

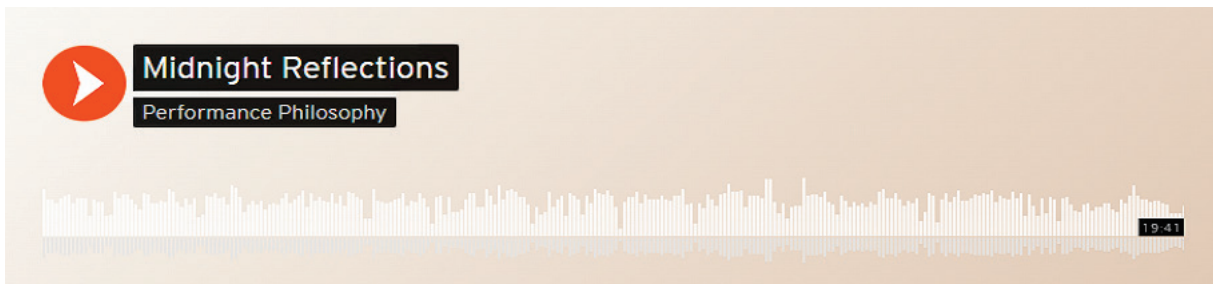


PERFORMANCE  
PHILOSOPHY

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## MIDNIGHT REFLECTIONS ABOUT OUR OWN NORTHERN VENTRILOQUIST'S SKILLS

AN AUDIO ARTICLE BY MAURICIO CARRASCO AND FERNANDO GARNERO  
IN DIALOGUE WITH YOUTUBE LINKS BY THIRUSHA NAIDU, ACHILLE MBEMBE,  
AND ROSI BRAIDOTTI



 Listen to the audio article: <https://soundcloud.com/performancephilosophy/midnight-reflections>

*Midnight Reflections* is structured around three works composed by Garnero and performed by Carrasco: *Campo Amniótico* or *CA* (2021), *Interlude* (2014) and *Neon Pig* (2017). In *CA*, synthetic voices recite Bruce Nauman's text from his work *Good Boy, Bad Boy* (1985–86), which arise randomly as the musicians operate the volume pedals.

Through autoethnographic accounts and perspectives, Carrasco and Garnero refer to their origins in the Global South, interrogate their identity and inquire about how the performative and creative self can thrive in the north when coming from the south.

The musical trajectory of this collaboration between composer and performer culminates in the uncertainty of feedback or the Larsen effect in *CA*, where the score becomes a navigational tool rather than an accurate notation system, as was the case with *Interlude* and *Neon Pig*.

# Campo amniótico (2021)

F. Garnero

For 2 instruments with feed-back device & synthetic voice samplers

The score consists of two systems of staves. The first system has two staves, I and II. Above staff I, there is a measure rest labeled '1'. Below staff I, there is a box containing 'V. P. min : 3'. Below staff II, there is a box containing 'Mic : ON' and a box containing '1'. The music features a melodic line on staff I and a more rhythmic line on staff II. A fermata is placed over the first measure of staff I. The second system also has two staves, I and II. Above staff I, there is a measure rest labeled '4'. Above staff II, there is a measure rest labeled '3'. Below staff II, there is a box containing '2'. The music continues with similar melodic and rhythmic patterns.

Figure 1. Fernando Garnero, Campo Amniótico (2021), unpublished score, bars 1-9.

The score is titled 'INTERLUDE' (2014) by F. GARNERO. It is for e-guitar in 116/20 time. Performance instructions include 'F. FI = Plastic Ruler' and 'L. H = Sponge, [Slide]'. The score is divided into two systems. The first system has two staves. Above the first staff, there is a measure rest labeled '9'. Above the second staff, there is a measure rest labeled '21'. The music features a melodic line on the first staff and a rhythmic line on the second staff. Performance instructions include 'Dist.', 'Dist. OFF', 'Dist. ON', 'w.w', and 'pp'. The second system has two staves. Above the first staff, there is a measure rest labeled '4'. Above the second staff, there is a measure rest labeled '2'. The music continues with similar melodic and rhythmic patterns. Performance instructions include 'OFF', 'ON', 'f', and 'p'.

Figure 2. Fernando Garnero, Interlude for e-guitar (2014), BabelScores, bars 1-13.

112

"NEON PIG" [2017] FERNANDO GARNERO

\*AMP FLUTE *mf* *mp* *sf* *sempre simile*

\*AMP PRFP B. CL *mf* *mp* *sf* *sempre simile*

\*AMP OB. *mf* *mp* *sf* *sempre simile* *P possibile*

\*AMP TR. INC *mf* *mp* *sf* *sempre simile*

\*AMP PERC. *mf* *mp* *sf* *sempre simile*

E. GUIT. *mf* *mp* *sf* *sempre simile*

HARP TRANS. [SAMPLER] *mf* *mp* *sf* *sempre simile*

SPEND ON PIANO *pp* *mp* *sf* *sempre simile*

\*AMP VIOLIN *mf* *mp* *sf* *sempre simile*

\*AMP VIOLA *mf* *mp* *sf* *sempre simile* *N.T. quasi jete* *[N.T.]*

\*AMP CELLO *mf* *mp* *sf* *sempre simile* *N.T.*

D. BASS TRANS. [SAMPLER] *pppp* *sempre crescendo...*

Figure 3. Fernando Garneró, Neon Pig (2017), BabelScores, bars 1-4.

Taking the acoustic phenomenon of feedback as its constituent element, CA becomes a metaphor for the elusiveness of an artwork, positing as an alternative to highly technologically enhanced virtuoso new music works. Instead of accomplishing performative prowess, composer and performer reflect on Mbembe and Braidotti's comments on the societal role of technology and on transhumanism, while aiming to find artistic strategies that attempt to evade Naidu's Northern Ventriloquist and Mignolo's Latin American tokenism concepts.

## Audio Article: Transcript

MAURICIO. Midnight reflections on our own Northern Ventriloquist's skills.

[*Campo Amniótico* begins]

An Audio Article by Mauricio Carrasco and Fernando Garnero in dialogue with YouTube links by Thirusha Naidu, Achille Mbembe and Rosi Braidotti.

FERNANDO. We met at the turn of the millennium at the Geneva Conservatory, and soon after we started collaborating in what constitutes by now a solid body of work. By then, none of the intersectional taxonomies related to gender, race, or geographical origin were taken into account by the musical institutions we attended, or by society in general.

MAURICIO. During the nineties, during our bachelor studies in South America, it seemed that the only way for us to achieve something and leave our repressive societies behind was to migrate to Europe.

FERNANDO. There was an almost axiomatic belief circulating in our environment at that time: to settle in Europe—at least for a few years—was the only way to acquire a 'real' compositional technique, to obtain a 'real' experience of composition. You had to 'be there', 'soak in', 'breathe that air'.

MAURICIO. The rather unquestioned path consisted of coming to a European country where the conservatory was not too expensive, especially without a scholarship, where one could survive doing student jobs or some teaching while getting the classical music education from the first hand, the original source.

FERNANDO. How could we know by then that we were going to be cursed to play a Southern role? Who could have foreseen this mirror movement, this symmetry? Our character carried performative mandates that were the opposite of those of the colonised South we had left behind. We rebelled against both in a symmetrical movement, sometimes retroactively.

Bruce Nauman

*Good Boy, Bad Boy* (1985-86)

*The highlighted passages correspond to the parts where the voices are clearly audible throughout the audio article.*

I was a good boy  
You were a good boy  
We were good boys  
That was good

I was a good girl  
You were a good girl  
We were good girls  
That was good

I was a bad boy  
You were a bad boy  
We were bad boys  
That was bad

I was a bad girl  
You were a bad girl  
We were bad girls  
That was bad

I am a virtuous man  
You are a virtuous man  
We are virtuous men  
This is virtue

I am a virtuous woman  
You are a virtuous woman  
We are virtuous women  
This is virtue

I am an evil man  
You are an evil man  
We are evil men  
This is evil

I am an evil woman  
You are an evil woman  
We are evil women  
This is evil

The first thing I knew when I was born was exile: well, what an idea to be born in Argentina in 1976, child of a left-wing militant couple. That was the year of the coup d'état, in which the bloodiest dictatorship in our history began.

Having been born on the periphery, the only possible milestone left for us to be part of the 'real' musical universe was to emigrate.

MAURICIO. We grew up attending conservatories that had this admiring look towards Europe, which shaped the musical education we received in Chile or Argentina from an early age.

THIRUSHA NAIDU. "Northern Ventriloquism is a term that I created to describe when Global South researchers appropriate northern ideas and repurpose them for their own purposes, where they will speak northern ideas on systems and structures and values and ways of seeing the world to the north" (Naidu 2021).

MAURICIO. I remember that as a bachelor student, any visitor who landed in a pretty locked up country as was Chile in the nineties, was received as a huge event. For instance, I remember how exciting it was to see Ensemble Modern performing at the Goethe Institute in Santiago some years after the end of dictatorship. To see such effervescence—crowded, enthusiastic young audiences. I remember the ensemble musicians seemed surprised by such a reception. Of course, now, living in the Global North, and a few decades later, the presence of a major new music ensemble is quite common in festivals and venues, and I experience it more like something on the order of a normal event.

FERNANDO. I spent months searching in libraries, consulting with contemporary music geeks in Buenos Aires, asking those who had the chance to travel to help me get the scores of two works that I came to know almost by chance, and which had a profound impact on me. Gerard Grisey's 1986 work *Talea* was one of them.

I'm alive  
You're alive  
We're alive  
This is living

I live the good life  
You live the good life  
We live the good life  
This is the good life

I have work  
You have work  
We have work  
This is work

I play  
You play  
We play  
This is play

I'm having fun  
You're having fun  
We're having fun  
This is fun

I'm bored  
You're bored  
We're bored  
This is boredom

I'm boring  
You're boring  
We're boring  
This is boring

I have sex  
You have sex  
We have sex  
This is sex

I love  
You love  
We love  
This is love

Grisey was a reference to a spectral movement that existed for more than twenty years, but that was practically unknown in Argentina. The second was by another fundamental composer, and also inaccessible for us by then: *Lo spazio inverso* (1985) by Salvatore Sciarrino. As both were published by Ricordi, I went to their office in Buenos Aires. I remember the astonished faces of the employees when asked for the Sciarrino score—people who were used to selling mainly solfeggio methods or musical instruments. Finally, a somewhat more avid manager told me that the simplest way to obtain them would be to go directly to Milan.

THIRUSHA NAIDU. “And you start to speak in this northern voice” (Naidu 2021).

FERNANDO. When I began to write a diary about my stay at the French Academy in Rome, a recurring starting question was: in which language should I write it?

MAURICIO. The foreign language is not English (or any other language for that matter), but the language of the Global North: the language of civilisation, the language of progress. The one that colonisers’ history manuals exalted as a main instrument of transmission of the superior legacy offered to the colonised, namely their culture.

FERNANDO. Xenos, the stranger, the foreigner, was the signifier around which was possible to build an ‘I’.

MAURICIO. Curiously enough, as a student, I had to learn a classical guitar’s repertoire largely constituted by original works written by Latin American composers. Lots of those having a folkloric root.

Walter Mignolo starts his article on epistemic disobedience like a fairy tale: “And once upon a time scholars assumed that if you ‘come’ from Latin America you have to ‘talk about’ Latin America; that in such case you have to be a token of your culture” (Mignolo 2009, 160).

I hate  
You hate  
We hate  
This is hating

I like to eat  
You like to eat  
We like to eat  
This is eating

I like to drink  
You like to drink  
We like to drink  
This is drinking

I like to shit  
You like to shit  
We like to shit  
This is shitting

I piss  
You piss  
We piss  
This is piss

I like to sleep  
You like to sleep  
We like to sleep  
Sleep well

I pay  
You pay  
We pay  
This is payment

I don’t want to die  
You don’t want to die  
We don’t want to die  
This is fear of death.



FERNANDO. What would epistemic disobedience mean for someone who creates music and knowledge about making music? Wouldn't the re-appropriation of the folk music tradition be another sign of obedience? Wouldn't it embody what the North sees or thinks about someone from the South? As an Argentinean composer, should I recreate tango over and over again? If tango is already a product of the encounter between Central European folk and African rhythms, is the South American component agonic then? A form of pronouncing?

MAURICIO. We met as students in a European higher musical institution.

Mignolo points out that “institutions are created to accomplish two functions: training of new (epistemically obedient) members, and controlling who enters and what knowledge-making is allowed, disavowed, devalued, or celebrated” (176).

I remember I had sort of two versions of the works I played: the one for my professor, with the phrasing she wanted, and which I played within the institution's examinations, and the more personal one, the version I would play in concerts and competitions outside the conservatory.

Perhaps one way to escape—both the performative obligations imposed by my guitar professor and a repertoire I disliked, characterised greatly by original works imbued with the colours and rhythms of Spain or its former colonies, to which the guitar lent itself so easily with its *rasgueados* and tonalities that I still avoid today—was to undertake an exploration of different expressive, technical, and aesthetic alternatives to the classical guitar, which I experienced as an asphyxiating milieu.

NARRATOR. “Tell me the thing that you desire and I can provide it for you” (Koltès and Wainwright 2001).

[*Campo Amniótico* fades out. *Interlude* fades in.]

FERNANDO. That's how we started collaborating first as students, and then by creating the Vortex ensemble.

For instance, let's look at the *Interlude for Electric Guitar* I composed for you in 2014.

NARRATOR. In this interlude, the guitarist holds objects in both hands: a sponge and a slide on the left, a ruler on the right. The tablature specifies: the rhythm, the areas where the objects need to be placed, the placement of the objects in a specific spot on the guitar, which determines the pitch, the direction in which the objects will move, indicated by arrows, the level of pressure of the objects over the strings, indicated by rectangles: white for light pressure, black and white for medium, and black for hard pressure, the control of the wah pedal indicated by a circle for ON and a cross for OFF.

ACHILLE MBEMBE. “All the tools, machines, technological artifacts, and devices with which humans interact, serve to fulfil two key functions, either to replace human action or to respond to human expression or sensation” (Mbembe 2019).

NARRATOR. The repetition of elements has little to do with a minimalistic intention, but with an obsessive, constant repetition of a short pattern that has an obstacle in front of it that prevents it from going further.

Once the obstacle is overcome, there may be a doubt about continuing, manifested by seemingly lengthy fermate. Like a toy running out of batteries, those become longer and longer by the end of the Interlude. The last fermata, the longest of the *Interlude* (eleven seconds pause), succeeds the last loop of the work, a seven-times-repeated 2/4 bar of a rising gesture in diminuendo produced by gradually closing the wah pedal. A fragile last gesture in pianissimo finishes the work.

ACHILLE MBEMBE. "That is, technology as *instrumentum*, a means to an end, and technology as an anthropology, that is, simply, as an activity performed by humans, an activity that sets humans apart from other species" (Mbembe 2019).

NARRATOR. Musical instruments reflect on this double essence mentioned by Mbembe, they serve to convey human expression, and they have historically evolved together with societal technological evolution. In this respect, electric guitar has played a major role in the passage to a mass reproduction and accessibility of music through the 20th century, contributing to, as Jacques Attali (1985) points out, enable music to be fully integrated into the global political order.

MAURICIO. However, in new music, we are far from feeling integrated into a global political order. At the most, we modestly try to comment on our contemporaneity from a peripheric point of view.

[*Interlude* fades out. *Neon Pig* fades in.]

FERNANDO. The "technique" to produce music and the language to talk about it is learned in the North.

I regularly use electric guitar in chamber settings: an example of that is *Neon Pig*, a work premiered at the Bendigo International Festival of Exploratory Music BIFEM by the Argonaut Ensemble conducted by Elena Schwartz in 2017.

MAURICIO. I was an Artistic Associate to the festival, and our main interest with artistic director David Chisholm was to render accessible to Australasian audiences works that were otherwise far from their radar. Although Australia doesn't officially make up part of the Global South, together with New Zealand, they have faced their own postcolonial challenges. BIFEM started as a festival in response to a programming policy that was always repeating the same names, those of the composers supported by a big publishing house. It was either that or the alternative scene—which Melbourne is a great place for—but it was logistically complicated to program, commission, and present more ambitious works, such as *Neon Pig*.

FERNANDO. So, in *Interlude* and in *Neon Pig*, we are in a different mindset than in *Campo Amniótico*, this audio article opening and closing work. Finally, we use the language of the North to discover whether we have our own purposes in the South. We are left to imitate, to mimic, but also to re-situate a place that can never really exist, to situate something impossible.



This impossible is the only universal to which a being from the Global South can aspire in this world ruled by the North.

[*Neon Pig* fades out. *Campo Amniótico* fades in.]

The lack, the absence, the desire, is the only place from where we can do our northern ventriloquisms.

ROSI BRAIDOTTI. "Oxford University has set up a few years ago a massive institute run by Nick Bostrom. It is called—and I'm glad you're sitting down—"The Institute for the Future of Humanity'. The ethos of the institute is Transhumanism. Transhumanism is human enhancement, human enhancement through brain implants or rather interfaces between brains, computational systems, clinical psychology, philosophy of mind. Millions in subsidies, incredible postdocs and PhDs, so get in there. Artists are very welcome, so long as you have your maths and physics under control" (Braidotti 2015).

NARRATOR. *Campo Amniótico* distances itself greatly from transhuman influenced music works that showcase this human enhancement, a sort of new brilliant instrumental virtuosity that demonstrates the technical prowess not only of the performer but also of the technological cyborg elements that reinforce them and allow the human to surpass them. Instead, *Campo Amniótico* questions the sacralisation of the musical instruments and of the symbolic support that is the music score: composers and performers are left to the arbitrariness of the medium they must inhabit through feedback, and where synthetic voices remind them from time to time of what Bruce Nauman had in mind as early as 1985 in his work *Good Boy, Bad Boy*, not as a jouissance of our own demise, but rather as a reminder that...

## Recordings

This audio article contains the following recordings of Fernando Garnero's compositions:

*CAMPO AMNIOTICO* (2021) for two performers playing self-regulated feedback devices, ring modulation, and two synthetic voices.

Performed live at the Inter Feral Arts, Malmo, Sweden, October 2021, by the Ensemble Vortex: Rada Hadjikostova & Mauricio Carrasco.

The text from *Campo Amniótico* corresponds to the work *Good Boy, Bad Boy* (1985–86). Installation for two monitors and sound by Bruce Nauman.

*INTERLUDE FOR THE EXPERIMENT for electric guitar* (2014). Part of the Monodrama written by Mark Ravenhill and composed by David Chisholm.

Mauricio Carrasco, electric guitar.

Recorded live in Fonderie Kugler, Geneva, Switzerland, March 2018.

*NEON PIG* (2017) for ensemble and electronics.

World Premiere performance Friday 1 September 2017, Ulumbarra Theatre, Bendigo, Australia.

ARGONAUT ENSEMBLE.

Elena SCHWARZ, Conductor.

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## Biographies

Dr **Mauricio Carrasco** (1973) is an artistic researcher interested in queer performativity, particularly in tracing performativity's 'queer lineage' through a multiplicity of autoethnographic, posthuman and scientific rhizomatic approaches. He argues against the stranglehold of the specialism of artistic disciplines and aims to develop a transdisciplinary holistic vision that can accompany humans and non-humans in this critical historical convergence.

Carrasco's autoethnographic research examines the identity and corporeality of the classically trained musician in a repressive, dictatorial, and homophobic society (Chile in the 1980s and 1990s), which approaches trauma, hysteria, and gender issues in the musical theatre projects he performs. He assures the artistic direction of CRI *création recherche interdisciplinarité* and performs with the Ensemble Vortex.

**Fernando Garnero** (1976) is an Argentinian composer, co-director of Swiss ensemble Vortex, Guest Artist by Festival BIFEM (2019-2020), PhD candidate in Artistic Research by Lund University (Sweden) and former Fellow at the French Academy in Rome, Villa Medici (2020-21).

His works are played by Contrechamps, Vortex, Accroche Note, Phoenix, Proton, Repertorio Zero, Cairn, Lucilin, Distractfold, Wet Ink, L'imaginaire, Françoise Rivalland, Donatienne Michel-Dansac, on festivals such as Biennale de Venezia, Musica, Huddersfield, Archipel, Unerhoerte Musik Berlin, Mixtur, Warsaw Autumn and commissioned by Biennale de Venezia, Festival Archipel, SUISA, Fondation Mika Salabert, Fondation Royaumont, Radio France, French Ministry of Culture, Teatro Colón, among many others.

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