

RE-ASSESSING NATIONALISM IN THE ART SONGS OF JAIME LEÓN

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Colombian composer Jaime León (1921-2015) is known for his art songs. Most of the current scholarly literature about León defines him as a nationalist composer even though a majority of his songs do not appear to have nationalist traits. This document examines a representative selection of León's songs divided into three categories: songs influenced by the *bambuco* (the Colombian genre most present in his songs); songs whose text refers to Colombian culture; and songs without Colombian elements present in their text or music. After examination of these songs, my conclusion is that León, rather than being nationalist, was a cosmopolitan composer who used national elements as rhetorical tools in an isolated and experimental way.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The art songs by Jaime León (1921–2015), probably the best-known and most prolific Colombian composer of art song to date, have gained relevance in recent years. Of his thirty-six songs, Patricia Caicedo edited three for publication in 2005 and the remaining thirty-three four years later. These publications have introduced León's music to mainstream audiences. However, scholarly studies on his compositions are limited: they provide only basic information, reach debatable conclusions, or focus on a small number of the songs. In addition, the studies tend to emphasize León's purported mix of Colombian poetry and rhythms with music from the USA. This dissertation will address the fact that most of the songs do not in fact reflect national features but adopt them as tools for specific purposes and in limited ways.

Jaime León was born in Cartagena, Colombia, in 1921. He began his musical studies under his father while living in the USA and continued them on his return to Colombia. There he studied piano at the Conservatorio Nacional de Música (National Conservatory of Music), where Guillermo Uribe Holguín was his theory teacher. In 1943, León traveled back to the USA to study at the Juilliard School, earning a degree in piano and starting conducting studies. During this time as a conducting student he was offered the music directorship of the Colombian Orquesta Sinfónica Nacional (National Symphony Orchestra). Accordingly, he paused his studies and went back to Colombia in 1947, then was also appointed director of the Conservatorio Nacional de Música the next year.

At just 27 years old, León already occupied two of the most important positions that a musician could have in Colombia at the time. However, he resigned these positions and moved back to the USA with his wife in 1949. After the assassination of the liberal leader Jorge Eliécer

Gaitán in 1948, the political environment had become turbulent. León acknowledged in an interview with Victoria Sofía Botero that these events changed his life. He had intended to make his career in Colombia, but the political unrest and extreme violence changed his plans.¹

Back in New York, León re-enrolled in the graduate conducting program at Juilliard but did not finish his degree. In 1955 he was appointed conductor of the American Ballet Theater, his most significant position in the USA. After a successful career in New York as a conductor, in 1971 he was appointed artistic director of the recently formed Orquesta Filarmónica de Bogotá (Bogotá Philharmonic Orchestra) and returned to Colombia. He succeeded in making the work of the orchestra more professional. After leaving the position in 1977, he served as advisor or artistic director of various cultural institutions in Bogotá.

León's first art songs were composed in the early 1950s while he was earning his living as an accompanist and conductor. His work as a composer was sporadic, as he focused his career on conducting. Because he had no formal education as a composer, he was reluctant to call himself one.² He wrote his last known songs in 1992 and died in Bogotá in May 2015.

This document examines the compositional style of León's art songs, the genre to which he contributed most. His catalog of around fifty works includes no fewer than thirty-six songs.³ In addition, he wrote two orchestral works, *Variaciones sobre un tema de Bizet* (1986) and *Rapsodia andina* (1996); a *Missa breve* (1979) for choir, soloists, and orchestra; works for piano and two piano; and the *Tríptico para tres pianistas* (Triptych for Three Pianists), comprised of a

¹ Victoria Sofía Botero, "The Art Songs of Jaime León: A Textual and Musical Analysis" (master's thesis, University of Missouri–Kansas City), 226.

² *Ibid.*, 37.

³ No complete catalog of his works exists to date.

nocturne, a *cumbia*, and a *pasillo*.⁴

Attention to León's music has increased in recent years. However, much research remains to be. At present, the scholarly literature about him is limited to four publications. Three of them identify León as a nationalist composer because of the presence of Colombian dance rhythms in some of the songs, a view that the present study finds too limiting. The fourth publication does not identify him as a nationalist composer.

The book *The Colombian Art Song: Jaime León, Analysis and Compilation of his Works for Voice and Piano*, published in two volumes and edited by Patricia Caicedo, made thirty-three of León's songs commercially available.⁵ Caicedo included short biographies of León and the poets he used for his songs, a reflection on the relevance of his music, and an interpretative guide for singers. She states that "León's style is a derivation from European, American, and Colombian elements."⁶ However, there is no technical analysis or examination of music in either of the two volumes.

Victoria Sofía Botero's dissertation "The Art Songs of Jaime León"⁷ presents the most complete and authoritative biographical information currently available on León, gathered through her communications with the composer. The document also includes biographical data on the poets, a complete catalog of the thirty-six published songs, a short analysis of each of them, and interview excerpts in which León discusses his music and career. Botero's dissertation thus provides a complete background for León's life and songs. However, in her conclusions,

⁴ Liliana López Alzate, "El ciclo de canciones Pequeña, pequeña de Jaime León Ferro. Análisis del texto y la música desde el punto de vista del word painting" (master's thesis, Universidad EAFIT, Medellín, Colombia, 2015); <https://repository.eafit.edu.co/handle/10784/7987> (accessed November 10, 2019), 6.

⁵ *The Colombian Art Song: Jaime León, Analysis and Compilation of his Works for Voice and Piano*, ed. Patricia Caicedo (New York: MundoArts, 2009).

⁶ *Colombian Art Song*, 28.

⁷ Botero, "Art Songs."

Botero observes that “León’s songs regularly allude to folk genres such as *bambuco*, *cumbia* and *habanera*.”⁸ The presence of these genres in León’s songs, as well as that of the *pasillo* (another Colombian folk genre in one of the songs), is undeniable. Nevertheless, after a critical examination of songs, it has emerged that these genres appear in just five of the thirty-six songs; their presence is not the norm but the exception.

Elissa Álvarez’s document “Pride, Place, and Identity” studies León’s style and the development of his career. It characterizes León as a nationalist composer with a European compositional background and North American musical influences.⁹ She highlights the Colombian musical elements in some of his songs and claims that “dance rhythms are prominent” in his music.¹⁰ I found her generalization unsupported in the music, since just two of the nine songs that Álvarez analyzes feature prominent dance rhythms. Her study also attempts to position León within the Latin American art song context, comparing him to Carlos Guastavino (1912–2000) and Alberto Ginastera (1916–1983). Álvarez highlights the similarities in style between León and Guastavino: both write tonal music, eschew Modernism, and remain closer to popular styles. Her comparison concludes that, whereas Ginastera’s style is nationalist and evolved through the years, “the fabric of León’s sound is layered beyond the hybridization of nationalistic and traditional European components.”¹¹

Liliana López Alzate’s thesis, “*El ciclo de canciones Pequeña, pequeñita de Jaime León Ferro*,”¹² provides a complete analysis of the only song cycle that was commissioned from him,

⁸ Ibid., 217.

⁹ Elissa Álvarez, “Pride, Place and Identity: Jaime León’s Transcontinental Exploration of Identity through Art Song” (DMA document, Boston University, 2013).

¹⁰ Ibid., 57.

¹¹ Ibidem.

¹² López Alzate. “*El ciclo de canciones Pequeña, pequeñita*.”

published in 1987 in Ecuador. López's detailed analysis of the six songs in the cycle identifies Colombian music elements in two of them without defining his overall style. Her thesis also provides background information on word painting and examines his use of this device in this cycle. She concludes that León uses it to highlight both the text and the vocal line, and the piano brings out the different characters or moods in the cycle *Pequeña, pequeñita*. This information is useful for future studies on León's songs, since it addresses León's style without imposing any ready-made conclusions about the national character of his musical material. López Alzate also includes in her appendix a complete list of all León's songs, containing the date of composition and the author of the poem.¹³

In her thesis, "La canción de arte," Jacqueline de los Santos Culebro addresses three different Colombian art-song composers, with an analysis of one song from each.¹⁴ In her analysis of "La campesina," De los Santos concludes that León's "music is filled with sounds native to Colombia, those that you can hear in small towns, like the *bambuco*, *cumbia*, and the *pasillo*, and he also used European sounds and rhythms."¹⁵ De los Santos discusses the *bambuco*, a folk dance used in this song, and elaborates on the composer's use of this rhythm, but does not identify which "European sounds and rhythms" were used by the composer, or in what other songs is it possible to find Colombian rhythms.

Two commercial recordings have been dedicated to León's music. The first, from 1977,

¹³ Ibid., 72.

¹⁴ Jacqueline de los Santos Culebro, "La canción de arte: un análisis de obras de autores colombianos (1900–2013)" (BM thesis, Universidad de ciencias y artes de Chiapas, 2019); <https://repositorio.unicach.mx/handle/20.500.12114/2614> (accessed October 7, 2019).

¹⁵ "Su música está llena de sonidos originarios de Colombia, esos que puedes escuchar en un pueblo, como el bambuco, la cumbia y el pasillo, y también utilizaba los sonidos y ritmos europeos." My translation. De los Santos Culebro, "La canción de arte," 25.

has León himself playing two of his songs and other songs by Latin American composers.¹⁶ The second recording, from 2015, includes his *Missa breve*, his song cycle *Pequeña, pequeñita* orchestrated by the composer, and a selection of his songs for voice and piano. Patricia Caicedo wrote the liner notes for this CD.¹⁷

There are no studies about León's reception; and no article on him has been included in the *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* or *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*. A short biography does appear in the *Diccionario de la música española e hispanoamericana*, written by the dictionary's general editor, Emilio Cásares Rodicio.¹⁸ I assume that, because of León's success and recognition as a pianist and conductor, he did not want to be judged as a composer and risk his performing career.

León's in fact limited use of national elements highlights his more general embrace of musical cosmopolitanism. Some tendencies of cosmopolitanism have been criticized because they attempt to dissolve local or national identity. Furthermore, in Latin America, composers traditionally considered nationalist tend to use international stylistic procedures to create structures that buttress the national melodic and rhythmic elements at the surface of their music. However, cosmopolitanism and nationalism are inseparable, as nationalism implies a reaction to cosmopolitanism. An example has been studied by Ana Alonso-Minutti in relation to the Mexican composer Mario Lavista.¹⁹ To define cosmopolitanism, Alonso-Minutti cites the words

¹⁶ Carmiña Gallo and Jaime León, performers, *Latin American Art Songs* (LP, Inter-American Musical Editions OAS 001, 1977).

¹⁷ León, *Vocal Music* (CD, Toccata Classics TOC0142, 2015).

¹⁸ Emilio Casares Rodicio, "León, Jaime," in *Diccionario de la música española e hispanoamericana* (Madrid: Sociedad General de Autores y Editores, 2000), VI, 877.

¹⁹ Ana Alonso-Minutti, "Forging a Cosmopolitan Ideal: Mario Lavista's Early Music," *Latin American Music Review* 35, no. 2 (fall/winter 2014): 169–96. See also Cristina Magaldi, "Cosmopolitanism and World Music in Rio de Janeiro at the Turn of the Twentieth Century," *Musical Quarterly* 92, no. 3/4 (fall/winter 2009): 329–64.

of Gerard Delanty, “Cosmopolitanism ... concerns the multiple ways the local and the national [are] defined as a result of interaction with the global. The resulting situation will vary depending on the precise nature of the interaction.”²⁰ A closer examination of a representative selection of songs by León demonstrates that his style is primarily cosmopolitan in both content and character. Within this frame, his use of national elements seems a rhetorical device, triggered by the lyrics. León’s being labeling a nationalist therefore seems unfounded.

²⁰ Alonso-Minutti, “Forging a Cosmopolitan Ideal,” 170.

CHAPTER 2

DISCUSSION

This chapter discusses eight songs by León, considering their structure and the influence of the text on it. Relevant melodic or rhythmic features indicative of Colombian or other styles are also taken into account. The selected songs are categorized into three groups.

The first group features ones influenced by the *bambuco*, an emblematically Colombian folk dance: “La campesina,” “Tu madre en la fuente,” and “El muñeco dormilón.” For these songs, I use the notion of *topic* as a more or less fixed set of musical features that carries semantic connotations—or, as Danuta Mirka would articulate it from a more restricted point of view, as a musical genre presented out of its original context, typically within a larger piece of music.²¹ My analysis looks at León’s manipulation of Colombian topics. A topic can be used directly or manipulated with rhetorical intentions. The use of a topic does not imply that it is nationalistic, or that the composer is a nationalist in the traditional sense.

The second group includes songs with lyrics referencing Colombian culture but are set in an international style in which León did not use Colombian musical references: “Canción del boga ausente” and “Letra para cantar al son del arpa.” The analysis includes a discussion of how their style does not correspond with the expectations presented by the poems.

The last group is a selection of songs, “Siempre,” “Rima,” and “Algún día,” with no hint of any Colombian traits in text or music. These songs provide a perspective on León’s general compositional style without the direct influence of evocative Colombian texts or the use of Colombian music.

²¹ Danuta Mirka, “Introduction,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Topic Theory*, ed. Mirka (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

Songs with *Bambuco* Influences

Three songs use national motives: “La campesina,” “Tu madre en la fuente,” and “El muñeco dormilón.” All draw from the *bambuco*, a folk-dance genre typical of the Colombian Andean region. However, León uses mostly international elements, the nationalist elements being subordinated to rhetorical or expressive purposes.

The *bambuco* is a folk dance or song that originated in the Cauca region in the Southwestern mountains of the Colombian Andean region. There is no certainty about when the genre originated, but its first documentation in 1819 refers to it as a distinctive feature of this region. John Varney established 1824 as the date when the *bambuco* was identified as a patriotic symbol of the then ill-defined socio-political entity that eventually became Colombia.²² It was in this year, during the final battle for Peru’s independence, that a *bambuco* was played during the decisive charge by the Colombian forces. The fact that the soldiers were from different regions of Colombia and this music inspired them in the final battle made the *bambuco* a Colombian symbol, according to Varney.²³ However, Colombia did not yet exist as a nation. Traditional historiography believed that Colombia was primordial, and that music expressed it in any historical stage. Today, we think instead that nations are constructed.²⁴ Their construction requires powerful symbols that promote sustained identification and agreement from the people among the nation, and in the words of Melanie Plesch: “Music, with its powerful appeal force

²² John Varney, “An Introduction to the Colombian *Bambuco*,” *Latin American Music Review* 22, no. 2, (fall/winter 2001): 123–56.

²³ Varney argues that the *bambuco* already represented Colombia, but the nation was still to be created. In 1824, the “forms of identity” currently employed in discourse included allegiances to a city or to America as a whole, with no clear in-between. Varney, “Introduction,” 128.

²⁴ On “forms of identity,” see José Carlos Chiaramonte, “Formas de identidad en el Río de la Plata luego de 1810,” *Boletín del Instituto de Historia Argentina y Americana “Dr. E. Ravignani,”* 3rd series, no. 1 (1st semester 1989): 71–92.

and its extraordinary capacity to express feelings of collective affirmation, occupies a distinguished place in the set of these values.”²⁵

In both instrumental and vocal versions, the *bambuco* has a characteristic 3/4 and 6/8 meter happening simultaneously. It shares this feature with the Colombian *pasillo* genre, the Colombo-Venezuelan *loropo*, and many other genres from Mexico to Argentina. One of the main differences may be found in the bass part: both the *loropo* and the *pasillo* have accents on the first beat of each measure, whereas the *bambuco* does not. It is this lack of accentuated downbeat, in conjunction with accentuation of the melodic line, that has created a controversy about how to notate the *bambuco*. There are two possible ways to write the *bambuco* explained by Varney and Carolina Santamaría using the *bambuco* “Cuatro preguntas,” by Pedro Morales Pino (1863–1926) as an example.²⁶ Morales Pino was a Colombian composer, remembered, among other things, for being the first to notate the *bambuco*.

Morales Pino wrote “Cuatro preguntas” in a configuration described by Varney as “*a tiempo*” (in time), this is, with the bass in regard to the harmonic progression occurring on beats 3 and 1 in 3/4 measure (see Ex. 1). This configuration provides a solid bass line that helps with the performance of the song, which was problematic for musicians unfamiliar with the genre. The main difference is in the voice line, where the accented syllables fall on the weak beat, and the harmonic change takes place in the middle of the measure.

²⁵ “La música, con su poderosa fuerza apelativa y su extraordinaria capacidad para la expresión de sentimientos de afirmación colectiva, ocupa un lugar destacado en el conjunto de estos valores.” My translation. Melanie Plesch, “La lógica sonora de la generación del 80: Una aproximación a la retórica del nacionalismo musical argentino,” in *Los caminos de la música (Europa–Argentina)* (Jujuy: Editorial de la Universidad Nacional de Jujuy, 2008), 55–111.

²⁶ Carolina Santamaría Delgado, “El bambuco, los saberes mestizos y la academia: un análisis histórico de la persistencia de la colonialidad en los estudios musicales latinoamericanos,” *Latin American Music Review* 28, no. 1 (spring/summer 2007): 1–23.

Example 1: Pedro Morales Pino, “Cuatro preguntas,” mm. 1–7²⁷

Both Varney and Santamaría explain the other configuration in which a *bambuco* can be notated, called by Varney “*a destiempo*.”²⁸ This configuration has the advantage of the stressed syllables falling on the downbeat and the harmonic changes being placed at the beginning of a measure, whereas the previous example shows harmonic changes in the middle of the measure. The disadvantage falls on the accompanying instruments, as the lack of a clear downbeat can lead to more ensemble difficulties. This problem is discussed in detail by Santamaría and Varney. According to Santamaría, there is no correct way to write a *bambuco*, since each *bambuco* has its way of writing that serves its purpose: “there is no unique *bambuco* formula, but many *bambucos*.”²⁹

Neither Varney nor Santamaría provides a melodic contour for the *bambuco*. However, Varney explains in detail the rhythmic properties of the *bambuco* melody. After analyzing a “number” of vocal *bambucos*, Varney found the representative rhythmic structure for the

²⁷ Ibid., 14.

²⁸ Varney, “Introduction,” 127.

²⁹ “No existe una fórmula única de bambuco, lo que hay es muchos bambucos.” Santamaría Delgado, “El bambuco,” 16.

the coexistence of 3/4 and 6/8, but the two meters alternate. In the melody, it is not the last beat that extends to the next measure; instead, León starts the melody in the middle of the measure, extending the second half of the second beat to the third beat. This change in accentuation coincides with the change in the 3/4 accompaniment: it is not on the first and third beats of the measure but the second and third. With these changes from the conventional *bambuco*, León creates a feeling of uncertainty or suspicion. All the *bambuco* elements are present there but misplaced or twisted.

“La campesina” (The Peasant Woman)³³

Original	English Translation
Caminando con lánguida pereza asoma por el recodo del camino, ya terminó el trabajo campesino, es la hora en que el Ángelus se reza.	Walking with languid laziness she appears at the bend in the road, the peasant work is done for the day, it is the hour that the Angelus is prayed.
En sus pupilas brilla la tristeza que abunda en el paisaje vespertino; medita en su monótono destino y resignada inclina la cabeza.	In her eyes glows a sadness that is abundant in the evening countryside; she meditates on her monotonous journey and, resigned, bows her head.
Entonando un cantar que es una queja, por detrás de los árboles se aleja apoyada en su rama de bejuco; Se pierde su figura dolorosa, pero queda la raza que solloza en las dolientes notas del bambuco. ¡Ah!	Intoning a song that is a moan, behind the trees she walks out of sight supported on a branch of the vine; Her painful figure is gone, but the people remain who cry out in the sorrowful notes of the bambuco. Ah!

(Angelus was a prayer said at specific times of the day: 6:00 am, 12 noon, and 12:00 pm.)

In Ex. 3, the alternation between 3/4 and 6/8 occurs right at the beginning of the piece, in the first twenty measures. In these measures, the odd-numbered ones contain the 6/8 pattern, the even-numbered ones have 3/4. However, León creates the characteristic *bambuco* syncopation

³³ Except where noted, all translations are taken from Botero, “Art Songs,” 92.

between the accompaniment and the voice. In the even-numbered measures, the voice rhythm corresponds to the 6/8 measure, contrasting with the 3/4 rhythm in the accompaniment and the odd-numbered measures in the voice.

Example 3: Jaime León, “La campesina,” mm. 1–29³⁴

In modo di Bambuco ♩ = 108

Ca - mi-nan - do con lán - gui-da pe

re - za a - so - ma

por el re - co - do del ca - mi - no

pp ritmico

mf etc...

This repetitive and monotonous rhythm depicts two essential ideas from the poem. It paints the first line of the poem, “Walking with languid laziness,” with the rhythmic bass in the piano, representing the walking peasant woman, while the voice has the role of narrator. In doing this, León gives distinctive roles to the piano and the voice: the piano illustrates the actions

³⁴ Ibid.

narrated or described by the voice. The other text depicted in the repetitive and monotonous pattern is “she meditates on her monotonous journey”: the walking is conveyed with the repetitive rhythm, and the fact that the harmony remains unchanged for 16 measures may refer to the walking peasant woman’s meditation or her monotonous journey.

The repeated right-hand chord is D minor with a fourth on the top. León’s use of quartal harmony is a reference to the *triple* and the guitar, string instruments used in a typical *bambuco* ensemble, which employs a similar tuning in the open strings: E–A–D–G–B–E on the guitar and D–G–B–E on the *triple*. Another reference to this pitch material can be found in the melodic line: in each of the first five short entrances, the melody gravitates around these notes (mm. 5, 8, 13, 16, and 21).

Example 4: León, “La campesina,” mm. 24–28³⁵

The musical score for Example 4 shows measures 24 through 28. The key signature has one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is 6/8. The vocal line is in the treble clef, and the piano accompaniment is in the bass clef. The lyrics are: "en la ho - ra en que el Án - ge - lus se re - za". The piano accompaniment features a consistent rhythmic pattern in the right hand and a more active line in the left hand. The piece concludes with "etc..."

Although León fragments the *bambuco* elements at the beginning of the song, he resorts to the complete *bambuco* topic, for example, in “it is the hour that the Angelus is prayed” (see Ex. 4). At this moment, and for four measures, the *bambuco* seems to be reconstructed and back in order: the right hand plays a 6/8 rhythm, and the left hand a 3/4. Even without accents on the third and first beats in the bass, the second beat feels weaker by tying it to the second half of the first beat, complying with expectations for the accompaniment in the *bambuco*. In the voice,

³⁵ *Colombian Art Song*, I, 105.

however, there is no extension of the third to first beat or second to third. Nevertheless, the coexistence of 3/4 and 6/8 seems to be sufficient to create the *bambuco* feeling. With this “correct” accompaniment, León chooses to set to music the only text with religious content in the sonnet. Perhaps that was the way to depict one of the few activities that united the mostly Catholic Colombia of the 1950s: going to church. The Catholic church was a powerful institution. The priest in each town was as respected and influential as the mayor. This perception of the church started to change after *La Violencia*.³⁶

Another place where the *bambuco* follows convention is the third stanza, a long and contrasting section in the song. It is written in D major, contrasting with D minor, and lasts thirty-one measures (see Ex. 5). For the first line León inverts the accompaniment, leaving the 6/8 in the left hand and the 3/4 in the right hand. The text “Intoning a song that is a moan” is sung only once, and the *bambuco* conventions are inverted, with the section functioning as an introduction for the other two lines. The following lines represent the “song that is a moan,” which at the same time are the “sorrowful notes of the *bambuco*.” Again, León makes the music ambivalent for different stanzas, in this case, between the third and fourth.

In the second and third lines of the third stanza, both melody and accompaniment follow the *bambuco* conventions (Ex. 5, mm. 47–70). Here, the bass is almost always on beats three and one, and the simultaneous 6/8 occurs in the melody, this time with a syncopation of beat three into one, or two into three (mm. 50–51 and 52). Thirds in the piano doubling the melody also follow conventions of the *bambuco*. This music, written in D major, represents the *campesina* singing on her way back home. It is noteworthy that although the text has a sorrowful content,

³⁶ Alan Axelrod and Charles Phillips, “La Violencia,” in *Reference Guide to the Major Wars and Conflicts in History: Wars in the Early 20th Century (1900–1950)* (Facts on File, 2015); https://libproxy.library.unt.edu:3035/content/entry/fofwtc/la_violencia/0

the “song that is a moan” is written in a major key and does not have musical characteristics proper to a lament or moaning. It might be León’s way to illustrate the *campesina*’s hope for a better future. Although the sonnet is not particularly hopeful, León was able somewhat to lift the depressing nature of this text through his musical choices.

Example 5: “La campesina,” mm. 42–63³⁷

42
En-to - nan-do un can - tar que es u - na que - ja por de - trás de los

49
ár - bo - les se a - le - ja a - po - ya - da en su ra - ma de be - ju - co. A - po -

56
ya - da en su ra - ma de be - ju - co. Solo
mf

60
Por de -
etc...

³⁷ Ibid., 106.

In mm. 60–63, the piano is alone, and all the *bambuco* elements or components are present. Although the left hand seems to be in 6/8, León adds the accents where beats three and one of a 3/4 measure take place, creating the simultaneity of 3/4 and 6/8. Though it just happens at the end, León elongates the melody to the next measure in the last measure of the piano solo.

The *bambuco* gestures appear again at the close of the song in mm. 88–96. León ends in the same fashion as he started, illustrating the *campesina* disappearing into the horizon in the same fatigued way as she appeared at the beginning of the song, “walking with languid laziness.” These last eight measures also make a direct reference to the last line of the sonnet: “in the sorrowful notes of the *bambuco*.” To this disconsolation, León adds an “Ah!” that is not part of the original text, reinforcing the distressed tone of the song. The topic of the *bambuco* comes back dismembered in D minor, and with the last lament on a high A in the voice.

Example 6: “La campesina,” mm. 81–88³⁸

81

pe - ro que - da la ra - za que so - llo - za

85

en las do - lien - tes no - tas del bam - bu - co

Tempo I

p

etc...

³⁸ Ibid., 107.

Previously, the final stanza had been introduced with the dismembered pattern, in this case with a repeated D in the left hand. To add to the longing of the text, León slows down the tempo and writes a less active rhythm, especially in the first line of the stanza. In the second line, León again writes hopeful music for a text that does not have that connotation. This time, the effect is achieved with an ascending melody in the voice, while the piano expands the predominant function (see Ex. 6).

León set the second stanza without any reference to the *bambuco* topic either rhythmically or melodically, and even in 4/4, not the expected 3/4 or 6/8. This change shows how León writes music according to each stanza. In the first, the repeated rhythm depicts the *campesina* walking. In the third, she sings, and in the fourth, the *campesina* disappears, walking again, repeating the rhythm of the first stanza. In the second, where the main action is the meditation of her “monotonous journey,” there are no *bambuco* elements. The *campesina*’s meditation is introduced by narrator describing her “sad eyes” with descending parallel chords over an A pedal. At the point where the meditation takes place, León asks for the text to be recited over a chord with the notes ADGBE, which corresponds to five of the six guitar open strings, as if the *campesina* is preparing the guitar to sing the third stanza. This effect is reinforced by repeating an arpeggio of the same chord just before the *campesina* continues her journey and starts singing her “song that is a moan.” These notes were also used by the voice in the first stanza, as mentioned before. León does not use the lower E of the guitar, as he prolongs the A pedal in the bass. The E is also in the top voice.

León uses a tonal harmonic language for this song, adding some compositional tools from the early twentieth century, much like impressionistic composers. Although the song starts in D minor, León adds quartal harmony to the D minor chord, evoking the open strings of the

instruments typically used to play the *bambuco*: this is another way in which he uses the *bambuco* conventions in this song.

The lack of a leading tone enhances the “laziness” in the walking of the *campesina*, as if she would not want to get back home to her “monotonous destiny” after finishing her work, i.e., going back to the tonic. Another possible justification is the use of quartal harmony: ascending from B and E, as the notes used on top of the D-minor chord, the following notes are A, D, G, C, and F. By raising the C, the F would end up being F-sharp. León avoids the dominant or any leading tone until the *campesina* has finished her work in mm. 17–22. However, he turns that dominant into a minor chord on the fifth in m. 24, right into the next line, as if the music and the *campesina* do not want to get back to “home” (tonic). In the interlude between first and second lines, the piano prolongs the minor chord on the fifth, and the dominant chord does not reappear until the last moment and resolving to D major (m. 39). The parallel descending chords of the second stanza have two explanations in terms of music and text depiction. The absence of tonal function in this passage, other than the prolonged fifth of D, contributes to the feeling of a moment of meditation after the long day of work.

“Tu madre en la fuente”

The period of La violencia (The Violence) is implicitly present in the song “Tu madre en la fuente” (Your mother at the fountain), a lullaby by the poet Eduardo Carranza (1913–1985) that was published in 1945. León set it to music in 1989. Botero includes conversations with León about this song and anecdotes. According to that interview, this was León’s favorite song.³⁹

Carranza’s lullaby describes a family in which the father is at war, fighting, while the mother, probably a peasant or *campesina*, stays at home to care for a child. Interestingly, the poet

³⁹ Botero, “Art Songs,” 191.

uses a lullaby as a foil for a patriotic and heroic poem. León seems to give it a different interpretation by subverting the military topic, which Carranza had already weakened by using a lullaby. At the same time, León does not use conventional nationalism, but resorts to folk topics as rhetorical devices.

“Tu madre en la fuente” (Canción de Cuna) [Your Mother at the Fountain] (Lullaby)

Original	English Translation
Tu madre en la fuente tu padre en la guerra. Duérmete mi niña Que azulas la tierra.	Your mother at the fountain, your father in the war. Sleep my girl because you make the earth blue.
Tu madre en la fuente recoge la estrella. Tu padre en la guerra lleva la bandera.	Your mother at the fountain gathers the star. Your father in the war carries the flag.
A tu madre, en sueños, alcanza la estrella. A tu padre, en sueños, sostén la bandera.	In your dreams let your mother reach the star. In your dreams let your father hold up the flag.
Azul de la fuente, azul de la guerra. Mi niña dormida azul de la tierra.	Blue of the fountain, blue of the war. My sleeping girl blue of the earth.

León references the war topic clearly, both in the indication *Allegro marziale* and with an introduction in 5/4, using chords reminiscent of a military musical rhetoric. Right after the introduction, León introduces some *bambuco* features: the meter changes to 3/4, but the accompaniment in the piano is in 6/8, while the melody stays in 3/4 (see Ex. 7). The simultaneity of those patterns refers if not directly to the *bambuco*, perhaps to other Colombian folk genres, like the *joropo* or the *pasillo*. By referencing Colombian folk topics, León musically characterizes the family in the poem as *campesinos*.

León's vocal line is mostly restricted to the notes of the A-flat major chord, starting on the fifth of the chord. This melodic construction evokes both a lullaby and the use of brass instruments, which at the same time suggests a martial topic. The martial topic, also in the 5/4 measures (1–2, 7–8, 12–13, and 60–62), is in an irregular meter compared with the usual 4/4 or 2/4 of most martial music. León's martial theme indicates that the war is present but is not right. Another way in which León twists the martial topic is with the use of uncommon chords for a march. First, he introduces a major chord over the flat seventh degree (mm. 1–2), then restates the same 5/4 march but with a major chord built over the flat third degree, spelled as B major instead of C-flat major (mm. 7–8). This march reiteration is accompanied in the left hand by an interrupted 6/8 pattern of eighth notes: interrupted because it does not fit in a 5/4 meter. See Ex. 7.

Example 7: León, "Tu madre en la fuente," mm. 1–6⁴⁰

Allegro marziale ♩ = 120

The musical score consists of two systems. The first system is the vocal line, written in a treble clef with a key signature of three flats (B-flat major) and a 5/4 time signature. It begins with a rest for two measures, followed by a melodic line starting on G4. The lyrics are: "Tu ma-dre en la fuen-te tu pa-dre en la gue-rra." The dynamic marking is *mf*. The second system is the piano accompaniment, written in grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The right hand has a 5/4 time signature and plays a series of chords and eighth notes. The left hand has a 6/8 time signature and plays a pattern of eighth notes. The dynamic marking is *f*. The score ends with a *p* marking and the text "etc..."

It is only when the text refers to the mother that León writes 6/8 and 3/4 at the same time. When the text refers to the father, León vaguely alludes to the *bambuco* topic, through the unexpected accent on the third beat of mm. 17–20 (see Ex. 8). Although the piano part plays only quarter notes instead of a 6/8 pattern, León writes an accent on the third beat for the lines about the father. The accent has two purposes. First, the accentuation of the weakest beat is reminiscent

⁴⁰ *Colombian Art Song*, I, 75.

of the Colombian folk topic, because a clear bass in the third beat of a 3/4 measure is common to the different ways of writing a *bambuco*. Second, the aggressive accent is evocative of the war in which the father is involved. Those notes are further stressed by the change of chord on each of those quarter notes.

Example 8: “Tu madre en la fuente,” mm. 17–23⁴¹

In “Tu madre en la fuente,” León uses some elements from the *bambuco* topic, not easy to perceive at first hearing. Nowhere does the melodic line resort to a 6/8 pattern; similarly, the bass never pits 3/4 against 6/8. On the contrary, León flips these two elements, writing a strong 6/8 pattern in the bass and almost exclusively quarter notes in the voice, under the 3/4 meter. Even with these inverted features, the song manages to evoke a Colombian atmosphere, as the simultaneity of 3/4 and 6/8 is characteristic of the *bambuco* and other Colombian folk genres. There is even a version of this song by the Colombian music group Le secret in which they play the song with a *tiple* making the typical *bambuco* pattern in the accompaniment.⁴²

“El muñeco dormilón”

This song is León’s clearest realization of the *bambuco* topic, even though, once again, he did not verbally allude to it in any way. “El muñeco dormilón” is part of the *Ciclo de*

⁴¹ Ibid., 76.

⁴² León, “Tu madre en la fuente,” performed by the chamber group Le secret, January 14, 2013, concert recording, 2:54; https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R135_HhaQcU.

canciones infantiles Pequeña, pequeñita (Children’s Song Cycle *Pequeña, pequeñita*). The cycle is the only group of songs that León composed on commission. It was published in Ecuador in 1987. Francisco Delgado Santos, an Ecuadorian children’s literature author, wrote the text. This song stands out for the spoken text, which introduces the story as well as serve as an interlude between the stanza and the refrain, and between reiterations of the refrain.

“El muñeco dormilón”⁴³ (The Sleepy-Headed Doll)

Original	English Translation
<i>Cuando yo estaba en la escuela me gustaba una canción que relataba la historia del niño dormilón:</i>	<i>When I was in school I liked a song that told the story of the sleepy-headed boy:</i>
Érase una vez un niño pequeñito y remolón que no quiso levantarse para estudiar su lección; Y como jamás hiciera caso a papá ni a mamá, lo convirtió una extranjera en muñeco dormilón.	Once upon a time there was a boy very little and lazy who did not want to get up to study his lesson; And because he never paid attention to his papa nor mama, a strange woman turned him into a sleepy-headed doll.
<i>Cuentan que a partir de entonces se oye cantar este son:</i> Pim, pirín, pirín, pompón. ¡ponte saco y pantalón! ¡Sal de la cama pequeño!	<i>They say that ever since then you could hear this song:</i> Pim, pirín, pirín, pompón. Put on your shirt and pants! Get out of bed little one!
Pim, pirín, pirín, pompón. Ya no debes tener sueño: ¡ponte saco y pantalón!	Pim, pirín, pirín, pompón. You shouldn’t be sleepy now: Put on your shirt and pants!
<i>Pedacito de granuja si no estudias la lección, te convertirá la bruja en muñeco dormilón....</i>	<i>Little rascal if you don’t study your lesson, the witch will turn you into a sleepy-headed doll....</i>

⁴³ The text in italics is spoken.

Musically, the *bambuco* features become evident after the four-measure introduction in common time. Starting in m. 5, the characteristic *bambuco* interplay between 3/4 and 6/8 is featured in the piano, with the right hand in six and the left hand in three. Varney’s description of the typical *bambuco* melody is illustrated in the first four measures of the voice part of the 3/4 section, alternating between 3/4 and 6/8, with the 6/8 being in the closing measure of each phrase (see Ex. 9). These two *bambuco* characteristics continue throughout the song. There are a few measures in which the piano, instead of playing the two patterns simultaneously, alternates them. However, these are cadential sections of the song and do not compromise the *bambuco* genre.

Example 9: León, “El muñeco dormilón,” mm. 1–12⁴⁴

5 **Andantino**

mf

9

É - ra - se u - na vez un ni - ño pe - que - ñi - to y re - mo - lón

p etc...

In spite of the song’s clear use of the *bambuco* topic, it failed to be addressed by either Álvarez or Botero. In contrast with the melancholy associated with the genre,⁴⁵ this *bambuco* is

⁴⁴ *Colombian Art Song*, II, 78.

jovial. León also makes a different rhetorical use of the *bambuco*, compared with the previously discussed songs where the text referred to the war or the vulnerable population of his country. With a text made for children, León seems comfortable using the *bambuco* in a traditional way, representing Colombia in a way that can be transmitted to younger generations.

Songs with Colombian Textual References

The following songs have Colombian elements that suggest a national setting; however, León set the music with neutral or international gestures. Two of these songs, “Canción del boga ausente” and “Letra para cantar al son del arpa,” bring up uniquely Colombian circumstances yet employ a Western musical idiom.

“Canción del boga ausente”

Candelario Obeso (1849–1884) was the author of “Canción del boga ausente.” An Afro-Colombian writer, Obeso was among the first writers with African roots in Latin America. His publication *Cantos populares de mi tierra* (1877) contains poems written in the Afro-Colombian speech from around the Magdalena river (Colombia’s most important waterway).⁴⁶ León knew this speech very well, for it is similar to that of the Caribbean region of his birth; he furthermore requested that the piece be sung in this accent, according to an interview with Botero.⁴⁷

Obeso’s poem has been set to music by other prominent Colombian composers, such as Guillermo Uribe Holguín, Alberto Bermúdez Silva, and Antonio María Valencia. Folk music groups have also set the text to music, in Colombian popular styles that span the Caribbean to the

⁴⁵ Óscar Hernández Salgar, “Los mitos de la música nacional. Poder y emoción en las músicas populares colombianas 1930–1960” (doctoral diss., Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, Bogotá, 2014), 54–55, 74–79.

⁴⁶ John M. Lipski, *A History of Afro-Hispanic Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 187–88.

⁴⁷ Botero, “Art Songs,” 199.

Pacific regions of the country; their recordings are easy to find on YouTube. “Canción del boga ausente” is the only song León wrote for baritone. It also stands out for its harmonic language, less conventional and more complex than the rest of his catalog.

“Canción del boga ausente” (Song of the Absent Boatman)⁴⁸

Original	English Translation
Qué trite que etá la noche, La noche qué trite etá; No hay en er cielo una etrella... Remá, remá.	How sad is the night, The night is so sad; There isn't a star in the sky... Row, row.
La negra re mi arma mía, Mientrá yo brego en la má, Bañaro en suró por ella, ¿Qué hará? ¿Qué hará?	The black woman of my soul, while I toil in the sea, bathed in sweat for her, What is she doing? What is she doing?
Tar vé por su zambo amáo Doriente supirará, O tar vé ni recuéda... ¡Llorá! ¡Llorá!	Maybe for her beloved zambo painfully she will sigh, or maybe she doesn't even remember me... Cry! Cry!
Lo jembras son como é toro Le réta tierra ejgraciá; Con ácte se saca er peje Der má, der má!...	Females are like everything on this disgraced earth; with art one gets the fish From the sea, from the sea!...
Qué ejcura que etá la noche, La noche qué ejcura etá; Asina se cura la ausencia... Bogá, bogá!...	How dark is the night, The night is so dark; absence is not cured that way Row, row!...

(A zambo is a person whose parents are African and Amerindian. The term is not politically correct today.)

When setting the poem, León deleted the penultimate stanza of the original text. It is also not clear if the changes to the text present on the MundoArts edition were made by León or were

⁴⁸ This is the poem as published by Obeso. Caicedo's edition and Botero's thesis present different versions of the text. The translation was adjusted to match Obeso's original text. Candelario Obeso, *Cantos populares de mi tierra* (Bogotá: Ministerio de Cultura, 2015), 29–30.

editorial decisions. These changes put the text closer to vernacular Spanish, whereas the composer had requested that the song be sung in the Afro-Colombian accent.

The text depicts a fisherman dealing with uncertainty on a dark starless night, away from his loved one, working hard and questioning whether his mate truly loves him. With dissonant chords and syncopated rhythm, León depicts the sadness and desperation of the fisherman. These chords are still functional. In the opening gesture, the first two are ninth chords. The first ninth chord is in fourth inversion; in its fundamental position it would be a diminished chord over an augmented chord: A-flat-C-E-G-B-flat. The minor seventh between B-flat and A-flat suggests an augmented sixth chord or a pre-dominant function. The second chord, in fifth inversion, is built over G: G-B-flat-D-flat-F-A, which at the same time is a mirror reflection of the first chord, an augmented chord over a diminished chord. This chord suggests the dominant of D. The last chord is a diatonic D minor chord with a ninth, and that is why it sounds stable. After the same gesture is repeated in m. 3, the second chord in m. 5 redirects the harmony to the subdominant. To close the introduction, the chords of m. 1 return as incomplete thirteenth chords, which makes them more diatonic and stable to the ear. (See Ex. 10.)

Another example of the dissonant harmony used by León in this song is found in mm. 12–16, where the voice has a pedal over C. In this section, while the voice continues in the A-Phrygian mode, León develops the harmonic idea exposed in the introduction. It can be understood as an augmented ninth that resolves first to a minor ninth and then to the fifth. The chords below are used as moving passing chords in parallel movement, first a C-minor seventh, then B-flat with minor seventh and augmented ninth, preparing the next measure, m. 15.

Example 10: León, "Canción del boga ausente," mm. 1–16⁴⁹

Con cadencia rítmica ♩ = 50

7

f 3 3

Qué tri-te que e-tá la no-che la no-che qué tri -te e

mp

12

3 3 3 3

tá; No hay_ en er cie-lo u na e - tre-lla_ re - má re-má re - má

etc...

⁴⁹ Colombian Art Song, II, 99.

The modulation to F minor, the song's ending key, can be interpreted as León depicting the boatman getting further away in the night while realizing that he may not be remembered by his significant other and starting to cry. It also represents the boat being in a different place. These are also the only lines repeated by León in the setting of the song, first in mm. 37–40 (Ex. 11), while modulating to F minor, and then in mm. 45–48 (Ex. 12), already in the new key.

Example 11: “Canción del boga ausente,” mm. 35–40⁵⁰

35

do - rien - te su - pi - ra - rá o tar vé ni re -

38

cuéc - da llo - rá! llo - rá! llo rá!

etc...

Example 12: “Canción del boga ausente,” mm. 45–48⁵¹

45

o tar vé ni re - cuéc - da llo - rá! llo - rá! llo - rá!

etc...

⁵⁰ Ibid., 101.

⁵¹ Ibid., 102.

The rhythmic instability comes to an end in the last stanza, or perhaps León is trying to show a tired fisherman who cannot row any longer. He represents the feeling of being lost with tonal instability, starting the song in D minor, and finishing in F minor. The song has piano interludes between each stanza. The fourth stanza stands out for its use of less dissonant chords and a stable tonic: this is the only stanza where the fisherman is not wondering about his loved woman or reflecting on his situation. In this stanza the fisherman firmly states his point of view about life: how women are on this earth, and how to do his work. The climax of the song is also in this stanza, indicated as *fortissimo* (see Ex. 13).

Example 13: “Canción del boga ausente,” mm. 50–58⁵²

49

Lo jem-bras son co-mo é to-ro— Le ré-ta tie-rra ej-gra - ciá; Con

54

ác-te se sa-ca er pe-je— Der má, der má, der má! 3 etc...

León not using music that represents the area where the poem is based is noteworthy. He had previously written a *cumbia*, typical music from the Colombian Caribbean, in the song “A

⁵² Ibid., 102.

mi ciudad nativa,” to a poem that celebrates the city of Cartagena, where he was born. Apart from the text being written in dialect, there are no identifiable traces of folk influences, *cumbia*, or other rhythms from the Caribbean in this song.

“Letra para cantar al son del arpa”

Nothing in the text of this song directly references Colombia. But the author of the text, Eduardo Carranza, was born in Los Llanos (the Eastern Colombian plains that stretch all the way into Venezuela), and his poem subtly recalls the most popular instrument in the region, the harp. This region cultivates a genre of folk music that is also shared with Venezuela, commonly known as *joropo*. In the typical ensemble of the *joropo*, the main instrument is an *arpa llanera* (harp from the plainlands).⁵³ It is possible that Carranza’s poems indirectly reference his birth region through its most popular musical instrument.

Carranza is also the poet whom León set the most. In Carranza’s work, many other texts make explicit reference to his origins, and León likely knew them. Nothing in this poem refers to anything from the *llanos*. The text does not follow a folkloric form but is modernist in the sense of the Nicaraguan poet Rubén Darío (1867–1916): it plays with symbols, colors, rhythm, and sonority. León’s reaction to the text consistently shows its affective and poetic implications.

Carranza did not make any division among the 48 lines of the poem (47 in León’s song). However, León divides the text into three stanzas, as shown above. In each of them, the piano part has a resemblance to the harp. To create this effect, León wrote arpeggios in thirty-second notes and glissandos. This texture alternates with sections more idiomatic to the piano.

⁵³ “... la instrumentación tradicional del Joropo Llanero es el clásico trío de arpa o bandola, cuatro y maracas” (The traditional instrumentation of the *Joropo* from the Plainlands is the classic trio of harp or *bandola*, *cuatro*, and *maracas*). Claudia Calderón Sáenz, “Aspectos musicales del joropo de Venezuela y Colombia,” *Música oral del sur* 12 (2015): 422.

“Letra para cantar al son del arpa”⁵⁴ (Words to Sing to the Song of the Harp)

Original	English Translation
<p>Del lado del arpa ya vamos, amor. Pradera dormida, velada de lluvia. Orilla del mar, un ala de música, un ala visible de ángel la oculta. Una margarita lleva entre sus labios el viento del arpa. La luna del arpa, cantando en voz baja, borda su pañuelo.</p>	<p>On the side of the harp we are going, my love. Sleeping grasslands veiled in rain. Shore of the sea, a wing of music, a visible wing of angel hides it. A daisy carries in its lips the wind of the harp. The moon of the harp, singing in a low voice embroiders a handkerchief.</p>
<p>Árboles azules del lado del arpa. Y, entre sus ramas, desnuda, la luz. Se abre otra rosa al lado del arpa. Hacia allá sonrientes los niños dormidos. Y mira hacia allá, por sobre la tarde, la absorta doncella. Hacia ese lado vuelan las palomas. Del lado del arpa, está el desenlace del cuento olvidado.</p>	<p>Blue trees on the side the harp. And, within the branches, naked, the light. Another rose opens on the side of the harp. Over there smiling the sleeping children. And look over there, by the afternoon, the enchanted maiden. On that side the doves fly. On the side of the harp is the ending of the forgotten tale.</p>
<p>Y esperan los sueños un pecho dormido. La palabra amor que tú me decías, aquella sonrisa parecida a un beso, viven para siempre</p>	<p>And dreams wait for a sleeping bosom. The word of love that you were telling me, with that smile like a kiss, that lives forever</p>

⁵⁴ The poem appears as used by León, who made changes from the original text.

del lado del arpa,
 en aire de música,
 igual que en un cielo.
 Hacia el fin del aire,
 hacia el azulado
 comienzo del ángel,
 del alma, del alba,
 vayamos, amor,
 hacia otro lado
 del arpa.

by the side of the harp,
 on the air of music,
 like that of a sky.
 Towards the end of the air,
 towards the bluish
 beginning of the angel,
 the soul, the dawn,
 let us go, love,
 to the other side
 of the harp.

The musical style chosen by León references Impressionism, a musical period when the harp became a more prominent instrument. He achieves an impressionistic sound by using the A-flat Dorian mode. The effect is reinforced by going to D-flat on the third beat of the measure and avoiding any progression to the fifth degree of the scale (see Ex. 14).

Example 14: León, “Letra para cantar al son del arpa,” mm. 1–4⁵⁵

Allegro vivace ♩ = 80

f Del la - do del

ar - pa ya va - mos a - mor.

etc...

⁵⁵ Ibid., I, 96.

León abandons modality for some sections of the song, and at the end slips back into functional tonality. He gives us a glimpse of his intentions at the end of the first section, with a cadence in G-flat major. This transition to tonality is done by taking the A-flat Dorian arpeggio as the second degree (pre-dominant) of the new tonic (see Ex. 15). Although this section is modal, G-flat major is present from the beginning in a hidden way and manifests itself in the cadences because of the process previously described, with A-flat as its second degree. Modality is also present in the melody, which presents the A-flat to A-flat octave divided in two by the E-flat. This structure is either Aeolian or Dorian, tending towards the Dorian mode through the F-naturals in mm. 6 and 10.

Example 15: “Letra para cantar al son del arpa,” mm. 20–23⁵⁶

The musical score for Example 15 consists of two systems of music. The first system covers measures 19 and 20. The vocal line (treble clef) begins at measure 19 with a rest, followed by the lyrics "La lu-na del ar - pa can - tan - do en voz". The piano accompaniment (grand staff) features a 7-measure arpeggiated figure in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. The second system covers measures 21 and 22. The vocal line continues with the lyrics "ba - ja, bor-da su pa - ñue - lo." and ends with a fermata. The piano accompaniment includes a 9-measure arpeggiated figure in the right hand and a bass line. A glissando instruction "(gliss. sobre las notas negras)" is written above the piano part, leading to a final chord marked "f" and "etc...".

⁵⁶ Ibid., 98.

Example 16: “Letra para cantar al son del arpa,” mm. 28–39⁵⁷

28 *f* *f* *f*
y en-tre sus ra-mas des-nu-da la luz.

33 *mf* *mf*
Se a-bre o-tra ro - sa al la-do del ar - pa

37 *senza affretare* *mf* *etc...*
ha- cia llá son-rien-te los ni-ños dor-mi - dos y mi-ra ha-cia a - llá

Modality and tonality are also mixed in the middle section (see Ex. 16). This time, the mode is E-flat Mixolydian (mm. 30–35), subsequently moving to the key of E-flat major through an augmented-sixth chord (mm. 35–38). This time, although the main note in the mode and key

⁵⁷ Ibid., 99.

is E-flat, the sense of moving into tonality can be appreciated by the resolution of the German 6th chord into the dominant of the home key, which creates a strong tonal drive towards the cadence. In this chordal section, León also uses some text painting under the words “hacia allá sonrientes los niños dormidos” (over there smiling the sleeping children), with a syncopated triplet rhythm in 5/4, contrasting with the steady quarter-notes in the 3/4 that precede that line and continues after it.

After exploring these tensions between modes and keys, the song concludes in G-flat major. The resolution was expected, as León announced it in the conclusion of the two previous sections. At no point during the song does he make any reference to music from the Colombian Plainlands. On the contrary, the music of this song is set in an international context. He disregarded Carranza’s origin, and depicts the harp as it is known internationally, rather than as the folk instrument that the poet might have heard in his hometown. In the *loropo*, the *arpa llanera* usually provides a chordal and rhythmic accompaniment; glissandos or arpeggios as used in this song are uncommon. León’s harp is reminiscent of Debussy and Impressionism, placing the listener in a salon of the *Belle époque*. These topics are employed as distinctively and efficiently as the *bambuco* or martial topic in the previous songs.

Songs without Colombian Elements in their Text or Music

The last group of songs consists of ones that do not make any reference to Colombian elements in either text or music. León places himself in a cosmopolitan setting, by citing Wagner and using tools characteristic of the art-song tradition. These songs, entirely set in a cosmopolitan style, are a sample of most of his output, which I would place in this category.

“Siempre”

In “Siempre,” each stanza of the poem receives a unique musical treatment, and in each stanza, it is possible to identify which line was crucial for León. Nevertheless, the song is coherent, and its message is delivered clearly. “Siempre” is one of León’s longest songs. Its form is ABCA’, with each section corresponding to one of the four internal divisions of the sonnet by Alfredo Gómez Jaime (1878—1946), published in 1910. León set it to music in its entirety in 1982.

“Siempre” (Always)

Original	English Translation
Por ti serán siempre mis hondos cantares, por ti nuevas trovas ensayan sus vuelos; tú has sido en mi senda de mudos pesares rosal florecido de amor y consuelos.	For you there will always be my deepest songs, for you new verses test their flight; you have been on my path of mute sorrows a flowering rose of love and consolation.
¡La perla más blanca de todos mis mares, la estrella más dulce de todos mis cielos, la flor más gloriosa de los azahares el premio más grande de ocultos anhelos!	The whitest pearl of all my seas, the sweetest star of all my skies, the most glorious flower of the orange blossoms the greatest prize of the hidden desires.
Sólo por amarte comprendo la vida; tan sólo por verte perdono la herida, de males que hieren sin tregua ni calma.	Merely by loving you I understand life; if only for seeing you I pardon the injury of the wrongs that hurt relentlessly without respite.
Por ti hay nuevas rosas sobre los senderos, y cómo jazmines, temblantes luceros despliegan sus broches de luz en el alma.	For you there are new roses on the paths, and like jasmine, trembling splendors display their brooches of light in the soul.

Although the word *siempre* (always) appears only once, it is in the opening line and all-important. This line, “For you there will always be my deepest songs,” makes the forthcoming lines dependent on this introduction. It is because of this dedication that the speaking persona will always sing. In the music, León writes a motive depicting the idea of “always”: an ascending scale that does not resolve conclusively. With this motive, León opens the song (see Ex. 17).

Example 17: León, “Siempre,” mm. 1–13⁵⁸

♩ = 106

7 **A tempo**

Por ti se-rán siem-pre

rit. etc...

In the first four measures, León presents the motive for the first time. It starts with the fifth degree of the primary key going to the sixth, and a delayed left hand providing harmonic support one beat later. Each of these four iterations has a dissonance that does not resolve conclusively. Even the fourth time, when it resolves the dominant-seventh chord, it changes register, and as soon as it resolves, the right hand moves again one step up, making it inconclusive. In its second attempt (mm. 5–8), the motive moves one step higher in each measure, allowing it to reach an octave instead of a sixth. Although the scale now reaches completion, and resolves to A-flat major, it is still not conclusive: The A-flat major chord has a ninth and later a seventh, keeping the song *always* moving.

A variation of this motive gives movement to the B section (see Ex. 18). The ascending scale appears in the voice with straight quarter notes (mm. 45–47), while in the piano, it is part of

⁵⁸ Ibid., I, 129.

the accompaniment in the left hand (mm. 43–45), adorned with a triplet figure in m. 46. This ascending motive with a triplet figure is similar to the motive Richard Wagner (1813–1883) uses for his *Siegfried Idyll*, WWV 103, and again in his opera *Siegfried*.⁵⁹ In the opera, Brunhilde sings the motive to Siegfried using the words “Ewig war ich,” meaning “forever I was.” The word *ewig* has a similar meaning to always (*siempre*); both are related to the eternal. In *Siegfried*, Wagner uses the ascending triplet scale exactly with this word three times (see Ex. 19). León is likely to have known this motive, as he was an opera conductor.

Example 18: “Siempre,” mm. 43–53⁶⁰

43 **Poco meno mosso**

La per - la más blan - ca de to - dos mis

ma - les la es - tre - lla más dul - ce de to - dos mis cie - los etc...

⁵⁹ Special thanks to Dr. Bernardo Illari, who noted the similarity to *Siegfried*.

⁶⁰ *Colombian Art Song*, I, 131.

Example 19: Richard Wagner, *Siegfried*, III, six measures after rehearsal 93⁶¹

The motive is used again in “Siempre” in the interlude between C and A1 and in the postlude. This interlude has the same material as the introduction, without the eighth notes in the left hand (mm. 89–92). By maintaining the non-resolution of the dissonances, the music still has an inconclusive character, and without the eighth notes it lacks forward movement, as most of what was wanted to be said is already said.

In the postlude, the song closes with the rhythmic cell of the motive, but without the scale. The motive moves around the sixth degree of A-flat major, surrounding it with E-flat and G, as if the dominant were trying to resolve but the attraction to F is stronger than to A-flat. In the left hand, an A-flat pedal changes between tonic and the diminished-seventh chord of the dominant. Neither of the two chords resolves, and the song concludes with a tonic 6/4 chord with an F in the top voice, as if the song itself would “always” remain unfinished (see Ex. 20).

⁶¹ Richard Wagner, *Siegfried*, arr. Karl Klindworth (Mainz: B. Schotts Söhne, 1908), 338.

Example 20: León, “Siempre,” mm. 125–30⁶²

125 **A tempo**

The musical score for Example 20, measures 125-30, is presented in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. It consists of a vocal line (treble clef) and a piano accompaniment (grand staff). The piano part includes dynamics like 'dim.' and 'ppp', and an '8va' marking. The vocal line has a long E-flat note at the end.

The song concludes with a variant of the musical material used in section A and then a coda. Although there are similarities between the opening and closing sections, it is significant that León does not treat the voice as he did in the first part, confirming how important the opening lines of the poem are for him. Before the piano postlude, which uses the same material as the prelude and interlude, the voice finishes its intervention with a long E-flat over a dominant chord.

Other than depicting with music the poetic idea of *Siempre*, León also highlights the most important lines of the poem. For the first stanza and the first couplet, León uses the same notes and rhythm four times in the voice part (mm. 11–26). The first couplet gives the title to the song and the overall mood of the poem and the song. It is noteworthy that this figure is used four times for this couplet, as if the song were going to be “always” sung with this three-note motive. This three-note figure is never repeated; even when the music goes back to A1 at the end, the motive adjusts to different words.

As in the first stanza, León sets the central line of the second differently (mm. 61–66). “The greatest prize of the hidden desires” is introduced by the piano moving forward, expanding the *Ewig* triplet motive for the first time. The arrival of this line stands out because of the change

⁶² *Colombian Art Song*, I, 134.

of texture in the piano. The moving triplets arrive at the most significant chord written so far in the piano part in m. 63. This chordal texture accompanies the text “The greatest prize,” while “the hidden desires” resume the calm texture used in the second stanza. Another detail worth mentioning is the lack of an added dissonance in this B-major chord. So far, every chord has had an added seventh, ninth, or eleventh. The lack of any dissonance in this spot catches the attention of the listener. León also calls the attention of the performers, by changing from flats to sharps. G-flat major was already established, and modulating to C-flat (the subdominant) is something that can be expected in this key. Instead, León chooses an enharmonic modulation to B-sharp major for “The greatest prize,” going “back” to C-flat major for “the hidden desires.”

León reserves the climax of the song for the third line of the third stanza. This is in E-flat major, the fifth degree of A-flat major, the primary key of the song. The climax is prepared by the ascending-scale motive, with eighth notes instead of quarter notes in the piano part. Also, this movement happens in the same register and with similar notes in the piano, giving an impulse. Opening the range as the music gets closer to its peak enhances this effect. So far, eighth notes have been used just as passing tones or embellishments for the voice, but in the third stanza, eighth notes give movement to the text, not just the piano part.

The climax takes place in m. 82, under the phrase “Of the wrongs that hurt relentlessly without respite,” where the forward movement that the music has gained through the C part reaches a culmination. This section starts with a dynamic indication of *piano* and has a *forte* in m. 82, preceded by a crescendo. Furthermore, the voice reaches its highest note in this measure and uses the scale motive but in contrary movement twice. The piano part reinforces the climax with a chordal texture accompanying the voice note by note. For “Of the wrongs that hurt,” León writes an E-flat pedal point, the tonic of this section, and the dominant to the primary key. In

contrast, for “relentlessly without respite,” the pedal moves to A-flat major, announcing the return to the primary key. This line is also the only one with a negative connotation in the poem, which may explain the use of the scale-motive in contrary motion, and a dissonant dominant chord (sharp-fifth and flat-ninth) for the word “hurt” (see Ex. 21).

Example 21: “Siempre,” mm. 82–85⁶³

82

de ma - les - que hie - ren sin tre - gua ni cal - ma

f legato

legato

etc...

Another detail worth mentioning is León’s selection of keys for each section of the song. *Siempre* is in A-flat major, the key that opens and closes the song. For the C section, he modulates to the dominant, E-flat major, and writes the climax of the song in this key. However, instead of modulating to a key closer to A-flat, for the B section León goes to the subtonic, G-flat major. A possible explanation for this far modulation is the key of the culmination of this section: B major, or enharmonically in C-flat major. These three keys form the A-flat minor chord. No substantial section of the song is in a minor key, and the keys of the most important lines of the song form the parallel minor triad of the home key.

“Algún día”

“Algún día” is one of León’s most frequently performed songs. It is a short song, setting the entire poem of the same name by Dora Castellanos (b. 1924). The poem first appeared in

⁶³ Ibid., 132.

1955, and León wrote the song in 1980. “Algún día” is through-composed. Each of the four stanzas is eight measures long, except for the last one, which is prolonged because of its cadential purposes.

“Algún día” (Someday)

Original	English Translation
Un día llegarás; el amor nos espera y me dirás: Amada, ya llegó la primavera.	One day you will arrive; love is waiting for us and you will say to me: My love, spring has arrived.
Un día me amarás. Estarás de mi pecho tan cercano, que no sabré si el fuego que me abrasa es de tu corazón o del verano.	One day you will love me. You will be so close to my bosom, that I will not know if the fire that burns me is from your heart or the summer.
Un día me tendrás. Escucharemos mudos latir nuestras arterias y sollozar los árboles desnudos.	One day you will have me. Silently we will listen to the pulsing of our veins the sob of the naked trees.
Un día. Cualquier día. Breve y eterno, el amor es el mismo en verano, en otoño y en invierno	One day. Any day. Brief and eternal, love is the same in summer, in fall, and winter.

The song is in E major, and most of the harmony is diatonic. Some chords have extended dissonances such as ninths or elevenths. In the short four-measure introduction, however, León starts with a progression expanding F-sharp minor seventh, then altering the same progression through a chromatic mediant relationship, arriving at the dominant-seventh chord of E major. The arrival at the dominant is also expanded by one measure, finally arriving at the tonic in m. 5. By avoiding the tonic until the fifth bar, León musically depicts the main idea of the poem: waiting (see Ex. 22).

Example 22: Léon, “Algún día,” mm. 1–6⁶⁴

Molto espressivo e rubato

A tempo *mf*

Un dí - a lle - ga - rás.

rit. *mf* *etc...*

After the music arrives at the tonic, the voice presents a motive that heads every stanza except the fourth. Each stanza begins with the words *Un día* (one day), accompanied by a verb in the future tense: will arrive (*llegarás*), will love me (*me amarás*), and will have me (*me tendrás*). The exception, again, is the fourth: One day, any day (*un día, cualquier día*). The motive is formed by three descending eighth notes from E, a descending fourth, and three ascending eighth notes from G-sharp, arriving at a whole-note B (see Ex. 20, m. 5).

Another aspect of the harmony is the appearance of F major, the Neapolitan chord of E major. It is first suggested in m. 11 when the dominant of F major is used as an augmented-sixth chord in E major. The Neapolitan chord becomes prominent in the second stanza, when the music arrives again on a C dominant seventh (through another chromatic mediant relationship),

⁶⁴ Ibid., I, 118.

expanding it, and arriving at F major. F major is then used as a Neapolitan and leads the music back to the dominant, closing the second stanza.

In the second stanza, the use of syncopated rhythms suggests the sound of a heartbeat (see Ex. 23, mm. 17–19). Other composers, such as Mozart and Schubert, have used this musical depiction of a heartbeat. León also uses the syncopation to depict the heartbeat the lover will feel when close to the chest of the speaker: “You will be so close to my bosom that I will not know if the fire that burns me is from your heart or the summer.”

Example 23: “Algún día,” mm. 17--21⁶⁵

León indicates the climax with a *fortissimo* at the beginning of the third stanza (see Ex. 23, m. 21), which arrives after the crescendo that closes the second stanza. After this big arrival, the third stanza starts *piano* and changes texture in the accompaniment, giving musical support to the text “Silently we will listen.” A whole-note chord in the piano part was used before, also

⁶⁵ Ibid., 119.

supporting text relevant to the action of listening, in m. 11, after the line “and you will say to me: My love.” The whole note works as a contrast with the moving eighth notes from previous measures in both cases. This contrast creates a sensation of listening, supporting the content of the text.

The main feature of the third stanza is the chromatic movement at the end. Through chromatic mediant relationships and parallel chord movement, León expands the tonic until the beginning of the final stanza. As mentioned before, this is the only stanza that begins without the main motive of the song. He uses a dominant pedal for three and a half measures at the end of the stanza, creating a tension typical of closing sections. In the last musical statement, the dominant pedal resolves to the tonic. However, the right hand plays subdominant chords before resolving. After resolving, the piano plays the primary motive for the last time.

“Rima”

“Rima” was composed in 1979, with text by Eduardo Carranza, published in 1957. The line “Not even with the most desperate music” seems to be León’s main inspiration in the text. The music illustrates the speaking persona’s “desperation” with arpeggiated sixteenth-note triplets in the piano, and also with an A-sharp in the two-measure introduction. A-sharp creates a dissonance, both with A-natural, the note that gives the home key its minor mode, and with its adjacent B-natural. Rhythm also plays a part in the desperation of the song, with simultaneous duple and triple rhythms. This rhythmic simultaneity occurs in most of the song. A possible explanation can be found in the text: in the first stanza, the poem’s persona cannot communicate with either silence, words, or the most desperate music. It is unknown what wants to be said (probably a declaration of love); we just know that it *cannot* be said. The rest of the poem explores possible means of communication, none of which solves the persona’s conundrum.

Based on these ideas, León expressively depicts “the most desperate music” (see Ex. 24). A piano interlude connects the first and second stanzas. With a steadier rhythm of eighth-note triplets in both hands, the variant of the voice part and dissonances maintain the desperate sense in the music. A possible interpretation of the interlude could be the persona taking time to think of other ways of “how to say it.” It is after the interlude that the “maybe” lines begin. The eighth-note triplets with rest in the last note could also represent hesitation before these lines.

“Rima” (Rhyme)

Original	English Translation
No puedo decirte ni con el silencio, ni con las palabras, ni aun con la música más desesperada.	I cannot tell you with silence, nor with words, not even with the most desperate music.
Tal vez con la luna o con un aroma de violetas, húmedo de vino y de música, sufriendo, nocturno.	Maybe with the moon or with the smell of violets, humid with wine and music, suffering, nocturnal.
Tal vez con la noche, cuando es solamente un rumor de hojas con viento y estrellas para el desvelado.	Maybe in the evening, when there is only a rumor of leaves with wind and stars while you lie awake.
Tal vez con la luna, si la luna oliera a vino y violetas. Tal vez con palabras nocturnas, y si las palabras miraran.	Maybe with the moon, if the moon could smell of wine and violets Maybe with nocturnal words, and if the words could see.
No puedo decirte.	I cannot tell you.

Example 24: Léon, “Rima,” mm. 1–14⁶⁶

Allegro

No pue-do de-cir-te ni con el si-

len - cio ni con las pa - la - bras ni aún con la mú - si - ca - - más de-ses-pe-

ra - da_

f *mp* *ff* *poco rit.* *etc...*

⁶⁶ Ibid., I, 82–83.

The second stanza begins like the first, modulating at the end to D-flat major, enharmonically the dominant of F-sharp minor. Probably León chose D-flat rather than C-sharp because it was easier to write. Sixteenth-note triplets sustain the same mood in the music, and the rhythm becomes more stable, as the piano part does not have duple-rhythm figures. The rhythmic contrast remains in the voice. Being in major mode is the most prominent contrast between the first two stanzas and the last two. Another significant contrast occurs in mm. 28–30, where, for the first time, the piano part does not have any triplets. A possible explanation for this rhythmic contrast may be found in the text: “A rumor with wind and starts for the sleepless.” It may be that the lack of movement in the rhythm will help to listen to the “rumor.” The repeated A-flats represent the “rumor” with the voice. However, there is no other indication that supports this idea. It would seem appropriate to have a dynamic indication to support the “rumor.” Still, this edition is not completely reliable. An examination of the manuscript would be necessary to prove that there is no other indication for these measures.

The last stanza takes the music back to the main tonality by concluding on the dominant of F-sharp minor. At the end of the fourth stanza, and before repeating the first stanza, one of the striking sections of “Rima” is found. It is a quasi-recitativo over the dominant chord with the line “maybe with nocturnal words, and if words could see.” Again, it seems as if the poet is reconsidering the use of words and not desperate music, if those words were nocturnal and could see. Carranza ends the poem here, but León makes this line inconclusive by employing the dominant chord. He resolves the chord and repeats the text and music of the first stanza. It could be interpreted as him thinking that nocturnal words able to see also were not enough to say whatever the poet wants to say. The music and text are repeated exactly, except for the end of the piano interlude. This time, the interlude concludes not with triplets but with an eighth note and a

quarter note. By adding a *ritardando* indication, this musical statement sounds like a defeat: the poet could not find a way to “say it.” By repeating the phrase “I cannot tell you,” the poem admits defeat, and León creates the impression that the poem’s persona runs away, by concluding the song with a presto coda.

The harmony in “Rima” is tonal with chromaticism and extended chords. Dissonances are often unprepared and unresolved, used to colorize different functions. As in “Siempre,” the tonic is the only unaltered chord.

CHAPTER 3

CONCLUSIONS

Although some scholars regard Jaime León as a nationalist composer, most of his song catalog makes no use of national music materials. In only five of his thirty-six songs did he employ some elements from Colombian music. *Bambuco* was the folk topic on which he most frequently drew in his national songs, but it is significant that it does not follow the conventions of the genre. León plays with *bambuco* conventions in songs with texts that reference social issues. In these songs, the topical characteristics of the *bambuco* are twisted. The abnormal social situation of Colombian peasants, whose identity is tightly related to the *bambuco*, perhaps motivated León to transform the topic, as if articulating social criticism through musical means.

In “La campesina,” León takes the different elements that identify the *bambuco* and creates a critique of the civil war in Colombia. He shows his nonconformity by twisting the characteristic elements of the genre: the accompaniment does not provide simultaneous rhythms but alternates them; the melody closes in a 3/4 measure instead of the conventional 6/8, and creates an unconventional palette of sounds based on instruments typical in the *bambuco* in folk ensembles. He may have distorted the Colombian national genre as his way of showing his discomfort with the situation in the country.

Another song in which León shows discomfort is “Tu madre en la fuente.” The poem makes direct reference to the war, which León reinforces by using martial topics and a melody based on a fanfare. In this song, León’s uneasiness is first articulated through tweaking the martial topic through the use of 5/4 meter, and then by presenting a transformed *bambuco* topic along with the fanfare. León plays with the notion of the lullaby, which Carranza had already subverted by using a patriotic text. Again, León uses the elements of the *bambuco* as a rhetorical

tool, possibly to express his uneasiness with the social situation in Colombia.

In the third of his songs written with *bambuco* influences, “El muñeco dormilón,” there is no sign of discomfort. Nothing in the text represents any critique of Colombia or its social situation. However, it is a child’s tale. The nation, León seems to say, is only possible as a child playing, rather than as a representation or celebration of nationality. It also becomes a statement for building a peaceful future. Even in this, León’s most direct representation of the *bambuco* topic, folk gestures are subject to manipulation. In these songs, the national elements are subordinated to rhetorical or expressive purposes that end up favoring a cosmopolitan approach.

Interestingly, for being a composer regarded as nationalist, León chose not to write nationalist music for texts that suggested nationalism. That is the case for “Canción del boga ausente” and “Letra para cantar al son del arpa.” León was aware of the musical traditions from the Caribbean, and he had even written a *cumbia* for the song “A mi ciudad nativa.” However, in “Canción del boga ausente,” the text of which is written in a type of speech from the Caribbean, he does not incorporate any of the musical aspects that could be associated with such speech. Although “Letra para cantar al son del arpa” makes no direct reference to anything Colombian, it could have been an opportunity for a nationalist composer to interpret the title and content of the poem and adapt it to the music associated with the region where the poet was born, where the harp is an essential element of such music. León decides to disregard this fact and writes a song influenced by the international conception of the classical harp rather than the harp of his own country. He gives an international interpretation to the text of these songs, disregarding their national elements.

Twenty-nine of the thirty-six art songs that León wrote have no Colombian influence, other than the poetry. After examining three of these songs, it is possible to conclude that for

him, the most significant influence was the text. He creates musical depictions of each poem based on the main affective idea from each one, and this idea creates the rest of the song. He follows the Lieder tradition, where rather than adapting a setting to a folk form, music expresses and illustrates the text. The main idea is present at the beginning of each song and can be substantiated as a motive, as in “Siempre,” a harmonic progression, as in “Algún día,” or in rhythm, as in “Rima.”

The transformation of the main idea also reflects the different ideas or moods in the text. In “Siempre,” the main motive is transformed in each stanza, and this motive carries the music to the most important line of the stanza. It also works as a prelude, interlude, and postlude, each with its transformation, illustrating the previous or coming lines. “Algún día” portrays the expectation for that *one day* with harmonic progressions that delay the arrival at the tonic. These progressions are used by León to both start and finish each line with the same tonic chord, accompanying the text through the rest of each line with different functions or topics particular to the poem. For “Rima,” León focuses on the use of rhythm to create the “most desperate music.” Duple and triple rhythms and fast sixteenth-note triplets create the sense of desperation. The rhythm changes to represent different ideas, such as the “rumor,” or hesitation, even stopping the music and writing a quasi-recitativo to represent a line about words and not music. León makes no use of any nationalist element in any aspect of these three songs.

Although previous studies have defined León as a nationalist composer, I argue that, based on the songs as a body of work, the composer’s sense of belonging and the audience’s reception of the nationality of his works require systematic questioning. It is not the nationality of composers that defines their music. León was a cosmopolitan composer who used national elements as rhetorical tools, in an isolated and experimental way. His expressive message was

broader than any nation, appealing as it does to humanity at large. Conveying emotion rather than representing a nation seems to be León's main concern, and the most important feature of his universal legacy.

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