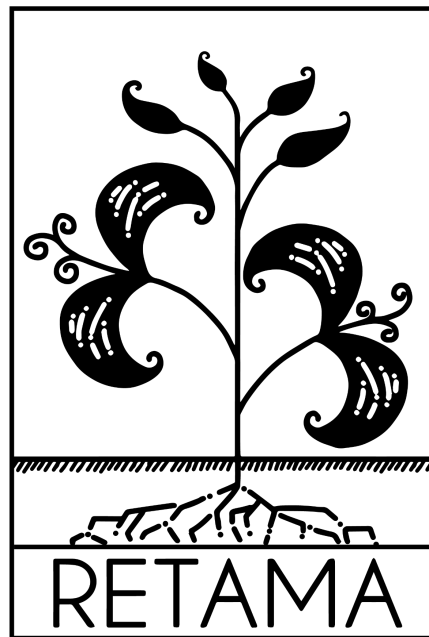


RETAMA

The strength of a seed



*A seed becomes a bush, and then a tree.
That grows strong and resilient,
but without ceasing to be beautiful and to flourish
It's an answer for complicated geographies,
It's an answer for hard weather,
It's a joy in the arid terrain that doesn't recognize itself as fragile,
It recognizes itself as unique, with identity,
and with the strength of the community, of becoming one in unity.*

*As small clusters.
creating groups, making networks, channels, and projects.
They unite their yellow flowers to distinguish themselves from the distance
To transform themselves into thousands and claim an entire peninsula if necessary.*

*It has its own name,
one that reflects the Andes, Latin America, and all the history that brought it to life in these
lands.
It knows itself as unique but also the same as the ones who will come next,
It knows its necessity to society but also that it needs the others to grow and achieve its best
self.
This is Retama, our collective.*

Our first meeting was in the middle of a pandemic and through a video call,
We weren't friends, but we weren't strangers either.
What we shared was clear: We were young female composers that were part of a new
generation of professional musicians in Peru. But we also were educated for the most part,
by men who believed they had succeeded in music because they left their country to
compose for an European audience and in a western type of way.

Each of us had always been an isolated RETAMA, growing up in a hard geography. In the
middle of a this pandemic, that forced us to become more remote than ever but at the same
time, more introspective, the names of Darlene Neyra, Wendolyne Guerra, Isabella Calmet,
Macri Cáceres, Yemit Ledesma, Pía Alvarado, Naid Cruz, Claudia Sofía Alvarez, and Isa
Otoya were called to start this collective.

We all knew that our names weren't just representing us.
We all knew that by turning on the camera, we were becoming the face of the young
Peruvian composer of the 21st century for the star of something that could change
everything.
We all came from different styles, from different schools, and from different parts of Peru.
We all have different beliefs, ideologies, and points of view, but we agreed that it was in our
hands to create alliances between us so that the following Peruvian female composers or
the young girls interested in composition and music could have a voice, a face, and an
identity in academic music.

So this is how this seed, that was created, in the heart of a country rich in history, culture, and art but poor in education. Embedded in all of this, an identity was created. We baptized our project as RETAMA and we identify ourselves as a collective. We didn't want to continue growing in an isolated way.

In Peru... Do we know female Peruvian composers? Do the girls know that they can compose scores for incredible instruments, so they can experiment with sound, and that they can build a new language every time they want their message to be heard by others? Do they know that their work as artists is valuable and necessary for our country? for our society? for Latin America?

Do they know that being a creative artist is a job and that they deserve the rights of any other worker and a decent environment that respects them? Do girls know that they can be educated as artists and that they have the freedom to decide if they want to dedicate their lives to music, dance, poetry, or writing? Does Peru know that art is a way of transcending and loving humanity?

The answer to most of this, in the majority of this country is no. Girls don't know enough. We all don't know enough.

We didn't even know this when we started RETAMA.

We began to answer many of these questions ourselves with the help of each other and other female artists around the world as we shared projects, gathering spaces, music and ideas.

To be honest, some of these are answers that we are still looking for or perhaps some solutions for these unanswered circumstances. But this time, we look with hope and it's always best to hope with some company.

Being an artist in today's world is a very risky and dedicated task. There is not a day that goes by in which one begins or stops to be an artist. The need to create, to represent is inherent to our personality. But now let's contextualize this profession in a country like Peru, where most people work a minimum of 8 hours per day, 7 days per week. To save money as much as we can, to deprive ourselves of a lot with the hope to have enough in the future. But to be honest most of the time it's not enough to even be able to cover the most basic needs such as health, food, housing and education. Perú is a poor country where we as artists (and in general) don't have support from the government, if not obstacles and constant political crises that just open the gaps between citizens.

In such a context, it's natural that art isn't a priority. It's understandable that most parents don't want their children to be artists, it's understandable that you have to become a rebel who abandons all expectations to become an artist and it's also understandable that the great majority of these rebels end up being men because... come on, women have always had another role in this society (and in most societies through history).

The Universidad Nacional de música del Perú (one of the few places in the capital where one can study music and receive a university degree) opens three annual vacant for the Musical Composition career and sometimes it can be extended to six if no one else achieves the minimum results to enter the other specialties. How many of the young Peruvians who

want to be composers get to apply? How many of these are women? Is it really so strange to find another woman in the composition classrooms?

Yes it is.

Do the numbers improve if we talk about private schools? Yes, but let's not forget the context of our country. In this reality, out of every thousand individuals only fourteen of them can pay a monthly payment that doubles the minimum wage. So to access the privilege of a good education, many of us were lucky, many of us had to use the family savings of many years, many of us had to work hard, many of us had to go into debt or many of us simply had to study hard and have a lot of patience to just enter into the few vacant of those professional studies.

Once inside, the story was very similar for all of us because we were women. Because we are women.

Let's go back to the classroom, where many of us were the only female student in the midst of young men who wanted to be pianists, violinists, singers, guitarists, directors, and of course, composers.

- What is your major here?
- + Composition
- Composition?

And there that was tone everytime we answered that question, that mix of astonishment and amusement because in music, What else can a woman do besides sing or play the piano? Everything, yes but you had to prove it, everytime, and proving it's exhausting.

We had to be very perfectionists with our own careers, listen to a lot of macho comments about our work, and study more than usual so they wouldn't take us as fools. We had to be very careful to not be too nice or open because that could be suspicious because you know... "preferences".

If we were lucky enough to run into a female teacher, we would find that these women were used to this scenery, that it was usual to deal with these thoughts, prejudices, and lies all the time. It didn't matter if she was a foreign, Latin American, or Peruvian woman. Our role in contemporary music, in the music scene of any style, is the same.

An underestimated role, taken with little seriousness, as very sensitive, as inconsistent, as resentful. Like a fad, a passing fever.

As a muse but not as a music engineer, not as a creator of languages, not as a player of big, heavy, and complicated instruments, not as an orchestra director, never as the one who is in charge.

In order to face this stormy and gray climate, there were many brave Latino-American women and Peruvians composers that came before us and who earned the respect of their male colleagues. With their own effort, their own dedication, their own abilities, and individual careers... but wouldn't it be easier to sail against these winds if we do it as a team in times like this? Wouldn't it have a stronger effect, joining all of our voices to say louder and clearer that we are artists too, that we dream of a world where we can have equal opportunities and equal payment for our work, that we want the same respect, that we want to build this new world, and that we deserve it? Wouldn't it have a strong effect on the girls of tomorrow to see all of us together today?

We are diverse women who deserve a safe space to express ourselves, leave our mark, to be happy with what we do without being obstructed, oppressed, or underestimated for being women.

Retama is a collective, but we don't seek to convince ourselves that we have the same points of view. Retama is admiration and respect between different women who listen, share, and constantly learn from each other. Retama is the space where we like to connect with women from all over the world to create together, challenge ourselves together, bring out the best in each other, together.

We believe in unity as a better way to search for solutions, in feedback, and in learning from others, that is why interdisciplinarity and conceptualization are fundamental characteristics of our artistic proposals.

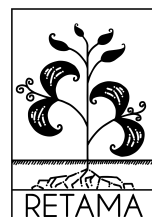
We want to tell a story and express an emotion or idea from different points of view, from different places, from different feelings, and from different languages, from different human experiences. We believe that diversity is our power as women and as humans.

Darlene, Isabella, Pía, Naid, Macri, Claudia, Isabel, Wendolyne y Yemit.

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