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The Joke and Discrimination in Art

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A very little treated subject in art is the one that refers to discrimination, which encompasses a great number of aspects, which go beyond the idea of selecting for very particular purposes not only works, authors or currents, and excluding all others that do not meet the criteria of those who make such discriminatory selection, the height or the purposes proposed by them, but such aspect extends to other attitudes, including verbal or physical aggression.

One of the branches that lends itself to this discrimination is also the joke taken not only to written expression, but also to graphic expression, in which the alleged defects of the character or the subject being attacked are represented with exaggeration or rudeness.

Discriminatory levels are also perceived in critical attitudes that generate not only discomfort, but also offenses that cause discomfort where teamwork is performed, and consequently, failures in its performance.

When a joke makes us laugh, we are not in the best conditions to investigate its technique, and it is difficult for us to carry out a penetrating analysis (S. Freud)¹.

Sigmund Freud, in his research on the unconscious and the relationship with the joke, finds within its mechanism elements that well indicate deep aspects of discrimination, although the sense of such work² is to find the cause of the joke without a discriminating criticism.

¹Freud, Collected Works

²Idem

I have chosen from the wide range of art, plus some examples of jokes in music and painting. The field is large to explore it very carefully, but I have preferred such disciplines because many work experiences and anecdotes that have arisen in them, have the character of jokes, so I have also considered that even in an exploratory way, we should keep some of them, which are the product of personal experiences, and others that circulate in the artistic and popular Guatemalan environment. One source of production, as there are many, is found in artistic groups, they have a code that is found in gestures, signs, words and phrases that are common knowledge among them, and that other groups outside such disciplines can hardly perceive them. Outside the group there is also a strong conglomerate of art lovers with whom it is allowed to talk about "musical jokes", literary "plastic jokes" or of any other nature.

Discriminatory aspects are nevertheless evident, both within the same group in a country and in any nation in the world, ranging primarily from musical taste to musical instruments, the character of a work or its theme, artistic currents, ethnic, political and even religious issues.

In the musical branch, a symphonic orchestra has among its members very different musical tastes regarding the works they play, becoming at a certain moment a matter of discrimination, common in what refers to the instruments to which is attributed, according to the criterion of those who play them, superiority for their sound, for their form, for their origins.

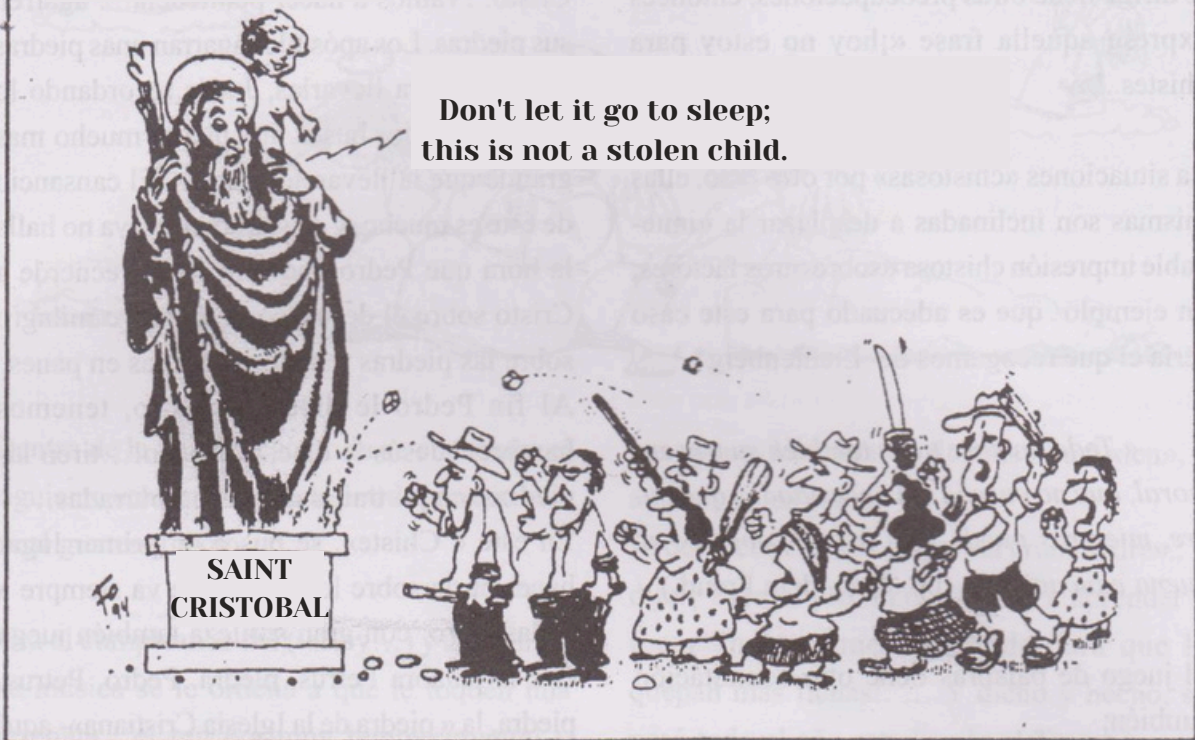
The dimension of this discrimination has varied shades, within the enormous quantity that can serve as example some that arrive to the musical history: The case of the "Semite" Felix Mendelsohn, of which it is said that his music was seen in Vienna with little appreciation by some, and of course with contempt in Palestine. Arturo Toscanini had him intentionally conduct it after 1933 in Salzburg and in Palestine.

Other traits of the same nature of Toscanini, although they tend to become anecdotes by some not perceiving the discrimination that is guessed in the background, is the one he provoked when conducting in Italy he did not allow the *Giovanezza* to be performed during one of his concerts, which attracted the enmity of the fascist fanatics, and he renounced since then to perform in his homeland.

The position before artistic currents is a way of discrimination, thus Wilhem Furtwängler, the great German conductor of the Berlin Philharmonic, did not accept atonal music. Or in a political position Stokowsky had ***La Internacional*** sung during a concert.

The Vienna Philharmonic does not accept female instrumentalists in its ranks. And we could speak of another type of discrimination in that some European orchestras do not play symphonic music, not even by the greatest Latin American composers.

Psychosis continues



**Don't let it go to sleep;
this is not a stolen child.**

Some of the previous attitudes change from racist episodes to jokes, barely feeling the transition of such metamorphosis.

In his little work entitled "The Double Bass", the author Peter Susskin, who seems to be also a player of this instrument, sometimes sarcastically alludes, using double meaning symbolisms, to a kind of discrimination towards the instrument itself and the derivations of its particularities. This is how he personifies it in his case in the living room, vigilant, jealous of what he himself says, "he cannot carry out any activity" because it seems that he is always observing him, ...

The joke is then analyzed in terms of its elaboration or purposes and then undergoes a personal re-elaboration that allows us to measure the dimension of its comic and offensive parts.

Freud (pp 883) stresses that he whose mood "depends on serious thoughts, will not be the most appropriate judge to confirm with his laughter that the joke has achieved its purpose of savoring pleasure".

This is why it is so natural that in another context it has a double meaning, such as when a false or true news is given, but the person to whom it is addressed has other concerns, then express that phrase "today I'm not in the mood for jokes!"

The humorous situations, on the other hand, are themselves inclined to displace the undeniable humorous impression on other factors; an example that is suitable for this case would be the one we gather from Lichtenberg³.

"Every man has also his moral ass, which he does not teach without necessity, and which covers, as long as he can, with his breeches his good education" (pp. 854-idem Freud).

The play on words has another connotation as well:

Popular joke:

Jesus says to his apostles, "Grasp a stone let us do penance!"

Each apostle takes a stone of regular size and with effort they carry it along the road, only Judas takes a very small one which he throws into the air and returns to his hands. In the face of so much heat and fatigue, Peter, who was the one who indicated to Christ the time to rest, said to Him: "Master, we are tired and hungry!" - Christ sees the penance interrupted and looks at the apostle and says "Petrus! (stone) leave them on the ground", and they are transformed into loaves, - all the apostles have loaves of bread the size of the stone they picked up, so Judas who had picked up a small one, small is the bread.

³Freud, Obras completas "El Chiste y su relación con el subconsciente, edif Barcelona.

The next day Christ tells them the same thing again: "Let us do penance... take your stones!" The apostles grab some large stones to carry them, Judas remembering what happened the day before, looks for a stone much larger than the one carried by the others. He is very tired, and in his heart, he can't wait for Peter to remind him again of Christ about rest and a new miracle on the stones transforming them into loaves of bread. Finally, Peter tells him, "Master, we are hungry...!" Jesus says to him, ... "Well!... throw away the stones and here I bring some champurradas..." (large cookies with sesame seeds on top.)

In this joke, the first aim is to make fun of how badly Judas is always doing, but with great subtlety he also plays with the word Petrus, stone. Peter, Petrus, stone, the "stone of the Christian Church" - here it acquires the connotation of stone, as many take it, and according to the popular sense of the joke, it "falls like a stone" (i.e. it bothers him, it bothers Jesus in this case) that he is reminding him when they have to eat and rest.

A second listener says: You see... man does not live by "stones" alone (by Pedro-Petrus), but also by Champurradas!

(collected orally)

THE ONE THAT IS SELLING SENSATIONALLY IS
THE LP 6537 STEREO/MONOAURAL THAT THE
LABEL "PHONO-DEUTSCH" HAS JUST RELEASED
WITH MY BRANDEBURGUES CONCERTO N.3 IN G
MAJOR



Within the same category is the following joke collected from the Guatemalan music media:

It was the birthday of the King and the music band was ordered to play a serenade; the king was very temperamental and fickle ("just like the orchestra conductors"-annotation made by the narrator) and the musicians prepared themselves to play at the window of the palace. The time came, and the notes and harmonies of the ensemble awoke the king, that day he was in a very good mood, he went out to the window and after delighting himself with such a serenade he told the royal treasurer to fill the instruments with gold coins. The musicians were happy to see how the tuba, with its big mouth, and the horns got a lot of coins inside them, while the clarinets and oboes got very little, and the flute and the piccolo got barely 5 cents, and even then, they fell out.

The one with the piccolo was so angry and said: For next year I'm going to learn to play a big instrument so that more chips will fit!. And so, he spent the whole year studying the Trombone, since it was a big instrument, unlike the Pícolo, which was the smallest of all.

When the date arrived, all the musicians of the band were excited, thinking of the coins they were going to receive from such a royal serenade. But that day the temperamental king woke up in a bad mood because of the problems he was having with taxes, strikes, intrigues and conspiracies, so when he woke up, the music of the band made it worse, and when they finished playing, he said to the minister of war: "Grab all these musicians and shove the instrument up their asses!"

And a musician who hears the joke says,
That's why I'd better change my profession!

The previous joke is similar to the one about
turning stones into loaves of bread, the
victim in the first one is Judas, and in the
previous one the musician who plays the
piccolo.

Another pun joke, verbal type referred to by
Freud as an example:

A singer, Edmundo by name, and as famous
for his fatness as for his voice, had to suffer
the title of a play inspired by a well-known
novel by Jules Verne being used as an
allusion to his inelegant physique. The

phrase "The trip around **Edmundo**, in eighty
days soon became popular". (Freud. c. idem)

The sense of the joke of local type, presents
the situation with an intention from the
beginning, that of accentuating the
mockery of the character's fatness, a fact
that is noticed when he refers: "as famous
for his **fatness** as for his **voice**" -
immediately presents the motive by putting
his fatness before the fame of his voice.



cathedral doves

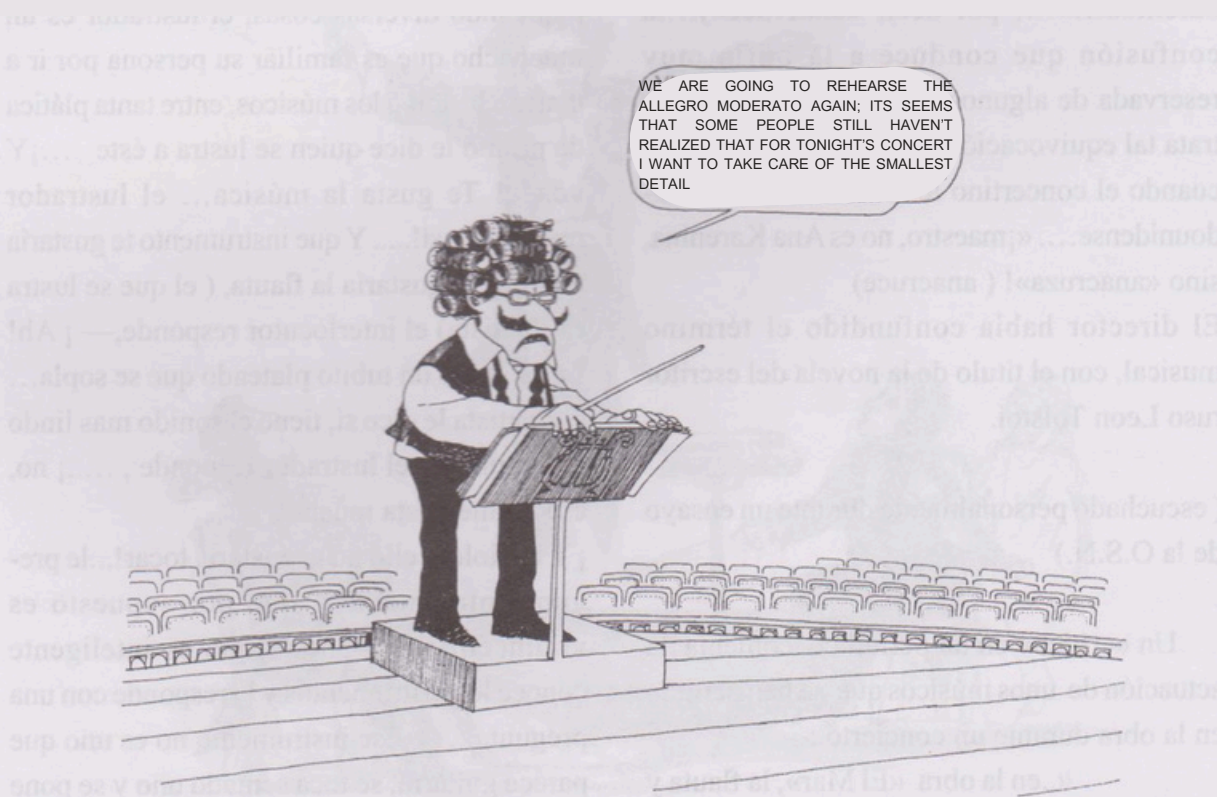
At popular levels, a joke of the same nature, somewhat offensive (for the singer) became popular among the Guatemalan musical environment when referring to a well-known and famous opera singer of exuberant physical condition with the surname **Pavarotti**, especially because of his stomach, they called him **Panزارotti** (from *panza* or *barriga* in the popular Guatemalan language: stomach).

The great Italian conductor Arturo Toscanini, who was criticized by many musicians for having such a bad temper, when conducting in Bayreuth not only shouted, which was natural in his rehearsals, but constantly repeated No! No!... which earned him the nickname "Toscano-no" instead of his surname **Toscanini**.

Someone said when listening to this episode that "Toscanono" may not only be because of the above mentioned, but also because it combines 'tosco' for its character, with "no, no" for its exclamations.

Other jokes that are classified among the diverse types exposed by the works of Freud, Schlinder, and Adler, collected from diverse sources I expose them next where the sharp, critical, or tendentious note appears referring to several aspects but mainly related to the artistic branch:

A conductor tells the musicians the following, which causes smiles, some sonorous inflection in others and seriousness in those who give it no more than a working musical meaning: referring to the "time value in the figure of notes" - "this is the only occasion when the **negras** (quarter notes) are worth more than the **blancas** (half notes)". (considered racist and personally collected during a trial)



In this sense and being again the target the orchestra conductors, the play on words and the pronunciation by a foreigner who does not know well the language of the country incites first to mock, then to make a joke with the same mockery when by association of some element completely foreign to the language and "musical jargon" he expresses some word from another foreign context.

In an orchestra rehearsal where an American maestro is acting as guest conductor, he tries to pronounce in Spanish some words and indications to the musicians. At one point, when explaining how to play a beat before the next measure, he tells them: "I want you to play in the ana karenina" (meaning anacruce) the confusion that leads to the very reserved mockery of some who know what this mistake is about, turns into laughter in others when the concertmaster tells the American conductor "Maestro, it is not Ana Karenina, but "anacruza" (anacruce)!

The director had confused the musical term with the title of the novel by Russian writer Leon Tolstoy.

(heard personally during a rehearsal of the N.S.O.)

A "critic" in a newspaper comments on the performance of some musicians who got lost in the work during a concert:

in the work "The Sea", the flute and the Faggotte were trying to find each other, completely lost in the waves produced by the rest of the orchestra, in the end it was too much and they could no longer find

each other... they drowned and gave no more signs of life (no longer played)

(From a written comment).

Herzfeld refers that the English director Thomas Beecham was described in the reviews with some humorous but somewhat ill-intentioned comparisons, such as the following note: "His movements when he directs are something special. He cuts the air with grand gestures. **Many marvel that the orchestra can understand them.** To facilitate his work, he wears a police whistle around his neck and uses it as a soccer referee might."

During a break in the orchestra's rehearsal, several teachers are polishing themselves and chatting about different things, the polisher is a boy who is familiar to him because he goes daily to polish the musicians, in the middle of the conversation he suddenly tells him, Do you like music... the polisher responds, Yes! And what instrument would you like to play... you would like the flute, (the one asking is a flutist) the polisher answers Ah! The flute is a little silver tube that you blow... the flutist says yes, it has the most beautiful sound in the world... the polisher answers, no, I don't like that one very much.

And wouldn't you like to play the violoncello! Another musician, who of course is a cellist, asks him, the intelligent boy who knows the instruments and answers him with a question: "Isn't that instrument one that looks like a guitar, you play it sitting down and put it between your legs... and you also pass it on a little ruler to make it sound?

The musician is not very convinced of the way the instrument and its playing technique are defined, but given the simplicity of the polisher and his erudite ignorance of musical instruments, he tells him

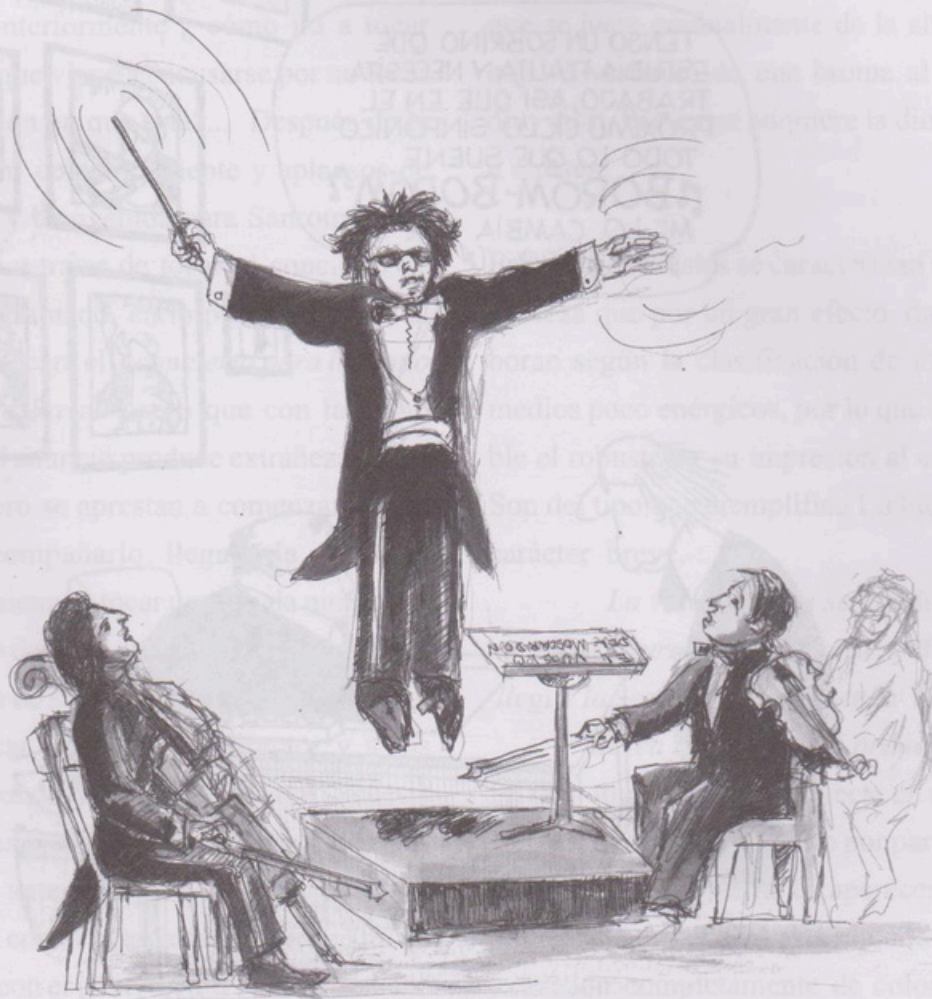
Yes... that's the one, says the musician, adding, that's the most beautiful one, that's why it means, violon from heaven!

The polisher replies, no, I don't like this one either!

So, then a horn player, a violinist, a trumpet player, an oboe player, etc., go around while the boy is still polishing, asking him what he would like to play. At the end, a little exasperated, the interlocutors tell him

Well, you... what fucking instrument do you like then! The polisher says: I like an instrument that is a stick and the one who has it stands on an elongated box (platform) and points to those who have the other instruments, and everyone listens to him (the orchestra conductor), that's what I'd like to play! The musician who has initiated the questions, says with a gesture of shooting him with a gun (in a joking manner) kill this (boy) while he is still small, lest he grow up (and become a conductor)

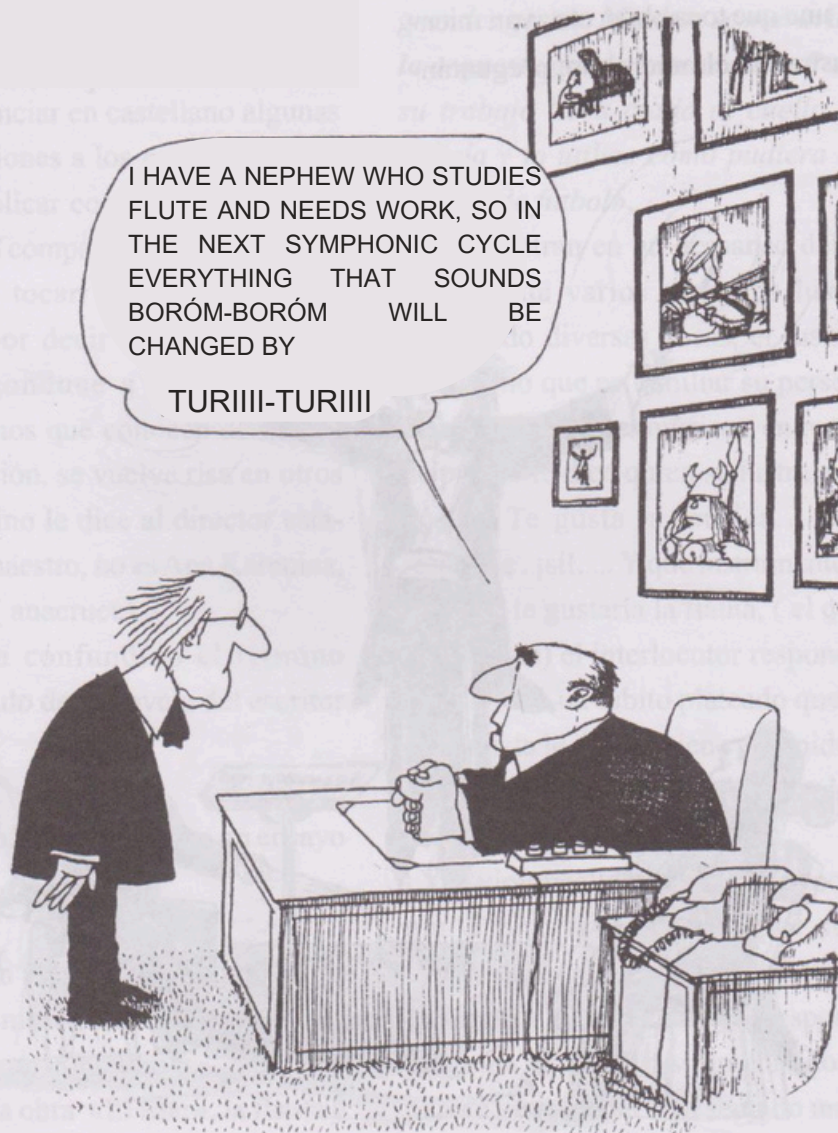
(collected during a break in the orchestra rehearsal - 1984)



The above joke is humorous to the orchestra musicians but carries a feeling of antipathy against the conductors. It is intended to see through it in the figure of the conductor, a wrong criterion of arrogance, an annoying superiority not only by the hierarchy of the position but of musical knowledge, another type of arrogance on the way he demands both of the interpretation of the works, as of the quality that he demands to the ensemble.

Such criteria eventually lead to considering the conductor as someone who is not equal to the other musicians, hence the feeling of antipathy in most of the members of an ensemble of this nature.

The attitude or behavior of looking for something comical has different effects, because the surprise comes before giving them a different reaction in each component of a symphonic conglomerate. Such an attitude can be taken as a joke at type II level, according to Freudian classification.



The eminent Spanish pianist José María Sanromá comes to Guatemala to play with the National Symphony Orchestra. Given the fame and universal recognition of this artist, emotions are crossed among the musicians who will play with this maestro.

Moments before the pianist's presentation, there is a silence of respect and uncommon seriousness. The maestro arrives with the orchestra conductor to introduce him, then everyone sees with surprise that he has three fingers of his left hand in a cast, and everyone wonders inwardly how he is going to play like that... or is he coming to excuse himself for not playing in the situation he is in? After the corresponding presentation and applause of admiration and welcome for Sanromá, he says that he will try to play the Mozart concerto programmed, if possible, and if he cannot, he will play the "concerto for the left hand by Ravel", only with the right hand. Such an announcement produces strangeness in the musicians, but they present themselves to begin with the task of accompanying him, when the soloist's part arrives, he begins to play a very sharp scale with the right hand as well as other measures that give an idea of his professionalism, suddenly, he stops playing, he addresses the conductor and the musicians, and tells them that it is very difficult for him to play like this (in a cast), everyone expects as he had previously warned that in reality he is going to play Ravel with the right hand, or that he is not going to continue with the rehearsal. But the master has another surprise, for with his right hand he tears off the plaster, puts it away, then sits down at the piano and plays Mozart.

The reaction of the musicians is diverse, some are surprised without understanding the attitude of the pianist, possibly because they consider him a master of great musical height it is difficult for them to consider him so joking, others smile because they have fallen into the deception of the broken fingers, others think that there are other situations of joke in the attitude, and in the words "I will play the concerto for the left hand" (of Ravel) "only with the right hand".

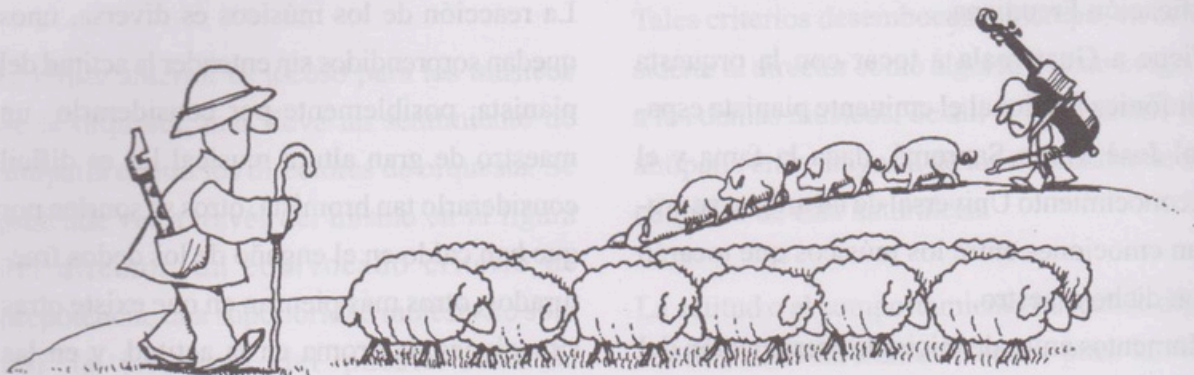
It can be considered a joke that provokes a reaction which depends on the analysis of the situation that is gradually made, which varies from a joke at the beginning, very subtle, until it acquires the dimension of a joke.

This type of jokes is characterized more by their subtlety than by a great effect, since they work according to Freud's classification, with little energetic means, so that it is explicable to strengthen their impression by exposing them. They are of the type exemplified by Lichtemberg of a brief nature:

Human life is divided into two epochs.

During the first one, the arrival of the second one is desired. And during the second, one wishes for the return of the first.

In a newscast that is projected in a movie theater, a commentary is made by the narrator, at the moment a picture appears on the screen, which is painted in all its extension completely black, the narrator says referring to the same burlesque tone... and do you know what this painting is called? It's called A black man in a dark tunnel at twelve o'clock at night!



This comment makes one hear from mocking laughter to derisive expressions, but these refer specifically to the painting and the author. Such a reaction is natural during those years (the 60's) because in those years, the public begins to know about the first works of modern art, which are a source of laughter and ridicule by those who are not familiar with such currents.

(personal experience)

The "oral" quick wit jokes consist in the immediate succession of aggression and defense < in turning the weapon against the attacker > or paying him with the same coin, that is⁴ in the constitution of an unexpected unity between attack and counterattack. Of this type we have this one from Lichtemberg:

<How are you doing? > asked the blind man to the paralytic, <as you see> Replied the paralytic to the blind man.

The same type heard in a pharmacy:

A lady of very humble condition comes in and says to the pharmacist <Do you have any remedy for rats? -referring to "poison". The pharmacist, who is known for his quick and witty answers, says: <Of course I do! What are the animals sick with?

The intention of the joke is in reference to the play on words "remedy and poison".

The great painter Van Dick, according to some biographies, is sent as ambassador of his country to another nation with the corresponding displeasure of other ambassadors who are annoyed by the fact that a painter, although of great renown, is acting as ambassador

⁴Freud idem

One day they find him painting, and mockingly call him one of them:

So, the ambassador is having fun playing as a painter. To which Van Dick replies, no, it is the painter who is having fun playing at being an ambassador!

An organist of a church in the capital city, before the beginning of a ceremony which he is going to liven up with other recognized master musicians, sees a young violinist arriving who is going to participate with them for the first time. The organist arrives and says: Good morning, Maestro. This one, who was obviously a half-amateur musician, feeling somewhat embarrassed in front of the other musicians who were far superior to him, because of the term used for him, answered him, looking at a crucifix on the altar. Maestro, the one nailed to the cross!

The other levels that the joke reaches in terms of its scope of irony, with a mixture of understatement, can be seen in the following example:

A lawyer who was also known as a professional pianist, but who was disliked by many musicians for various reasons, is quoted by someone in a conversation in which he candidly asks other musicians about the level of the artist, one of the musicians says, well, as a pianist he is a good lawyer! The counterpart is said by another person when he adds, but as a lawyer he is a good musician!

As is notorious, an addition appears in most of the jokes, which is sometimes an excuse and (or) conclusion of the joke.

Expressions of artistic *caló* that are considered jokes.

Two musicians are walking on a street on the sidewalk side where the strong midday sun is beating down after rehearsal, then one says to the other, let's change to **G minor** because this key is very strong (move to the shade, where the sun is minor, **key of G minor**).

A teacher is given an unfunded check, and says when he tells the story, "I was given a check with no phonograph".

A Guatemalan joke.

Between musicians commenting on a symphony by Gustav Malher, how do you like the Malher Symphony? to which the other replies Well, the truth is that I don't like that "soup" very much. (in Guatemala there is a brand called Malher, that makes soups)

During a rehearsal, a director, in his gestures while directing, gets so excited that at one point he gets out of control and falls off the stage, which fortunately was not very high.

However, the fall is quite spectacular and serious, as he suffers a severe blow to the head that causes bleeding and requires hospitalization. When he recovered, a few days later he went to a rehearsal of the orchestra, and a musician said when he saw him: "Guys, here comes **the lord of the fall!**"

The wit and the reason for the joke is not only the part that many consider comical of falling in a rehearsal for exaggerating the movements, but also the association of "**señor de la caída**" (lord of the fall), the name by which a Guatemalan colonial image is known that represents Jesus Christ in one of his falls on his way to Golgotha.

(occurred in Guatemala City during the rehearsal of an orchestral ensemble)

A joke whose origin is unknown, but which has become popular in a very wide radius in

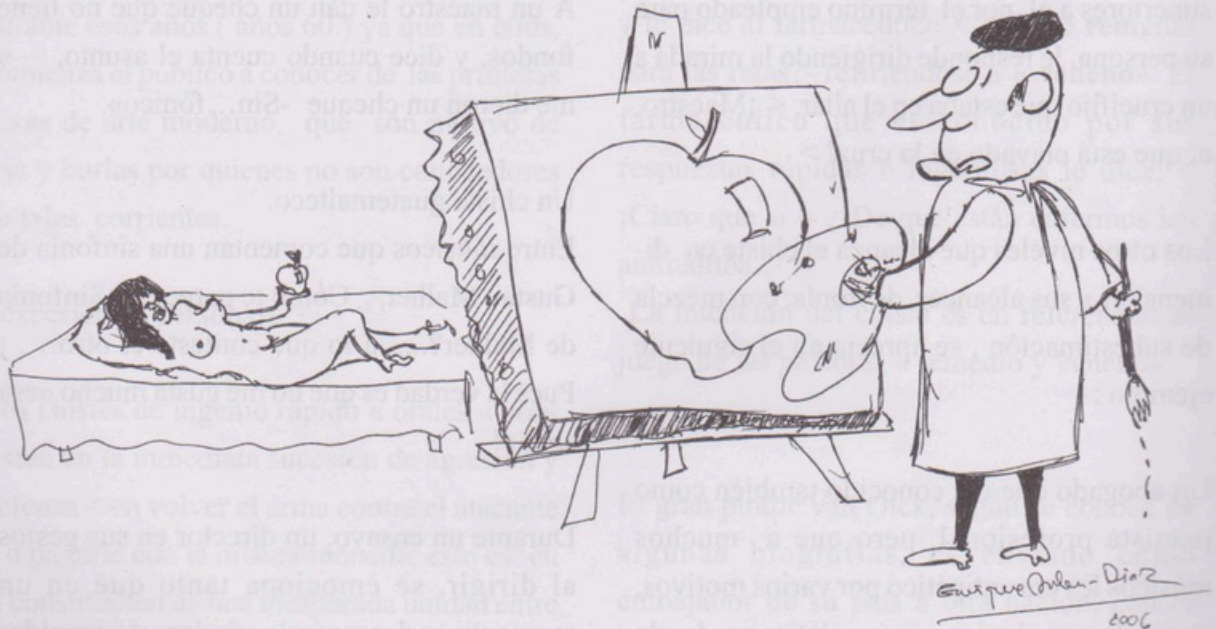
Europe and Latin America is the following, acquiring different ways of telling it but keeping the idea of the double meaning:

A husband and wife who are musicians in an orchestra are walking along, and upon seeing them, someone who knows them comments to a friend who accompanies him:

She plays **the violin**, and he plays **the viola**. (Ella toca el violín y él la viola, in Spanish the word "viola" can refer to when someone rapes another person.)

Of course he refers to the two instruments, the Violin and the Viola.

A pianist of great talent and sensitivity, which competes with her great beauty and slender figure, elicits the following comment between two music lovers after listening to her in a magnificent concert:



What a good pianist! to which the other replies, "And she plays the piano well too! Says the director to start the rehearsal "we'll play Peter and the Wolf". Among the orchestra a voice is heard saying in an annoying way, "Wolf will be your father, son of a thousand...!"

It was the protest of a musician who was nicknamed Lobo, something he did not like.

One painting depicts the jungle and a group of monkeys, to what the painting salesman says, is an **authentic Monet**.

From the art dictionary:

Muting the conversation = speaking more quietly

Papel Cantáble = paper for "singing".
(toilet paper).

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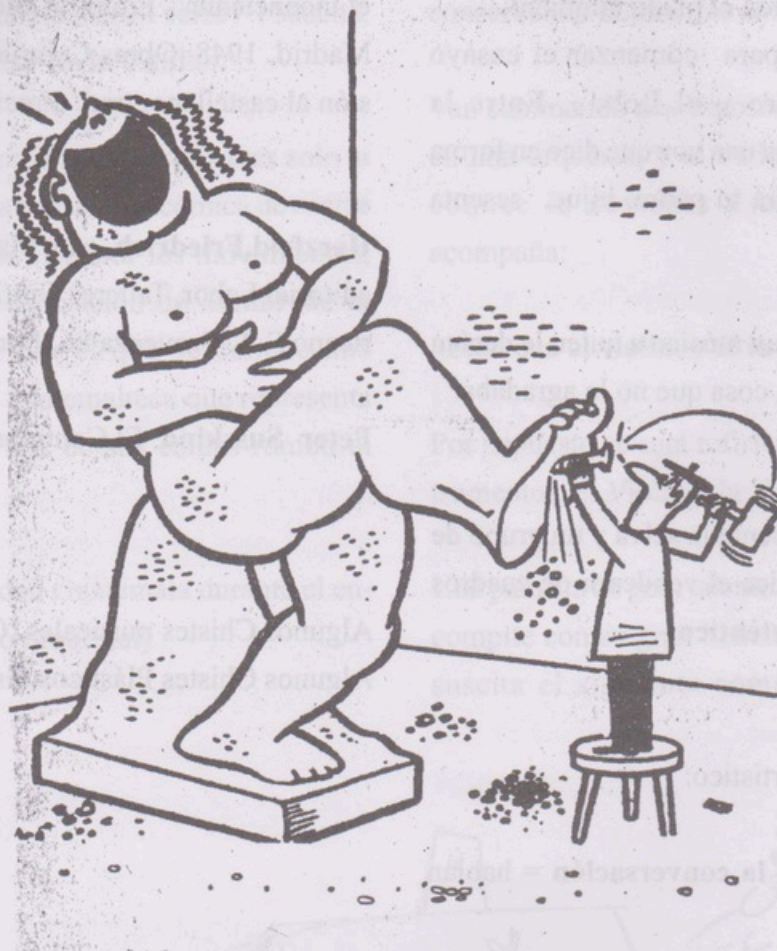
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Some musical jokes (graphics)

Some plastic jokes (graphics)





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