

# ALLIANCE<sup>FOR</sup> WOMEN FILM COMPOSERS

A Q&A with Buenos Aires-Based Composer  
Jimena Martínez Sáez



1. **Jimena, tell us your story and your background in music. What sparked your interest in music for media?**

Music was constantly played at my parents' house. My father, an amateur guitarist, took me to every concert he went to with my mother.

My first step into music was playing around on the piano in my grandmother's house, so my parents suggested that I take lessons. Years later, my teacher encouraged me to study music formally, and through these studies, I learned about the different possibilities and institutions where I could study.

The academic format offered in Argentina put me off completely, with every option consisting of a very long career path. None of these careers fit my needs, film scoring was not offered at the time, only now are a few places beginning to offer it. I spent many years trying different formal approaches to music, from

classical to popular piano, alongside a couple years of classical music composition, until I finally decided to forge my own path, choosing who and what to study according to my needs. I never stopped studying, in fact, I continue to do so, both in film scoring and in composition. I believe it is important to never stop training, pushing ourselves to keep up to date with modern day musical demands.

2. **What would you highlight as a major milestone in your music journey? How did it help you get where you are today?**

There are two important events that helped me develop musically.

Although formal study has allowed me to see a range of possibilities within music, I also discovered that there are other ways to specialize in what I wanted. Accepting and making this decision was the beginning

of my journey.

The second important milestone was to get in touch with other female composers, mainly from Argentina, with whom we shared experiences and work. Two colleagues and friends with whom it is always enriching to work with are Micaela Carballo and Luisina Kippes. I think that being in contact with other musicians is the best way of growing as a composer, thanks to them and many other female composers, we have created a great support network.

- 3. Your collection of original compositions really showcases your unique creative voice. Do you approach your personal music differently than your media work? If so, how?**

They are two completely different worlds for me.

Composing for media implies cooperating with a pre-

existing dialouge, so the music has to compliment the visuals.

However, when it comes to composing my original music, freedom is always much greater but not always easier. The idea can come from a chord that I play on the piano, or maybe from a

particular sound that I want to try on an instrument. I really like wind instruments and all the possibilities they offer, so I research them and get to work.

In my compositions I try to do the opposite of music for media, since I take advantage of freedom of not having to follow a pre-existing material to explore a lot more. I like to surprise the listener, and every time I decide to face a new piece, I try to find a new starting point or a different motivation from everything I have already done. I like challenges.

4. **Are there any major influences or role models that inspired/inspire you? What is the best advice you have ever received?**

If I have to choose, I like minimalism, to tell you an iconic name: Philip Glass. In addition to watching movies, series, documentaries, listening to music, etc. I really like reading about the work and life of different composers (of music for cinema or not). I never cease to be surprised by their life stories and the way they approach the works, each composer is a world and knowing about their experiences is very enriching and helps me not to give up.

My teachers and my colleagues are the ones who truly inspire me. I have a little bit of each one of them in me and in my music. The best advice I received was not to give up and move on. Meeting friendly people along the way, who want you to do well, who do not keep anything from you, with colleagues who support

you, is beautiful.

And I was lucky to have excellent teachers too, from my first piano teacher to my great teacher Guillo Espel, an Argentine composer, who is always there helping me.

5. **Do any current, past, or future projects have a unique place in your heart? Why are they particularly important to you?**

We are currently working with a Spanish director, Rakel Aguirre, on a documentary about a feminist camp in the 1980s near London (Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp). I am excited about this film as it shows the strength of sisterhood. It is a large and well-run project, in which I feel very comfortable. We have been working with Rakel practically full time since June. I think we have been doing a great job and I am very fond of it.

6. **Would you like to share any current or upcoming news? Any new music/project releases we should keep an eye out for?**

Well, the documentary that we hope to finish in the next few weeks as this year marks the 40th anniversary of the women's protest march to Greenham Common and the creation of the Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp.

Fortunately, there are several projects in pipeline. For September I will be making the music for an Argentine short film (Le Gotera) by the director Matías Cibils, with whom I have already worked before.

And, of course, some personal compositions that are going around in my head.

Interview by Michael Van Bodegom Smith