

The Influence of Folk Music in Guitar Compositions by Manuel Ponce

by

Arnoldo García Santos

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Graduate Supervisory Committee:

Frank Koonce, Chair
Rodney Rogers
Catalin Rotaru

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this project is to explore the influence of folk music in guitar compositions by Manuel Ponce from 1923 to 1932 that resulted in his being called the father of musical nationalism in México.

The project focuses on his *Tres canciones populares mexicanas* and on the two pieces he composed in Cuba for guitar, *Tropico* and *Rumba*. These works incorporate rhythmic and melodic influences of folklore and reflect the emotions of a people suffering and beaten down by revolution.

The Mexican revolution led to Ponce's exile to the neighboring island of Cuba in March 15 1915, where he would remain until more favorable circumstances allowed him to return to his homeland. While in Cuba, he composed *Tropico* and *Rumba*, pieces representing characteristic musical styles of the Cuban people. In these two pieces, Ponce was able to capture the daily life of a lively village through the use of representative rhythms.

Tres canciones populares mexicanas, *Tropico*, and *Rumba*, are analyzed and discussed in this paper to show Ponce's interest in using folk music and its incorporation into his compositions for guitar.

DEDICATION

This research paper is dedicated to my parents Raul Garcia Gonzalez and Lucrecia Santos Aldape, and to all my brothers, sisters, nieces, and nephews for all the love and support I have received from them.

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CHAPTER 1:

INTRODUCTION

[In pre-independence México, before 1810,] prosperity did not reach all social classes. The beneficiaries were the 100,000 whites who inhabited México, especially Spanish officials and aristocratic Creoles. The first group controlled the government and monitored the colony's trade; the latter were landowners and the owners of mining concessions and high-ranking military or ecclesiastical dignitaries. The remaining white, middle-class Creoles and lower clergy were the most educated members of the population, dissatisfied with their social and economic status and opposed to the Spanish presence. This sector welcomed the ideas of the French Revolution and led in the early stages of the struggle for independence by relying on the masses (Indians, mestizos, and mulattos) who formed the vast majority of the population.¹

Following the war, which had taken place in 1810, the panorama was one of reconstruction. The population had been hit by a war that removed Spanish dominion. This war left the people poor. However, the rich few, and those who worked for the government, could keep their status as long as their ideas were in line with presidential goals.

It is within this historical context that Doña María de Jesús Cuellar gave birth to Manuel Maria Ponce on December 8, 1882, in the city of Fresnillo, Zacatecas, México.² He was the son of Felipe de Jesus Ponce de León, a bookkeeper whose job was to keep

¹ *Salvat Enciclopedia*, (Barcelona, 1976), s.v., "México." Trans. Arnoldo García Santos.

² Corazón Otero, *Manuel M. Ponce y la Guitarra* (México City, Editorial FONAPAS, 1981), 17. Trans. Arnoldo García Santos.

the accounts of farms and businesses.³ In modern times we can compare this to the work done by an accountant. It was this activity that allowed Manuel's father and family to move to the city of Aguascalientes where the talent of the young Ponce began to develop.

It is worthwhile to note that during his childhood years in the city of Aguascalientes, Manuel had access to one of the most important traditional town fairs—the San Marcos fair, famous throughout the Mexican republic for its bullfights. Ponce heard musicians and singers who came to the fair to seek their fortune. This was his first contact with popular music and its characteristics, and would lead him years later to compose and arrange many such songs. In addition, the serenades that each week took place in the kiosks of main city gardens influenced Ponce's later production of popular songs.

Traders, bullfighters, artists and songwriters meet [...] every year in the San Marcos Fair in Aguascalientes. The bards and singers roaming from fair to fair are a wonderful source of the Mexican folk song.... San Marcos is rooted in the soul of Ponce when, as a child playing in its gardens and in his youth, he is planning the nationalist musical revolution. This is where Ponce meets a unique man who plays songs from different regions of the country. In his wandering lifestyle he accompanies himself with an old harp and sings with a loud voice and great style. He often hears Severiana Rodriguez, a well-known singer in those parts. She is a blind woman whom Ponce frequently asks to sing different songs that suggest interesting musical ideas to him.⁴

The talent of the young musician soon became evident, and it became clear to the family that his musical development would require more training in the art he loved. This led Ponce to think about leaving his adopted hometown and to go to the capitol. The

³ Emilio Díaz Cervantes and Dolly R. de Díaz, *Ponce Genio de México. Vida y Época (1882-1948)* (Durango, DGO, México, Ujed Editorial, September 2003), 21. Trans. Arnoldo García Santos.

⁴ Otero, *Manuel M. Ponce*, 19-20. Trans. Arnoldo García Santos.

advantage he had was that one of his brothers was interested in religious life and had become a priest there.

His brother's connections gave Manuel an introduction to the study of formal religious music, and this training developed important qualities in Ponce that later would have an influence on his compositions. In addition, the position of his brother made it easier for Ponce to develop relationships with people from these musical circles. "At the age of 10 he enters the choir of the church of San Diego, [Aguascalientes] where his brother Antonio officiates and is already a priest. Meanwhile, his progress in music is already evident."⁵ His progress was so fast that, soon, only three years later [1895], Ponce was appointed "organist of the Franciscan Church of San Diego."⁶

His work as a church musician led him to develop his musical abilities in a remarkable way. He prepared the music for masses and the church choirs that sang carols when the Christmas season arrived. Years later, Manuel declared how important his years as church organist were: "Improvisation on the organ developed in me the fantasy musical form and, as I conceived [compositions], helped me to easily put my ideas into musical notation more or less correctly."⁷

Eventually, Ponce decided to relocate to México City where his brother Antonio would put him in contact with "Vicente Mañas, the pianist from Madrid, who was a renowned piano teacher in the México of the early twentieth century and a friend of

⁵ Díaz Cervantes and de Díaz, *Ponce Genio de México*, 40. Trans. Arnoldo García Santos.

⁶ Ibid. Trans. Arnoldo García Santos.

⁷ Ibid. Trans. Arnoldo García Santos.

Ponce's brother.”⁸ In México City Manuel tried to enroll in the National Conservatory of Music. However, here he would have been required to start his musical education from the very beginning, and the young musician, confronted by this dilemma decided to return to the city of Aguascalientes where he taught in a local music academy from 1902 to 1903.

Back in Aguascalientes he was accustomed to meet with friends in the garden of San Marcos, where artists of the time began to define and to shape the ideas that would give an identity to the Mexican music of the period: “He is friend of Saturnino Herran and Ramón López Velarde ... and these three, the painter and the poet, like the young musician are inspired by the idea of creating a national art.”⁹

These three people helped to give shape and more weight to nationalist art in México; each one was a strong advocate of Mexican folklore in his respective artistic area: poetry, painting, and mural, and especially in music. It should be noted that Ponce was not necessarily the first to use popular music in his compositions. There had already been attempts to provide music with popular traits in compositions. An example of this had been “Ricardo Castro, who had been the true precursor 30 years before with his *Mexican Nationals Airs and Four Dances*.”¹⁰

The real problem was that during those years there was a desire for the upper class to evoke the lifestyle of the great European cities, so a popular art was not well accepted by the aristocracy. For this reason “Ponce was the first to visualize a Musical Nationalism as such, since prior to the revolution [of 1910] (when the popular Mexican *corridos* and songs were spread), there was no demand for vernacular music [each

⁸ Ricardo Miranda, *Manuel M. Ponce. Ensayo sobre su vida y obra* (México: Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes, 1998), 15. Trans. Arnoldo García Santos.

⁹ Ibid. Trans. Arnoldo García Santos.

¹⁰ Díaz Cervantes and de Díaz, *Ponce Genio de México*, 143. Trans. Arnoldo García Santos.

country's own].... To Ponce correspond the titles of Founder of Folkloric Research and of Nationalism Consciousness in the Field of Mexican Music.”¹¹

Ponce was aware that European composers based much of their music on the popular tunes of their countries and that this fact escaped the minds and inclinations of the aristocrats in México. They did not take into account that “great composers like Bach, Beethoven, Mozart, Liszt, Chopin, etc. used folk forms in their musical creations, all of them dressing those simple harmonic melodies with appropriate clothing, keeping the original melodic line born from the heart of the people itself; they created high musical forms to be interpreted in the concert halls of the world.”¹²

Ponce achieved his cherished goal of going to Europe in 1904. His interest in his own musical advancement was great. From the moment he reached Europe, his musical production included gavottes, mazurkas, dances, preludes, and even an opera called *Cira*, in two acts that are set before the arrival of Hernan Cortes to the new continent. In this opera, “Cira and Delio sing solos or duos accompanied with a choir of sopranos, altos and baritones.”¹³ Unfortunately, much of the music of this opera is lost.

In Italy, Ponce sought out a teacher, Marco Bossi, who, due to his many occupations, could not accept him as a student. Ricardo Miranda explains what teacher Bossi told Ponce:

God has given you the principal [elements] inspiration and intelligence ... You need to have a solid base and know the immutable laws of music that are in counterpoint, but then-certainly- [music] should be composed according to the

¹¹ Ibid., 144. Trans. Arnoldo García Santos.

¹² Ibid., 137. Trans. Arnoldo García Santos.

¹³ Ibid., 64. Trans. Arnoldo García Santos.

requirements of the time. In 1905 you should write 1905 music ... or [even music of] 1920, but never music of 1830.... My occupations prevent me from accepting you as a student, but I will recommend you to Dall 'Ollio who was also a teacher of Puccini as well; in this way you will have, though distant, an illustrious classmate.¹⁴

Ponce then studied with Cesare Dall' Ollio who taught him about fugues and counterpoint. His experiences in Europe enabled the young composer to progress and, as a result, many of his compositions contained new instrumentation and structures, "mostly with string instruments: violin, viola, cello and forays into the sonata and Lied forms."¹⁵

Ponce went to Germany, where he joined the class of the eminent teacher Martin Krauze, who played an important role in his development as a concert pianist. Through this contact, he was able to develop his full potential as a soloist and to dominate the piano, the composer's principal instrument. Miranda, in *Manuel M. Ponce, Ensayo sobre su vida y obra*, comments:

The influence of Martin Krauze produced definitive results, as it was during those months of hard discipline that Ponce forged the necessary tools to dominate the instrument. The deep knowledge of the piano which he then acquired, would be important, not only for his career as the soloist and virtuoso he would become in later years, but also because of the legacy of Liszt that would be inevitably reflected in much of his work for piano, particularly in the rhapsodies, in Evocations, the Concerto and in other works where romantic virtuosity results from a flawless script of that instrument.¹⁶

Manuel María Ponce returned to his native country in 1908, where many significant events were to mark his life. He was hired as piano teacher at the National

¹⁴ Miranda, *Manuel M. Ponce*, 20. Trans. Arnoldo García Santos.

¹⁵ Díaz Cervantes and de Díaz, *Ponce Genio de México*, 83. Trans. Arnoldo García Santos.

¹⁶ Miranda, *Manuel M. Ponce*, 21-22. Trans. Arnoldo García Santos.

Conservatory.¹⁷ He was already working with larger musical forms and composed his *Concerto for Piano and Orchestra* ... and his *Dialogue of Love* for piano [both in 1911]. According to Otero: “He goes to Aguascalientes by train [in 1912...], sees the starry night, and this inspires him to compose his song *Estrellita* [the most famous of his songs].”¹⁸ He marries his fiancée Clementina Maurel who “always ensures that the teacher can compose quietly; she seeks to avoid any noise.”¹⁹

The circumstances prevailing during 1915 in the country were lack of money, food, and water, services of any kind, political instability and the prosecution of some artists. Ponce saw the need to go into exile in the neighboring Caribbean island of Cuba, where he, along with two of his artist friends, was well received.

In 1923, in México City, Ponce met the eminent Spanish guitarist Andrés Segovia,²⁰ with whom he maintained a vigorous communication. Segovia requested that Ponce write music for the guitar; music that later would become part of the global repertoire for the guitar.

Ponce moved to France in 1925 and, there, he became a disciple of Paul Dukas who was “giving a composition course at the Ecole Normale de Musique.”²¹ Young and talented musicians from other countries were also studying there. Some would play an

¹⁷ Otero, *Manuel M. Ponce*, 24. Trans. Arnoldo García Santos.

¹⁸ Ibid. Trans. Arnoldo García Santos.

¹⁹ Ibid., 29. Trans. Arnoldo García Santos.

²⁰ Ibid., 31. Trans. Arnoldo García Santos.

²¹ Miranda, *Manuel M. Ponce*, 57. Trans. Arnoldo García Santos.

important role in creating nationalist music in their respective homelands. These included Joaquin Rodrigo and Heitor Villa-Lobos.

Ponce's body of work continued to grow, and he stood as the most important promoter of Mexican popular music through his works at that time. His music was played in large concert halls in México and in other parts of the world. By the year 1948, "the health of Ponce was increasingly failing but this did not diminish his creative talent. [That year] as an act of justice, the National Institute of Fine Arts proclaimed him as the winner of the National Prize of Arts and Sciences 1947. It was the first time a musician had received this award."²²

Now, his health was precarious and his impairment was evident. Ponce hardly left his house or could even walk. After winning this award, he gave an interview to the newspaper *El Universal* on December 10, 1947, in which he declared:

I did not even know I was a candidate because I no longer leave this house. I can barely walk supported on crutches to go into the other room. I spend the day here, sitting, working, and sometimes I cannot sleep all night ... I have some work started and another already close to completion. Now I am working at the same time on my second Concerto for piano and orchestra that I have offered to Pablo Castellanos and in a Quartet for guitar, violin, viola and cello which Segovia is proposing to premiere in the United States.²³

Ponce died on April 24, 1948, at his home on the street Acordada in the south of México City.²⁴

²² Otero, *Manuel M. Ponce*, 141. Trans. Arnoldo García Santos.

²³ Miranda, *Manuel M. Ponce*, 90. Trans. Arnoldo García Santos.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 91 Trans. Arnoldo García Santos.

CHAPTER 2:

THE GUITAR IN PONCE'S LIFE

From childhood, Ponce had access to musical training. At home, he and his brothers and sisters learned to read music and to play a musical instrument. Ponce's skill at the piano meant that he could perform and learn from the music of all the important composers. His eventual contact with a popular instrument, the guitar, created a turning point in his life as a composer. It was Ponce's relationship with the eminent concert guitarist Andrés Segovia that led him to explore this area of composition, and that gave his music an international status. Most importantly, Ponce's remarkable talent for composition, and Segovia's fame as a performer, meant that Ponce's music was to be heard in many important international settings.

During Ponce's time in the music academy of Vicente Mañas in México City in the year 1900, he had the opportunity to accompany many performers at the piano. "He [met] different people linked to the musical and intellectual life of the city: singers, poets, painters and writers; gifted pianists, and violinists and guitarists whom he accompanied at the piano and with whom he began many wonderful friendships."²⁵

Popular music in those years was enjoyed mostly by the lower classes. It was the music of the people. If they wished, aristocrats had the means to buy a piano for a family member who wanted to learn music. This was not so for the poor; they could only buy less expensive musical instruments. "The common people had adopted the guitar, violin, harp and double bass (*tololoche*) as their musical instruments; with the guitar they

²⁵Díaz Cervantes and de Díaz, *Ponce Genio de México*, 53. Trans. Arnoldo García Santos.

accompanied their songs. The violin led the melody, with the harp and *tololoche* providing the rhythm forming fandangos of mestizo²⁶ origin, showing undeniable Spanish influence ... “They produced *sones* from the land of their birth. These were hybrid-type melodies where people sing and dance together....”²⁷

Ponce’s friendship with the musician Miguel Lerdo de Tejada put Ponce into direct contact with the indigenous music of México. Lerdo de Tejada conducted “orchestras which include rare instruments such as seven-string guitars, *salterios*, harps, mandolins, accordions and the huge *guitarrones* that were the ancestors of those later to be used by mariachis, [instruments] not yet known [at that time]. Undoubtedly Lerdo de Tejada was the direct predecessor of the mariachi. [His orchestra members] wore the *charro* suit [and carried] an enormous pistol in their waistband.”²⁸

Hence, Ponce was not a stranger to the guitar and its performers. Furthermore, in Cuba, he had the opportunity to meet the guitarist Sindo Garay. Ponce notes the brilliant ability that Sindo has as a musician and poet, thinking rightly that he could be the promoter of nationalism in his country. After listening to Garay perform, Ponce describes the guitar for first time and how Garay took it in his hands:

He voluptuously caresses his guitar as if it were the body of a beloved woman and runs his hand lovingly over the roundness [of the] instrument... Sindo disdains the purely Cuban music: danzon, guaracha, clave, and guajira; he cultivates only the bolero. In my own judgment he should apply his admirable qualities to the Creole melody, using the very different rhythms that his prodigious land offers him and that he knows so well. [In this way] he would

²⁶ This is a term meaning a person of combined European and Native American descent.

²⁷ Díaz Cervantes and de Díaz, *Ponce Genio de México*, 54-55. Trans. Arnoldo García Santos.

²⁸ Ibid., 107-108. Trans. Arnoldo García Santos.

promote Musical Nationalism in his country and therefore would do laudable work.²⁹

But it was his relationship with Segovia that was undoubtedly the most important in terms of his connection with the guitar. After all, it was because of Segovia, that the guitar now had a very important place in music; not only as an accompanying instrument, but as a solo instrument with orchestras and other ensembles.

Ponce met Segovia in 1923 while the guitarist was touring in México. Ponce wrote about the beauty of the concert that Segovia gave and also commented that the guitar repertoire in those days was not very vast:

To hear the notes played on the guitar by Andrés Segovia is to experience a sense of intimacy and homely comfort... His musical culture [allows him] to translate the composers thinking faithfully to the instrument and, in this way, he enriches the not very rich repertoire of guitar music day by day.³⁰

The talent of Ponce led him to compose for other musical instruments besides the piano. The guitar was no exception. Writing for the guitar was not easy for him; however, he still managed to create beautiful melodies that he harmonized in an excellent manner. Certainly, Segovia, knowing the instrument perfectly, helped Ponce to modify technical and musical aspects of the works that Ponce sent to him. The collaboration Ponce was to have with Segovia gave him the opportunity to widen his compositional range to include music for the guitar, which was to become very important in the repertoire of that

²⁹ Ibid., 241-242. Trans. Arnoldo García Santos.

³⁰ Otero, *Manuel M. Ponce*, 31. Trans. Arnoldo García Santos.

instrument and which is performed today in the largest and most important concert halls of the world.

It was Segovia who must have inspired the composer to study the guitar. Segovia gave a practice guitar to Ponce for this purpose. In the fourth of a collection of letters compiled and published by Miguel Alcázar, entitled *The Segovia-Ponce Letters*, Segovia asks Ponce if the instrument has helped him in his purposes and if he has taken the time to sit down and practice. We read at the end: “And the guitar, has it served any purpose for you? Have you studied?”³¹

The eminent guitarist and composer Julio Cesar Oliva, who knew “the priest Antonio Brambila, friend and confessor of [Manuel M. Ponce],”³² is of the opinion that that guitar given to Ponce was most likely a Pimentel. Instruments built by Juan Pimentel Ramirez, México’s largest guitar builder (along with those of José Ramirez in Spain) were the best guitars available at that time in México.³³ Although speculative, Oliva’s opinion is given credence by the fact that Segovia, as the most famous guitarist in those years, was frequently given instruments by luthiers for promotional purposes. Also, because of the difficulties of touring, Segovia is unlikely to have carried an extra instrument from Spain only to give it to Ponce. In an interview of Segovia, the author, James Sherry, notes: “I asked why didn’t he travel with two guitars. He said that when his

³¹ Miguel Alcázar, *The Segovia-Ponce Letters* (Columbus, OH, Editions Orphee, 1989), 7.

³² Otero, *Manuel M. Ponce*, 143. Trans. Arnoldo García Santos.

³³ Shared in personal conversation with the author.

wife joins him he has too much luggage. He could receive a guitar by air freight within four to five hours so why have the extra burden.”³⁴

The works that Ponce wrote for guitar are listed in a musical compilation of Ponce’s work by Alcázar. This book includes commentaries on the pieces and aspects of the compositions relating to the form and technicalities of musical features, as well as historical facts related to the musical requests that Segovia asked of Ponce. Alcázar’s book contains the complete collection of Ponce’s 22 works for the guitar. These are:

Sonata I
Five Mexican songs
Prelude
Theme Varie, et Finale
Sonata II
Sonata III
Sonata IV
Sonata V
Suite I
24 Preludes
Studio
Sonata VI
Sonatina
Prelude, Ballet, Courante
Prelude, Theme, Variations and Fugue
Suite II
Finale, from the homage to Tarrega
Four Pieces
Concierto del sur
Vignettes
6 Easy Preludes
*Variations*³⁵

³⁴ James Sherry, “With Andres Segovia-The Third Interview 1966” *Guitarra Magazine*, November - December 1967, http://guitarsofspain.com/Guitar_magazine/1967-29_color/img04.jpg (accessed January 7, 2014).

³⁵ Miguel Alcázar, *Obra Completa*, 7.

In relation to aspects of folklore in Mexican music and its influence found in the guitar pieces written by Ponce, *Sonata I* (sub-titled “Mexicana”) has two musical themes based on Mexican popular music. In the first movement the theme has similar characteristics to a song from the central, *Bajío*, states of México called “*Salve niño hermoso* (Greetings, Beautiful Child).”³⁶

Figure 1 shows the Christmas chant, a popular tradition in the state of Guanajuato.³⁷ Measures 1 and 2 have the rhythmical figure used by Ponce throughout the first movement of the sonata.



Figure 1

The lyrics are:

*Salve, niño hermoso,
Salve, luz del cielo
Del hombre consuelo
Del Padre estupor.*

Hail, beautiful child
Hail, light of heaven
Man's consolation
God's stupor

The third movement also “evokes a well-known popular tune, *Vamos a tomar atole* (Let us Drink Atole),³⁸ from the *Jarabe Tapatio*.³⁹

³⁶Ibid., 18. Trans. Arnoldo García Santos.

³⁷ Vicente T. Mendoza, *Panorama de la Música tradicional de México* (México City, UNAM, 1984).

³⁸ This is a type of Mexican porridge.



Figure 2⁴⁰

Alcázar calls this segment *Vamos a tomar atole*, shown in Figure 3.



Figure 3

Figure 4 shows the original as written by Ponce, probably copied by Segovia.

This is from a segment of a copy of the manuscript now in the Acervo Musical Manuel M. Ponce, at the Universidad Nacional Autonoma de México, in México City.⁴¹



Figure 4

The Mexican Songs that represent Mexican folklore, and which were composed or arranged for guitar by Ponce are *La Valentina*, *Estrellita* (Little Star), *Cuiden su vida*

³⁹ Mendoza, *Panorama de la Música*, 20.

⁴⁰ Vicente T. Mendoza, *La Cancion Mexicana*, 78.

⁴¹ Maestro Paolo Mello sent the present writer copies of some of the manuscripts and a list showing where they were written. Some probably were transcribed by Segovia, others by an unknown person.

(Watch Out for Your Life), *La Pajarera* (The Bird Seller), and *Por tí mi Corazón* (For You, My Heart).⁴²

⁴² Alcázar, *Obra Completa*, 34. Trans. Arnoldo García Santos.

CHAPTER 3

TRES CANCIONES POPULARES MEXICANAS

Ponce's music for guitar that contains elements identified with folklore certainly has its basis in Mexican folk songs. Ponce arranged or composed these pieces, and Andrés Segovia helped make them even more popular throughout the world because of his performances and the publicity given to his concerts. But why would a classically trained composer like Ponce dedicate himself to this type of music? What motivated him to elevate popular music beyond the folk traditions?

In an article written by Ponce in *Revista Musical de México*, entitled “*El Folklore Musical Mexicano, lo que se ha hecho. Lo que puede hacerse*” [Mexican Musical Folklore. What has been done? What can be done?],⁴³ he expressed concern and details of certain facts that were critical to the popular song as an expression of Mexican folklore, and how it contributed to the consolidation of musical nationalism in México:

A question of fundamental importance is presented to those who care about the future of our musical folklore: Are there in our songs raw material, the indispensable element to form a truly national music? Do these elements print a distinctive character to our music?⁴⁴

In the same article, Ponce lists a number of circumstances that present a strong case for the finding of a national identity. He notes that, in the field of Mexican folk music, we can identify the following as achievements:

First: based on the use of popular songs in the art, there had been an evolution in our rickety musical life.

⁴³ Manuel M. Ponce, “El Folklore Musical Mexicano,” *Revista Musical de México* (1919): 5-9.
Trans. Arnoldo García Santos.

⁴⁴ Ibid. Trans. Arnoldo García Santos.

Second: many popular tunes (especially songs) have been saved from sure oblivion.

Third: young musicians are now more interested in a genre of composition that ten years ago had not been exploited.

Fourth: the public has already accepted the Mexican song as a profound expression of the popular soul.

Fifth: foreign artists of an undeniable importance have played our songs and found them worthy of inclusion in their musical programs.⁴⁵

Ponce then responds categorically to the questions posed:

We can, therefore, answer the questions posed above, stating that in the vernacular songs there exists, latent, the essential elements to constitute a national music ... First, we must consider how to give shape to the melody of the people ... [initially] a simple harmonization of a folk melody in order to make it more accessible to amateurs. Now, if we want to prevent the fossilization of the songs of the people, we must begin the work of true ennoblement, a work of artistic stylization that elevates [the tune] to the level of a masterpiece.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Ibid. Trans. Arnoldo García Santos.

⁴⁶ Ibid. Trans. Arnoldo García Santos.

CHAPTER 4

LA VALENTINA

Ponce harmonized and arranged this song for guitar that later was delivered to Andrés Segovia to be performed in his concerts.

Who was the Valentina?

During the time of the Mexican Revolution, which began in 1910, many of the participants were armed citizens of cities and small towns. They were recruited by the revolutionary forces that went from city to city. There were people who joined the armed struggle in their eagerness to collaborate on constitutional reform that was intended to favor the poorest.

Many women felt the need to join the revolutionary movement; however, they were not allowed to do so. If women wished to join an armed group, they had to serve as cooks, messengers, or as “company” for the men. This was not the case of Valentina Ramirez Avitia (later known as “La Valentina”) who, in her own words during an interview with journalist Leopoldo Avilés in 1969, said:

When Francisco I. Madero stood against the dictator Porfirio Diaz, I was young and lived with my father. He immediately informed the family of his desire to fight for the freedom of our countrymen, and I told him I would go with him, but he died shortly afterwards. In November 1910, I joined the group of General Iturbe, but I dressed as a man and went under the name of Juan Ramirez. So Juan Ramirez fought until June 22, 1911, and was among the group that took the Culiacan Square, the last [stronghold] of the movement, overthrowing Governor Diego Redo, General Higinio Aguilar, and Colonel Luis G. Morelos on that glorious date.”⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Benjamín Luna Lujano, “Valentina Ramírez: ‘La Leona de Norotal,’ ” *Periodico Noroeste de Culiacan* (November 6, 2010), “Mil historias que contar,” <http://noroeste.com.mx/publicaciones.php?id=633755> (accessed February 3, 2014). Trans. Arnoldo García Santos.

In order to join the revolution and become a lieutenant, Valentina had to learn the ways of behaving like a man. From her brothers, she learned everything from how to talk to how to ride horses. However, not much time was needed by her superiors to realize that Juan Ramirez was actually female. She explained:

When I was giving water to my horse near the island of Oraba, [my horse] threw my hat off, and a revolutionary who was next to me discovered my long braids. He took me to the general who, after interrogation, thought I was a spy for the enemy. When he discovered that I was a woman, he was surprised and immediately congratulated me, but I was cut off because he, like General Villa, would not admit women to their ranks. Thereafter, all smell of gunpowder was completed finished for me.⁴⁸

One of the first accounts of *La Valentina* as a song is provided by Mendoza, where there is a side note on the score mentioning that Mendoza first heard the song as it was sung by the troops of General Venustiano Carranza:

I heard it sung for first time in the street of Cinco de Mayo by the troops of Carranza, recently occupied the capital by the Constitutionalist army in August 1914. And [it was] also played by the Military Bands of different corporations.⁴⁹

Valentina Ramirez died in 1979, in the city of Culiacan, Sinaloa on April 4.⁵⁰ She died in squalor, without the deserved recognition for her exemplary role in the history of México.

⁴⁸ Ibid. Trans. Arnoldo García Santos.

⁴⁹ Mendoza, *La Canción Mexicana*, 299. Trans. Arnoldo García Santos.

⁵⁰ Luna Lujano (accessed February 3, 2014).



Figure 5: Valentina Ramirez Avitia, from the article “La Leona de Norotal.”⁵¹

According to researcher Benjamin Luna, however, the woman who inspired the song was not Valentina Ramirez Avitia. Instead, it was her cousin who had the same given names, but a different surname name, Valentina Ramirez Soto, “born in Potrero, a small town of three houses on the banks of river Tamazula ten miles away from San Antonio Norotal.”⁵² We know the composer only by the name “Miguel,” who left the town in deep sorrow after Valentina went with another man.

Some scholars, like federal deputy Adriana Fuentes Cortes,⁵³ still claim that Ramirez Avitia was the woman for whom the song was written, although Ramirez Avitia denied it. However, there is no doubt that women had the strength to defend their beliefs.

There are three Mexican films that have the name of La Valentina. The oldest is a production by Gonzalo Varela, in which the so-called “Mexican Tenor” Jorge Negrete is an actor together with Raul de Anda, and with Esperanza Baur in the role of Valentina. The film, in black and white, is a love story that takes place during the time of the

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid. (accessed March 18, 2014). Trans. Arnoldo García Santos.

⁵³ Ibid.

revolution. The music is according to the time, but the film does not necessarily describe Valentina Ramirez as the warrior she really was.⁵⁴

The second film called *La Valentina*, with actress Maria Felix, and comedian Eduardo Gonzales “Piporro,” was filmed by Rogelio González in a somewhat droll style in 1966. In this adaptation, the strong and brave character portrayed by María Félix may show some of the characteristics of the real Valentina.⁵⁵

The third film, more connected to the real revolutionary fervor, is called *Pancho Villa y la Valentina*. It is by Ismael Rodríguez, with Pedro Armendaris as Pancho Villa and Elsa Aguirre as Valentina. Some fictional accounts about Villa are portrayed in this film. It ends with Valentina marrying the revolutionary leader, and at the end of the film she dies. Although this film shows more affinity to the time of the revolution, it nonetheless represents Valentina as feminine, without her being dressed in men’s clothes, and it misrepresents the fact that it was General Iturbe, not Villa, who removed her from the rank of lieutenant upon learning her gender.⁵⁶

The original song shows how Ponce closely maintained the melody and rhythm of the original. The music shown in Figure 6 is based on *La Cancion Mexicana* by

⁵⁴ “La Valentina, Peliculas Mexicanas Completas.”
http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_detailpage&v=BFhjesCjnHA
(accessed February 17, 2014).

⁵⁵ “El Piporro y María Félix, La Valentina”,
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8mSfJfyK4GU&feature=player_detailpage
(accessed February 17, 2014).

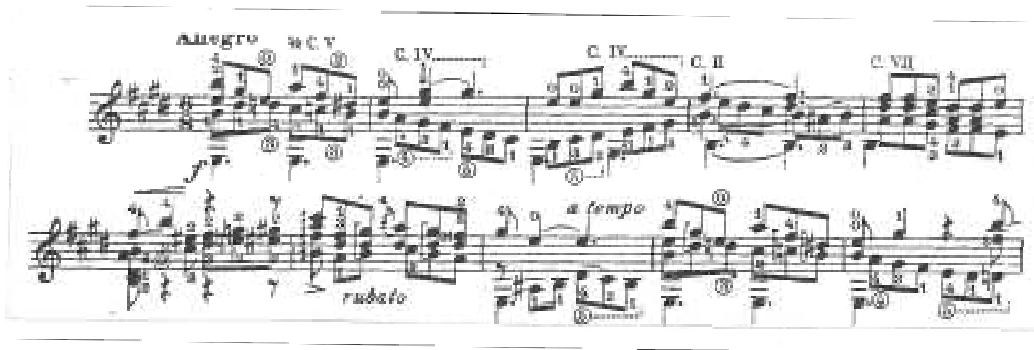
⁵⁶ “Pancho Villa y La Valentina.”
http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_detailpage&v=d_NzUVUFGIc
(accessed February 17, 2014).

Mendoza.⁵⁷ Mendoza catalogues the song as revolutionary as well as romantic and sentimental.⁵⁸



Figure 6

In Figure 7, the Schott edition of the music, transcribed by Segovia, shows the work made by Ponce using the musical traits described above.⁵⁹



⁵⁷ Mendoza, *La Canción Mexicana*, 531.

⁵⁸ Mendoza, *Panorama de la Música tradicional*, 108.

⁵⁹ Manuel M. Ponce, *Tres canciones populares mexicanas* (Schott Music, 1928).

Figure 7

Harmonic Analysis

The present analysis of the piece *La Valentina* is based on the Schott Edition, transcribed by Andrés Segovia for the guitar.⁶⁰ The piece starts in the key of E Major, in 6/8 meter. The introduction of a dominant chord in measure 5 leads to chords in measure 6 that suggest a tonicization to C# minor for the borrowed chord of that key, at the last eighth note of the first beat of 6/8 of that measure. However, the chromatic movement of the music in measure 6 is leading again to the key of E Major in measures 7 and in 8 where the tonic is reasserted. A V/V at the second eighth note of first beat of measure 8, suggests a tonicization to B Major, but this key never follows. Measures 9 and 10 repeat the same harmonic structure that is present at the beginning of the piece, at measures 1 and 2.

In measure 10, the last chord is a secondary dominant, V7/IV, and this suggests the key of A Major. Measure 11 is interesting because there are secondary dominants that shape the piece: The first chord is V/ii. The second beat starts with vii°7/ii, and the last beat is V7/ii. The *e#* suggests a tonicization to F# minor in measure 12, and in measure 13 a tonicization to the key of A minor instead of the expected A Major. Measures 14 to 16 are emphasizing and giving harmonic weight to the piece in the key of E Major. Chords in measure 14 moving from I6 to IV, or I to V in measure 15. Measure 16 is moving to the tonic a secondary dominant gives the chance for the piece to start over again. Measures 17 to 32 are a repetition of measures 1 to 16.

⁶⁰ Ponce, *3 canciones*.

Measures 33 to 36 also are a repetition of measures 5 to 8. At measure 37, however, different harmonic material is presented. Measure 38 rests on a vii°6 chord, and measure 39 is moving after the first eighth note from the V chord (second eighth note of the first beat of 6/8) to I6/4 (last eighth note of the same beat). The second part of measure 39 has V7, I6/4, and VI/V chords. From measures 41 through 47, the harmonic motion is the same as in measures 9 to 15. The piece finishes on the tonic chord.

Melodic And Motivic Structure

Since *La Valentina* is based on a folk song, an understanding of the lyrics is necessary to better understand the melody of the piece. The lyrics, shown for the first verse in the book by Mendoza, read:

<i>Una pasión me domina</i>	There is one passion that dominates me
<i>Y es la que me hizo venir</i>	And it is that which has made me come
<i>Valentina, Valentina</i>	Valentina, Valentina
<i>Yo te quisiera decir.</i> ⁶¹	I would like to tell you.

Given the first verse of the song, the melody of the piece is in the soprano voice from notes b, g, e, and a, f, and d# in the first measure, in a descending motion each time. In measure 2, the note e jumps an interval of a third to g, which lasts through the measure. Dividing into syllables, the words *una pasión me domina, y es la que me hizo venir*, the melodic motion is: *U-na pa-si-on me do-mi-na, y es la que me hi-zo ve-nir*, in relation to the six eighth notes of the 6/8 meter. Phrase a, which I divide into two semi-phases, encompasses measures 1 to 4. The first semi-phrase starts in measure 1 and

⁶¹ Mendoza, *La Canción Mexicana*, 298-299.

finishes in measure 2 on g in the soprano voice. The second semi-phrase begins in measure 3 and ends in measure 4.



Figure 8

Figure 8 above, presents phrase 'a' and the division into two semi-phrases, 1 and 2. The rhythm of the text matches the soprano voice. Phrase 'b' starts in measure 5 and ends in measure 8. The name Valentina occurs twice in measure 5, in syllables as follows: *Va-len-ti-na, Va-len-ti-na*, to create the third phrase. Phrase 4 is intended to match the words *Yo te qui si e ra de cir*, also divided into syllables.



Figure 9

This example has phrase 'b' from measures 5 to 8. This is divided, like phrase 'a', into two semi-phrases, 3 and 4. Semi-phrase 3 forms measures 5 to 6. Semi-phrase 4, forms measures 7 and 8.

Measure 6 has an interesting motion in the melody. The soprano voice jumps a perfect fourth interval, different than in measure 1, which is a third. This characteristic jump is present in some other parts of the piece, such as in measures 10, 11, and 14. These last two measures include a “glissandi” indication in the fingering that gives the piece the sensation of a breath on a long note. Also, the chromatic ascending motion of thirds, common in the *corridos*; type of romantic song narrative in character and with stanzas with four, six or eight octosyllabic,⁶² gives the piece the feeling of a revolutionary song.

1. Ascendent Gliss. 2. Chromatism 3. Third Interval 4. Asc. Gliss. 5. Asc. Gliss.



Figure 10

New material is introduced in measure 10 through measure 16. The *appoggiatura* moving from *b* to *d#* in measure 14 is repeated later in measures 30 and 46. In the last three measures, the lyrics take a different dimension: *Mañana que me maten de una vez*. Figure 11 shows measures 14-16 with text.

⁶² Otto Mayer-Sierra, *Música y Músicos de Latinoamérica* (México City, Editorial Atlante 1947), s.v., “Corrido.”



Figure 11

The same melodic and rhythm structure applies to the measures 17 to 32, a direct repetition of measures 1 to 16. Measures 33 to 36 are the same as measures 5 to 8. Approaching to the end of the piece, measures 41 to 47 are the same as measures 9 to 15. The piece ends on an E-Major tonic chord in measure 48.

CHAPTER 5

LA PAJARERA

La Pajarera is a very good example of a Mexican song. This, according to the categorization given by Mendoza in *La Canción Mexicana*, is a merchant song.⁶³ It depicts a woman named Rosita, who traps birds to sell on the streets.

One interesting feature of this piece is the mixture of tempos, 3/4 and 6/8, which gives the piece its characteristic rhythm. Written in 6/8, the 3/4 pattern of three beats occurs in measures 8, 14, 16, 20, 23, and 25. In reference to this song Mendoza says: “It also has an important feature that is in Guajira rhythm.”⁶⁴ Ponce kept the original source of the melody while also maintaining the rhythm to arrange this piece. The song *La Pajarera*, as heard by Mendoza, includes a note at the bottom of the score, for which he writes: “Music from the oral tradition in México [of the] 1920s. The text appears in *The Mexican Mockingbird*, 4th edition. San Antonio, Texas, 1925.”⁶⁵

A film called *La Pajarera* by Emilio Gomez Muriel, from 1945,⁶⁶ depicts the life of Rosa, a woman who sells birds to make money to survive. It is a love story, and is based on the song. There is no information on whether or not Rosita (*La Pajarera*) was a real person or if the idea of the song was used as the idea on which to base the movie.

⁶³ Mendoza, *La Canción Mexicana*, 85.

⁶⁴ Ibid. Trans. Arnoldo García Santos.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 531. Trans. Arnoldo García Santos.

⁶⁶ Emilio Gómez Muriel, *La Pajarera*, *Colección México en Pantalla*, DVD, Televisa 2005.

Harmonic Structure

The following analysis of *La Pajarera* is based on the original version of the *Three Mexican Songs* as arranged by Ponce.

The piece starts in E Major and is in the meter of 6/8. After a brief introduction of two measures of the tonic, a vi6 chord is distinguished between the first and second intervals of the scale in both measures. The harmony establishes a cadential point in measure 4, where the tonic is heard more clearly. Measure 5 briefly touches the key of B Major. This is tonicized from the leading tone of B Major, A#, which is present in the first two chords. Here, the use of secondary dominants points to the home key, E Major, but a modulation never follows, and instead of the dominant chord of B Major, there is an F#-minor chord in measure 6, the subdominant of E Major.

Secondary dominants of V/iii and V7/ii lead to a minor-ii chord of E Major in measure 8. Measure 9 fluctuates in the dominant of E Major to finish the first section of the piece at the tonic in measure 10. Between measures 10 to 18, the musical content heard at the beginning in measures 2 to 9 is repeated in full.

Measure 19 continues in the key of E Major. The first beat of this measure includes a vi chord followed by vii6, ii, and vii°7/ii on the last beats of the measure. These chords suggest a movement to the key of F# minor; however, this is just momentary, and the modulation is not fulfilled. This measure also introduces new material that encompasses different harmonies in the following measures. Measure 20 has a ii chord on the first beat, followed by a V chord. Measure 21 has a vii°6/5 chord that leads towards the tonic. Measures 22 and 23 restate the same event that had happened in

measures 5 and 6, with the suggestion of B Major. Measure 24 is identical measure 7. Measure 25 is similar to measure 8, except that the first beat is harmonized with the interval of a third between the soprano and alto voices, instead of a sixth.

Measures 26 and 27 are identical to 9 and 10. The harmony is at the V chord during the first beat of 26; the second beat then goes from V to IV. Measure 28 ends at the tonic.

Melodic Structure

In order to analyze the melodic structure of the piece, knowledge of the lyrics of the song is very important since every verse of it depicts an action. The most characteristic verse of the song is the one describing the woman who sells birds. The preceding verses describe the way the different kinds of birds are trapped. The division of the text into sections helps us establish the correct phrasing of the piece. Some verses from the original song are provided by Mendoza:⁶⁷

*Ya cayó un pajarillo silvestre,
Ya cayó un cardenal con esmero,
Ya cayeron un par de gorriones,
Ya cayó un pajarillo jilguero.*

A wild bird now fell
A Cardinal now fell gracefully,
A pair of sparrows now fell
A little goldfinch now fell

*Cuando a México vayas, Rosita
Cuando llegues a la capital,
Cinco pesos y medio, Rosita,
Es lo menos que te han de pagar.*

When to México you go, Rosita
When you arrive at the Capital
Five and a half pesos, Rosita
Is the least that they have to pay you.

When divided, the text is: *Cuan-do a Me-xi-co- va-yas, Ro-si-ta, Cuan-do lle-gues a la ca-pi-tal.*

⁶⁷ Mendoza, *La Canción Mexicana*, 531. Trans. Arnoldo García Santos.

Once the lyrics are known, it becomes clear that the first musical period begins in measure 2 at the last two eighth notes, as an anacrusis to measure 3, and ends in measure 10. The first phrase begins at the same point of measure 2 and ends in measure 6 at the third beat. Dividing each phrase into two semi-phrases, the piece has the first semi-phrase starting in measure 2, as an anacrusis to measure 3, and ends in measure 4 on the second beat.

The second phrase begins in measure 6 on the third beat and ends in measure 10. As with the first phrase, this contains two semi-phrases that follow the same division as the one described above in the first phrase. The entire piece follows this division pattern. The hemiola rhythm also permeates the entire piece, beginning in measures 1 and 2 in the introduction, with 3/4 meter. Measure 3 is then in 6/8, and the hemiola pattern is present measure by measure throughout the rest of the piece.

Figure 12 shows the song from Mendoza's publication,⁶⁸ and Figure 13 shows Ponce's arrangement in the 1928 Schott edition edited by Segovia.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ Mendoza, *La Canción Mexicana*, 531.

⁶⁹ Ponce, *Tres canciones*.

1) DE COMERCIANTES

284-1. *La pajarrera*

Cuando Mé-xi-co va-gas, Ro-si-ta, cuando lle-gues a la Ca-pi-tal
 cin-co pe-sos se-rá el me-nor pre-cio que por e-llos a-llí te da-rán
 Ya lo sa-bes que soy pa-ja-re-ra, en los campos me vi-vo go-zando
 dis-fru-tan-do de la pri-ma-ve-ra y de las a-ves los pú-li-dos can-to-s

Música de tradición oral en México, 1920.
 Texto que aparece en *El Ruiseñor Mexicano*, 4ª edición, San Antonio, Texas, 1923.

Figure 12

Allegro

C. VII
 p
 rit.
 f a tempo
 C. IV
 C. IV

Figure 13

Figure 14 shows the relationship between the text of the song and the piece, as arranged by Ponce. It corresponds to the measures 2 through 4 of the Schott edition. According to the original song, the syllables *si* and *ta* ending this semi-phrase are the only changes Ponce made to the pitches *g* and *b* of the soprano voice.



Figure 14

Figure 15 shows the second semi-phrase of the song in measures 4-6. This corresponds to the verse: *Cuando llegues a la capital.*



Figure 15

The second phrase begins in measure 6 on the third eighth note of beat one. This phrase is made up of two semi-phrases, the third starting in measure 6, beat one, and ending in measure 8 on second eighth note of the 6/8. Semi-phrase four begins in measure 8, beat one on the third eighth note, and ends in measure 10. Figure 16 shows measures 4-10, the second semi-phrase of the song that corresponds to the verse: *Cuando llegues a la capital.*

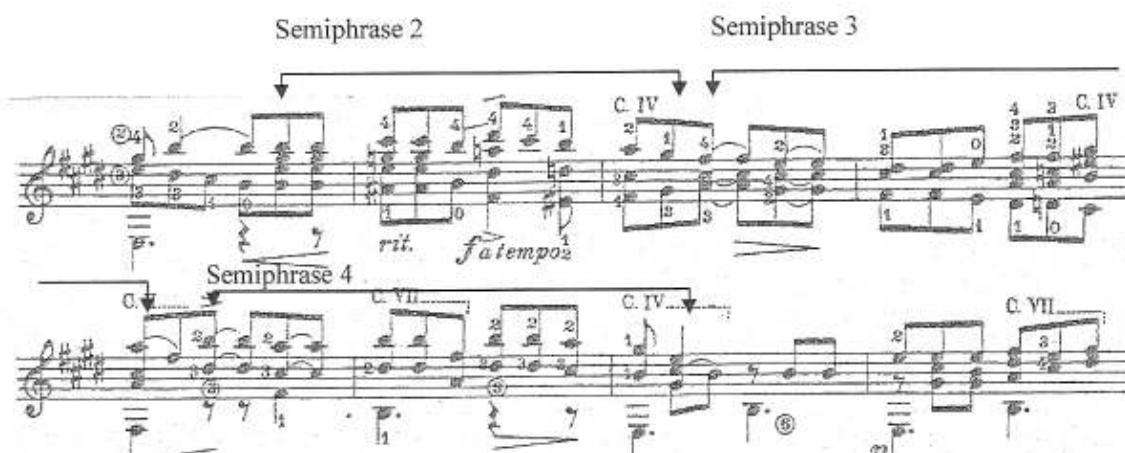


Figure 16

CHAPTER 6

POR TI MI CORAZON

Of the three popular songs, *Por Tí mi Corazón* [For you my Heart] is the only one that Ponce himself wrote. *La Pajarera* and *La Valentina* are arrangements made by the composer, chosen from among songs that emerged during the period of the Mexican revolution. The Mexican poet and friend of Ponce, Luis G. Urbina wrote the lyrics for *Por tí mi Corazón*.⁷⁰

Harmonic Structure

Por tí mi Corazón begins in the key of A Major, with a meter of 3/4. The first measure presents the tonic, which moves through a series of secondary dominants in measure 2. The secondary dominants lead to a modulation in the key of B minor. Introduced from the first beat of measure 2, it continues until the last beat of measure 3 where there is a ii°/vii° chord that moves to a V chord of A Major in the first beat of measure 5. At the end of measure 7 another change is ready to appear.

The last beat has VI/ii and the next measure has V/ii where the return to the key of B minor again dominates the structure of the piece. This happens in measures 8-10. The end of measure 10 has a secondary dominant $V6/4$ of ii in the key of B minor, which serves to modulate to the key of A Major, the introductory key of *Por tí mi Corazón*.

Measures 12 and 13 shape the cadence of the first section of the piece, progressing from the chords ii, $V6/4$, and V7 in measure 12 to the tonic of A Major in measure 13. The music has the same harmonic motion from measures 14 to 26, because it

⁷⁰ Díaz Cervantes and de Díaz, *Ponce Genio de México*, 147.

is a repetition of the previously mentioned measures. After measure 26, the harmonic motion seems to be modulating again to the key of B minor, but this does not actually happen until measure 32. Measures 32-34 have the same harmonic structure as in measures 8-10. The modulation to the key of B minor is reasserted in these measures. Certainly, at the end of measure 10, the secondary dominant V6/4 of ii in the key of B minor gives the chance to the sequence of chords to lead to the A-Major key, the same as how the piece starts.

Lastly, measures 35 and 36 introduce the next groups of chords: iii that goes to I in measure 35; and in measure 36: ii, V6/5 to V in root position. The piece finishes in the tonic of A Major.

Melodic And Motivic Structure

Of the three Mexican songs for guitar, *Por tí mi Corazón* has the most recognizable motive, which appears immediately on the first beat of the first measure. An interval of a sixth from e to c# is followed by melodic figuration with g#, b, and a in thirty-second notes before resting on e on beat two. In this analysis it is labeled motive one [Figure 17]. While e sustains for two beats, the alto voice imitates this motive an octave lower, minus the initial interval of a sixth.



Figure 17

Motive one, according to the lyrics, corresponds to the title of the song: *Por- tí, mi-co-ra-zón*. Measure two presents the second motive [Figure 18], which appears at the second half of beat one and continues to measure 3, beat two. The motive is formed by the pitches c, d, and e in ascending eighth notes, followed by two sixteenth notes descending to d and c, which jump to f, a#, and then end at the note b in measure 3.



Figure 18

The lyrics of *Por tí mi Corazón* that represent motive two are: *Fue un-ta-lis-man-di-vi-no*. The note c shapes the words *fue* and *un*, but they are elided to create one syllable. The note d corresponds the syllable *ta*; e corresponds with *lis*; d and c to *mandi*; f to *vi*; and a# and b to *no*.

Both motives have a very characteristic rhythmic pattern that can be heard all through the piece. The second of the two b notes encompasses two syllables, *tro-en*; however, they are elided. The last beat of measure 5 fits the syllables *mi* and *des* on c# and d. The phrase ends at measure 6. On the first and second beat, the syllable *tin* corresponds to g#, and *no* corresponds to e.



Figure 19

Motive two presents an eighth note joined to two sixteenth notes that resolve on the next note. This is labeled motive three, even though it could be considered as the last part of motive two. The reason is to clarify and straightforwardly present a motivic analysis of the piece. This motive is present for first time in measure 2 on the second and third beats of the measure [Figure 20]. Motive three appears in many different measures: 5, 19, 24, 27, and others. A variant of this is in measure 6, first beat, where the movement of the sixteenth notes has an intervallic jump of a third from g^\sharp to b , and descends to the note a . Also, this same rhythmical movement is present in the thirty-seconds of motive one. Measure 8 presents a variation of motive two. Its rhythmical value has undergone a mutation of diminution in the first part, and a mutation of augmentation in the second and last part of the motive.

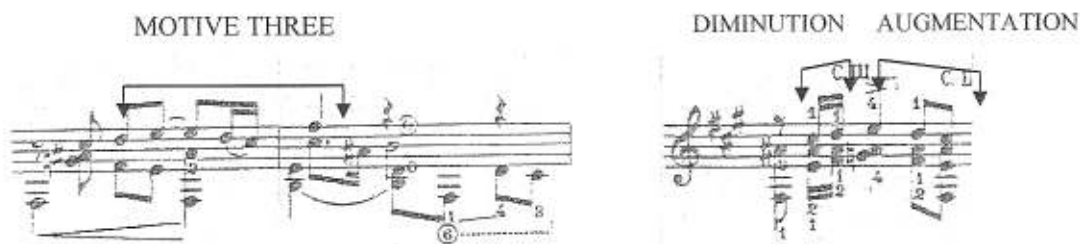


Figure 20

Figure 21 shows the transformation of rhythmic values. Taking into consideration the repetition of the melodic, rhythmic, and harmonic structure, the lyrics fit into the same notes. The only change is the text of the song, but this follows the same pattern of the verse line. During measure 27, the presence of the figure constituted by the variation of motive b from measure 8 is reintroduced, and indicates the beginning of the second section of the song. The lyrics match the following notes: b for the syllable *pe*; c# for *ro*, d# for *lau*, f# for *sen*, and g# for *cia*. The measures that follow show the words *mato el placer*, with g# for *ma*, b for *toel*, a for *pla*, and e for *cer*.

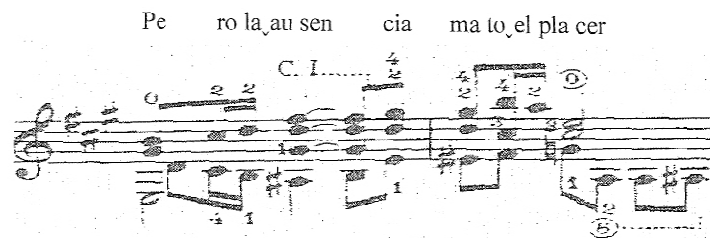


Figure 21

Two important climaxes occur at measures 10 and 34, not only because of the motion of the melody, but also because of the emotion expressed by the lyrics: *lloro y muero de amor* (I cry and die from love).

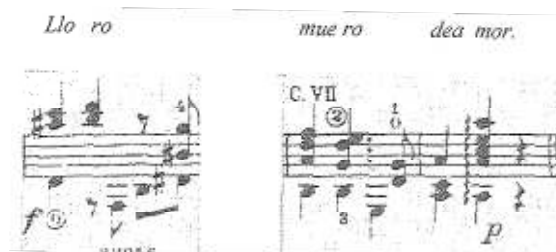


Figure 22

CHAPTER 7

TROPICO

Ponce's life was not easy. México was at the crossroads of political change during his lifetime. The domestic instability in the country forced many into exile in foreign countries. Ponce, along with other artists such as poet Luis G. Urbina and violinist Pedro Valdes Fraga, was forced to leave México to avoid injustice and possible death.

In Ponce's own words in a letter to his wife Clema Maurel, dated December 14, 1915, he writes:

They [his enemies] have the confirmed habit of slandering me night and day, to discredit me with powerful lies, and profess that I am artistically worth very little. When I lived there, anonymous messages were the daily bread and they went so far as to go to the homes of my students to tell them about horrors of my behavior, to leave me without a student and plunge me rush into despair and vice."⁷¹

The Caribbean island of Cuba became his home for the following few years. "Forced by circumstance, Ponce abandoned México in March 1915 and went to Havana via Veracruz, accompanied by Luis G. Urbina and Pedro Valdes Fraga."⁷²

Given the fame of Ponce, Urbina, and Fraga, it would be a difficult task to go unnoticed among the people and to freely board the boat that would take them out of México. In an effort to circumvent and confuse their enemies, the three friends made people believe that they were on their way to Central America. "On March 6, they announced that they would leave by rail to Central America."⁷³ But their story would be

⁷¹ Miranda, *Manuel M. Ponce*, 35. Trans. Arnoldo García Santos.

⁷² Ibid. Trans. Arnoldo García Santos.

⁷³ Díaz Cervantes and de Díaz, *Ponce Genio de México*, 216. Trans. Arnoldo García Santos.

complicated by an attack on a train following that same route, which had been blown up by one of the revolutionary groups, the Zapatistas.

This event caused alarm among members of the artistic community who were sure that Ponce had died in the accident. However, it was not so: “In this city [México City] some days ago rumors circulated about a train being blown up by the Zapatistas, in the vicinity of Apizaco [Veracruz], and of the notable Mexican writer Don Luis G. Urbina and pianist Manuel M. Ponce having perished. We talked yesterday with a person who came from Veracruz, whose name we are not authorize to make known, and he informs us that this version is entirely false.”⁷⁴

Once on the island of Cuba, Ponce became familiar with the lifestyle of the Caribbean inhabitants, not only of their habits, but also of their music with its characteristic rhythms and the joyfulness. This was “the rich Cuban folklore born of prodigious soul of its people, [musical forms such as] ‘Son’, ‘Guajira’, ‘Rumba’, ‘Guaracha’, ‘Danzon’, ‘Clave’, and ‘Bolero’.”⁷⁵

This music certainly inspired Ponce to compose important works that enriched his musical repertoire and career. He became an important figure in the musical world of the island. So important was his stay that he had the opportunity to open a music academy called “Academy of Music Beethoven,”⁷⁶ which was very popular with the many Cubans who studied there. Ponce gave concerts, classes, and all type of activities that linked him

⁷⁴ Ibid., 218. Trans. Arnoldo García Santos.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 229. Trans. Arnoldo García Santos.

⁷⁶ Díaz Cervantes and de Díaz, *Ponce Genio de México*, 244.

to the musical world there. He also gained favor with Cuban musicians, who elected him “Director of the Philharmonic Orchestra of Havana [founded] officially on April 13, 1917.”⁷⁷ Thus, his economic situation in Cuba improved and allowed him to live more comfortably. Later that same year, he returned to México where he was appointed director of the National Symphony Orchestra.

The works that Ponce composed for guitar that were based on Cuban folk rhythms were *Rumba* and *Tropico*. These pieces allow us to have an idea of the intentions of Ponce to persevere in his attempt to exploit the indigenous music of the countries he visited. These two pieces for guitar were mentioned in a letter that Segovia sent to Ponce, probably written during December of 1932, in which he says: “The Rumba is in its feet and moving the torso. And everybody does the same at home while listening to it.”⁷⁸ Later Segovia makes mention of these and other pieces in a letter of February 1936 where he tells Ponce: “I have proposed your *Sonatina* and the last 4 pieces, *Vals*, *Mazurka*, *Tropico* and *Rumba*. Soon you will receive a letter from him [Editor Strecker] to talk about the conditions. Keep me informed about the result.”⁷⁹

Melodic And Harmonic Structure

The piece begins with an inverted vi chord that moves to D minor. The bass line sings the habanera rhythm that will be present throughout the piece. The Habanera “is a 19th-century Cuban song and a dance form [...] It is in a slow moderate tempo and in a

⁷⁷ Ibid., 309. Trans. Arnoldo García Santos.

⁷⁸ Alcázar, *Obra Completa*, 241.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 241, 243.


duple meter, with a characteristic accompanimental figure: $\frac{2}{4}$  It was popular in Spain and Europe as well as elsewhere in Latin America. It is a primary source of the Mexican *danza* of the late 19th and early 20th centuries and a Major influence in the early development of the Argentine Tango.”⁸⁰

Figure 23 below shows bars 1 and 2 of *Tropico*, according to Alcázar’s book manuscripts.⁸¹ The bass line shows the Habanera rhythm that begins on the downbeat of the measure with the chord, and ends in the second half of the measure.

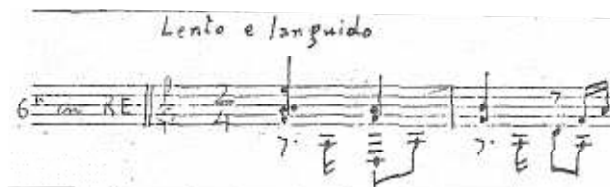


Figure 23

The figure of triplet notes appears in various parts of the piece, forming different rhythmic patterns like the ones in measures 6 and 7 [Figure 24], with two eighth notes in the second beat, similar to a 5/8 pattern.



Figure 24

⁸⁰ *The Harvard Dictionary of Music*, 4th ed. (Chicago, Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003), s.v. “Habanera.”

⁸¹ Alcázar, *Obra Completa*, 254-256.

This pattern repeats in measures 37, 38, 39, and 42-45 [Figure 25].



Figure 25

Measures 9-11 show a characteristic rhythmic figure over a dominant chord. This figure appears again in measures 30-32, and later in measures 68 and 69. Measures 9-13 with the sixteenth-note figure in measures 9-11. Measures 12 and 13 have a rhythmical pattern presented in triplets, and that repeat two measures later [Figure 26].

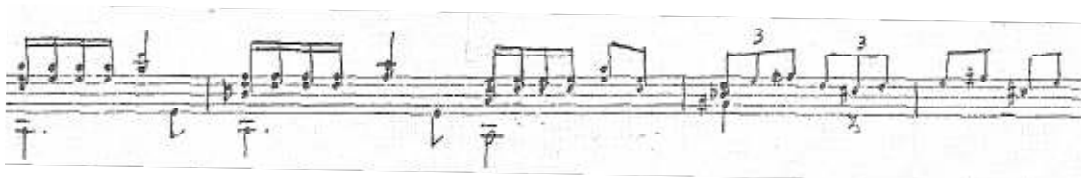


Figure 26

From measures 16-20 the piece is in D Major, with a tonicization to E Major in measure 17. Measure 20 has an interesting feature, the *appoggiatura* in the second tempo of the measure. This gives more rhythm to the figure that has the Habanera pattern in the bass line, and this occurs again in measure 21 and later in measure 24 [Figure 27].

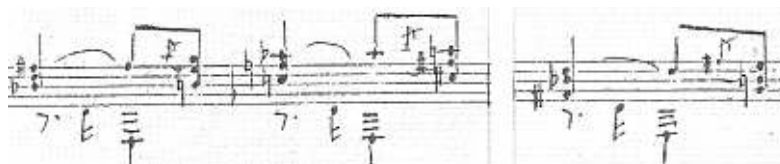


Figure 27

Measures 26- 30 are in the key of D minor. After these measures a series of tonicizations occurs during the piece, as in measures 31 and 33 to Eb Major, and in measures 34 and 35 to D Major. Measure 48, beat two, is in C Major that goes until measure 51 where A Major is implied; however, D Major key is reasserted in measure 52.

From measures 68 through the end of the piece, the key is D Major. A double harmonic in the last measure marks the end of the piece [Figure 28].



Figure 28

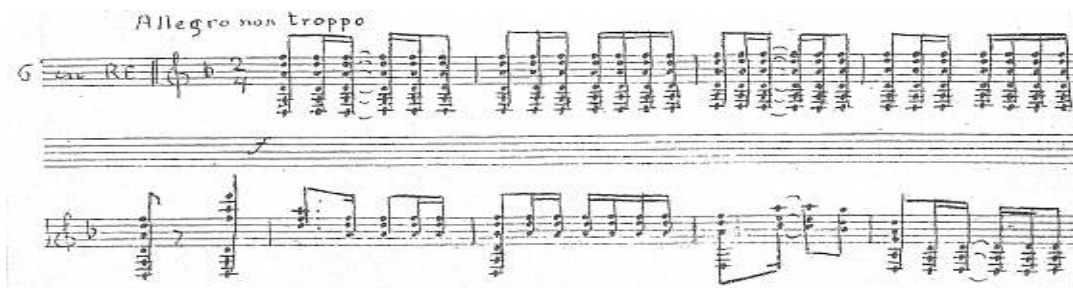
CHAPTER 8

RUMBA

The Rumba “is most typically dance music in rapid duple meter, with the energetic character, emphasis on call-and-response patterns, and intricate percussion playing of its traditional counterpart.”⁸²

Harmonic And Melodic Structure

The Rumba that was written by Ponce is a simple piece that starts in D minor and changes to D Major from measures 36 to 61. The opening measures, 1 through 5, according to Alcázar’s book manuscripts⁸³, establish the characteristic rhythm of Rumba with a strummed D-minor chord in *rasgueado* style across all six strings. The rhythm, known as “son clave” is typical of the Cuban rumba.⁸⁴ A break in the rhythmic pattern occurs in measure 5, as shown in Figure 29. At measure 6, a variation of the rhythm continues; however, the chords are now plucked with the fingers. The A minor chord appears in measure 8, second beat for first the time [Figure 29].



⁸² Ibid, s.v “Rumba.”

⁸³ Alcázar, *Obra Completa*, 257-259.

⁸⁴ http://educacion-musical.com/musica4eso/imagenes/unidad7_actividad8_1_claves_cubanas1.jpg (accessed March 16, 2014).

Figure 29

From measures 6 through 8 the chords are strummed over a higher group of pitches, an event that changes abruptly in measure 9 where the *rasgueado* is now over the low notes of the D minor chord on strings four to six. These chords give more harmonic support to the Rumba rhythm.

Measures 15 through 18 are equal to measures 1 to 4 with the *rasgueado* style across all the strings. Measure 19 introduces a melodic line with the alternating pitches of g and a, rising to b on the downbeat of the next measure. A variation of this pattern occurs in measures 23-24, an octave higher. The harmony is a subdominant chord (G) in second inversion with added “color” tones, E in measure 20 and A in 23-24, over the D pedal [Figure 30].

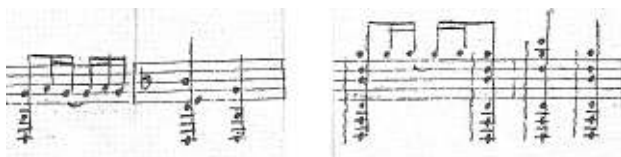


Figure 30

Measure 26 presents the melody in ascending motion on a D minor chord and descending in the following measure over a ν 6/4 chord. This rhythmical event is repeated in the measures 30 and 31 as preparation for the change to the key of D Major. Measures 32 to 35 present a sequential pattern on the melody. Measure 32 has a b 6/5 minor chord and the remaining sixteenth notes of the measure, which are *b*, *a* and goes to *f* these notes outlines a sequence. This changes in measure 33 where the sixteenth notes

moves a interval of a second on the notes *g* and *e*, the note *b* keeps the same pitch. This section of two chords is repeated in measures 34 and 35.

The key of D Major starts in measure 36 and continues until measure 61. Like in the beginning, there are strummed chords in the *Rumba* rhythm, from 36 to 39. The melody occurs in the bass voice in measure 40-41 on the notes a, b and d, and again in 50-51, two octaves higher and over the same pitches. Similarly, measures 45-46 match 56-57. These last two measures present the melody over the notes g ,e, f and d, and then on the notes e, a and b respectively in each measure.

From measures 62-72, there is a recapitulation of the first ten measures in D minor, with one extra measure added (measure66). A coda section at 73 brings the piece to a close at measure 82.

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