

## Between a Context that Expands and an Ideology that Defunds



Miguel A. García

With this issue of *El óido pensante*, we present the second edition of OP-Incitements, a section that brings together prominent researchers around a provocative idea. This time, the contributors have been invited to deny, affirm, or relativize an idea that questions the effectiveness, and even the very existence, of ethnomusicology in the face of the changes occurring in musical practices since the beginning of the century. These changes result from technological and commercial transformations affecting various types of contents. I am primarily referring to the omnipresence of platforms, the constant emergence and renewal of software and devices, the unprecedented production scale of intermedial expressions, the appearance of new types of consumers and intermediaries, and the unpredictable spread of AI, among others. In terms of musical practices, these transformations favour the emergence of new genres, composition techniques, listening experiences, distribution and storage policies, and commercialization strategies. For research in the field, this context is doubly expansive: it leads to exploring the possibilities of emerging sound production, distribution, and consumption tools, while also prompting a reevaluation of the theories and methods we have to address the music scenario these tools are creating.

Over this context of exploration and reevaluation looms a force that, in one sense, can be considered its antithesis: an obscurantist ideology that attributes all evils to the State and seeks to sever humanities and social science research from it, either by deeming it useless or by viewing it as one of its most tenacious enemies. This obscurantism gained notable visibility during the pandemic in the form of anti-vaccine discourses, flat earth theories, racism, homophobia, sexism, anarcho-liberal proclamations, odes to meritocracy, veneration of cryptocurrencies, and many other absurdities of the same ilk. On both sides of the Atlantic, these ideas, now

sprouting and being validated from the mouths of politicians, ideologues, and magnates of the so-called Big Tech, make up the doctrine and action plan of several far-right parties. The crusade is against the State, migrants, gender perspectives, progressivism, and anything that stands in the way of economic concentration, ultraliberal dogma, and the reign of the macho.

In Argentina, the country where *El oído pensante* is published, obscurantism has added science to its blacklist. Acting accordingly, the current government, from the beginning of its administration, embarked on defunding the sector through layoffs, interruption of funding, delays or cancellations of mechanisms for researchers' entry into the scientific system, and all sorts of reductions. The epicentre was the humanities and social sciences, with the National Scientific and Technical Research Council, the National Agency for Scientific and Technological Promotion, and public universities being the institutions that bore the brunt of this policy. This situation appears similar to that of several other countries governed by similar retrograde policies.

In summary, research on music is being developed under the influence of two divergent forces. On one hand, that generated by the technological developments of recent years, which pushes research to understand new practices of listening, creation, distribution, and storage of music, and leads to a reconsideration of theories, methods, specificities and scope. On the other hand, that of obscurantism and ultraliberalism, which cuts resources and clouds its future. The first, although paradoxical, given that it is largely driven by the logic of commodities, gives research an expansive character. The second, in contrast, imposes a limited, uncertain, and retrenched scenario. The ability to adapt to or resist these two forces appears to be the key factor in determining the vitality that research in the field may retain or lose.