

Dissident Sounds: Electronic music in Venezuela from the notions of radical education

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Based on the theories of radical education, this article discusses the education of electronic music in Venezuela. After a historiographical review of the state of music education in the country, which shows that there is little information on the subject, the institutional life that has promoted electroacoustic music in Venezuela is approached from a critical perspective. This documentary research gathers and analyses data provided by a bibliographic review and unstructured interviews with experts in the field. Among the most salient findings is the discontinuity in the teaching of electroacoustic music, as well as a critical review of the notions of radical education in the case of Venezuela, where the educational system shows stagnation in the face of the global context.

1. INTRODUCTION

The critical study of music education in Venezuela in the first two decades of the twenty-first century is an exercise full of paradoxes. On the one hand, the media (both print and digital) proclaimed the international success of the National System of Youth and Children's Orchestras of Venezuela (*El Sistema*), an educational model that postulates the transformation of individuals from disadvantaged social classes into citizens integrated into society. On the other hand, during the administrations of Hugo Rafael Chávez Frías (1999–2013) and Nicolás Maduro (2013–present), the Caribbean country has experienced the greatest socioeconomic, cultural and educational deterioration in its history: weakened or closed higher education institutions, migration of more than seven million Venezuelans and one of the highest percentages of child malnutrition in the world (Gedan 2017; Mijares and Rojas Silva 2018; Ragas 2017; Ausman 2019; Lengwinat 2021).

However, there has been little criticism of the national music education system from academics in the country. Baker (2014, 2016) has criticised the scope of *El Sistema* with little debate on the part of Venezuelan academics. Nevertheless, three of its employees, Verhagen et al. (2016) have offered an uncritical description of the programme, with indicators of the social and educational benefits of *El*

Sistema. In the last 40 years, academic music has been mainstreamed from the governmental platform of *El Sistema*, and any particular or private initiative outside of it risked stagnation or disappearance. Thus, the teaching of electronic music has had a particular trajectory, because its techniques and aesthetics do not converge with the nineteenth-century symphonic repertoire, the pedagogical axis of *El Sistema*. Beyond this discussion, there is no criticism of Venezuelan music education, which points to a lack of progress in the production of texts and few institutional initiatives for private education that last over time. Music education depends on the state resources. There have been other criticisms of Venezuelan musical education, but they are limited to the private sphere or unpublished. The main obstacle is the lack of documentation and evidence that provides empirical data and allows researchers to glimpse strategies to obtain and manage resources. Another reflection of the power of José Antonio Abreu, director of *El Sistema*, over the music sector.

Baker and Frega (2016) have presented a work with access to documentation that contributes to the historiographical review of *El Sistema*. They used a report of studies commissioned by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) in 2011. The first report was published in 2016, and revealed that the poverty rate among children participating in *El Sistema* was 16.7 per cent, compared with 46.5 per cent of children in the states where they lived. The primary goal of the study was not to determine the poverty rate within *El Sistema*, but it did provide a broad and significant sample of *El Sistema* participants. This IDB study raises doubts about the optimistic conclusions presented in the 1996 reports regarding the population served by the programme and its effects, conclusions that had become the official narrative of *El Sistema*. Instead, it supports more critical perspectives expressed in 1997 reports and in more recent academic studies.

In order to approach electronic music in Venezuela from the notion of radical education, we have started from the concepts proposed by Meyerhoff regarding

modes of study: thinking and redefining the differences, learning models and value scales that are within the needs and capacities that an individual has in order to try to understand the world (Meyerhoff 2019). However, just as Meyerhoff considers his model as an exercise in theorising and abstraction, it is necessary to point out that the temporal, economic and academic relationships of the conceptual framework proposed by Meyerhoff differ from the Venezuelan context. Meyerhoff (2019), Lewis (2008) and Chatterjee and Maira (2014) make theoretical reflections on the educational models of Europe and North America from within the academy. However, Venezuela is facing the greatest academic disaster in its history, with the de facto disappearance of various educational institutions, the absence of research centres and archives that allow researchers to have access to materials for a bibliographic review under minimally acceptable conditions (Sans and Palacios 2023; Lengwinat 2021).

Radical education serves as a framework within which discourses, theories, educational models and academic texts are analysed to elucidate the direction of the state bureaucracy. Every educational process is a model that has been predetermined by political practices (Meyerhoff 2019). However, how can such models be elucidated in the absence of state interest in promoting a guideline for electroacoustic music? How to adopt a critical stance when the reality shows that nothing remains of the past, the present is blurred and the future of electronic music pedagogical practices in Venezuela is uncertain?

2. ABSENCE OF NOISE: ELECTRONIC MUSIC AND ACADEMIA

The lack of bibliographical material on electroacoustic music education in Venezuela became evident through this research. There are only a handful of works that, although not exclusively devoted to electronic music, review the biography of some Venezuelan composers who have made this journey. For example, Peñín and Guido (1998), in their *Enciclopedia de la música en Venezuela* (Encyclopedia of Music in Venezuela), the only work of its kind to date, synthesised in a single book the biographical aspects and works of Venezuelan composers. Tortolero (1996), on the other hand, made a biographical synthesis of the most important Venezuelan composers and pointed out some of their works. Both books, even if they offer a panoramic view, indicate the path of academic electronic music in Venezuela. There are other researchers who take their approach from studies of popular music, such as Montiel Cupello (2004) and Allueva (2008), both authors opt for electronic music throughout its relationship with rock, providing data, biographical trajectories and observations on record production.

However, the works that problematise electroacoustic music have been published only in academic spheres. In this regard, several unpublished studies stand out and point the way forward in this field. Segnini Sequera (1994), a prolific international composer, produced one of the first theses on electroacoustic music in the country in the mid-1990s. This research is fundamental, given the lack of local musicological reflection on the subject. Noya (2007) has done an exhaustive work on the history of electronic music in Venezuela. Two aspects stand out in his research: first, the division of artistic production between academic and popular musicians; second, the cycles of development, paralysis and emerging trends that coincide with the country's economic boom or stagnation, related to the institutions and presidential elections years (ibid.: 47–60). Furthermore, Arocha Bernal (2009) distances herself from historiographical work, but reviews the techniques and aesthetics of Venezuelan composers who are representative within the country, such as Alfredo del Mónaco, Ricardo Teruel and Jacky Schreiber, among others. Finally, Rojas Ramírez (2015) takes as a theoretical framework the concepts of nationalism and cultural mix that are revealed in the works of Venezuelan composers of the first decade of the twenty-first century. These four works broadly show some characteristics of electroacoustic music in the Venezuelan context: the composers use different languages and aesthetics; the spaces for the diffusion and learning of electronic music are marked by the technology of the moment, and private initiatives do not coincide with government interests.

3. ON RADICAL EDUCATION AND ELECTRONIC MUSIC IN VENEZUELA

Meyerhoff identifies seven main features that influence the creation of meaning from relations of study: 1) a vertical imaginary, in which students project their academic and social mobility; 2) a romantic narrative, in which the obstacles are overcome and the student becomes an individual hero; 3) the separation and regulation of student–teacher relationships, with hierarchies linked to the institutional structure; 4) techniques of governance, where the teacher, as an expert in the field, is the highest authority; 5) a zero-point epistemology, where the teacher as an expert is the authoritative voice that validates universal knowledge; 6) pedagogical practices influenced by credit and debt to cover studies; and 7) education as a contrasting binary value: success vs failure, graduates vs dropouts (Meyerhoff 2019).

This model focuses its critique on traditional institutional values, on hierarchies within the classroom, on the relationships expected between teachers

and students. However, as it will be seen in the following pages, this scheme is far from being ideal within the educational model for electronic music in Venezuela. Meyerhoff believes that the success of the modes of study depends on the institution's ability to regulate a narrative, a regime of study, as a hegemonic model (Meyerhoff 2019). In Venezuelan music education, there is no institution that has developed a hegemonic discourse around the techniques and aesthetics of electronic music. In fact, as explained later, electronic creators are dissident voices within the mainstream of academic orchestral music, popular music and traditional schools.

Contrary to what Baker (2014, 2016) and Born (1995) have argued, by critically approaching the institutional and human operation of an organisation, everyday practices in Venezuelan electronic music education point to the lack of institutionality and the discontinuity of state projects; a constant restarting of activities that assumes that there is no immediate past (Noya 2007). To this we must add the lack of leadership, a fact that has been recurrent in the democratic era, as it has been in the Chavista era (Hugo Chávez Frías, president 1999–2013) of the country (Lengwinat 2021).

4. BROKEN LINES AND ELECTORAL CELEBRATIONS

From the educational field in general, the Latin American Forum of Musical Education (FLADEM) meetings stand out. FLADEM aims to evaluate education quality in the region and generates reports every two years during its international meetings. These reports partially reveal the state of the art on electronic music and its teaching in the region. Its founder, Hemsy de Gainza, conducted a comprehensive analysis of the situation of music education on the continent at the start of the twenty-first century. Two critical points stand out in her work: first, the significance of pedagogical models enforced with the coming of technological tools; and second, the need for the State to support music teaching at different levels (Hemsy de Gainza 2004: 15–16). The author argues that Latin America education comprises two divergent learning contexts: the teaching of popular music, acquired through private lessons, self-taught or academies; and the teaching of academic music, which is imparted in conservatories following the Central European model (*ibid.*: 17–18).

Meyerhoff (2019) proposes the term 'narrative crisis' to explain learning that differs from traditional institutional discourses where education is a story of what individuals are expected to learn. The author highlights two aspects in this regard: 1) through education, individuals understand their circumstances

and relate to the world; and 2) institutions extend hegemonic discourses and educational narratives.

When this is used to approach electronic music in Venezuela, it becomes clear that there has never been an educational centre from which a hegemonic discourse has been consolidated, nor has there been an aesthetic tendency in the field, and consequently, there is no continuity of any school of electroacoustic composition. There have been some individual and institutional initiatives that have been projected by one or two composers, but none with a long-term impact. According to Noya (2007), the characteristic of almost 40 years of electronic music in Venezuela, which Sans and Palacios (2023) and Lengwinat (2021) confirm a few years later, is that each institutional initiative in electronic music is marked by the political, social and economic circumstances of the time.¹ Each pedagogical proposal generated a series of electronic works that, to this day, do not rest in a single documentation centre where they can be consulted.² Each period of activity is followed by gaps, and each attempt to restart a movement is generated from an absolute ignorance of what has gone on before. In this sense, Noya (2007) distinguishes that private and individual initiatives take place within the framework of the

¹It is important to note that the degree and specifics of these issues can vary significantly from one country to another. Additionally, some countries in Latin America have made substantial efforts to invest in and support their arts and culture sectors. Therefore, while these challenges exist, there are also success stories and positive initiatives that aim to overcome them. For example, Mexico, Ecuador and Argentina are three countries in Latin America, and each has its own unique cultural and artistic landscape. While there may be some similarities in the challenges faced in the electronic music scene, there are also significant differences in how each country's cultural policies and institutions operate. Here is a brief overview of the electronic music situations in these three countries. Mexico has a vibrant and diverse electronic music scene with a long history of electronic music production and events. The Mexican government has invested in the promotion of electronic music through cultural policies, funding for events, and initiatives to support the electronic music. Mexico has made efforts to preserve the history of electronic music through institutions such as the Fonoteca Nacional and the Laboratorio Arte Alameda, which have focused on archiving and promoting electronic music culture (Sigal 2010; Rocha Iturbe 2004). In Ecuador, the electronic music scene is relatively new but growing steadily, with a focus on local and regional artists, but the government in Ecuador has limited resources, venues and funding (Pérez-Valero 2023; Viteri 2022). Finally, Argentina has a long history of electronic music, particularly in Buenos Aires, with a thriving scene that dates back several decades. It is known for its diversity, spanning various subgenres and styles. And, similar to other countries, Argentina may face challenges related to funding, shifting government priorities, and the preservation of electronic music heritage. However, it has also seen various successful electronic music festivals and events that have made a global impact (Dal Farra 2013; Heile 2006). Each country has cultural and political context, as well as its specific history with electronic music, that will lead to different situations and opportunities.

²Electronic music archives in Latin America present particularities in each country. A general picture can be seen in the compilations made by independent researchers, and in some cases, under the sponsorships of institutions such as the Daniel Langlois Foundation in Canada.

Table 1. Segmentation of periods of activity in electroacoustic music in Caracas, Venezuela

Name	Type of initiative	Category, according to Noya	Start and end dates
Phonology Institute	State	Phonology I	1965–68
Alternative I	Private/individual	The beginnings of rock culture in Venezuela	1968–69?
Institute of Musical Phonology	State	Phonology II	1972–79
Alternative II	Private/individual	Post-psychotomimetic – pre-psychotronic	1972–84
Juan José Landaeta National Conservatory of Music	State	Juan José Landaeta National Conservatory of Music	1980–92
National Youth Orchestra of Venezuela's Institute of Musical Phonology	State	Phonology III	1982–90
Alternative III	Private/individual	Sound Art Workshop – Electronic Music Festivals	1985–97
Center for Acoustical and Musical Documentation and Research – Central University of Venezuela	State		1992–94
Alternative IV	Private/individual	Parties and raves	1998–2003
Digital Music Laboratory (LADIM, in Spanish) Simón Bolívar University	State	Master's degree in Music	2003–Present
Alternative V	Private/individual	Parties II, musical collectives and new producers	2003–07

Note: Adapted from Noya (2007).

music industry, the gradual access to technology to make electronic music and the local scene to make electronic music within entertainment.

There are two concepts from Meyerhoff that intersect with the reality of Venezuelan educational policy and are embedded in the country's educational narrative: the melodrama, understood as the classical story between heroes, victims and villains; and the jeremiad, the lamentation of losses and ideal practices that, if implemented, would mean progress in education (Meyerhoff 2019: 40). These two concepts are present in the little that has been written about electronic music in Venezuela.

Table 1 takes as a point of reference the segmentation into periods of electronic music education in Venezuela as proposed by Noya (2007). It is worth mentioning at this point that offering a detailed description of each period is beyond the scope of this article; however, we refer to Noya's work, which is enlightening. As far as we are concerned, it is inevitable to link Meyerhoff's notions of melodrama and jeremiad.

It is worth pointing out the fact that all the initiatives attributed to the State in Table 1 began as individual efforts that could only be carried out with State support due to the cost of the equipment, physical location and maintenance services for the operation of electronic music laboratories. There is another constant to consider in Table 1: the start and end dates for each institution are accurate, they

correspond to the disappearance of each referred institution and with the establishment of new governments. This means that each new government administration redefined the function of the electroacoustic music centres, which were always considered as an expense, with little political capital. In this latter aspect, while *El Sistema* offers massification and propaganda of social welfare through music (Baker 2014), electroacoustic music is an individual search that depends on the experience of each creator. It was possible to have group classes, but electroacoustic music students learn by interacting with technology. Until the mid-1990s it was obligatory to practise in institutional buildings, where the equipment was kept. But as the institutions disappeared, so did the equipment. In this regard, we spoke with several composer-informants who emphasised that the equipment disappeared as a result of lack of maintenance, as well as the fact that it fell into disuse due to technological changes. In addition, orchestral training offered a mass reach and international legitimacy; while electronic music consisted of individual, scattered and dissident voices that were practically non-existent in the imaginary of Venezuelan culture.

Meyerhoff (2019) argues that organisations that function as para-academic communities are important when they criticise the modes of study and narratives of education; individuals who live around a discipline and who work under the protection of other institutions. In Table 1, the university centres, the Central University

of Venezuela and the Simón Bolívar University, ensure the continuity of an educational narrative from individual models. Specifically, in the case of the Simón Bolívar University, the Digital Music Laboratory (LADIM for its name in Spanish) was part of the courses of the Master's Degree in Music. LADIM carried out activities, concerts, workshops and conferences in which electronic music was promoted as a vital axis of the institution. In other countries such as the United States, para-academic communities are alternative learning centres. In the case of Venezuela, the para-academic communities are refuges, spaces for the survival of educational practices that have not been able to position themselves within the state budget.

In Venezuela, like in the rest of the Western world, there exists a romantic narrative around music education. Formal music instruction occurred in conservatories that followed the European education model of the first half of the twentieth century, with an emphasis of extensive years of music theory studies. Depending on their age and abilities, students typically began practising an instrument and spent years studying music history, functional-tonal harmony, counterpoint and occasionally fugue, aesthetics and music analysis. In most conservatories, electronic music is either an optional course or is only studied once throughout the entire curriculum. However, obtaining a conservatory diploma required eight to fourteen years of continuous study, making it a challenging feat. As time passed, there was a growing demand in Venezuelan society to confer university degrees to musicians that aligned with the regulations of a collegiate professional practice within the country. As a result, some musical programmes and institutions were established, including the University Institute of Musical Studies (later absorbed into the National Experimental University of the Arts, UNEARTE), the music degrees at the University of Los Andes (ULA) in Mérida, at the Cecilio Acosta University in Maracaibo and at the Lisandro Alvarado Central Western University (UCLA) in Barquisimeto. However, none of these institutions have a distinct focus on artistic production in electronic music. Concerts and workshops are organised, but the rigor regarding the subject matter remains in the hands of individual initiatives framed within institutional policies. Hence, it can be argued that the romantic discourse of music education as a saviour of the individual, universal in nature and empowering the individual at the social level, as pointed out by Meyerhoff (2019: 55–6), finds little political profitability in electronic music in Venezuela.

Despite this, each educational narrative features symbolic figures as well as academic and artistic references. In the field of electronic music in Venezuela, Alfredo del Mónaco (1938–2015), a lawyer

and composer, stands out for his strong academic background. He obtained a PhD in music from Columbia University, specialising in electronic music. Furthermore, del Mónaco has conducted the most extensive musicological research among electronic composers (Rojas Ramírez 2006; Riascos Aguirre 2012; Serrano Cadena 2016; González Sarmiento 2018; Hernández Brito 2002). In the field of popular music, while Vladimir Pérez-Perazo is noteworthy, the most renowned figure is Vytas Brenner (1946–2004), particularly for his record production *La ofrenda de Vytas Brenner* (Brenner 1973), in which he fuses electronic music with jazz and Afro-Caribbean music (Peña Zerpa 2014).

5. OEDIPUS REX: INSTITUTIONAL LEGITIMATION

Between 1966 and 2006, electronic music education in Venezuela was presented as an alternative within the country's music education system. During that time, learning alternatives and new ways of approaching listening to sound were promoted. However, most private initiatives relied on state support for the continuation of their projects. The State addressed infrastructure and equipment issues; however, any electronic music-related educational project was viewed as irrelevant in the medium term, particularly given the social transformation phenomenon brought about by *El Sistema*. Beyond the responsibilities of the government, there is also a lack of cultural managers (non-artists) who are able to navigate bureaucracy, manage public resources, and implement sustainable projects – a feat that Abreu accomplished after over 40 years leading his own project.

Academic initiatives concerning electronic music in Venezuela have been primarily personal endeavours, despite efforts to establish them as institutional frameworks. The construction of a directional and hegemonic narrative on education and electronic music in Venezuela appears to lack guidance and continuity. It is a fragmented history, susceptible to narration from the micro-history of some cities and characters that have stood out. In this regard, Meyerhoff's elaboration on the epistemology of ignorance (2019: 48–49) is considered. He argues that the discourse of education and its romanticisation promote segregation, reinforce colonial hierarchies and highlights the social gaps between individuals. In the case of Venezuela, we face the almost total absence of any narrative, yet, making electronic music can be considered a heroic act, one in which those involved insist on giving concerts and carrying on activities during adverse bureaucratic and cultural circumstances, even considering student apathy.

The absence of continuity in the educational and artistic projects suggests the impossibility of knowing the educational protocols implemented by precious instructors. A significant contribution of radical education is to examine pedagogical practices based on syllabi, pedagogical models, methods and educational treatises. This raises the question of how to conduct a critical exercise in the education of electronic music in Venezuela when these resources are absent. In fact, certain aspects emerged during the investigation. For example, no single archive or documentation has been established to preserve the production of electroacoustic music in the country. Additionally, no technical or pedagogical treatises have been developed to clarify a teaching methodology for electronic music in the country. According to Schafer, musical creation and consumption were undergoing a transformation, where mastering new mediums, such as electronic music, would prove to be a valuable asset in the future (Murray Schafer 2004). The fact remains that neither music educators nor electronic music instructors strictly adhere to a method when teaching electronic music. Rather than a pedagogical and educational discipline, much of the artistic and educational processes are guided by intuition.

Scholars such as Meyerhoff, Lewis, Chatterjee and Maira take a critical stance against hegemonic European education and, as a result, support decolonial discourses. However, due to the limited research and analysis on Venezuela's electronic music historiography, it is common to validate European artistic practices and establish a stance based on potential affiliations with hegemonic centres. For instance, upon returning from Paris, Antonio Estévez (1916–88), a prominent Venezuelan composer of the twentieth century, received resources from the Venezuelan State to pursue a project of his choice. He chose electronic music, marking the beginning of stages of research on musical phonology (Noya 2007). However, Estévez was recognised for his studies in France. In fact, Raúl Delgado Estévez (1946–2019), his nephew, took over as head of Musical Phonology after studying in France, as well. Later, Servio Tulio Marín, who also trained in France, became the institute's head. Thus, Venezuelan academic electronic music has carried on the legacy from Pierre Schaffer to the Estévez–Estévez–Marín line.

One of the few para-academic community initiatives that tried to organise some kind of material and consolidate artistic projects was the Venezuelan Society of Electroacoustic Music (Sociedad Venezolana de Música Electroacústica, SVME), founded by Eduardo Kusnir, an Argentinian musician who lived in Venezuela. The SVME affiliated with the Confederation of Electroacoustic Music in France and sought sponsorship

from UNESCO (Guido 1998). In other words, the validation process was not limited to peers. Instead, it also involved seeking assistance from international organisations for financing and information on techniques and trends prevalent in the international electronic music circuits. Kusnir, who received training at the Latin American Centre for Advanced Musical Studies (CLAEM, in Spanish) under the guidance of Gerardo Gandini, Francisco Kropff, Fernando Von Reichenbach and Luis de Pablo. Kusnir had been established as a professorship of electronic music at the Juan José Landaeta Conservatory in Venezuela. His activities are presented in Noya's work (2007: 151–6); notably, he designed a course that combined revising existing repertoires with exploring.³ However, no syllabi, study programmes, manuals or educational materials remain, as was the case with his predecessors. Kusnir gradually withdrew from electronic music activities following numerous bureaucratic processes he encountered with the National System of Youth and Children's Orchestras of Venezuela and the National Council of Culture (Noya 2007).

It was common during the Abreu era to start projects that were proclaimed a priority, but then they were abandoned to their fate and, consequently, were paralysed by bureaucracy. Noya (2007: 163) confirmed how *El Sistema* supported the Institute of Phonology in 1983, and how time showed indifference. Abreu promoted priority in alternative projects that later disappeared. There are many cases, but some deserve attention, such as the Latin American Instruments Orchestra (ODILA). This project began in 1982, when the situation of key figures in the management of State resources for matters of cultural interest coincided, such as Isabel Aretz, Argentine composer and researcher who lived in Venezuela for several decades and who at that time was the director of the Inter-American Institute of Ethnomusicology and Folklore (INIDEF); José Antonio Abreu, as director of *El Sistema*; and Emilio Mendoza Guardia, researcher and composer close to Artez who managed the ODILA project.⁴ With Aretz's retirement and Abreu focusing exclusively on his political project, ODILA survived for 40 years on the initiative of its members, and partial support from the State at different times (Lengwinat 2021: 62; Mendoza Guardia 2020). Another emblematic case has been the teaching of musical composition in the field of symphonic repertoire. Venezuela is a country full of orchestras, but without work for composers. There are no residence composers. There have been efforts between the individual and the institutional, such as

³An updated version of Kusnir's biography is available at <https://eduardokusnir.com.ar/biografia>.

⁴To date, there have been no doctoral studies in Music or Musicology in Venezuela.

Ricardo Teruel, who was resident composer of the Gran Mariscal de Ayacucho Symphony Orchestra. But these initiatives were no more than a pilot plan. Mendoza Guardia (2013) believes that the Venezuelan composer is in danger of extinction. The history of Venezuelan music education since the 1970s reflects what Abreu supported and did not support. All alternative projects lasted according to institutional interests and, when they were not necessary, the proposals faded away. As reviewed later, electronic music education in Venezuela suffered the consequences of the conservatism that Abreu imposed in the sphere of academic music for several decades.

A frequent phenomenon in all electronic music projects involving the Venezuelan government was the disappearance of equipment and the institution after the project leader's departure. For example, when Antonio Estévez left Phonology, the institution hosted fewer events over time, experienced declined student involvement, and its instruments were incorporated into *El Sistema*. An option to prevent obsolescence could have been the establishment of a Museum of Electronic Instruments. The LADIM (Simón Bolívar University) is another example; Adina Izarra founded this laboratory, and since her retirement in 2016, it has conducted fewer activities, induced by artistic inertia, a consequence of the alterations that have impacted higher education in Venezuela since 2014. Moreover, the laboratory's activities have been almost non-existent since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020.

According to Noya (2007: 143–5), during the early 1980s there was a significant overlap between electroacoustic musicians trained in academic institutions and those who had a non-formal education in the field. In particular, concerts were held in alternative venues such as the Salón de Artes Arturo Michelena, in Valencia, or the 6th International Theater Festival in Caracas. In light of the record kept by Noya and Hemsy de Gainza's assessments, it is inevitable that the electronic music artist in Venezuela has a hint of 'hero', according to Meyerhoff's perspective, which highlights an almost superhuman effort to overcome environmental challenges. In light of this, a particularly interesting character is Ángel Rada, a composer and electronic musician who founded his own record label: Uranium Records. With over 30 record productions, Rada has an important body of work that has not yet been systematically studied (Noya 2007: 147–8). However, Rada's work is an individual effort: he produces and distributes his recordings independently and, on occasions, offers guidance to domestic rock groups in regards to musical production.

There have been several initiatives for the teaching of electronic music, but being subject to the ups and downs of technology, it has been difficult to assimilate

it as a massive practice of music education. Nevertheless, at the beginning of 2000, with the popularisation of personal computers and the appearance of free software, some music educators began to draw attention to these resources for teaching music from the first levels. Fonterrada (2004) considered that computers were essential for both traditional and experimental education. However, when laboratories were set up in his country (Brazil), they fell into disuse because the equipment was installed in places that were not suitable for this purpose, since they presented problems such as humidity, electrical failures or high temperatures that deteriorated the equipment. Falling into the jeremiads pointed out by Meyerhoff (2019) is inevitable: What a level we would have today if such a project had been consolidated! Another fundamental author was Koellreutter (2004), who sees the need to combine pedagogical experience with electronic music from an early age; although the author did not develop the idea, it is an encouraging text.

In this sense, according to Meyerhoff's work on the significance of students' narratives (Meyerhoff 2019: 52), three categories of electroacoustic composition students are identified: 1) individuals with a personal interest in electronic music, who continue to create and explore independently; 2) individuals who produce works to fulfil course requirements; and 3) individuals who enrol in courses, but do not submit any work. In this regard, Meyerhoff has argued that the construction of a romantic narrative should align with an imaginary that surpasses these elements. However, we encounter another critique of the Venezuelan reality: the absence of such imagery could suggest a lack continuity.

The interplay between the categories of electroacoustic composition students reveals an intriguing hypothesis: here has been a notable lack of female electroacoustic composers in Venezuela. Radical education acknowledges the involvement and participation of women in the educational process (Chatterjee and Maira 2014; Butler 1990). In Venezuela, a handful of women have made significant contributions to electronic music, with composer Adina Izarra (b. 1959) being an obvious figure. Izarra, a concert promoter and educator, has left an unquestionable educational work in electronic music during the 1990s and early 2000s. Generationally, the next composer to establish a work path in the area is Marianela Arocha (b. 1965), a pianist and composer of electronic music. She earned her Master's degree in Music from the Simón Bolívar University. She is followed by Yoly Rojas Ramírez (b. 1978) then succeeded as a prominent researcher and artist, also graduating, in 2006, from Simón Bolívar University under Izarra's guidance. In the search for data documenting a generational line, it was found that there is no other female composer of academic

electronic music in the country after Rojas Ramírez, and none of the five Venezuelan composers consulted recalls another woman following Rojas Ramírez. This means that 17 years have passed since Rojas Ramírez's earned her degree and there is no continuity of women electroacoustic composers in the country, or at least there is no record or memory of it. It cannot be claimed that the role of women has been made invisible, but there appears to be a lack of consistent female involvement in the field of electronic music in Venezuela. This may seem contradictory, given that women have had an important place in the political discourse during the *chavismo* Chavista era in the country (Elfenbein 2020; Terán Díaz 2019; López Caldera 2018).

6. CONCLUSIONS

The notions of radical education, as understood in global North countries, cannot be applied in a similar way in Latin America. Despite a shared challenge of unequal access to education, each Latin American nation has its unique socioeconomic and political circumstances. Poverty and the government's indifference in arts education are constant issues rather than those of gender, race or religion. Meyerhoff (2019) and Chatterjee and Maira (2014) take a critical stance towards the State and the educational apparatus. However, in the case of Venezuela, as it has been shown, nearly all personal initiatives in the field of music education involved the State. Venezuela possessed economic abundance from the mid-twentieth century to the beginning of the twenty-first century, perhaps like no other country in the region. The influx of funds from oil revenues facilitated investment in areas such as education. It was inevitable that any private initiative would involve the government to safeguard the educational artistic heritage. However, the reality is that each administration has incorporated electronic music initiatives to a lesser extent and they were forgotten with every change of government.

Venezuela's spaces for electroacoustic music have been unconventional, but these have also been shared with the traditional symphonic repertoire. At an academic level, electroacoustic music has not been part of the mainstream academic symphonic music, funded by the State for almost 50 years. On the other hand, the initiatives coming from the alternative world, as Noya has defined them, which occur within the field of popular music circuits, have enjoyed greater diffusion and acceptance. However, this is a practically unexplored area of academic research that could be explored through various perspectives, including music scenes (Bennett and Peterson 2004; Appadurai 1996), from urban tribes and subcultures (Maffesoli 2004; Bennett 1999), and even from

ethnomusicological and musicological studies (Cottrel 2010).

Electronic music education in Venezuela has yet to reach its peak. Despite numerous opportunities to gain momentum, efforts have been diluted over time. The lack of public interest, limited number of students pursuing electronic music, and insufficient resources to undertake effective media campaigns have resulted in stories being told only at electronic music events. In addition, every educational system has its managers, and in the case of electronic music, artists have played multiple roles such as teachers, educational managers, administrators and concert organisers. Unlike the French IRCAM or *El Sistema* models, electronic music in Venezuela lacks an administrative structure that could enable the continuity of a project for more than 10 years.

This article aims to initiate a discussion on electroacoustic music education in Venezuela. Despite the country's significant tradition in urban popular, folkloric and Central European academic music, little has been theorised and discussed regarding electronic music. One contributing factor to this issue comes from Venezuelan musicology itself, which has placed great effort to glimpse the past of the country's colonial music and has neglected alternative musical movements.

It is difficult to trace a clear line of continuity in electronic music education from its origins to the present day. The various formal centres did not leave any material, guides, syllabi or programmes on teaching processes. The teachers instructed their students based on their experience and the characteristics of the technology at the time. In addition, there is no government interest in this educational and artistic practice, as evidenced by the absence of funds and archives that preserve, even partially, the historical development of electronic music in the country. There is no systematic approach to organising the history or practice of electronic music and the few initiatives that have existed expected the government to take charge of an aesthetic current in which it has no interest and for a music that does not attract the masses. Electronic music is not well suited for propaganda purposes.

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