form of the opera. The musical work is divided in independent musical modules: *Mictlan*, *Mictlan'ome*, *hum*, *Retrato*, *matlapoa*, *Caja con trenzas* and *fosiles resonantes* that all together assemble a tridimensional puzzle, where any module connects with another one creating a continuous transition between different characters and instruments. For this goal the composer proposes five different versions of the multi-opera which synthesize the possible combinations that can be obtained in a musical puzzle.

- I. A complete version with all the seven modules that integrate the opera, all instruments, singers, voices of the actors and recorded environmental sounds, the two latter ones are heard only through the speakers.
- II. Partial versions: "Doloritas", the first part of *Murmulllos del páramo*, a quasi-radiophonic opera which includes *mictlan*; "Susanna", the second part of *Murmulllos del páramo*, a quasi-radiophonic opera which includes *mictlan'ome*, not yet finished.
- III. Both first and second parts may have added parts from *hum*, *retrato*, *matlapoa* and *Caja con trenzas*.
- IV. Concert versions from one and/or other parts of the opera in combination with complete or partial versions of other modules, e.g., *Mictlan* trio for "Doloritas", or a reduction of this last one or two of his parts: *Miqi'cibuatl* for female voice or *Miqi'nahuatl* for double bass.
- V. Symbolic text version in Nahuatl language (a free version inspired by Rulfo's text, still in process by Estrada).

The multi-opera *Murmulllos del páramo* in its general form is unified by seven modules which evoke the characters included in the novel through the voices and the instruments included in the musical work:

Module	Character(s)	Instrument(s)
mictlan	Doloritas, Juan Preciado and Pedro Páramo	female voice, noisemaker, double bass
hum	Susana San Juan, Justina, woman in the town, Juan Preciado and Pedro Páramo	vocal quintet (soprano, mezzo, contralto, tenor and baritone)
matlapoa	Priest Renteria	sho
Retrato	Pedro Páramo	trombone
mictlan'ome	Doloritas, Susana San Juan, Pedro Paramo, Abundio and Juan Preciado	two female, one bass voice, trombone, noisemaker and double bass
Caja con trenzas	Suana San Juan	guitar
Fosiles resonantes	all characters	all instruments

***Murmullos  
del páramo***

multi-ópera para 8 voces solistas –soprano y soprano coloratura,  
soprano, mezzo-soprano, contralto, tenor, barítono, bajo– y 5  
instrumentistas –Sho, trombón, ruidista, guitarra, contrabajo–,  
grabación de voces de actores y de ambientes sonoros y  
distribución espacial en 12 altoparlantes.

música y guión  
**Julio Estrada**

versión escénica A:

**“Los murmullos”**  
basada en *Pedro Páramo* de  
**Juan Rulfo**

Penumbra [01:40”]  
Doloritas (1992-93) [55:22”]  
Fósiles resonantes [04:40”]  
Susana (2001-06) [37:05”]  
Penumbra [02:10”]  
[Ca.100:57”]

Figure 5. Multi-opera *Murmullos del páramo* (Estrada 2014)

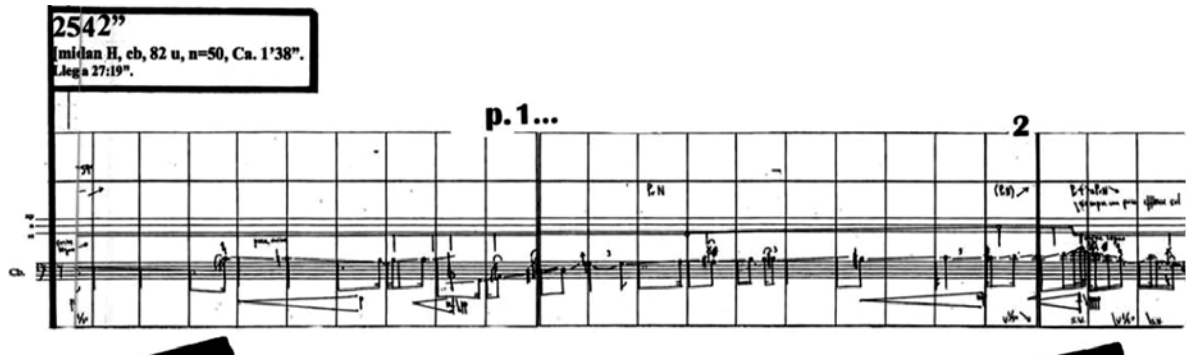
### *Mictlan*

The opening in Rulfo’s novel and in Estrada’s opera carries over both the reader and the listener – inside the mystical *Mictlan*. For this reason I would like to present important details from this module which are focused on its construction and aesthetic backgrounds. *Mictlan* is integrated by two separate works that could be performed together or separately. The first piece *Miqui’cihuahatl* – From *miqui* (Nahuatl, the dead) and *cihuahatl* (woman), for female voice solo, represents the chant of Preciado’s death sung by his mother Doloritas Páramo; the second piece *Miqui’nahual* from *miqui* and *nahual* (a mythological protector animal) for double bass solo. The unification of both pieces presents transmutation between Juan’s life and death. A symbolic approach by using the double bass must be considered as important element to observe. It reflects the artistic intention to manifest Preciado’s corpus struggling with the death. For this purpose one of the two double basses is laid onto a table where the instrumentalist must perform on the instrument in a creative and cruel way by the utilization of two bows, grasping it from the top to the bridge, extracting dry, dark and scratchy sounds. The chant by female solo represents the sorrow and laments of Preciado’s mother, Doloritas, as her soul is lost between shadows in this phantasmagorical passage, where Estrada elevated the expression of suffering by employing new musical textures for vocal performance offering more realistic impressions from the dark *Mictlan*.



Figure 6. *Miqui’cihuahatl*, solo female voice (Estrada 1992–1904)



Figure 7. *Miquí'nahual*, double bass solo (Estrada 1992)

A handwritten musical score for 'Mictlan'. It consists of five staves, likely representing different instruments or voices. The notation is dense and includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings. A large number '3' is written at the top right of the score. The staves are connected by a vertical line on the left side.

Figure 8. *Mictlan* (Estrada 1992)

### Conclusion

The myth from pre-Hispanic cultures brings the images and sounds to our perception from a lost paradise inside the Mexican jungles, hidden between stones, ritual constructions, sound of rivers, dark places and everything that could manifest in a great magical tale. More than that, it contains an unusual power that was sheltered from generation to generation until our days. *Pedro Páramo* goes beyond a novel of *magical realism*; it is a conjunction of echoes fused between the real and the under-world. For the reader with “ears wide open”, it is a novel that sounds like a place where time and space are suspended, where the only reality is the confrontation with our own imagination, where the text can express the silence and loneliness in the dry land of Comala, floating in the air of *Mictlan* joined by noises and sorrows of other souls. In Rulfo’s novel Estrada found this power hidden between the text, which, later on, he used in order to transform it into a chant from the lost souls.

The multi-opera *Murmillos del páramo* is Estrada’s most representative work by this time. It amalgamates myth-poetry-sound, the synthesis of his inner musical reality. The artist elevated his intuitive capacity of perception to the maximum in order to bring a musical work that goes beyond the limits of the expression by words. Instead, he exploited those noises that were never used as the main substance that was extracted from the libretto and is the essence of the sonority in Rulfo’s texts: murmurs, laments, screaming, sorrow, babbling, etc. Another aspect that should be highlighted is found in the relation between performers and instruments resulting in an artistic duality, where all the characters from Rulfo’s novel become phantasmagorical voices and instruments. For all this conjunctions between the aesthetical backgrounds of ancient Mexico and the innovatory adaptation of Rulfo’s novel into an original libretto, the opera achieves the standard of a *multi-opera*, the first of its kind in the beginning of the 21st century.

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## Julio Estrados multioperos *Murmullos del páramo* poetika

### Santrauka

XXI a. pradžioje Julio Estrada (1943) pristatė naują kūrinį – multioperą. Žengęs žingsnį gilyn į vaizduotės pasaulį, kompozitorius atrado naujus libreto (Juano Rulfo novelės *Pedro Páramo*) traktavimo būdus. Čia novelės tekstai paverčiami grynu garsu, beveik visiškai atsisakoma žodinio teksto. Vienu iš kertinių žingsnių, padėjusių kompozitoriui pasiekti tokią koncepciją, tapo paties Estrados literatūriniai tekstai. Juos įkvėpė Rulfo kūrybos muzikalumas – Estrada asimiliavo esminius Rulfo bandymus garsais nupasakoti skaitytojui savo vaizdinius. Estrados knygoje *El sonido en Rulfo: „el ruido ese“* (2008) suklasifikuotos audiosensorinės formos vėliau padėjo jam sulieti multioperos konstrukcijas literatūriniu, aplinkos, muzikos ir laiko aspektais.

Straipsnyje svarbus vaidmuo tenka multioperą papildančių estetinių elementų, Mezoamerikos mitologijos paveldo ir kitų šiam kūriniiui įtaką padariusių kultūrinių aspektų apžvalgai. Senovės mešikų (actekų) ir majų Mirusiųjų pasaulio valdovas *Mictlantecuhltli* yra Rulfo novelės pagrindinio herojaus Pedro Paramo prototipas. Abu jie tarsi susilieja vienoje iš pačių svarbiausių multioperos dalių – *mictlan*.

Estrada kviečia mus pasinerti į fantasmagorišką pasakojimą apie giliausius rulfiško pragaro siaubus. Savo brandžiausiame kūrinyje kompozitorius pateikia klausytojui sudėtingą intencijos ir mąstymo suformuotą medžiagą, kurioje muzikos adaptavimas prie libreto yra iškeistas į garsų, sukeliančių realaus ir įsivaizduojamo pasaulių vaizdinius, percepciją. Ir visa tai sudaro muzikinį Estrados murmesių labirintą.