

Research > AVANT

Sound art and experimental music arrived to Spain relatively late, but over the course of the last three decades they have produced names, scenes and works that have managed to establish themselves with certain authority on the international stage.

From the most academic electroacoustics to industrial music, from radiophonic art to post-no-wave improvisation, AVANT has joined together with some of the most important performers of experimental music in Spain to retrace some of the key moments of the country's musical avant-garde, scarcely documented until now.

Each AVANT focuses on the work and career of a group project from the scene, documented and composed of two parts: the first part reconstructs the artist's context through interviews, and the second part retraces the artist's work with musical examples.

Curated by Roc Jiménez de Cisneros.

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Roc Jiménez de Cisneros (Barcelona, 1975) is a musician and composer. Since 1996, he is the core of computer music project EVOL, and his work has been released on internationally acclaimed record labels. In 2003 he began developing a series of electroacoustic pieces entitled "Punani", in which he deepens in some of the main aspects of his work, namely algorithmic composition, various synthesis techniques, spectro-morphology and the musical application of fractal geometry and other mathematical phenomena. Since 1997, he co-runs the record label and artists collective Alku with Anna Maria Ramos, as well as imbecil.net, a platform for absurd computing and binary obfuscation. He lives and works in Barcelona.

Voice: Clàudia Faus

AVANT #12

Carles Santos

Carles Santos is a paradigmatic example of interdisciplinarity: his complex and exhaustive oeuvre starts out with music and his famous association with the piano, but is articulated from fields like theatre, film and performance so as to overturn traditional notions of composition and spectacle. A restless composer who has never ceased in his search for surprise.

01. Biography

To a large extent, the history of the piano, from its origins in the eighteenth century up until the present day, is also the history of the music of Western civilization over the past three hundred years. Curiously, the instrument that revolutionised learned music in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, survived into the early twentieth century as the main means of popular entertainment and music transmission in the homes of the new European middle class. The arrival of electronic media pushed the piano into the background in comparison to its previous social role, but even in the unstable context of music in the first half of the twentieth century, with its radical changes and new sound sources, the piano held onto its status and mutated along with the times. Thus, most composers who spurred on cutting-edge music on both sides of the Atlantic around the 1950s, used the piano as a tool and as a means for expression.

The life and career of the musician Carles Santos (Vinaròs, 1940) has also been inseparably linked to the presence of the piano. "There are piano artists, and there are artists who have turned the piano into a work of art," wrote Manel Guerrero in the catalogue for the exhibition *Visca el piano!* So much so that even his brief period without a piano (when, rebellious, he sold it to buy a motorbike) allowed Santos to synthesize his relationship to the instrument with the same irony that hovers over many of his creations.

The education of this Valencian musician follows a similar pattern to that of other key figures in twentieth century music: he started as a student, went on to become a young performer, then a torchbearer for contemporaneity (first the Vienna, then New York versions), and later a composer. But in the case of Santos, this process acquired a transversal slant that soon led him to develop an aspect that defines his work to this day: an interest in related arts disciplines (theatre, film, dance, plastic arts), which led him to bring about a radical change in music (and particularly in the way audiences perceive the musical act).

Meeting the poet Joan Brossa was an unmistakable milestone for Carlos Santos, who describes him as the "ideologue" of the group of artists and activists that Santos himself sprung from. Their relationship deeply influenced his global conception of the performing arts which has led him, over the past forty years, to compose with a stage rather than an auditorium in mind, to mix scenes and specialities and to superimpose seemingly unrelated concepts like minimalism and romanticism. It has also led to him to make forays into film, putting forward alternatives and breaking traditional codes and structures, mainly in the company of filmmaker Pere Portabella, but also other directors like Gonzalo Herralde, Jordi Cadena and Carles Durán. In Santos's work, extravagance, sexuality, histrionics and sarcasm are placed at the service of music and art, which he sees as a form of communication and entertainment, in the best sense of the word. Although his work implies a rupture that he shared (almost inevitably) with many of his contemporaries –the break with the single discipline, with linear narrative, stylistic continuity, and the distinction between high and low culture that can be seen in the work of Santos–, it challenges not only the status quo, but also



[Carles Santos]



[Carles Santos *Piano Turbo*. *Pianos Intervenidos* series. Carles Santos Company, 2006]

boredom. A challenge that is part amiable and part hermetic, somewhere between popular accessibility and that unfathomable aspect of contemporaneity in music that Santos struggles to dissolve in acid.

02. List of sound fragments

Part I

Carles Santos, "Fanfarra Promenade" (in *Música para las Ceremonias Olímpicas Barcelona 92*)
 Carles Santos, "Scène 1" (in *Sama Samaruck Suck Suck*)
 Benet Casablanças, "Inflexió trièdrica i gratuïta (int. Barbara Held, Miquel Gaspà, Carles Santos)" (a *Benet Casablanças*)
 Llorenç Balsach, "De Caldetes a Moià (int. J. Codina, C. Santos, X. Joaquín)" (in *De Caldetes a Moià*)
 Robert Gerhard, "Nonet" (in *Gerhard - Concertos, Nonet*)
 John Cage, "Amores. For Piano And Percussion Trio. Part 1 (int. Amores grup de percussió, Carles Santos)" (in *Amores Cage*)
 Robert Gerhard, "Nonet" (in *Gerhard - Concertos, Nonet*)
 Carles Santos, "Conversa" (in *Voicetracks*)
 J. S. Bach, "Prelude and Fugue, for keyboard No. 13 in F sharp major (WTC II/13), BWV 882", Glenn Gould (in *The Well-Tempered Clavier*)
 Carles Santos, "s/t" (in *Nocturn 29*, de Pere Portabella, 1968)
 Carles Santos, "s/t" (in *Cuadecuc, Vàmpir*, de Pere Portabella, 1970)
 Carles Santos, "La Porca i Vibràtica Tecluria" (in *La Porca i Vibràtica Tecluria*)
 Carles Santos, "Blau i Blanc" (in *Músiques X Coreografies*)

Part II

00:00:15 John Cage, "Amores. For Piano And Percussion Trio. Part 4 (int. Amores grup de percussió, Carles Santos)" (in *Amores Cage*)
 00:03:46 Carles Santos, "Canto" (in *Five Voices*)
 00:08:22 Carles Santos / Adam Raga, "Ebrofalia Copulativa (fragment)"
 00:14:26 Carles Santos, "Obertura Hola" (in *Música para las Ceremonias Olímpicas Barcelona 92*)
 00:18:42 Carles Santos, "Scène 10" (in *Sama Samaruck Suck Suck*)
 00:20:45 Carles Santos, "La Porca i Vibràtica Tecluria (fragment)" (in *La Porca i Vibràtica Tecluria*)
 00:38:22 Carles Santos, "Pepa" (in *Voicetracks*)
 00:41:51 Benet Casablanças, "Harmonies Banals (Carles Santos, piano)" (in *Benet Casablanças*)
 00:50:54 Carles Santos, "Aquesta és la història que mai podré oblidar" (in *Angelica 91*)
 00:58:42 Carles Santos, "Blau i Blanc" (in *Músiques X Coreografies*)
 01:03:56 Carles Santos, "Fanfarra Clausura" (in *Música para las Ceremonias Olímpicas Barcelona 92*)

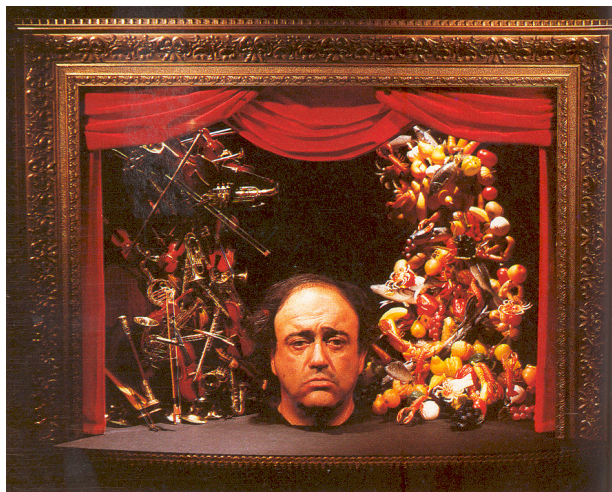
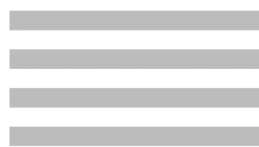
Note: the tracks on this compilation come from recordings released on various formats. The differences in sound quality and feel were preserved for the sake of historical value.

03. Related links

<http://www.carles-santos.com>
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kY4IO6zKmTc>

04. Acknowledgements

AVANT #12 wishes to thank Carles Santos and Pere Portabella.



[Carles Santos]

05. Copyright note

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