

E r i k a V e g a

**B L A N C O**

for voice and piano

2 0 1 9

B L A N C O is dedicated to SARAH MARIA SUN

Commissioned by Festival Vértice, UNAM

Based on a poem by Octavio Paz

duration: 13'30"

# B L A N C O

based on a text by Octavio Paz

- 1.- del silencio al silencio
- 2.-de la imaginación
- 3.-de la percepción
- 4.-de la sensación
- 5.-del entendimiento
- 6.-de los sentidos

B L A N C O draws inspiration from Blanco (1967), a poem by Mexican Nobel laureate Octavio Paz. Rich in symbolism, spatiality, and meaning, the poem challenges conventional ways of reading and interpreting text. Rather than unfolding linearly, it stretches across the white page in multiple directions, offering four readings: as a continuous whole, or as three separate vertical columns.

Each of these columns becomes a poetic universe of its own:

- the left column reflects the four elements – earth, water, air, and fire,
- the centre column explores four colours – yellow, red, green, and blue,
- the right column delves into four emotions – desire, anguish, joy, and doubt.

This structural and conceptual openness is mirrored in the music of B L A N C O. Just as the poem invites various interpretations, the piece allows for multiple performance paths. The movements can be performed in any order, or individually as self-contained miniatures.

Each movement draws on a fragment of the original text, exploring contrasting sonic worlds. The vocal writing calls for a broad range of expression: from whispering, speaking, humming, and narrating, to moments of lyrical, operatic singing. The performance also incorporates theatrical and gestural elements, creating an experience that blurs the lines between song, speech, and stage. The piano plays an equally versatile role — at times echoing or shadowing the voice, at others creating textural contrast or silence. Together, voice and piano engage in a dialogue that mirrors Paz's exploration of sound and silence, presence and absence, form and fluidity.

## 1.- del silencio al silencio

el comienzo

el cimiento

la simiente

latente

la palabra en la punta de la lengua

inaudita                      inaudible

impar

grávida                      nula

sin edad

la enterrada con los ojos abiertos

inocente                      promiscua

la palabra

sin nombre                      sin habla

## 2.- de la imaginación

\* *árida ondulación  
entre brazos de arena  
brilla se multiplica se niega  
renace se escapa se persigue  
visión del pensamiento gavilán  
cabra en la peña hendida  
paraje desnudo  
snap-shot de un latido de tiempo  
real irreal quieto vibrante  
pradera quemada  
color de sol en la arena  
sobre un lugar de la juntura  
oscurecida por los pájaros  
beatitud suficiente  
hecha a la imagen del mundo*

## 3.- de la percepción

*subyector y obyector abyector y absuelto*

*es mi creación esto que veo  
la percepción es concepción  
agua de pensamientos  
soy la creación de lo que veo*

*agua de verdad  
verdad de agua*

\* selected text for the piece is highlighted in bold italic

## B L A N C O: texts

## 4.- de la imaginación

*en el muro la sombra del fuego  
en el fuego tu sombra y la mía*

*el juego te desata y te anuda  
Pan Grial Ascuá*

*Muchacha  
tú ríes -desnuda  
en los jardines de la llama*

*llama rodeada de leones  
leona en el circo de las llamas  
ánima entre las sensaciones*

*frutos de luces de bengala  
los sentidos se abren  
en la noche magnética*

## 5.- del entendimiento

*no allá sino en mis ojos  
cielo y suelo se juntan  
intocable horizonte  
yo soy tu lejanía  
el más allá de la mirada  
las imaginaciones de la arena  
las disipadas fábulas del viento  
yo soy la estela de tus erosiones  
espacio dios descuartizado*

## 6.- de los sentidos

*contemplada por mis oídos  
olida por mis ojos  
acariciada por mi olfato  
oída por mi lengua  
comida por mi tacto*

*habitar tu nombre  
caer en tu grito contigo*

excerpts from:  
*Blanco* / Octavio Paz

## PERFORMANCE NOTES

B L A N C O is a work composed of six short movements that may be performed in any order, or as standalone miniatures. Each movement explores a different facet of human experience, reflected not only in sound but also through gesture. The voice is treated as a multi-dimensional instrument, traversing a wide expressive range—from whispered breath to operatic lyricism.

Theatricality is an inherent part of the piece. Gestures, spatial positioning, and moments of stillness are integral to the musical narrative. Performers are encouraged to approach these elements with intention, allowing them to emerge from the emotional landscape of each movement.

### Movement notes:

1. **del silencio al silencio** – The pianist makes voice sounds. The sound between the voice and piano blurs. Let this duality emerge subtly, almost as if both are echoing one another.
2. **de la imaginación** – Energetic and unpredictable. Embrace abrupt shifts in dynamics and texture. Allow for contrasts, giving space for surprise and playfulness.
3. **de la percepción** – Vocal gestures are central. Use tapping of the mouth with fingers and mouth articulation (opening/closing silently or with sound) as expressive tools. At the end of the movement, the singer should walk slowly toward the piano's harp and face the pianist. Let this moment be quiet and charged.
4. **de la sensación** – Incorporate stage movement as part of the vocal delivery. Project the voice into the piano's harp, as if resonating through the strings. After this, engage in a prolonged gaze with the pianist (approx. 5 seconds), then return slowly to the original point at the indicated moment.
5. **del entendimiento** – A cappella. The voice should remain within a delicate dynamic range (never above mf). Embrace silence. The empty spaces between phrases are as important as the sung ones. Let them breathe.
6. **de los sentidos** – Lyrical and expressive. The final gesture of the piece should dissolve into a tender, whispered sotto voce. Let the ending feel as though it disappears into darkness.

# NOTES

## voice

Throughout the piece, the voice alternates between traditional five-line staff and one-line staff notation.

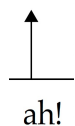
The one-line staff is used for extended vocal techniques such as whispering, spoken text, inhaling/exhaling sounds, and other non-pitched gestures.

In these cases, pitch is approximate and follows the general contour indicated in the score.



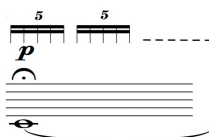
Cross-head notes indicate a hybrid between speaking and singing.

The tone quality should resemble heightened speech, loosely following the melodic contour notated, without aiming for precise pitch.

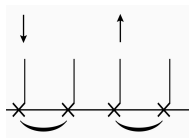


Arrow-head notes indicate sounds sung as high as possible, with undefined pitch.

Focus on intensity and gesture rather than exact intonation.



In Movement 3 – de la percepción, this effect is further extended through physical articulation: gently tap the mouth with the fingers of one hand or create vocalised gestures by opening and closing the mouth, with or without audible sound, as indicated.



Inspire deeply and exhale.

## NOTES

## piano

List of material: r.h. right hand  
l.h. left hand

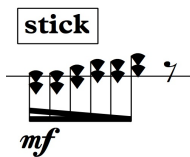
-Ebow  
-A coin  
-Triangle stick



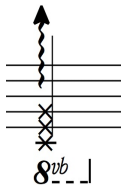
Cluster on strings with both palms of the hands, the register is approximate.



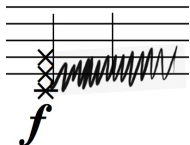
Mute the strings with right-hand-palm firmly before or after the dampers.



Gliss on the tuning pins with the triangle stick, play on the register according to the context.



Very fast scrape ON the strings (at the low register).  
With a coin or fingernails.



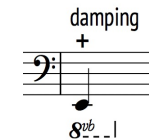
Slow scrape on the string (at the low register).  
With a coin or fingernails.

It's necessary to mark in advance the precise nodal point on the string, the harmonics are produced by pressing lightly over, release the finger in order to leave the resonance:



During the 4th movement the E string is damped at different positions (chosen randomly by the player) to produce different colours and harmonics

-before the dampers  
-after the dampers  
-w/palm of the hand  
-with the fingertip at different nodal points



It's also important to mark the strings in advance for easy identification:





For soprano and piano

To Sarah Maria Sun

## B L A N C O

Erika Vega

## 1.- del silencio al silencio

(♩=60) espressivo, timeless

improvise on mouth position

change pitch

ON the strings  
\*ebow

Ped. sempre

voice *p* non cresc. *pp* *p* non cresc. *pp* *p* non cresc.

ohm ohm ohm

10 *p* *mf* *mp* *pp* *p* non cresc. *pp*

S. e i el co-mien-zo el ci-mien-to la si

Pno. (voice) *pp* *mp* *pp* *p* non cresc. *pp*

ohm ma i - a

\* Ebow is already placed  
on the string

\*\* a = with "o" mouth-shape  
i = very nasal

17

S. mien-te el-ci-mien-to la ten-te la pa-la bra en la pun - ta de la len - gua

Pno. (ebow)

(voice) *mp* *pp* keyboard *sfz* *8vb*

*non vib.* *mf* *mf* *5* *3* *mp* *P* *5* *whispering*

23

S. (senza misura) inaudita impar inaudible grávida sin edad nula la en-te-rra-da con los con los o-jos a-bier-tos-sss -sss

Pno. (voice) *p* *mf* *f* keyboard *sfz* *8vb*

*non vib.* *mf* *5* *3* *urgent* *pp* *pizz ON the strings*

29

S.

inspire deeply exhale

*senza espressione*

inocente promiscua la palabra sin nombre sin habla

Pno.

*p*

inspire deeply exhale

keyboard

*mp*

*p*

*sfz*

stick

*p*

*pp*

a  
t  
t  
a  
c  
c  
a

## 2.- de la imaginación

♩=92 energético, nervoso

like tv advertising

1

S. snap-shot!  
sna sna SNAAA  
snap-shot!

6 8 emphasis

8 8

laughter (rhythm free)

*sfz*

*pp*

3 8 screaming

2 4

3 8 more agitated

*f*

de un\_ la-ti-do!

hahaha\_

sna na na na na na na na

sss-nap-shot!

ss-nap shot

Pno.

remove elbow

ON the strings  
(at the lowest register)

keyboard  
b&w keys

8<sup>vb</sup> *sfz*

*p*

*ff*

slap on the strings  
w/palm of the hand

8<sup>vb</sup> *sfz*

scrape  
w/finger nails

*f*

8<sup>vb</sup>

*sfz*

Ped.

8 8

2 8

3 8 virtuoso

*f*

*sfz*

*mf*

8 8

energico

3 8

brilla se multiplica se niega  
renace se escapa se persigue

re - al ir\_ re - al

keyboard  
accel.

*f*

*fff*

Ped.

8<sup>va</sup>

*pp*

Ped.

*f*

8<sup>vb</sup>

Ped.

4/4 secretly *mp* 3 intense whisper *f* 2/4 wind effect *f* 5/4 secretly *mf* 3 intense whisper *f* 2/4 advertising *f* snap-shop!

S. á ri - da on - du - la-ción en - tre bra - zos de a - re-na

Pno. + 8<sup>va</sup> *mf* Red. *sfz* ON the string scrape w/nails *sfz* keyboard + 8<sup>va</sup> *f* *sfz* 8<sup>va</sup> *pp*

4/4 secretly *mf* 3 *f subito* 3 *mp* 5 real unreal 4/4 bright, operatic *f* 3 3 3

S. bri-lla se es - ca - pa se per - si - gue pa - ra - je des - nu-do

Pno. 8<sup>va</sup> 3 7 *f* Red. *pp* ON the strings coin scrape *f* stick *mp*

**♩=80 poco meno**

**2/4** *leggero*

S. 26 *mf* 5 pra-de-ra que-ma-da *p* 6 co-lor de sol 5 en la-are-na *f* laughter (rhythm free) *mp* 3 tender so-bre el lu-gar

**ON the strings**

(stick) soft pluck *f* *mp* *f* \* gliss on the strings w/fingertip *mp* *sfz* keyboard accel. *f* *ff*

Pno.

**♩=92 a tempo**

**4/4** *energico subito* *pp* *mf* *f* *mp*

S. 33 closed mouth open closed mmh ooh mmh os-cu-re-ci-da por los

*accel.*

Pno. *pp* *mf* *sfz* *f* *ff*

\* press the indicated keys w/l.h. and gliss on the strings with/r.h.

3 4 4

40

S.

*f*

5

pa-ja-ros

*f*

agitated

mm mm

*f*

3

5

he-cha a la i-ma gen

*ff*

highest pitch possible

del mun-do

Pno.

(8)

8va

*pp*

*ff*

*mf*

*ff*

Ped.

## 3.- de la percepción

(♩=60) *espressivo, timeless*

1

S.

*p*

*sotto voce mp*

*mf*

*p*

whispered at the given pitch

es mi crea - cion es - to que ve o

ON the strings

ebow

keep the ebow throughout the movement

Pno.

*mp*

*sfz*

*Ped. sempre*

2

S.

*sotto voce mf*

*p*

whispered

la per-cep-ción es con-cep ción

emphasizing every syllable

*mf*

sub-yec-to  
ob-yec-to  
ab-yec-to  
ab-suel-to

(♩=60) *espressivo, timeless*

*p*

*mf*

*sfz*

Pno.

*mp*

\* tapping the mouth with one hand (the fingers)  
OR articulate the sound by opening and closing the mouth



♩=80 capriccioso

S. *f* 3 *8'* *mf* *leggero virtuoso* *pp* *mf* *mp* *f* *tendre p*

a-gua de pen-sa - mien - tos mm soy la crea cion de lo que

Pno. *very fast gliss on the strings w/fingertips* *8'* *sfz* *8<sup>vb</sup>* *Red.*

*p* *slap on the strings w/palm of the hand* *8<sup>vb</sup>* *sfz* *Red.*

(♩=76) espressivo, timeless

S. *sotto voce mp* *3* *pp* *sotto voce mysteriously p* *mf* *pp* *voiceless p* *pp*

ve-o a-gua de ver dad es mi crea cion ver-dad de a - gua

Pno. *8<sup>va</sup>* *mp* *Red.*

walk slowly to the piano's harp, face to the pianist

remove elbow

## 4.- de la sensación

♩=70 rhythmic, imprecise

1

sing projecting the voice into the piano's harp

inspire exhale  $p \rightarrow f$

with the same breath whisper as fast as possible

llama rodeada de leones  
leona en el circo de las llamas  
ánima entre las sensaciones

mp  $\rightarrow$  ff

shh AH!

ON the strings

Lh. slap w/hand

slow scrape with finger-nails

same

8<sup>vb</sup>

sfz

keyboard

8<sup>vb</sup>

ff

Ped. sempre

2

agitated  $f$

le-o-na en el cir-co

mf

de las lla-mas

inspire exhale  $p \rightarrow$

a-ha

stammer

frutos de luces de bengala  
los sentidos se abren

slap tremolo

gliss on the strings

mp

slap tremolo

8<sup>vb</sup>

8<sup>vb</sup>

f

p

sfz

mp

f

ff

3

S. *mp* *ff* seductive sensaciones very emphatically en el muro la sombra del fuego en el fuego tu sombra y la mía *mp* *f* fss shh recitating el fuego te desata y te anuda p- p-Pan Grial Ascua

Pno. *sfz* *8va* white keys gliss keyboard *f* *ON the strings* *sfz* *8va* *p* *f* *sfz* *8va* *p* *f*

4

S. a ha a ha energico *f* mu-cha-cha! a ha a ha AH! scream tú rí-es whispering desnuda mimic the words en los jardines de la llama

Pno. gliss on the strings *f* keyboard *f* *sfz* *8va* *8va* *sfz* *8va* *sfz* *p* *f* *mp* *f*

transition between whispering and speaking as fast as possible

with the same breath

*mp* *fff*

5

S.

llama rodeada de leones  
leona en el circo de las llamas  
ánima entre las sensaciones

5"

walk with calm to your original position

*sfz* *sfz* *mp* *fff*

*8va* *8va* *8va* *8va* *8va* *8va* *8va*

*accel.*

Gaze at each other as if sharing an unspoken understanding

5"

*8vb* *p* *f*

6

S.

senza espressione

frutos de luces de bengala los sentidos se abren

*mp* *5*

en lano-che

whispering *p* *5*

magne ti ca

Pno.

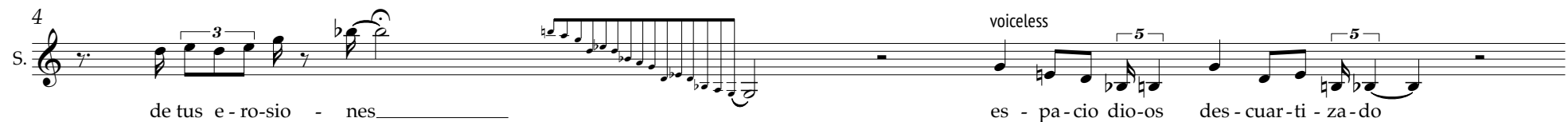
*8vb* *p* *f* *p* *f* *p* *f* *p* *f* *mp* *p* *f*

## 5.- del entendimiento (♩=76) a capella, libero

1 humming  
S.   
free dynamics bellow *mf*

2 jazzy  
extrimely intimate, sweet  
S.   
no\_\_ a-llá si-no en mis o- jos\_\_ cie lo se jun-ta\_\_ in-to-ca-ble ho - ri-zon - te\_\_ yo soy tu le - ja - ní-a

3  
S.   
el más a-llá de la mi-ra da\_\_ las i-ma - gi-na cio-nes de la a - re-na yo soy la es te-la - a\_\_

4  
S.   
de tus e - ro-sio - nes\_\_ es - pa- cio dio-os des - cuar-ti - za-do

5 humming  
S.   
non stop

## 6.- de los sentidos

♩=60

♩=♩. lyric, expressive

12  
8

1 *sotto voice* *p* *bright operatic* *mf* *f*

S.

Pno. *ppp* *p* *Red. sempre* *p* *f* *p* *f* *unexpected!*

7 *mf* *p* *mf*

S. con - tem-pla-da por mis o - í- dos o - li- da por mis o - jos

Pno. *p* *f* *p* *f*

11 romantic & kitsch *f* sincere *mf* dark *mp*

S. a - ca - ri - cia - da por mi ol fa to \_\_\_\_\_ o i - da por mi len gua co - mi - da por mi tac to \_\_\_\_\_

Pno. *pp* *p* non cresc.

16 very dark *p* sotto voice *p* tender whispering

S. ha - bi - tar tu nom - bre des - po - blar tu cuer - po ca - er en un gri - to con - ti - go

Pno. poco a poco morendo *p* *pp*