



THE FAREWELL SOUNDTRACK

Leonardo Padrón

I have always liked to think that, if the soul has a sound, it is music. There is something otherworldly about music; it is so laden with wind, with mystery and, at the same time, with so much humanity. Aldous Huxley once said that, after silence, music is the closest thing to expressing the inexpressible. That is why music cannot be told. Words are merely a mere, uninspired instrument for doing so. That is why I feel uneasy about trying to convey the significance of the soundtrack that Eduardo Marturet composed for Diego Rísquez's movie about one of the women most representative of Latin American courage: Manuela Sáenz.

Every film needs its own music. It is as necessary as a trusted lover. It is the final protagonist, the god entrusted with breathing the last touch of soul into the scenes. Just image, therefore, the expectation that the people involved in this film felt when told that Eduardo Marturet had agreed to provide the music. Just imagine our enthusiasm when we sat in front of the moviola to listen to the opening chords, the first merging of images of the great warrior and the music of the well-known composer. The end result was moving. The images billowed, stood proud and began to pour out poetry in all directions. The coupling had been flawless.

All I wish to do here is applaud the melodic fabric woven by maestro Marturet. I don't know how to talk about music, how to narrate it. But I can boast of feeling it. If there is one thing to be found in this soundtrack, it is what they call beauty. The frantic, terrible and heroic life of the Liberator's most significant inamorata is described in unsettlingly emotional melodies. The presence of war, the force of love, the libertarian vehemence, the itinerary of banishments and persecutions, the pain of loss, the melancholy of crumbling dreams can only be understood in all their vast and human extent thanks to the musical map that Eduardo Marturet was able to create throughout the movie.

Calling upon Haydn at times, on Beethoven at others, evoking composers of the independence era (Juan Meserón, Juan Manuel Olivares), playing at being a bit of Vivaldi, a bit of Albioni, saluting the memorable influence of others who have written music for films (Nino Rota and Miklós Rózsa, for instance), Eduardo Marturet wrapped himself in the skin of history and built his own sound structure to create music that will give dramatic and aesthetic dimensions to this chronicle of Manuela Sáenz's life. One of greatest rewards that I have reaped from the entire process of making this movie has been to witness Eduardo Marturet's creative precision. I was amazed to find that someone of his artistic stature was able to grasp that moviemaking is, essentially, the work of a team. And he came to us each day with a single musical note in his pocket: humility. And he asked questions, and he studied the frames over and over again, and he gazed speechlessly at the performance given by Beatriz Valdés, and he struggled day after day to find just the right scale for the last two seconds of a scene. He was the *maestro* without a podium, without a theater full of people, without his symphonic tailcoat. He was pure creator, naked and curious, with a bone-deep passionate desire to produce the perfect crescendo, the necessary climax, the melancholy required by a set of scenes.

Whoever listens attentively to this soundtrack will realize that the music is composed as a spiral; that, as the movie progresses, it becomes more corporeal, it grows on screen, it looms large, earthshaking, evolving into a cloak that envelops us until the closing scene. What may perhaps be one of the most beautiful challenges of this *oeuvre* is having managed to create one music for the sepia and another music for color, the two chromatic temperatures that Diego Rísquez used to create the dialogue between our main character's past and present. Manuela tells us about her life as she awaits death, Manuela is delirious, Manuela dances, Manuela wanders feverishly through

the years, the letters from Bolivar, the whiplashes of betrayal, the misfortunes of power, and the epic story of a bevy of men and women who were decisive for our history. There, in that almost schizoid structure, the music becomes the thread, the course the compass point for the emotions.

Musical connoisseurs will spot the subtle bridge that Marturet has built between the 19th century and these early years of the 21st, because there are musical echoes from that era and daring melodies that are strictly contemporary; they will see how shrewd he was in understanding that, at times, there is no better music than the sea, how he avoided the modern piano in honor of historical truth and the fact that there were non pianos in America, how he avoided excess, obvious sentimentality, how he grasped that the core of the movie was Manuela, not Bolivar, that it was courage, not war; farewell, not love. And they will witness the inexplicable moment when the music leaps into the arms of Manuela Sáenz, becomes her.

The soundtrack of *Manuela Sáenz, la Libertadora del Libertador*, has a life of its own. It was born to be heard together with a visual narration, to complete the dramatic intentions of the text, to accompany the existential rustling of a woman who has gone down in history; this soundtrack carried its own freedom in its soul. No one who sees the movie will forget the music, on the contrary they search for it, seek it out to listen to in some pleasurable corner. That is where the music will prove to have a kingdom of its own, its own independence. Perhaps listening to it will bring back the scenes of the movie, perhaps our memory will recapture the magnificent love that Manuela Sáenz felt for Simón Bolívar, how she fought his one hundred wars, how she traveled the continent on horseback to wipe the sweat of the hero's brow, how she died, reviled and cast off by the world. Also, and above all, for those who have never seen the movie, this music will provide a magnificent package of sound-filled emotions. The telos was fully achieved: to tell, in the language of sound, the story of a free spirit named Manuela Sáenz. And we may, perhaps, think of and paraphrase Lawrence Durrell when he said that music was invented to confirm human loneliness.

Mr. Marturet, we simply say: Thank you for the beauty.

If you would like to purchase the film, you can visit:

<http://www.venezuelatuya.com/tienda/manuelasaenz.htm>