

Gernikaren itzalpean: Propaganda, Appropriation, and Depoliticisation of Basque Art Music

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Article abstract

The Bombing of Guernica stands as the best-known war crime during the Spanish Civil War. The town symbolically representing the Basque essences was destroyed by a German-Italian air raid lasting over three hours, and almost two hundred people were killed. Unfortunately, this abominable event remains contentious among disparate political factions, sometimes upholding its memory by means of tailor-made interpretations.

As music often performs a political role within conflicts, particularly those involving violence, it is not surprising that the Bombing of Guernica has inspired several compositions of art music. Among them, we study three works by Basque composers, namely Pablo Sorozábal, Francisco Escudero, and Ramon Lazkano. Each case study respectively stands, politically speaking, as a propagandistic event, a musical appropriation, and a collateral depoliticization of the vivid memories around the war crime.

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José L. Besada & Ainara Zubizarreta

Music often performs a political role within conflicts, particularly those involving violence. Although music may form part of a range of practices for repression and torture,¹ it can also restrain or even sublimate explicit behaviours when reframed within particular cultural contexts,² even acting as a means for conflict resolution.³ Nationalism, in particular, is often associated with several repertoires of music. Numerous milestones within European musical history can be explained from a nationalist viewpoint, even since the Second World War.⁴ Although Europe has mostly been at peace since then, several violent conflicts in which music has played an important role have taken place, namely the Yugoslav Wars (1991-2001),⁵ or nationalist struggles involving terrorism in Northern Ireland.⁶ Both mainly drew from popular and folk music trends, but, as we will show, the art music repertoire has also been significant in similar contexts.

This article discusses a case involving both a war and a nationalist conflict against the backdrop of violence, in different, yet continuous, temporal phases. To do so, a set of musical pieces will be examined that were inspired by the bombing of Guernica during the Spanish Civil War (scw) (1936-1939), but were composed later, i.e., during the Francoist dictatorship (1939-1975) or since democracy was restored in Spain (1978-present). Both subsequent periods also intersect with the activities of Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (Basque Homeland and Liberty, ETA), a clandestine group founded in 1958 that announced its dissolution in 2018 but developed into a murderous terrorist organisation from 1968 to 2010. The hypothesis underpinning our research is that music can highlight partisan interpretations of a past war crime when

1. As in recent detention camps; see Cusick, 2008.

2. For example, in musical competitions where all factions are gathered; see O'Connell, 2010, p. 4.

3. Urbain, 2008.

4. Bohlman, 2004, pp. 209-330.

5. See Baker, 2010 for Croatia, Robertson, 2010 for Bosnia, and Hudson, 2003 for Serbia.

6. Rolston, 2001. Early Basque nationalism took the Irish conflict as a model; see Juaristi, 1997, pp. 207-268. Nevertheless, it was not a religious conflict.

a violent conflict is still active, while also helping to mitigate bias when the conflict enters its resolution phase.

Several acclaimed composers, not analyzed here, have produced works relating to the bombing of Guernica, often through the interpretative prism of artworks such as Pablo Picasso's painting *Guernica* (1937) or Paul Eluard's poem *La victoire de Guernica* (1938).⁷ The first documented instance was Paul Dessau's *Guernica* (1937)⁸ and Stefan Wolpe's *Battle Piece* (1947), although not a confirmed case, also supports this hypothesis.⁹ *La victoire de Guernica* (1954) by Luigi Nono, which incorporated Eluard's poem, is further evidence. Nono fully embraced Eluard's Marxist interpretation of the war crime, as evident in his musical quotations of *L'Internationale* and Ernst Busch's *Mamita mia*.¹⁰

FIGURE 1 *La victoire de Guernica* by Luigi Nono (mm. 189-198). The brass section performs a rhythmic canon based on *L'Internationale*. © Ars-Viva-Verlag, Mainz. By kind permission of Schott Music, Mainz–Germany.

189

2/4 = 120

Ob. 1 2

Fag. 1 2

Cor. 1 2 3 4

Tr. 1 2

Trbne. 1 2

Timp.

S. nuit nous en au - rons rai -

A. nuit nous en au - rons rai -

Coro

T. nuit nous en au - rons rai -

B. nuit nous en au - rons rai -

Viol. 1 2

Vla.

Vcl.

2/4 = 120

7. For an exhaustive international list see Fink, 2005, p. 184.

8. Fink, 2005, p. 188.

9. Clarkson, 2001, p. 42.

10. Nielinger-Valik, 2015, p. 35.

German actor Ernst Busch enrolled as an International Brigadier during the scw. His song borrowed an Andalusian tune that was popularised during the war; see Ossa Martínez, 2011, pp. 320-323.

These composers offered an external musical perspective on the war crime. For this study, however, our repertoire will be limited to music written solely by Basque composers. Eresbil (the Basque Archives of Music) has an extensive catalogue, from which we chose samples: Pablo Sorozábal's *Gernika (hileta martxa)* (funeral march) (1966-1976), Francisco Escudero's *Gernika* (1979-1985), and Ramon Lazkano's *Gernika (Lekeito 4)* (2013), an orchestration of songwriter Mikel Laboa's homonymous song. This corpus was chosen for three main reasons: the composers are among the best representations of 20th and 21st century Basque art music; their pieces are some of the lengthiest and most closely related to the Guernica topic; and they are strongly connected to the Basque cultural and sociopolitical context. The main social reception and political implications of Escudero's and Sorozábal's works were felt in the early 1980s, overlapping with the bloodiest period of ETA. Lazkano's work, on the other hand, was composed after the violence within the nationalist conflict was over.

Our aim is to test this corpus against the aforementioned hypothesis. To do so, we first set out the historical background of the bombing of Guernica, as well as some factual evidence that problematizes some of the bombing's *post hoc* interpretations. We then discuss each case separately, highlighting the composers' biographical details, contextual features of their work and/or some stylistic aspects. These elements will allow us to address the political and ethical implications of the pieces and/or their reception, before reaching a succinct conclusion.

Guernica: a tree, a bombing, and a myth

On April 26, 1937, Guernica was destroyed by a German-Italian air raid lasting over three hours. Around two-thirds of the buildings collapsed and almost two hundred people were killed.¹¹ Civilians, as well as militiamen and refugees, were brutally machine-gunned while the town was bombed and burnt down. Despite the devastation, the Casa de Juntas (Meeting House) and the Tree of Guernica were left standing. These places symbolically represent the essence of being Basque:¹² from the 14th century Spanish monarchs had to pledge their allegiance to Basque *fueros*¹³ under the historical oak tree, until such time as they were abolished after the Third Carlist War.¹⁴ The Rebel army in the scw—led by a group of putschist generals, including Francisco Franco—placed blame for the bombing on the Republicans, leading to a propagandist quarrel over responsibility for one of the most horrific war crimes in Spanish history.¹⁵ The Rebel propaganda was rapidly quashed and the bombing became symbolic of the scw in the Basque Country, even outside of Spain.¹⁶

11. Payne, 2012, p. 210, and Caunedo Domínguez, 2013, p. 102.

12. Luengo Teixidor and Delgado Cendagortagarza, 2006.

13. *Fueros* were regional laws that spread throughout the Iberian Peninsula and the South of France during the Middle Ages. After the Spanish Succession War (1701-1714), only Basque and Navarrese ones prevailed.

14. Castells, 2003. Carlism was a legitimist movement supporting an alternative Bourbon dynastic line on the Spanish throne. It was particularly strong in the Basque Country and Navarre, leading to three civil wars: 1833-1840, 1846-1849, and 1872-1876.

15. Durango, another Basque town, was previously bombed by the Italians on March 31, 1937, becoming "the first time in the history of warfare that a civilian population had been attacked from the air for other than military reasons." Clark, 1979, p. 70.

16. Steer, 2012.

17. For a summary, see Cueto Asín, 2017.

18. Raento and Watson, 2000, pp. 717-731.

19. For a comment upon controversial narratives of the Memoria Histórica (Historical Memory) within the Basque Country, see Pérez, 2012, and Caunedo Domínguez, 2013, pp. 98-103.

20. Although the Soviet Union never appeared on the battlefield, Stalin provided logistical support to the Republican faction. See Payne, 2012, pp. 149-159.

21. Granja Sáinz, 2008.

22. Blinkhorn, 1975, pp. 41-67.

23. Pablo, 2003, p. 122.

24. Núñez Seixas, 2007, pp. 562-566.

25. Pablo, 2003, p. 126.

Vivid memories of the scw still remain in the region. Since the reinstitution of democracy, both traditional nationalism and those on the left advocate a historical and cultural recall of its aftermaths¹⁷ that would respectfully commemorate the anniversary of the massacre. The bombing, however, remains contentious among disparate political factions, who sometimes uphold its memory using tailor-made interpretations.¹⁸ Its symbolic dimension has indeed reached a mythical status¹⁹ where allegedly homogeneous groups adhering to national identities—Basques against Spaniards—persistently label people as criminals or victims.

Two main factions clashed during the scw: on one side, the putschists and the Rebel army comprising falangists, Catholic traditionalists, and monarchists; on the other side, the Second Spanish Republic defenders with their disparate intentions, ranging from supporters of a liberal republic to those in favour of a Soviet model,²⁰ and even anarchists. Regional nationalisms—mainly in the Basque Country and Catalonia—also opened up a complex third dimension. During the Second Republic (1931-1936), two parties led the polls in Navarre and the Basque Country, with the exception of the Biscay province: the Partido Nacionalista Vasco (Basque National Party, PNV) and Comunión Tradicionalista (Electoral Carlism).²¹ Both had conservative and religious origins but strongly disagreed on the *status quo* of the regions. Whereas the PNV desired greater autonomy, Carlists advocated for the unity of Spain under the aegis of the Bourbon monarchy. The Carlists, however, did not disown their proudly held Basque identity and strongly supported the *fueros*.²² The Carlists played an active role in the conspiracy that led to the scw, and the Requetés (Carlist militia) fought alongside the Rebel army. Once war broke out, Navarre and Alava quickly fell to the Rebels, while Biscay and Guipuzcoa remained loyal to the Republic. Nevertheless, this loyalty was not met with enthusiasm within the PNV, as several members favoured aligning with the Rebels over religious convictions.²³ Finally, this relative passivity developed into engagement in exchange for political benefits.²⁴ The Spanish Republic approved the Estatuto de Autonomía del País Vasco (Basque Statute of Autonomy) on October 1, 1936; six days later, José Antonio Aguirre (PNV) became the first *lehendakari* (head of the Basque Government) in a solemn ceremony beside the Tree of Guernica. In return, PNV's commitment to the Republic strengthened by means of the Eusko Gudarostea (Basque Government militia).²⁵ Meanwhile, in 1937, the falangists and Carlists became one party; they would then go on to govern throughout the dictatorship.

In summary, the political events surrounding the bombing of Guernica, and to a larger extent the Basque context within the scw, do not admit a simplistic explanation based on the dichotomy between their main actors. Nevertheless, we will now show how some musical pieces have embraced these dualistic narratives, or have been used to emphasize them.

Escudero's *Gernika*: "Our People, honest follower of its ancestors"

Francisco Escudero's (Zarauz 1912-San Sebastian 2002) *Gernika* was premiered in Bilbao on April 25, 1987, on the eve of the 50th anniversary of the bombing. The opera epitomised several institutional commissions for a Basque topic that Escudero had received since 1979.²⁶ This year was marked by the approval of a new Estatuto de Autonomía del País Vasco that reinstated the previous *status quo*. The PNV later became the hegemonic party in the Basque Country from 1980 to 2009. *Gernika* was not Escudero's first use of a Basque theme for an opera: he had previously composed *Zigor! (Punishment!)* (1957-1963), based on the factual and mythical origins of the Kingdom of Navarre.²⁷ Escudero was heavily influenced by the scw and its aftermath. After studying in Paris with Paul Dukas and Paul Le Flem, he voluntarily enlisted in the Eusko Gudarostea. He went into exile in 1937²⁸ but upon returning to Spain in 1940 was sent to Miguel de Unamuno concentration camp. Freed in 1942, Escudero returned to the Basque Country in 1946 and started working at the Conservatory of San Sebastian in 1948.

The libretto for *Gernika*, written with Agustín Zubikarai and Carmelo Iturría, echoes several Basque conservative values within a pacifist environment. *Gernika* is a clairvoyant girl living in a harmonious community. One day, the King of the North arrives and offers protection to the Basque people against a Southern enemy. He asks for feudal loyalty in return while still respecting their freedom. Meanwhile, the evil leader of the royal militia tries to possess Gernika, who rejects him. Offended, the warrior starts a series of conspiracies and betrayals ending with Gernika's murder. When her compatriots find her corpse, Gernika's lover claims revenge, but Aitona (Grandfather) steps in and demands the King's intervention to provide justice. The Basque people finally decides to preserve her symbolic legacy forever.

Escudero's music portrays the different scenes of the opera through a wide range of techniques, ranging from modal atmospheres in the most bucolic contexts, somehow echoing the traditional Basque music, to avant-gardist textural effects in the most violent ones. For instance, during Act III, Gernika vividly foresees the bombing of Guernica, which is also acted out on stage.

26. Larrinaga, 2005, p. 1617.

27. He also began adapting, but did not finish, Lope de Vega's *Fuenteovejuna*, encouraged by the State after the great success of *Zigor!* The topic was surprisingly closer to Spanish nationalism: the play extols the Catholic Monarchs, a Francoist model for legitimizing the dictatorship's narratives; see Gilmour, 1995. Escudero was probably acquiescent at the time because Basque institutions were not supporting his career; see Larrinaga, 2010, p. 499.

28. For a broader comment upon Spanish exiled composers, see Moreda Rodríguez, 2015.

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29. Charteris-Black, 2005, p. 41.

Despite the composer's desire to produce a work that ethically engaged with pacifism, the libretto for *Gernika*, politically speaking, is quite controversial. The presence of archetypal characters embodying national values in a drama while by no means new, had become old-fashioned by the second half of the 20th century. Such a presence solidified the persuasive potential of metonymic personifications of political ideas, which is "either to arouse empathy of a social group, ideology or belief evaluated as heroic, or to arouse opposition towards a social group, ideology or belief evaluated as villainous."²⁹

Initially, it is not surprising that an audience would identify with the peaceful character of *Gernika* and would repudiate the violent one. Nevertheless, the heroine does not represent a single value or event: she theatrically embodies both Guernica, the symbolic location of the Basque people, and the bombed town. Such a temporal blending is ahistorical, or at least purposely timeless, entailing a problematic appraisal. As already shown in North American sculpture, incarnating national values, “[a]nthropomorphism collapses temporal and spatial boundaries.”³⁰ In *Gernika*, time collapses both facets of Gernika/Guernica. The amalgam hence echoes the triadic structure of almost any nationalist rhetoric—“glorious past,” “degraded present” and “utopian future”³¹—, pervasive in the Basque one.³² The portrayal of the Basques in *Gernika* also defies historical facts. Escudero depicted a united and peaceful society that, despite the anti-hero’s efforts to drive apart, in the end remains ideologically cohesive. First, it would be delusive to fantasize about the shared morals by the “primeval Basques.” Second, as shown previously, Basque society was by no means homogeneous at the time of the Second Spanish Republic or the scw. Thus, Escudero’s Manichean characters and the ostensibly naive narratives for *Gernika* successfully demonstrate an ethically engaged plea for peace. Nevertheless, they also make room for historical inaccuracies and mythical biases, both clearly rooted in nationalist propaganda.

Sorozábal’s *Gernika*: “A march [...] for *gudaris*”

Popular and folk music are often used in nationalist conflicts to boost identity features. Tunes, songs, and anthems tend to be re-contextualized, and original sources are confused or even distorted to appeal to the emotions of particular social groups. Scholars have shown, for instance, that some folk tunes linked to particular factions in Ulster during the 20th century were previously shared without political discord between Catholics and Protestants.³³ Leftist *abertzales* (Basque patriots) also established their own repertoire of preexisting music. The Movimiento Nacional de Liberación Vasco (Basque National Liberation Movement, MNLV)³⁴ incorporated tunes to their funeral parades, namely *Eusko gudariak* (Basque soldiers)—the anthem of Eusko Gudarostea—and the folk *adieu* song *Agur Jaunak* (Greetings, Sirs).³⁵ A piece borrowed from art music also became part of this repertoire: Pablo Sorozábal’s (San Sebastian 1897-Madrid 1988) *Gernika*, a funeral march honoring the victims of the massacre, with lyrics by priest Nemesio Etxaniz.

The piece is a sad march that Sorozábal composed in the tonal style that characterised his whole career. He was a successful zarzuela and operetta composer during the Second Spanish Republic, who was disparaged by

30. Tichi, 2001, p. 9.

31. Levinger and Lytle, 2001, p. 178.

32. Fernández Soldevilla, 2016, pp. 25-31.

33. Cooper, 2010, pp. 95-97.

34. This term has encompassed a wide number of social and political organizations orbiting around nationalist terrorism in the Basque Country.

35. Casquete, 2009, pp. 112-129.

36. For instance, he tried to play Shostakovich's Symphony No. 7 ("Leningrad") in 1952, but Francoist censorship aborted the project and fired him from the Orquesta Sinfónica de Madrid (Madrid Symphonic Orchestra); see Sorozábal, 1986, pp. 273-278.

37. Marco, 1993, p. 100.

38. Woodworth, 2002, p. 98. The statement is attributed to Goikoetxea's widow; see Casquete, 2009, p. 130.

39. In any case, a not insignificant leftist group of Catholic priests, mainly imbued with the Liberation theology, supported and sometimes actively collaborated with ETA; see Bastante, 2004.

40. Some exiled *gudaris* morally supported ETA; see Fernández Soldevilla, 2016, pp. 145-183.

41. Casquete, 2009, pp. 131-132.

Francoism for his leftist sympathies.³⁶ In addition, since the second period of Francoism (1959-1975), which was marked by an international openness abandoning autarchy, Sorozábal was equally despised by a younger generation of musicians for allegedly composing "well constructed [music] but not very unusual, displaying a certain nationalism."³⁷

This aforementioned MNLV repertoire can be related to the violence between ETA and the Spanish State, and notably the ways in which the State tried to defeat the terrorist group using violence, in some of the darkest episodes of the new Spanish democracy. The Grupos Antiterroristas de Liberación (Antiterrorist Liberation Groups, GAL) were anti-ETA death squads, who acted outside the law from 1983 to 1987, but were secretly supervised by some law enforcement officials and members of the Spanish Government. It was under such circumstances that Sorozábal's *Gernika* was played during the funeral parade for ETA member Mikel Goikoetxea who had been killed by the GAL.

The march was labeled as "not for priests or monks, but for *gudaris* (soldiers)."³⁸ This statement clearly delimits its target audience, as did the musical appropriation. A funeral march first and foremost, is not devised for votaries. Requiems, as music for obsequies, emanated from Roman liturgy, but funeral marches do not, perforce, involve religious sentiments. The inordinate emphasis of the *abertzale* statement could be regarded as an implicit but maybe intentional exclusion: the right wing of Basque nationalism was traditionally attached to the Catholic Church, while the MNLV brought together leftist, and mainly Marxists, trends.³⁹ Second, the use of the term *gudari* was not coincidental: *gudaris* were members of the Basque militia during the SCW. Thus, the terminological choice virtually metamorphosed the civilian victims honored by *Gernika* into warriors. It also tacitly related the *gudaris'* fight to ETA's terrorist actions: ETA's narratives sought to legitimately inherit the fight from the former, who, for them, acted as a martyrological model.⁴⁰ Last but not least, the choice of Sorozábal's music apparently clashed with the composer's ethics: he held strong anti-military convictions and sarcastically repudiated the concept of national martyrs.⁴¹ Thus, the case of Sorozábal's march probably constituted an unauthorised appropriation.

Laboa/Lazkano's *Gernika*: "Yes, it is the wind, our window is open"

The dictatorship's repressive actions spiked in the early 1970's in response to increasing activity by clandestine organizations and social demonstrations. In this context, several assertions of regional culture emerged in explicit moral

dissent for the regime. An example is Ez dok amairu, an artistic group active from 1966 to 1972, who gathered musicians and writers who represented the Euskal kantagintza berria (New Basque Song). They promoted *euskara* (Basque language), reshaped expressive traditional forms, and incorporated political messages concerning social justice and freedom,⁴² in line with other global counter-cultural trends.

Mikel Laboa (San Sebastian, 1934-2008) was a key figure of Euskal kantagintza berria. Among his work, the cycle *Lekeitios* stands out, composed between the late 1960s and 1980s. One of his first recordings was *Gernika-Lekeitio 4* (1972), whose title juxtaposes two Basque towns from Laboa's childhood memories of the scw.⁴³ After an instrumental introduction followed by a screaming choir, *Gernika-Lekeitio 4* recites imaginary words with phonemes that resemble *euskara*. Finally, Laboa melodically alludes to the Basque folk song *Haika mutil* (*Get up, boy*) without using lyrics. Laboa's *Gernika* was also inspired by Euskal kantagintza berria poet Joxean Artze. This first version did not mention his poem *Arrano Beltza* (*Black Eagle*),⁴⁴ but two years later, in his recording, *Bat-Hiru*, Laboa did recite it. The poem is politically engaged, confronting historical milestones of the medieval Kingdom of Navarre with a pessimistic outlook on the preservation of Basque identity.

The potential ambiguity of Artze's poem has led to its musical appropriation. The Spanish 1980s witnessed a boom in urban popular music echoing rock and punk trends spreading worldwide. The *Movida* (in Madrid) brought these trends together and the governing socialists quickly capitalised on it as symbolic of the newly created Spanish democracy's cosmopolitanism.⁴⁵ This festive attitude and political connivance was however considered "'soft,' frivolous, and out of place by a good part of the Basque youth."⁴⁶ A much more politically engaged music scene emerged there: the Euskal Rock Erradikala (Radical Basque Rock). Within this context, underground group Negu Gorriak exhibited a conspicuous alignment with leftist nationalists.⁴⁷ They borrowed folk and countercultural Basque elements—among them Artze's poem—, which entails a political assumption.⁴⁸

Other assimilations of Laboa have taken an opposite direction. In 2013, the Euskal Herriko Unibersitatea (University of the Basque Country) created the Mikel Laboa Katedra (Mikel Laboa Chair) to promote and fund research or new artworks linked to the songwriter. This event epitomised a progressive incorporation of Laboa's *œuvre* within so-called high culture and academia. Although such an assimilation is legitimate, it equally entails aporetic plights.⁴⁹ Mikel Laboa Katedra has commissioned several contemporary pieces; among them, Ramon Lazkano's (b. San Sebastian 1968) *Izarren*

42. In tune with coincident movements such as Catalanian Nova Cançó (New Song); see Martínez, 2016.

43. Aurtenetxe Zalbidea, 2011, p. 391.

44. The black eagle was a Navarrese heraldic emblem that the MNLV later arrogated to itself.

45. Fouce and Val, 2013.

46. Sánchez Ekiza, 2013, p. 45.

47. Lahusen, 1993, pp. 273-278.

48. Also ska-punk band Kortatu, from which Negu Gorriak was born, transformed an *aizkolari* (Basque wood-chopper) into somebody chopping the Tree of Guernica; see Sánchez Ekiza, 2013, p. 48.

49. Concerning the North American counterculture, it is the case for instance of Bob Dylan; see Marshall, 2008.

FIGURE 3 *Gernika (Lekeitio 4)* by Ramon Lazkano (mm. 160-167), composer's manuscript. The printed score is published by Maison ONA.

The image shows a handwritten musical score for measures 160 to 167 of the piece 'Gernika (Lekeitio 4)' by Ramon Lazkano. The score is written on multiple staves for various instruments and voices. The notation includes complex rhythmic patterns, dynamic markings (pp, p, f, ppf), and performance instructions such as 'Rit...', 'Solo → Solo', and 'ppf'. The score is marked with a box containing the number '160' and a box containing the letter 'H'. The tempo is indicated as '♩ = 108 ca (1 = 54 ca)'. The score is published by Maison ONA.

Hautsa (Stardust) (2014). One year earlier, he wrote *Gernika (Lekeitio 4)*, a symphonic adaptation of Laboa's works. Lazkano first studied composition with Escudero; he then moved to Paris to work with Alain Bancquart and Gérard Grisey, then to Montreal to complete his studies with Gilles Tremblay. He currently teaches at Musikene (the Conservatory of the Basque Country) and was the head of Musikagileak (the Basque-Navarrese non-profit association of composers). Among his few theoretical texts, salient references to Helmut Lachenmann⁵⁰ make us think he probably has leftist sympathies. Most of Lazkano's works are titled in Basque, not indicative of nationalist vindication, but rather functioning as an affective acknowledgment of his family ties.⁵¹

50. Lazkano, 2004.

51. Fryberger and Velasco-Pufteau, in press.

A relevant feature in Lazkano's orchestration of Laboa's *Gernika* is the absence of vocals and lyrics. This choice was rather circumstantial: Musikagileak once promoted a concert in which Laboa's widow was invited to choose an orchestration of her husband's music to be played. She suggested Cuban composer Carlos Puig-Hatem's arrangement of *Gernika-Lekeitia* 4, but there were insufficient funds to pay the singers. Thus, Lazkano—who became Laboa's friend at the end of his life—decided to write an instrumental version.⁵² His orchestration is relatively conventional, devoid of the multiple extended techniques featured in his own music.

Beyond the pecuniary circumstances of the arrangement, the absence of text has unintentional political connotations.⁵³ Unlike the case of Negu Gorriak, the lack of textual and phonetic elements mitigates potential meaning-based emphases that the audience could interpret politically. Besides, Musikagileak does not have particularly political purposes; this fact contrasts with the commemorative and institutional nature of Escudero's commission. This situation is in line with the progressive depoliticization of Basque cultural associations since the return of democracy, accelerated after ETA's ceasefire in 2010⁵⁴.

Conclusion

In these three cases, three differing situations can be accounted for: Escudero's propagandistic libretto for his second opera, the appropriation of Sorozábal's funeral march by the MNLV, and Lazkano's orchestration within a context that could be regarded as collateral depoliticization. The first two cases entail an ideological bias—fostered by the composer or incidental—with respect to the historical facts surrounding the bombing of Guernica; the third probably attenuates potential partisan interpretations. Therefore, our case studies seem to confirm the hypothesis put forward in the introduction, at least within this particular historical context. In any case, composers' ethical attitudes regarding these facts were probably determined by their own past experiences.

Two main reasons led to relatively straightforward analyses: first, they left clues of their social impact or their use in particular political contexts. Second, references to textual sources provided potential interpretations going beyond stylistic, musical issues. These features were not readily detectable in other pieces we found in Eresbil. In that sense, our research could be expanded to include other Basque pieces, also inspired by the bombing of Guernica.

52. Personal communication, January 10, 2018.

53. Lazkano acknowledges that he did not consider any political connotation around his choice. Personal communication, January 10, 2018.

54. Pérez-Argote, 2008, pp. 244-254

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