

## Leonardo Balada and Surrealism in Music

My current book proposal brings to light surrealism in music. By researching the clarinet repertoire of Leonardo Balada, I will show his approach to surrealism and illuminate the impact of his collaboration with Salvador Dali. Artistic styles develop first in visual arts and literature, and eventually seep into the musical realm. Impressionism is an example of a style developed first as visual art, eventually influencing the styles of musicians as well. Dali's works symbolize surrealism in visual arts, while Leonardo Balada's works demonstrate Dali's concept of surrealism in the musical arts. Theorists still have not extracted and defined the compositional method behind surrealism in music. In my book, I aim to demonstrate a theory based analysis explaining this technique. In addition, while attending Carnegie Mellon University, I was fortunate enough to work with Maestro Balada during recording sessions of his clarinet compositions. I both analyzed his music and helped record the CD "The Clarinet Music of Leonaro Balada".

### Abstract:

Leonardo Balada's music demonstrates a melding of the surrealistic avant-garde with the traditional 20<sup>th</sup>- Century styles of expressionism and neo-classicism. My research focuses on Balada's *Capriccio No 7 - Concerto for Clarinet and Chamber Ensemble* and *Maria Sabina-tragifonia*<sup>1</sup> (Opera) for narrator, choir and orchestra, in order to show Balada's approach to surrealism.

Leonardo Balada studied composition with Vincent Persichetti and Aaron Copland, and conducting with Igor Markevitch. He was awarded the position of Professor of Composition at

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<sup>1</sup> A term that Leonardo Balada has invented

Carnegie Mellon University and retains this title to this day. Balada has influenced and taught such composers as John Zorn, Stephen Hartke etc. His works are being performed by the world's leading orchestras, such as the Philharmonics of New York, Los Angeles, Israel, The Philadelphia Orchestra, The Philharmonia Orchestra London, the symphonies of Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, Dallas, Washington D.C., Barcelona, Dusseldorf, Prague, the radio orchestras of Berlin, Leipzig, Madrid, Helsinki, BBC, Jerusalem etc....conducted by artists such as Maazel, Rostropovitch, Lopez-Cobos, Jansons, Marriner etc.

He developed a style that combines different avant-garde compositional techniques. Balada's collaboration with the prominent surrealist artist Salvador Dali had a profound influence on the development of his surrealistic style. A 1960 letter from Salvador Dali about Maestro Balada exemplifies their collaboration:

*This is to certify that I consider the young composer Mr. Leonardo Balada, to possess a remarkable talent. I believe his music contains a high degree of ripeness and originality. I had the opportunity to test his gift on the occasion of the filming of my motion pictures Chaos and Creation in collaboration with Mr. Philippe Helsman, for which Mr. Balada composed the music. I have some plans for the future in which he will again create the music. One of them will be an opera the outline of which already was determined and on which we will start working in the near future.*

Dali's surrealism, especially his concepts of the mutable and the transformation of matter in the brain of each individual, became essential for Balada. The relationship between the painter

and the composer became a long-term creative dialogue. My book focuses on Balada's compositions as key elements in the synthesis of the arts in the late 20th century, looking closely at the relationship between the composer and Dali.

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## Chapter Summaries

The book unfolds in the following five chapters: Leonardo Balada; Acts of Creative Madness: Balada Discovers Dali and Surrealism; Surrealism and Picasso's *Guernica*: Balada Found his Artistic Identity; Maria Sabina; Analysis of Caprichos No 7, Sound Transformation and the Mystery Revealed: Analysis of Concerto for Clarinet and chamber ensemble.

**Leonardo Balada:** covers Leonardo's biographical information as it focuses on his childhood, early age and education. Although mostly historical this chapter has direct importance to surrealism as a whole, explaining in details Leonardo's Spanish and more specifically Catalonian roots, the pure geographical artistic background of Barcelona city of Gaudi, Picasso and Dali. This chapter smoothly leads to the next one, which explains the formation of his surrealistic style.

**Acts of Creative Madness: Balada Discovers Dali and Surrealism:** discusses the complicated process of style formation by focusing on Salvador Dali and their mutual collaboration, Dali's influence of Balada's writing, and Leonardo's artistic battles and challenges. It further explains personal style transformation and how maestro Balada achieved his surrealistic approach to composing. The chapter walks through the works in which Leonardo found his own writing style using both analytical method as well as his own thoughts from our interviews.

**Surrealism and Picasso's *Guernica*: Balada Found his Artistic Identity:** Another step forward- After his collaboration with Salvador Dali, Balada felt comfortable aesthetically in his writing. However, there was still something missing to completely express himself. It was necessary to take a step forward and represent better his emotional world, show his human conscience in order to express his own artistic identity. The chapter explains surrealism as a whole, Picasso's *Guernica* and its influence on Balada for writing his homonymous work. It takes a detailed consideration to the Sebastien Arfouilloux's book "Que la nuit tombe sur l'orchestre, Surrealisme at musique" by focusing on the historical and aesthetical sides of surrealism.

**Maria Sabina:** A year after maestro Balada composed his symphonic work *Guernica* influenced by and dedicated to Pablo Picasso, he wrote the opera *Maria Sabina*. Completed in 1969, it is the first fully surrealistic work by Balada, demonstrating the early development of surrealism in music. It prepares the reader for the actual analysis and theory behind the surrealism which is fully revealed in the next chapter.

**Sound Transformation and the Mystery Revealed:** is a detailed analysis of Balada's Clarinet Concerto, showing how Dali's surrealism inspired Balada to explore the field of the permanent sound transformation. It explains how Dali's transformation of one recognizable object into another recognizable object through the process of illusion works with musical notes. Balada establishes a well-defined, creative musical profile that mutates to another perfectly clear musical unit, the *sound transformation* concept, which is fundamentally different from earlier developmental approach and represents the most distinctive aspects of surrealism.

The **conclusion** summaries all of the above suggesting that this is an important pioneering initiative, but only the beginning for future research on surrealism.