

## Ideologemes in Search of Topics: Argentine Music During the Peronist Decade

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### Resumo

A *Sinfonía 'In Memoriam'* de Luis Milici, composta em homenagem a Maria Eva Duarte de Perón, teve a sua estreia no Teatro Municipal de Santa Fe a 21 de Agosto de 1954, dois anos após a sua morte. Esta obra foi distinguida com o primeiro prémio num concurso para composições em memória de Eva Perón, organizado pela Universidad Nacional del Litoral em 1953.

Os títulos dos cinco andamentos têm a sua origem no próprio vocabulário do Peronismo e retraçam o percurso pessoal e político de Eva Perón: 'O Advento', 'Os humildes', 'Os privilegiados', 'O povo feliz', 'A passagem à imortalidade'. Composta para orquestra sinfónica, quarteto vocal, coro misto, coro de crianças e pequeno conjunto de guitarras, esta sinfonia constitui um verdadeiro inventário dos ideologemas que o Peronismo produziu na construção do seu sistema simbólico. No sentido de transpor os ideologemas em formas artísticas, o compositor utilizou recursos retóricos ou tópicos musicais de representação. Nesta obra, surgem diversos ideologemas centrais do pensamento peronista, articulados pela música, nomeadamente a ideia palingenética da Nova Argentina, que transformou o passado dramático num presente luminoso, assim como a ideia de Peronismo como religião secular e política.

### Palavras-chave

Música argentina; Peronismo; Luis Milici; Eva Perón; Tópicos musicais.

### Abstract

Luis Milici's *Sinfonía 'In Memoriam'* written as an homage to Maria Eva Duarte de Perón was premiered at the Teatro Municipal of Santa Fe on August 21, 1954, two years after her death. The work had been awarded the first prize in a competition for pieces honouring her memory organized by the Universidad Nacional del Litoral in 1953.

The titles of its five movements stem from Peronism's own vocabulary and indicate the political and personal trajectories of Eva Perón: 'The Advent', 'The Poor', 'The Privileged', 'The Joyful People', 'The Passing to Immortality'. Composed for symphony orchestra, solo vocal quartet, mixed choir, children's choir, and a small guitar ensemble, this symphony constitutes a veritable inventory of ideologemes that Peronism had manufactured to construct its symbolic apparatus. In order to transpose the ideologemes into artistic forms, the composer employs rhetorical devices or musical *topoi* of representation. Here, a number of ideologemes central to Peronist thought appear, articulated by music. Among them we find the palingenetic idea of a New Argentina that transformed the dramatic past into a luminous present, as well as the idea of Peronism as a secular and political religion.

## Keywords

Argentine music; *Peronism*; Luis Milici; Eva Perón; Musical topics.

**L**UIS MILICI'S *SINFONÍA 'IN MEMORIAM'* written as an homage to María Eva Duarte de Perón, was premiered at the Teatro Municipal (City Hall) of Santa Fe, Argentina, on 21 August 1954, two years after her death. The playbills, bearing the Justicialist Party's (Partido Justicialista) official logo, also included government slogans such as 'art for the people', and 'in accord with the second five-year plan'. They also feature images of Eva Perón, as well as the conductor of the orchestra, and the composer.

In 1953, the symphony had been awarded first prize in a competition for pieces honouring the memory of Eva Perón organized by the Universidad Nacional del Litoral. The initiative proceeded from the Director of its School of Music, Roberto Locatelli. It was confirmed by the Rector of the University, Raul Rapela, one of the founders of the Justicialist Party in Santa Fe, appointed to that position directly by the Presidency of the Nation in 1952.

This was not the first time that a work by Luis Milici (Rosario, 1910-98) received an award within the university context. Previously his *Himno de la Universidad Nacional del Litoral* [*Anthem of the National University of Littoral*] (1952), and *Nuestras Malvinas* [*Our Malvinas*] (1953) had both received prizes. In his record as professor of that university is found information about his professional career, including his musical training with Antonio Boreto, Alfonzo Ingo and Juan Bautista Massa, his activities as conductor and choir director of different provincial ensembles, as well as his dedication to university teaching. He also worked as an arranger with the Rosario Police Music Band (1948) and, from 1945, contributed a few articles on folk music to local newspapers and journals.

Until then, his catalogue had comprised a considerable number of works for varied musical resources, many of them premièred shortly after their composition. His oeuvre is characterized by the use of large forces and the presence of pre-Columbian imagery as, for example, in *El Inca triste*, for mixed choir, soprano and orchestra (1942), and *Aanyyay*, 'Inca poem', for orchestra (1940). Also prevalent in his orchestral output are works based on Argentine folk music, such as *Aire de gato* (1938), *Impresiones nortenas* (1946), and *Malambo* (1948). *Mi ñusta* (1939), *Pincelada jujeña* (1939), *Patria hermosa* (1939), *A corrientes* (1942), and *Corumbá* (1944), for a cappella choir, *Aire*

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*de bailecito*, for harp and string quartet (1946), and *El tilcareño* (1943), *Malambo* (1944), and *Danza de las ñustas* (1952), for piano solo, also belong to the field of national music, with emphasis on the folk music of the Northwestern region. The composer thus places himself in a direct line of descent from the musical nationalism practised by his teacher Juan Bautista Massa. His *Sinfonía 'In Memoriam'* is the only one of his works known to be directly linked to a political circumstance.

Later performances of this symphony, in 1973 and 1974, i.e. twenty years after its composition and première, were also related to a Peronist government and can be understood, at least partially, as an action of cultural militancy for the recovery of a historical repertoire of *Justicialismo*. In the composer's archive, a facsimile of the same score of this work is also preserved, titled simply *Sinfonía en Do*, with the dedication 'To my mother'. This reveals the intention of the composer to dilute the original semantic content. On the back of the title page, however, there is a flyer with information about the award received for the piece in the aforementioned circumstances.

The jury of the competition remarked that this *Sinfonía 'In Memoriam'* 'thoroughly interprets the feelings that the unparalleled Spiritual Leader of the Nation inspired in the Argentine people [described as 'Argentineness'] as well as her work projected towards the core of our people' ['interpreta acabadamente los sentimientos que inspirara a la argentinidad, la figura sin par de la Jefa Espiritual de la Nación y su obra proyectada en lo más íntimo [sic] de nuestro pueblo'].<sup>1</sup> The piece was written for symphony orchestra, solo vocal quartet, mixed choir, children's choir, and a small guitar ensemble. The titles of its five movements stem from Peronism's own propaganda vocabulary and indicate the political and personal trajectories of the dedicatee: The Advent, The Poor, The Privileged, The Joyful People, The Passing to Immortality [El advenimiento, Los humildes, Los privilegiados, El pueblo feliz, El tránsito a la inmortalidad]. The composer wrote a 'programme' for the piece, explaining in detail the intention and meaning of each movement. This text is reproduced in the concert programmes, press releases, and press reviews, and therefore functions as an external narrator of sorts.

This symphony constitutes a veritable inventory of ideologemes that Peronism had manufactured to construct its symbolic apparatus. The work's music, words, and context reveal 'the image assumed by a set of social beliefs, the image of a social ideologeme that has been fused with its own discourse, with its own language', in Bakhtin's words.<sup>2</sup> At the intersection of social practices and aesthetic space, the ideologeme is, according to Kristeva, 'that intertextual function read as "materialized" at the different structural levels of each text and which stretches along the

<sup>1</sup> Proceeding of the Jury, Buenos Aires, 7 June 1953.

<sup>2</sup> Michail BAKHTIN, 'Discourse in the Novel' (1934-5), *The Dialogic Imagination. Four essays* (Austin - London, University of Texas Press, 1981), pp. 270-422 at p. 357.

entire length of its trajectory, giving it its historical and social coordinates' ['L'idéologème est cette fonction intertextuelle que l'on peut lire "matérialisée" aux différents niveaux de la structure de chaque texte et qui s'étend tout au long de son trajet en lui donnant ses coordonnées historiques et sociales'].<sup>3</sup> Thus, according to Jameson, ideologemes act as mediators between ideology as an abstract opinion, and the narrative material with which it is expressed.<sup>4</sup>

In order to transpose the ideologeme into artistic form, music has, among other resources, its own rhetorical devices or *topoi* of representation. In the wide array of symbols and political aphorisms, almost always derived from public speeches of Perón and his wife, which were widely disseminated at the time by the government's ever present propaganda apparatus, a number of ideologemes central to Peronist thought appeared. Among them we find the palingenetic idea of a New Argentina that transformed the tragic past into a luminous present, as well as the idea of Peronism as a secular and political religion, which are important signifiers in mid-twentieth-century Argentina.

### The 'New Argentina'

The expression 'New Argentina' mentioned in this symphony's programme was widely disseminated through nearly every possible avenue at the time. This 'today' of the new Argentina forms a duality with an antithetical 'yesterday', that is, the time before the arrival of Peronism. This duality brings in a predictable chain of binary oppositions: before/after, sorrow/joy, poverty/wealth, sadness/happiness, lack/abundance, justice/injustice, unemployment/work, submission/sovereignty, and so on. These binaries were ever-present, especially as instruments of indoctrination. They abound in official publications such as *La Nación Argentina Justa, Libre y Soberana*, published by the Office of the President, and are applied to diverse situations. Some of these, by virtue of their graphic impact as well as their location within the narrative of the publication, became paradigmatic. A clear example can be found in the opposing images of two families that respectively open and close this massive volume (see figures 1a and 1b).

Milici's work takes on this two-sided construction. Recurring throughout the symphony is an interweaving of dysphoric and euphoric topics<sup>5</sup> that duplicate the before/after binary, firstly in relation to the trajectory of Peronism in power, and secondly to the personal and political life of Eva Perón.

<sup>3</sup> Julia KRISTEVA, 'Le texte clos', *Langages*, 12 (1968), pp. 103-25 at p. 104. All translations are ours.

<sup>4</sup> Fredric JAMESON, *The Political Unconscious. Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (London - New York, Routledge, 2002, 1981<sup>1</sup>), pp. 72-3.

<sup>5</sup> Categories already proposed by Heinrich C. Koch, often employed in contemporary semiotic theories, as in Raymond MONELLE, *The Sense of Music. Semiotic Essays* (Princeton - New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 2000), pp. 27, 45, 62-3.

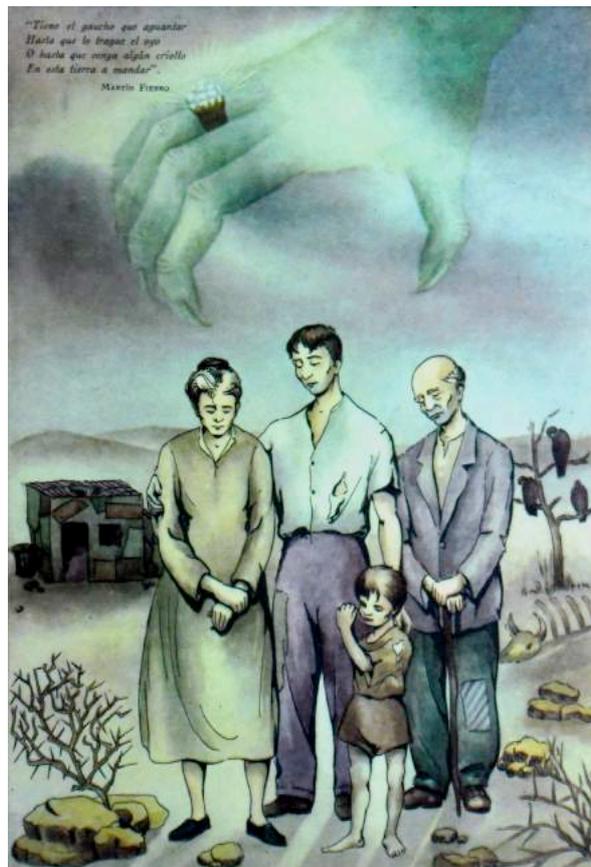


Figure 1a. *La Nación Argentina Justa Libre Soberana* (Buenos Aires, Presidencia de la Nación, 1950), p. 34

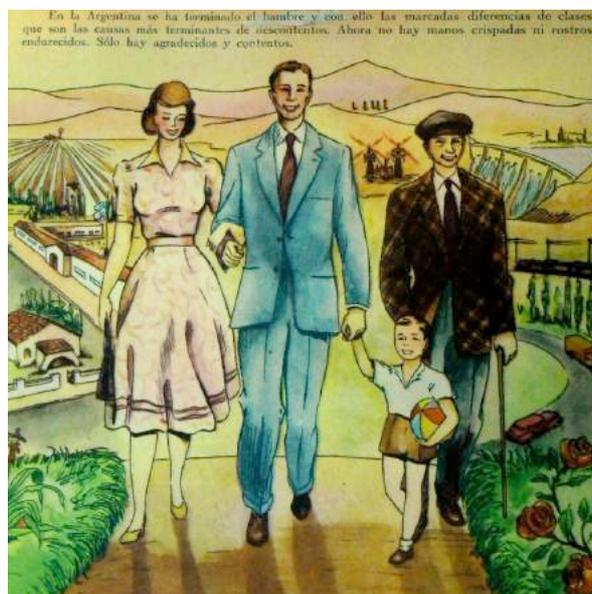


Figure 1b. *La Nación Argentina Justa Libre Soberana* (Buenos Aires, Presidencia de la Nación, 1950), p. 799

The core of dysphoric connotations is developed in the first two movements, and adopts configurations that could, in Ratner's terminology, be either types or styles.<sup>6</sup> The rhythmic and melodic structures associated with dysphoric topics consist of a relatively nondescript configuration, following the French horn's exposition of the beginning of the Argentine National Anthem, its slow pace balanced between two unstable chord structures with ninths over the first and second degrees, and a melodic sequence stopping at the dominant with its three intermediary voices descending by step, a type of movement historically associated with dysphoric affects.

**Example 1.** Luis Milici, *Sinfonia 'In Memoriam'*, first movement, beginning<sup>7</sup>

With this material the composer claims to depict a 'deep pathos flowing with anxiety, sorrow, and the yearning for liberation of a people that has been suffocated by injustice' ['hondo patetismo, en que fluyen la inquietud, la pesadumbre y el ansia de liberación de un pueblo agobiado por la injusticia'].<sup>8</sup> The other rhythmic and melodic structures are based on popular genres. According to the composer in his aforementioned note for the concert programme, the brief allusion to tango in the first movement is meant to represent the People and the 'period preceding the birth and growth of the New Argentina' ['el ambiente previo al surgimiento de la Nueva Argentina']. This association of tango with this constellation of sadness, even though most tango composers and performers of this time were Peronists, matches the objections of Peronism to the pessimism of tango lyrics, regarded as remnants of the pre-Peronist 'yesterday', and no longer having a place in the all-encompassing happiness of the present. The superimposition of this motif with that of the National Anthem throughout the movement and the possible identification of People with Country provides the reference with an historical anchor: this is the people of the pre-Peronist country. The

<sup>6</sup> Leonard RATNER, *Classic Music: Expression, Form and Style* (New York, Schirmer, 1980)

<sup>7</sup> Since the work has never been published, all the musical examples presented here are transcriptions of the manuscript score. It belongs to the family of the composer and is preserved at the Instituto de Investigación en Etnomusicología, Buenos Aires.

<sup>8</sup> Luis MILICI, concert programme notes, Santa Fe, Teatro Municipal, 21 August 1954.

*vidala* in the second movement is used to represent ‘the somber tone depicting the bitterness of the proletariat’ [‘el tono sombrío que pinta la amargura del proletariado’].

**Example 2.** Luis Milici, *Sinfonía 'In Memoriam'*, second movement, beginning

From a structural point of view, the slow tempo, the use of pentatonic fragments, monophony and the lower register all contribute to convey these ‘sombre tones’. In terms of their topical gestures, they are linked to meanings associated with what Melanie Plesch has identified as the pentatonic *topos*. This *topos*, in turn, is informed by literary tropes such as that of the ‘sad Indian’ from the Northwest and brings forth ideas of ‘sadness, loss, [and] sorrow’.<sup>9</sup>

In contrast to this semantic field we find the euphoric topics of the New Argentina, also represented in the symphony through folk and popular dances and songs. The use of nursery rhymes in the third movement, ‘The privileged’, corresponds to a slogan introduced by Perón himself: in this New Argentina, ‘the only privileged ones are the children’ [‘los únicos privilegiados son los niños’],<sup>10</sup> and incorporates to the work the stereotype of the happy childhood. The fourth movement, ‘The Happy People’, incorporates yet another slogan that recurred in the official discourse. According to the government’s ‘second five-year plan’, its main goal was ‘the greatness of the Nation and the happiness of the people’ [‘la grandeza de la Nación y la felicidad del pueblo’].<sup>11</sup> Folk dances are used to express this sentiment: ‘The people enjoy themselves, dance joyously, and sing [...] motifs from the most profound vernacular tradition: it is a people that has rediscovered itself, its true destiny, and has recovered its patriotic fervour, conjured up by justicialist mystique’ [‘El pueblo se divierte, danza jubilosamente y canta [...] motivos de honda raigambre autóctona: es el pueblo que se ha reencontrado consigo mismo, con su verdadero destino y ha recobrado su fervor patriótico a conjuro de la mística justicialista’].<sup>12</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Melanie PLESCH, ‘La lógica sonora de la generación del 80: Una aproximación a la retórica del nacionalismo musical argentino’, in *Los caminos de la música. Europa y Argentina*, edited by Pablo Bardin *et al.* (Jujuy, Universidad Nacional de Jujuy, 2008), pp. 55-108, 95-6.

<sup>10</sup> Juan PERÓN, Speech given on 17 October 1950, quickly made known by the media as *Las veinte verdades del justicialismo*.

<sup>11</sup> Ley 14.184, ‘Apruébase por ley el Segundo Plan Quinquenal de la Nación’, *Boletín Oficial de la República Argentina*, 17.327 (1 January 1953), p. 1.

<sup>12</sup> MILICI (see note 8).

Fl *mf*

Ob *mf*

Cl *mf*

Fg

Timbales

Arpa

Guitarra

∞ Los acordes así marcados deben ejecutarse apoyando la mano cerrada sobre las cuerdas para imitar el rasguído típico

Pa - la pa - la pul - pe ro chu - ña sol - te - ro chu - ña sol - te - ro

Coro

ah ah ah ah

Vl 1 *p*

Vl 2

**Example 3.** Luis Milici, *Sinfonía 'In Memoriam'*, fourth movement, bb. 210-3

Thus, musical nationalism converges again at the intersection of political and patriotic intent. Each folk genre is given a specific semantic value, organizing it into one or the other of two groups that replicate the euphoric and dysphoric registers of European art music topics.

It is worth noting that this *new* Argentina is expressed here through folk music genres from centuries past which, despite their deliberate revival at the hands of the influential conservative sectors of Peronism, were far from the contemporary genres spontaneously practised by Argentinians at the time. Rather, Argentine society of the mid-twentieth century danced and enjoyed music promoted by the recording industry: jazz, *rancheras*, tango, mambo, and other tropical genres, and even the folk rhythms from the North-Eastern area (*litoral*) brought to the cities by internal migrants.<sup>13</sup> The ‘most profound vernacular tradition that the text refers to is the centuries-old, rural, regional folk music, where—in the nationalistic view—the national essence was supposed to still abide. Indeed, folk music was explicitly endorsed by the government in its ‘first five-year plan’ (1946 to 1951). Milici emphasizes the richness of folk music as compositional material and praises those who, like him, ‘help build the motherland by beating in unison with the people’ [‘hacen patria al palpar al unísono con su pueblo’]. Their triumph would also ‘represent that of true Argentine culture, for which such promising perspectives can currently be foreseen’ [‘ha de representar también el de la verdadera cultura argentina, para la cual se vislumbran perspectivas tan halagüeñas en los momentos actuales’].<sup>14</sup> In the absence of an art music tradition with a well-known, shared and valued past that could command prestige, folk music, as the ‘eternal present of the people’, fulfils that need for, in Fauser’s terms, a ‘usable past’.<sup>15</sup> It is to this past that music explicitly linked to the political world would often resort, in an emotional appeal to a binding common identity, that is, a pre-existing spiritual unity.

In Milici’s work, musical figures derived from folk music are treated using techniques similar to those of the first generation of nationalist composers more than half a century earlier. Those composers were by then clearly in decline, having failed to acknowledge, in their treatment of folk sources, the more contemporary language promoted by composers from the Grupo Renovación [Renewal Group], among them Juan José Castro, or by Alberto Ginastera. This language, more demanding and disturbing, would have obscured the work’s communicative efficacy. In this regard, the composer’s selection of musical techniques is functional to his project.

The theme of Hope, representing Eva Perón, mediates the differences between dysphoric and euphoric topics. Its construction corresponds to that of the ‘singing style’ of Classical music, as defined by Ratner, based on Koch and Daube.

<sup>13</sup> See Sergio PUJOL, *Historia del baile. De la milonga a la disco* (Buenos Aires, Gourmet Musical Ediciones, 2011), chapter 7, pp. 187-207.

<sup>14</sup> Both quotations in Luis MILICI, ‘Posibilidad de un arte musical argentino de raíz folklórica’, typographic copy conserved in his personal archive, later published in *Democracia* (11 November 1953).

<sup>15</sup> Both quotations in Annegret FAUSER, *Sounds of War. Music in the United States during the World War II* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 138, 155.

Andante Moderato (♩ = 63)

Arpa  
p  
(Sonido Natural)

VI Solista

1º VI  
pp VI

2º VI  
pp

Vla  
pp

V.C.  
pp

C.B.  
p|pizz

Example 4. Luis Milici, *Sinfonía 'In Memoriam'*, first movement, bb. 146-9

♩ = 54

Fl

Bombo Tipico  
x golpear sobre el aro

Arpa

Solista

1º VI

2º VI  
mf sfz

Vla  
mf sfz

V.C.  
mf

C.B.  
mf|pizz

Example 5. Luis Milici, *Sinfonía 'In Memoriam'*, first movement, bb. 160-2

Its lyrical expression is conveyed by a narrow melodic range, in moderate tempo and long note values.<sup>16</sup> Balanced, emotional yet calm, with slight chromatic inflections within its harmony and an ‘airy’ texture, the theme of Hope helps depict a protective and angelic image of the dedicatee. It is presented initially by an individual voice: a violin solo, which speaks in the first person to its listener. The theme adapts itself to different rhetorical inflections throughout the piece. Thus, its connection to the people is made explicit by its association with the Argentine folk genre *zamba* in the first movement.

It adopts more assertive accents in the finale of the second movement, when leading [them] to victory, according to the work’s programme. When it appears in the movement dedicated to children, the theme of hope—reduced to its first four sounds—re-enacts the motherly element ever present in the social representations of Eva Perón: here, a woman—she herself?—floats above the children’s scene, represented by the nursery song *La torre en guardia*, as she does—whether as angel or fairy—explicitly in the official iconography of the government.



Figure 2. *La Nación Argentina Justa Libre Soberana* (Buenos Aires, Presidencia de la Nación, 1950), p. 194

Example 6. Luis Milici, *Sinfonía 'In Memoriam'*, third movement, bb. 334-7

<sup>16</sup> RATNER, *Classic Music* (see note 6), p. 19.

Lastly, the fusion of the theme of hope with religious symbolism in the final movement completes Eva's shift from the history in which she was a major protagonist to the personal drama of her death. We do not find here, however, the *topos* of the *pianto*—that chromatic descending melodic line that, in European music of the past centuries, identifies the expression of sorrow. On the one hand, the very name of the theme—hope—dispels dysphoric topics; on the other, it is the political connection, rather than private suffering, or individual fate, that is at the forefront here. Therefore, after the moment of collective mourning, the music does not dwell on what Gentile calls the 'liturgy of sorrow',<sup>17</sup> and quickly restores the heroine to a triumphant, collective, and transcendent space, through the use of a euphoric reference: the *Gloria* of the Mass.

### Music for a Secular Religion

Peronism, like other movements with similar characteristics, progressively became a political religion to its followers. The idea of a secular religion has a long history and is of great relevance for the study of twentieth-century political phenomena, particularly after the work of George Mosse and Emilio Gentile. For the new cultural study of Peronism, the seminal work is Mariano Plotkin's *Mañana es San Perón*.<sup>18</sup> Terms such as political, secular, civic, non-religious, patriotic, or national religion indicate, in Gentile's terms, a 'transfusion of the "sacred" from traditional religions to mass political movements [...] from which new, secular religions emerged' from the end of the eighteenth century; in the twentieth century these secular religions acquired a remarkable ability to 'construct their own symbolic universes of a religious character [...]. Entities of modern mass politics such as nation, race, class, state, party, leader—requested and generated acts of total devotion that were typical of traditional religious devotion'.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Emilio GENTILE, *El culto del littorio. La sacralización de la política en la Italia Fascista* (Buenos Aires, Siglo XXI, 2007, 1993<sup>1</sup>), p. 28.

<sup>18</sup> Mariano PLOTKIN, *Mañana es San Perón. Propaganda, rituales políticos y educación en el régimen peronista (1946-1955)* (Buenos Aires, Ariel, 1994). In the last two decades, the bibliography on Peronism and culture has grown substantially. Nevertheless, only a few contributions are concerned with art music. We mention here only those titles directly linked to our subject. General studies related to this field have been considered in our previously published articles such as Omar CORRADO, 'Los sonidos del '45: Música e identidades en Buenos Aires entre el fin de la Segunda Guerra y los comienzos del peronismo', *Revista del Instituto Superior de Música*, 16 (2016), pp. 9-61; 'Para el "tránsito a la inmortalidad": La *Sinfonía In Memoriam* (1953) de Luis Milici', *Revista Argentina de Musicología*, 15-16 (2014-5), pp. 279-320; 'Música en el peronismo clásico: variaciones sobre (una) *Vidala* (1946)', *Música e Investigación*, 21 (2013 [2014]), pp. 19-54; 'Ideologías y tradiciones en conflicto: La *Cantata Martín Fierro* (1945-1948) de Juan José Castro en el contexto del primer peronismo', in *Discursos y prácticas musicales nacionalistas (1900-1970), España, Argentina, Cuba, México*, edited by Pilar Ramos Lopez (Logroño, Universidad de La Rioja, 2012), pp. 301-16; 'Honrar al General: Música, historia, lenguaje y política en el Año Sanmartiniano (Argentina, 1950)', in *Teoría, crítica e música na atualidade*, organized by Maria Alice Volpe (Rio de Janeiro, Escola de Música, 2012), pp. 91-115.

<sup>19</sup> GENTILE, *El culto del littorio* (see note 17), p. 244. A critical revision of the concept in Emilio GENTILE, 'Political Religion: A Concept and its Critics – A Critical Survey', *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, 6/1 (June 2005), pp. 19-32.

Eva was a central figure in the Peronist cult; her character was crystallized through different aesthetic devices. ‘The aesthetic mark’, writes Anahí Ballent, ‘was a central instrument in the construction of Eva Perón’s political myth: she herself became the major iconic product of Peronism’ [‘la impronta estética fue un instrumento central en la construcción del mito político de Eva: ella misma se convirtió en el mayor ícono creado por el peronismo’].<sup>20</sup> Milici’s symphony contributed to this process from the field of music, supported by specific semantics. The association of Eva with sainthood proliferates in the hyperbolic manner that only cults of personality can elicit. She is compared to Joan of Arc—a character with a dual political and religious status—whose virtues she is said to share and even surpass; thus, Member of Parliament Hilda Castañeira affirmed, ‘she has multiplied them [Joan of Arc’s virtues], elevated them to the umpteenth degree’ [‘las ha multiplicado, las ha elevado a la enésima potencia’].<sup>21</sup> In his speech during the meeting that took place on the 17 October 1951, Perón announced that the following day will be a holiday, dedicated to ‘Santa Evita’.<sup>22</sup>

During Eva’s protracted illness and long agony, popular religiosity was manifested through collective prayer, masses, and constant multitudinous gatherings to pray for her cure. Shortly after her death, the priest who administered the last rites, Hernán Benítez, stated: ‘this great Samaritan of the Mystical Body of Christ, as was to be expected, would fall victim to the heroic exercise of charity. Hence we see her haloed with clear sparks of martyrdom’ [‘esta gran samaritana del Cuerpo Místico de Cristo, como era de prever, había de caer herida en el ejercicio heroico de la caridad. Por eso la vemos aureolada con claros destellos de martirio’].<sup>23</sup> Thus, sacrifice is added to the attributes of her sainthood. Devotion to Eva emerged from the wider Argentine working class; only days after her death, the Food Workers’ Union lobbied Pope Pius XII for her beatification. After fifteen days of official mourning, memorial services continued for months and took place in all imaginable places. These services were attended with sincere devotion and great grief by those who were her followers, and through relentless coercion by those who were not.

In the context of this close interaction between social and aesthetic texts, Milici’s work brings together meanings that were prevalent among wide sectors of mid-twentieth century Argentine society and translates them through the use of musical rhetoric. His symphony, as a mirror narration compliant to the expectations of its audience, projects into the concert hall those public rituals and suggests a correlation between the massive popular prayers and those included in the work’s finale.

<sup>20</sup> Anahí BALLENT, *Las huellas de la política. Vivienda, ciudad, peronismo en Buenos Aires, 1943-1955* (Bernal, Universidad Nacional de Quilmes - Prometeo, 2009), p. 153.

<sup>21</sup> Marysa NAVARRO, *Evita* (Buenos Aires, Edhasa, 2009), p. 308.

<sup>22</sup> *Democracia* (18 October 1951), p. 2.

<sup>23</sup> *Revista de la Universidad de Buenos Aires*, 9/1 (July-September 1952), p. 20.

For this, the composer was able to use an already established rhetorical apparatus, the religious *topos*, which, in the last movement, he translates directly from the Roman Catholic domain into that of the new political cult, in the form of the litany to the Virgin and the *Gloria*.

The musical score is a full orchestral score with vocal parts. It includes staves for Flute (Fl), Oboe (Ob), Clarinet (Cl), Bassoon (Fg), Cor Anglais (Cor), Trumpet (Trp), Trombone (Trb), Timpani (Timp), and Cymbals (Camp). The vocal parts are labeled Solos and Coro. The score features dynamic markings such as 'ff' and 'Ritenuito', and tempo markings 'in tempo' and 'marcato'. The lyrics are: 'Gloria e-ter-na en el cie-lo, div.'

**Example 7.** Luis Milici, *Sinfonia 'In Memoriam'*, last movement, final bars

The piece uses ‘archaic’ elements, such as fugue-like passages reminiscent of religious music, as well as the final climax for choir and orchestra, which includes the text of the *Gloria* set to the theme of hope.

The ‘passing to immortality’ (an expression used at the time), definitively locates the protagonist in a transcendent, religious dimension. If this movement represents the death and resurrection of Eva, then the symbolic model is the Roman Catholic mass, expressed via symbols and materials co-opted from the Roman Catholic liturgy.

Lastly, another decisive element is added to this picture: Eva as synecdoche for the Nation. In order to do so, the composer invokes the National Anthem. Towards the end of the piece, a point with the thinnest textural density also exhibits the richest symbolism: the ‘abstract’ theme of hope is voiced in the *Sancta Maria* and combined with the augmented beginning of the National Anthem played, again, by the French horn. This strategy fuses together the semantic clusters of María-Eva and the Virgin Mary-Nation, whose graphic correlate can be found in the iconography of the time, presenting Eva with the Virgin’s attributes and the national colours of white and light blue.



**Figure 3.** Portrait of Eva Perón (1952)<sup>24</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Design by Napoleón Sollazo, painted by Ermete Meliante, printed by the Sindicato de Vendedores de Diarios y Afines. Picture and information in Gabriel MIREMONT, *La estética del peronismo 1945-1955* (Buenos Aires, Instituto Nacional de Investigaciones Históricas Eva Perón, 2013), pp. 56-7.

The image shows a musical score for three parts: Soprano Solista, Violin VI, and Cello. The Soprano Solista part is in treble clef and has the lyrics "San - cta Ma - ri - a". The Violin VI part is also in treble clef and provides harmonic accompaniment. The Cello part is in bass clef and provides harmonic accompaniment. The score is in common time (C) and consists of four measures. The Soprano Solista part has a melodic line with a long note in the first measure, followed by a series of eighth notes in the second measure, and a long note in the third measure. The Violin VI and Cello parts provide harmonic accompaniment with chords and moving lines.

**Example 8.** Luis Milici, *Sinfonia 'In Memoriam'*, fifth movement, bb. 90-4

Through this play of superimpositions and metonymic displacements, the litany *Sancta Maria ora pro nobis*, which models this section, acquires a double meaning: praying to the Virgin for the healing of Eva, and praying to Eva herself on behalf of the Argentine people. Both figures are thus made equal in the hope for a saving intervention.

The use of the National Anthem establishes the civic statute of the Nation. The importance bestowed on this material by the composer is evidenced by its placement in the piece, as the first theme of the opening Allegro, and by its treatment: a fugato. Preceded by the uncertainties expressed in the previous bars, the fugue is a point of departure towards what Kremer-Marietti calls the 'topic of the glorious theme' ['le topique du thème glorieux'] that corresponds to 'the enunciation of a greater subject' ['l'énonciation d'une thématique majeure'].<sup>25</sup> It is presented after a lengthy wait, thus offering an instance of 'strategic optimism'. On the other hand, the Nation, romanticized and essentialized, according to the nationalistic view prevalent in the discursive world of the time, is represented, once more, through the use of folk music. In this context, folk music becomes, in Mark Antliff's terms, a form of 'politicized regionalism'.<sup>26</sup> The folk music that permeates the work functions as a nexus between the meanings linked to the two central ideologemes analysed in this paper: the New Argentina and Peronism as secular religion. The aesthetic strategy is complemented by the monumental scale of the work, whether it be genre, style, performing forces, length—about three quarters of an hour—, and the semantic apparatus provided by the intertext and paratexts.

### Icons, Indices, Trajectories

Besides the topics already discussed, the work presents a number of icons and indices that help reaffirm—through different mechanisms—the same semantic fields. Thus, for instance, the bell's

<sup>25</sup> Joseph François KREMER-MARIETTI, *Les grandes topiques musicales. Panorama d'un parcours anthropologique* (Paris, L'Hartmann, 2012, 1994<sup>1</sup>), p. 17.

<sup>26</sup> Mark ANTLIFF, *Avant-Garde Fascism. The Mobilization of Myth, Art and Culture in France, 1909-1939* (Durham - London, Duke University Press, 2007), p. 43.

eight strokes refer to the time of Eva Perón's death; they are presented in the somber atmosphere that precedes the litany. Altogether, these references constitute the key moment in the [work's] liturgy of Death.

The work begins with the opening bars of the National Anthem played by a French horn, thus adding to the patriotic reference the instrument's indexical value as call with epic accents; this is reinforced towards the end of the movement by the incorporation of the rest of the brass section in a triumphant fanfare. The piece therefore constructs layers of meaning, either successive or overlapping, ranging from the iconic naturalism of the tolling bell, the use of several rhetorics—that of patriotism (National Anthem), nationalism (folk music), and Roman Catholicism (the final litany and the *Gloria*)—together with the use of more neutral elements, affectively related to their referent (the design of the theme of hope). Thus, the work constructs a montage of technologies of representation using one of the most prestigious forms of the learned tradition: the symphony, its codes, and its hierarchies.

Meaning is also constructed in this work not just by the specifics of the musical materials but through their placement in the work's narrative, the processes of elaboration to which they are subjected, and their consequences for the overall narrative.<sup>27</sup> In Milici's symphony, the three central movements introduce emblematic topics that contribute to the general construction of meaning, but which end up being relatively static with regard to the internal narrative. The external movements, on the other hand, move the argument forward and therefore become the dramatic pillars of the action.

The theme of hope, representing the dedicatee, is one of the piece's central discursive motors and it is highlighted through various strategies. The first one of these is structural; that is, the length and importance of the melodic gesture, as well as its emotional appeal, achieved by using pre-existing expressive and stylistic codes. The disruption created by the insertion of a contrasting idea—a folk idiom—that interrupts the general orientation of the theme, emphasizes its importance. The second strategy is related to the theme's placement, after the end of the exposition of a sonata-allegro form. Placing a theme of this importance in the development section of the movement is 'irregular'—a 'markedness' procedure in Hatten's terminology,<sup>28</sup>—but at the same time adds to its semantic importance and acts as compensation: in the dominant key, and opposed both by its

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<sup>27</sup> 'Agential narrative' is the concept proposed by Almén and Hatten to define the musical process by which actors and strategies generate narrative plots. Byron ALMÉN - Robert HATTEN, 'Narrative Engagement with Twentieth-Century Music: Possibilities and Limits', in *Music and Narrative since 1900*, edited by Michel Klein and Nicholas Reyland (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2013), pp. 59-85. See also William A. CAPLIN, 'On the Relation of Musical Topoi to Formal Function', *Eighteenth-Century Music*, 2/1 (2005), pp. 113-24.

<sup>28</sup> Robert HATTEN, *Musical Meaning in Beethoven. Markedness, Correlation, and Interpretation* (Bloomington - Indianapolis, Indiana University Press, 1994)

texture and its expressive character to the first theme, it functions as a true second theme within the logic of sonata form, though relocated, and replaces the weaker, actual second theme of the exposition, that is, the 'people's theme'. The importance of the theme of hope is also reinforced by insistence: it appears in four of the piece's five movements, thus re-affirming these movements' cyclic links. Even though the theme's identity remains recognizable, it is the thematic material that is elaborated the most throughout the piece, adopting different expressive hues. Lastly, its gravitas is further revealed when it is entrusted with the religious text in the final movement, initially in Latin and then in Spanish, thus completing the trajectory from structural material to explicit semantic content. The journey towards greater transparency of intention crowns the didactic and spectacular strategy. In addition to reinforcing the transcendence of the theme, these strategies make up for its lack of iconicity, thus facilitating its intelligibility.

The first and last movements are the most complex and dynamic, both structurally and semantically; they are also the most committed to both the internal narrative of the work and the external history to which they correlate. Both movements mirror the two parallel and complementary trajectories that summarise the plot of the work: the heroine's slow ascent to political and social triumph in the first movement, and her journey, through sickness and death, towards glory in the last movement. This strategy is achieved by the use of the same structural and symbolic economy: the same dysphoric and euphoric topics are applied to both political history in the first movement, and Eva's personal history in the last one. Both share the National Anthem's opening call, and are followed by fugato episodes, appealing to what Hatten calls the 'venerable authority' of 'Baroque learned styles'.<sup>29</sup> The first of these, on the main motif of the National Anthem, is orchestral and represents the Nation; the second, on a litany, is vocal, and represents religion. Both of these fugato sections culminate in the theme of hope, which confronts and defeats all obstacles at the beginning of the movement, and transcends death in the final glorification: a process that takes us from history to myth.

Thus, a dramatic story arc emerges, informed by history itself and its transformation into narrative: a conflict, appearance of the protagonist, triumph, fall into a tragic fate, final apotheosis. Like the faint trace of a watermark we can see here the archetypal journey of the hero, as studied by Joseph Campbell,<sup>30</sup> represented by a few of its paradigmatic stages. Not all of them are essential to the fulfilment of the cycle; others need not be presented because they were still part of the present for the audience at the time of the premiere, as they continue to exist in Argentina's collective memory.

<sup>29</sup> Robert HATTEN, 'The Troping of Temporality in Music', in *Approaches to Meaning in Music*, edited by Byron Almén and Edward Pearsall (Bloomington - Indianapolis, Indiana University Press, 2006), p. 66.

<sup>30</sup> Joseph CAMPBELL, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (New York, Mending Books, 1956).

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