

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE MUSIC OF TANIA LEÓN AND
A CONDUCTOR'S ANALYSIS OF *INDÍGENA*

A Monograph

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is to provide an introduction to the living American composer, Tania León, and a detailed analysis of *Indígena*, her work for large chamber ensemble. Chapter One includes León's biographical information, focusing on her cultural heritage and her dual careers as a composer and conductor. Chapter Two details her compositional style, illustrated by examples from selected works. Subsections focus on her compositional practices with regard to rhythm, melody, harmony, texture, and form, as well as the prevalence of jazz and Latin American influences in her work. Chapter Three analyzes *Indígena* from a theoretical perspective and makes reference to relevant elements of León's compositional style. Of specific importance is her employment of the octatonic collection, as well as jazz and Afro-Cuban material. Chapter Four reexamines the work with regard to issues pertinent to the conductor, including rehearsal and interpretive suggestions. It is the author's hope that this information will assist conductors in understanding the work and describing to the ensemble the essential elements of its construction, so they may then have the information necessary to generate a compelling performance.

I. TANIA LEÓN: CITIZEN OF THE WORLD

I am who I am, thanks to my mestizo heritage and my ancestors from China, Nigeria, France, and Spain. I'm a citizen of the world with a global consciousness, and I do not like to be categorized by race, gender, or nationality. My music is my contribution to mankind.

This is my heritage and I'm proud of it.¹

- Tania León

Biographical Information

Tania Justina León was born on 14 May 1943 in Havana, Cuba to Oscar León and Dora Ferrán. Her parents were of mixed descent (French, Spanish, African and Chinese), and she was exposed to various cultural influences at an early age. The family was close-knit and often worked together as a result of their limited financial resources. She later recalled that this had a positive impact on her approach to working as a professional musician:

When you live in a household where there is not too many means, everybody collaborates with everybody. So at a given time I had to collaborate with my father in order to actually have the electricity running in the apartment, so therefore, I learned, through him, how to put electrical wires together and how to make connections, so I became his sideman at that time. It was not: "She's a girl; she's not supposed to do this." So therefore, by the time I went out in the world, my whole outlook about working with people didn't have that much demarcation per se.²

León's musical aptitude was quickly recognized, and at the age of five her family contributed to purchase her a piano, later referred to by the composer as "the best gift of my life."³ She immediately began taking piano lessons at the Carlos Alfredo Peyrellade Conservatory, and subsequently studied violin and music theory.⁴ Her formal training also came at the Conservatory; she earned a Bachelor's Degree in solfège and theory in 1961, and another in

¹ "Tania León," *Soy Unica, Soy Latina*, <http://www.soyunica.gov/guests/tanialeon.aspx/>, (24 May 2005).

² Tania León, "What is American Music?" Interview by Frank J. Oteri. *NewMusicBox* 1.4, 4 August 1999, <http://www.newmusicbox.org/page.nmbx?id=04fp00/>, (24 May 2005).

³ *Soy Unica, Soy Latina*.

⁴ K. Robert Schwarz, Liner notes to *Indígena*, Continuum, Tania León, director, Composers Recordings: CR1662, 1994.

piano in 1963.⁵ Lessons in solfège were emphasized at the Conservatory; these were often combined with exercises in score reading at the piano, such as playing three parts and singing the fourth of a four-part setting.⁶ Her focus was piano performance, but as a student she also composed *boleros*, *bossa novas*, and short pieces in the style of Cuban popular music.⁷ León later recalled the importance of Cuban music in her training.

You know, one of the things that I believe...happens in the smaller countries is that those that become their classics are really nourished...It's some kind of cultural pride to understand or know what can happen with the local music in all spheres, not only in the popular, but in what we term the serious music...So therefore, for us to study Chopin and to study [Ernesto] Lecuona,⁸ it was on equal terms.⁹

Subsequent study came at the National Conservatory in Havana, at which she earned a Master's Degree in music education in 1964.

Following graduation, León remained in Cuba for two years and began a promising career as a concert pianist. She also earned a degree in accounting and business administration from Havana University (1965) in the event that her hopes for a performing career did not come to fruition. Despite her success as a performer, León began to feel isolated in Cuba, and decided that it was necessary to live abroad in order to fully realize her potential. She later recalled, "My spirit is not an island spirit...I felt trapped not being able to go elsewhere without a boat..."¹⁰

⁵ Donna Jean Reiner, "The Colors of Culture: Characteristics in Selected Works of Tania Justina León" (Ph.D. diss., Union Institute, 2000), 38.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ *Soy Unica, Soy Latina*.

⁸ Lecuona (1896-1963) was a Cuban composer and pianist who was educated at the National Conservatory in Havana. He made several tours of Latin America, Europe and the United States as the leader of a dance band, Lecuona's Cuban Boys, which became quite popular. He later resided in New York, where he wrote for musicals, films and radio. He is known for his salon piano pieces and many of his songs, though he also composed music in a more formal style.

⁹ León, "What is American Music?"

¹⁰ Ibid.

León initially desired to emigrate to Paris, but was awarded a free flight to Miami in 1967 through the Freedom Flights program, and later established residence in New York City.¹¹ After earning a scholarship at New York University, she entered the composition studio of Ursula Mamlok (b. 1928) and subsequently earned two degrees (BS 1971, MS 1975). She spent time studying the trombone and bassoon, and also continued to perform as a pianist, playing with the New York College Music Orchestra in 1967, the New York University Orchestra in 1969, and the Buffalo Symphony Orchestra in 1973.¹² Despite this immediate success as a concert pianist, León felt that her time was monopolized by the hours of practice she devoted to practicing her technique. This contributed to her change of career from performer to conductor. She recalled in an interview,

I could not use the time more effectively than I'm using it now if I had to continue with the piano. I would have to devote hours, practicing and being sure that my technique is impeccable, even though technically I can sit down and play...¹³

Equally important to her musical development was her immersion in the cultural scene of New York. Approximately one year after her arrival, a friend asked her to substitute as an accompanist for a dance class at the Harlem School of the Arts.¹⁴ The class was conducted by Arthur Mitchell, who was so impressed by her ability that he asked her to work as the rehearsal pianist for the Dance Theatre of Harlem, of which he was founder and director. She flourished in that position due to her technical proficiency and improvisational skills, and Mitchell asked her to serve as the Dance Theatre's first music director, a post she held from 1969 until 1980. During her eleven-year tenure, León served as pianist, conductor and composer. She organized

¹¹ The Freedom Flights program was begun by the administration of President Lyndon B. Johnson. Between 1965 and 1971, it provided free travel to Miami for 250,000 Cubans refugees. Tickets were awarded through a drawing similar to a lottery.

¹² Reiner, 40.

¹³ Jenny Raymond, "Excerpt from Interview: Tania León with Jenny Raymond," *Oral History, American Music*, 29 September 2005, <http://www.yale.edu/oham/frameexcerpt.html>, (3 February 2006).

¹⁴ Reiner, 41.

the Dance Theatre's music school (1970) and orchestra (1975), and composed four ballets for the troupe: *Tones* (1970), *The Beloved* (with Judith Hamilton, 1972), *Haiku* (1973), and *Douglas* (with Geoffrey Holder, 1974). She later recalled the importance of her long and fruitful association with the Dance Theatre: "Meeting Arthur Mitchell and...the foundation of a company starting from zero - that is what actually has shaped, I think, the Tania that I am right now."¹⁵

Compositions, Commissions, and Awards

It was not until the late 1970s that León considered a career as a composer. She was fond of a vast array of musical styles, but feared that her diverse approach to composition would not be taken seriously by the critical New York public. She later stated, "Perhaps I was looking for an entry into the mainstream."¹⁶ In her early works she searched for a way to separate herself from the influences of music she studied and admired, and to discover her own compositional voice. This metamorphosis began with the final conversation she had with her father before his death, during which he told her that he had heard a recording of her music, but could not hear *her* in the music.¹⁷ For León this was a powerful, pivotal moment which prompted her to draw upon the music indigenous to her native culture. She found further inspiration on a 1979 visit to her former home. "I felt an explosion inside of me...and I felt the sounds of my environment, the sounds of my childhood, starting to come back to me."¹⁸ Upon returning to New York, León found that she was able to successfully combine the influences of Latin America, the classical training she received at the Havana Conservatory and New York University, and the numerous sounds she encountered as a resident of New York City.

¹⁵ León, "What is American Music?"

¹⁶ Schwarz, Liner notes for *Indígena*.

¹⁷ Tania León, interview by author, tape recording, New York, NY, 13 December 2005.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

Although her environment and background permeate her music, León developed a highly personal style in which the sound of these sources is present yet extremely subtle. This unique approach to composition began to attract national attention in the 1980s. Her first orchestral work, *Concerto Criollo* (1980), was commissioned by the National Endowment for the Arts, and she was the Resident Composer of the Lincoln Center Institute in 1985. Subsequent commissions have come from the American Composers Orchestra (*Kabiosili*, 1988), the Cincinnati Symphony (*Carabali*, 1991), the Meet the Composer program (*Para Viola y Orquesta*, 1994), the NDR Sinfonie Orchester, Hamburg (*Horizons*, 1999), and the Koussevitsky Music Foundation (*Desde...*, 2001). Chamber music commissions have come from the Da Capo Chamber Players (*Parajota Delaté*, 1988), New York City's Town Hall (*Indígena*, 1991), Ensemble Modern (*Hechizos*, 1995), and the Library of Congress (*Fanfarria*, 2000).¹⁹

She is especially well known for her compositions for solo piano, two of which, *Rituál* (1987) and *Mística* (2003), were performed in March, 2005, at the Chicago Symphony's *MusicNow* celebration of the 80th birthday of Pierre Boulez. Her most recent work, *Variación*, was written in 2004 for Gilbert Kalish in response to a commission from the Gilmore International Keyboard Festival, and was premiered in March, 2006, at the annual conference of the Society for American Music.

León has also contributed significant works for solo and ensemble voices. Particularly important is her relationship with the Western Wind Vocal Ensemble, which yielded *De-Orishas* (1982), and *Batéy* (1989), for which she collaborated with pianist Michel Camilo. Her first opera, *The Scourge of Hyacinths* (1994), was the result of a commission by the Munich Biennale,

¹⁹ Tania León, *Tania León Homepage*, 6 January 2006, <http://www.tanialeon.com/>, (3 February 2006).

where it won the BMW Prize as best new work of opera theater. She also authored the libretto, which was based on a play by the Nobel Laureate, Wole Soyinka. One aria, *O Yemanja* (*Mother's Prayer*), has become particularly well known, and was recorded in 1998 by Dawn Upshaw and the Orchestra of St. Luke's, conducted by David Zinman. León and Soyinka collaborated again on *Samarkand* (2005), a theater work for narrator, chorus, children's chorus and mixed instrumental ensemble which marked the opening of the Shaw Center for the Performing Arts in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, in March 2005.

In 1998 León earned the New York Governor's Lifetime Achievement Award, and in the same year held the Fromm Residency at the American Academy in Rome. Other awards include those from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, the National Endowment for the Arts, Chamber Music America, the Lila Wallace/Reader's Digest Fund, ASCAP, the Koussevitzky Foundation, the National Women's History Project, the Coalition of 100 Black Women, and the Nathan Cummings Foundation. In 2004, she was featured in a Composer Portrait concert at Columbia University's Miller Theatre. She holds honorary doctorates from Colgate University and Oberlin College, has been Visiting Lecturer at Harvard University and the Musikschule in Hamburg, Visiting Professor at Yale University, the Karel Husa Visiting Professor of Composition at Ithaca College (1997-98), and Visiting Professor at the University of Michigan (2005). In 2000 she was named Claire and Leonard Tow Professor at Brooklyn College, where she has taught since 1985. In 2006, she was awarded the rank of Distinguished Professor by the City University of New York board of trustees.²⁰

Composer as Conductor

In 1971, the Dance Theatre of Harlem participated in the Festival of Two Worlds in Spoleto, Italy, accompanied by the Juilliard Orchestra. It was decided to use live, rather than

²⁰ Ibid.

recorded, music, and though she had no formal training as a conductor, León was encouraged by Arthur Mitchell and Gian-Carlo Menotti to rehearse the orchestra and conduct the performance. She reminisced, “I had never done it in my life. It was my very first time, but I picked up the baton, and I conducted the performance.”²¹

This experience sparked León’s interest in conducting, and after returning to the United States she began studying with Laszlo Halasz.²² Subsequent training was with Vincent La Selva,²³ and numerous guest conductors at the Berkshire Music Center at Tanglewood (1978), including Leonard Bernstein and Seiji Ozawa. She also began attending rehearsals of the New York Philharmonic, where for two years she was a guest of Zubin Mehta.

León’s reputation grew through her work with the Dance Theatre, and throughout the 1970s she fulfilled numerous engagements as a guest conductor of American and international ensembles, including the Buffalo Philharmonic (1970, 1975), the Symphony of the New World (1974), and the BBC Northern Orchestra (1976). She served as the music director for the Broadway production of *The Wiz* (1977-78), and at that time also organized the Brooklyn Philharmonic Community Concert Series with fellow composers Julius Eastman and Talib Rasul Hakim. This weekly series was initiated at the suggestion of Lukas Foss, who was then music director. Its objective was to introduce the works of minority composers and performers to urban communities in the greater New York City area.²⁴

In choosing repertoire, León is an advocate of contemporary music, especially that of Latin American composers. From 1996 to 1997 she was the New Music Advisor to Kurt Mazur

²¹ Anne Lundy, “Conversations With Three Symphonic Conductors: Dennis DeCoteau, Tania León, Jon Robinson,” *Black Perspective in Music* 16.2 (Autumn 1988): 217.

²² Halasz (1905-2001) was the first music director of the New York City Opera Company.

²³ La Selva joined the faculty of the Juilliard School in 1969. He founded the New York Grand Opera Company in 1973.

²⁴ Reiner, 43.

and the New York Philharmonic, and she served as Latin American Music Advisor to the American Composers Orchestra until 2001. Stemming from her work with that organization, in 1994 she co-founded the American Composers Orchestra *Sonidos de las Americas* (*Sounds of the Americas*) music festivals, the first of which took place in New York City in cooperation with Carnegie Hall and featured the music of Mexican composers. The annual festival includes concerts, symposia, and masterclasses. León reminisced about her travels to meet with composers throughout South America: “It began with an old-fashioned fact-finding tour, but our calendar moved at the pace of a good conga – very fast.”²⁵ Encouraged by the festival’s success, she hopes that other orchestras will develop similar programs and create a “new movement of interconnections between countries, so that whole communities of composers can be known.”²⁶

After resigning from the Harlem Dance Theatre in 1980, León was able to devote more time to guest conducting. She has led some of the world’s finest ensembles, including the Netherlands Wind Ensemble, Metropolitan Opera Orchestra, Kennedy Center Opera House Orchestra, Beethovenhalle Symphony Orchestra, National Symphony Orchestra of Johannesburg, Louisville Symphony, Leipzig Gewandhausorchester, New World Symphony, members of the New York Philharmonic, and the Symphony Orchestra of Marseille, France, dividing her time between her compositions and those of others. These experiences afford her the opportunity to study the work of other composers, a pursuit she sincerely enjoys.

I study everybody, and that’s what I love about conducting because that’s why I study. When I study the most is when I’m conducting something because I’m a total detective, and that’s when you see technique a lot. I see the technique, I see ways of coloring; I see personalities, shapes, graphics, architecture, space, culture.²⁷

²⁵ Octavio Roca, “Sonidos de las Americas: Mexico – The Sound of America,” *Symphony* 45.3 (May, June 1994): 38.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Tania León, interview by Jenny Raymond.

Perhaps as a result of her work as a composer, she feels that the primary function of the conductor is to facilitate the communication of sound to the audience. She stated, “I am the vehicle and make myself subservient to the sound which passes through myself.”²⁸ She also notes that her experiences on the podium have helped her become more succinct and efficient in explaining to conductors what to do with her music. “When you’re a conductor you can rapidly say what you mean.”²⁹

Some composers, most famously Stravinsky, have placed strict restrictions on the interpretive license of conductors of their music. Given León’s expertise as both a conductor and composer, one might expect her to take a similar stance, but nothing could be further from the case. She has heard many live performances of her compositions, and views it as an honor when her music inspires a performer or conductor to present a thoughtful, inspired interpretation.³⁰

Gender, Ethnicity, and Labels

As a conductor and composer, León has confronted traditional perceptions concerning gender and ethnicity. Though she rarely speaks of the challenges she faced, she stated the following in an interview for *Ebony* magazine: “It’s not common for a woman of my skin color to conduct serious music, so I have to know the score inside-out, or work twice as hard as male conductors.”³¹

León perceives a global society, and is uncomfortable with the categorization of individuals according to culture or gender. She feels that one cannot embrace one label or category without excluding another, thus becoming inherently limited. The following statement presents a synopsis of this philosophy:

²⁸ Lundy, 219.

²⁹ Victoria Bond, “A Double Life,” *Symphony* 47.1 (Jan/Feb 1996): 24.

³⁰ Tania León, interview by author.

³¹ Dalton Narire, “The Maestros,” *Ebony* 46.4 (Feb 1989): 62.

I am tired of all our labels...I am not a feminist, am not a black conductor, and am not a woman conductor. I am nothing that the people want to call me. They do not know who I am. The fact that I am using this physical costume does not describe my energy, does not describe my entity.³²

This view is evident when she speaks about the Cuban influences in her music. She rejects the term Afro-Cuban because it does not accurately represent the numerous and disparate influences that combined to make Cuban music what it is today; while African characteristics are certainly important, they were joined with music and musical instruments indigenous to French, Spanish, and Chinese immigrants, as well as native Indians. She stated in an interview, “Tell me, when Bizet put the *habanera* in...*Carmen*, did he call it Afro-Cuban?”³³

She also does not wish to be labeled as nationalistic, because in her opinion it is completely natural for composers to be influenced by aspects of their culture, as well as their immediate environment. In her perception, she is no more nationalistic than other contemporary composers such as George Crumb, or even Classical masters such as Beethoven. She spoke about this topic in an interview as part of Yale University’s *Oral History, American Music* project: “What kind of nationality [is] George Crumb? He was born in America, and he was influenced by Asia and Spain.”³⁴ Regarding Beethoven, she stated,

There’s dance in his music. There’s the dance of his period. It’s the connotation of whichever harmonic environment he wants to create..., plus his personality, plus the rhythms that are the rhythms that he knows how to command because that’s what he is, that’s what he speaks, that’s how he moves. That is his music. But we don’t talk about the folk element or the cultural element in the music of Beethoven or the music of Brahms. Come on!³⁵

³² Lundy, 219.

³³ Tania León, interview by Jenny Raymond.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

In summary, she addressed the Cuban cultural references present in her compositions.

I speak with an accent, so my music might have an accent, which might not be understood by many people. And if the accent has to...be roots or folklore or whatever you want to call it at some point, fine. That's okay...That's how I define this type of situation. I think that labels - going back to the Afro-Cuban thing - is selling short what the whole thing is about.³⁶

³⁶ Tania León, interview by Jenny Raymond.

II. THE COMPOSER'S LANGUAGE

Compositional Process

León's compositions join contemporary techniques with numerous stylistic elements of Latin American, jazz, and gospel music. This pluralistic approach to composition results in an individual style that defies categorization and yields a self-portrait of the composer. León stated, "Though these musical mixes seem strange, they reflect who I am."³⁷ Her cultural background directly affects her compositional process, and her artistry lies in the subtle manner in which these sources inform and permeate her music without overshadowing its complexity. Formidable technical demands, contemporary harmonic language, angular melodies, dense rhythmic layering, and colorful orchestration are equally important in her work.

León's approach to composition is shaped by the sounds she encounters every day. She recalled in 1991,

My ideas have to do with my present...They come when I least expect it, in the street, sitting at home, in the car. Ideas start tapping in anywhere, anytime. They wake me up and all of a sudden I'm hearing an entire orchestra playing something. I keep pencil and paper by the bed. Sometimes I write the rhythm, sometimes it's the pitches, sometimes it's complete. It's like making a soup. You're collecting different items before you cook.³⁸

As a result of this creative process, she often works from many sketches, which she sometimes posts on a wall in her studio. After examining them, she formulates a concept for the piece as a whole. Her approach to assembling a work is largely intuitive; she stated in an interview, "I write what I feel."³⁹ Due to her many years as a pianist and extensive training in solfège, she does not require a piano to compose; instead the instrument is used in improvisation and the formulation of ideas.

³⁷ *Soy Unica, Soy Latina*.

³⁸ Philippa Kiraly, "Musical Melding," *Symphony* 42.5 (1991): 29.

³⁹ Tania León, interview by author.

Improvisation has been an important part of León's approach to music since her early years in Cuba. She recalls improvising new arrangements of standard melodies such as *Malegueña*; these enjoyable exercises fostered her creativity and laid the foundation for her work as a pianist and composer. Her fondness for improvisation also led to her appreciation of jazz, to which she was first exposed with a recording of the pianist Art Tatum⁴⁰ soon after arriving in New York City.⁴¹ Throughout her career, León has immersed herself in various styles of jazz, and has collaborated with performers such as Paquito D'Rivera and Michel Camilo.⁴²

León has composed for virtually every medium, but the majority of her works are for orchestra, mixed chamber ensemble, vocal ensemble, and piano. A notable absence in her catalog is a work for string quartet; her first was recently commissioned by Harvard University's Fromm Music Foundation for the Del Sol String Quartet. She has not yet written for the wind ensemble, but has contributed a work for concert band, *Alegre*.⁴³

Influences

León cites Stravinsky as one of her foremost influences, and has also studied the works of Ligeti, Janáček, and numerous other composers.⁴⁴ Her compositional style is quite original, but does meld aspects of Stravinsky's techniques with a distinctly Ivesian sound. The former composer's influence is reflected in León's rhythmic vitality and complexity, use of rhythm as a generator of form, colorful orchestration, and use of the octatonic collection and its subsets,

⁴⁰ Tatum (1910-1956) was a pianist who mastered the "stride" style prevalent in New York City in the early decades of the 20th century. He is admired for his improvisational prowess, technical fluency, and elegant style of playing.

⁴¹ Tania León, interview by Frank J. Oteri.

⁴² Born in Cuba in 1948, Paquito D'Rivera enjoys international recognition as a clarinetist, saxophonist, and composer. Among his achievements are six Grammy Awards. His memoir, *My Sax Life*, has been translated into English and is published by Northwestern University Press. Michel Camilo (b.1954) is a native of the Dominican Republic, and is one of the most respected living jazz pianists and composers. Among his honors are two Latin Grammy Awards for the following recordings: *Spain* (2000), and *Live at the Blue Note* (2003).

⁴³ Commissioned by *Bandworks*, this work is for young band (grade 3) and includes numerous Latin percussion instruments and a short improvisational section which can be repeated to feature numerous soloists.

⁴⁴ Tania León, interview by author.

specifically the major-minor chord. Both composers began their careers with music written to accompany dance, and these experiences informed later compositions. In addition, both remained connected to music of their heritage. Similarities with Ives include her use of dissonant harmonies and ambiguous harmonic movement within an essentially tonal framework, polyphonic textures distinguished by rhythm, pitch content and tonality, and integration of jazz into works otherwise within the classical tradition.⁴⁵

Rhythm

Perhaps the most important aspect of León's compositional style is the rhythmic vitality that saturates her music. She related the following to *Symphony* magazine:

For me, movement is music. When I hear music, movement materializes, and vice versa...There's dance in it. But to me it's not dance – it's something indigenous and vital that had no connection to dance when I wrote it.⁴⁶

The influence of physical response to the pulse and rhythm of music can be traced to León's formative years in Cuba, where dance is a common part of everyday life. Interestingly, she feels that motion, not rhythm, is the most important element of her compositional style.⁴⁷ She compares motion in her music to riding a bicycle. In order to sit on a bicycle without falling, one must be in motion; it is necessary to create forward momentum before riding. She perceives her music in the same way and endeavors to maintain constant motion. Initially, this motion is not immediately evident; she frequently changes tempo, and often employs temporal notation which includes no regular pulse. Using *Indígena* as an example, she compared such passages to the visual image of a bicycle or automobile wheel in motion. At certain rates of speed, the inner part of the wheel often appears to move at a slower rate, or even to stand still, however this does not

⁴⁵ One must remember that Ives was limited to the sounds of ragtime and early jazz; the advent of swing coincided with the end of his compositional career.

⁴⁶ Kiraly, 29.

⁴⁷ Tania León, interview by author.

alter its overall rate of motion. In her music, she freely moves between both parts of this “wheel,” but in her conception, the motion is uninterrupted.⁴⁸

At first glance, the most salient aspect of León’s rhythmic vocabulary is her use of Latin American rhythms. These are employed with great discretion; they are generally not presented until late in her works, and then only for brief episodes. When combined with harmonic and melodic language not indigenous to Latin America, they assume the character of filtered images, rather than clear aural pictures.

It seems appropriate to begin with the *Four Pieces for Violoncello* (1983), León’s first composition after the death of her father; as stated earlier, their last conversation inspired her to begin integrating Latin American influences in her work. The third of the *Four Pieces* is marked *Montuno* (♩=72), and is the only one of the four that deviates from traditional Italian character markings. The *son montuno* is one of the most recognizable styles of Cuban popular music; it is perhaps mainly known for its typical piano figures, such as the one shown below.



Example 1. *Montuno* piano figure

Typically faster than the *cha-cha* but slower than the *mambo*,⁴⁹ the *montuno* is commonly notated in \wp time and has a lively yet controlled quality.

The piece is 32 measures in length, and is unified by a recurring rhythmic motive derived from the *tumbaó*, which is a fundamental Afro-Cuban string bass pattern. Based on the *son*

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ed Uribe, *The Essence of Afro-Cuban Percussion and Drum Set*, (Miami: Warner Bros., 1996), 213.

Example 3. *Four Pieces for Violoncello, Mvt. III*, mm. 15-24

In *Batá* (1985), León evokes the rhythms and textures of the ritual *Batá* drumming of the Yoruban people of West Africa.⁵² The piece is comprised of 167 measures, and the first clear reference to African rhythm is presented in measure 95, with the sudden entrance of a large cowbell.⁵³ Known as the *cencerro* or *campana grande*, this instrument is one of the most important in Afro-Cuban percussion; here it plays a pattern derived from the basic 6/8 bell pattern present in many African drumming traditions.⁵⁴

Example 4. *Batá*, mm. 95-96, cowbell

Example 5. Basic Afro-Cuban 6/8 bell pattern

⁵² *Batá* drums are two-headed and hourglass-shaped. In Yoruban religious rituals called *Santería* ceremonies, the drums are used to contact deities called *Orichas*.

⁵³ Afro-Cuban percussion instruments will be discussed further in Chapter Three. The Afro-Cuban cowbell is a descendant of the *guataca*, which is the blade of a garden hoe struck with a large nail or metal spike.

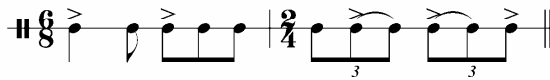
⁵⁴ Uribe, 35.

The cowbell is absent in the following eleven measures, but its rhythmic content is subtly maintained by the winds and strings. In the following passage, note the juxtaposition of duple and triple subdivisions, a common characteristic of Afro-Cuban rhythm. As with much of León's music, the Afro-Cuban rhythmic influence is partially hidden by angular melodic material.



Example 6. *Batá*, mm. 103-104, wind instrument reduction

The cowbell briefly reappears in measures 108-109 and in measure 137 with a slightly altered version of the basic 6/8 bell pattern shown in Example 5.



Example 7. *Batá*, mm. 108-109, cowbell

This pattern continues until measure 149; each two-measure repetition is bracketed in the following example. The cowbell is joined by the string section, whose running eighth notes have the dual purpose of maintaining rhythmic vitality and maintaining the pervading sonority, in this case a Bb⁷ chord; accompanimental material of this type is typical in León's music. The passage is decorated with accents carefully placed to first strengthen, and then partially obscure, the pulse of the dotted quarter. Note the tom-tom passage, which initially reinforces the bell pattern but subsequently becomes less regular.

Example 8. *Batá*, mm. 139-149, reduction

The rhythmic complexity of León's melodic writing often evokes the extemporaneous character of improvisation. Common techniques include syncopation, hemiola, multiple contrasting subdivisions of the beat, irregular accents, and plentiful ornamentation, all of which may obscure the underlying meter. The following passage shows an example of syncopation generated by note grouping.

Example 9: *Parajota Delaté*, mm. 21-24, flute

The following excerpts highlight León's predilection for complex polyphonic textures; the resulting polyrhythms often project contrasting subdivisions, shown in Example 10, and/or meters, as in Example 11. The juxtaposition of simple and compound meters is prevalent in León's music.

Quasi andante, sempre rubato

Flute

Bb Clarinet (in C)

Violin

'Cello

Example 10: *Parajota Delaté*, m. 41-44

Energico ♩ = 84-90

Clarinet

Piano

Violins

Viola

'Cello

Bass

Example 11. *Indígena*, mm. 9-11

Note that Example 11 includes four distinct layers: the clarinet has primary melodic material, the piano provides one layer of melodic accompaniment, and the strings contribute two additional layers. The viola and ‘cello reinforce the primary pulse, which in the violins is displaced by one eighth note; the contrabass alternates between the two accent patterns.

One final characteristic of León’s rhythmic language is her usage of the syncopations and cross-rhythms of jazz. Examples permeate her music, and generally consist of short rhythmic figures which are repeated to form complete phrases. The passage below serves as a transition into the final portion of *Momentum* (1986), for solo piano. It is based on a one-beat rhythmic motive, which is presented on the first and third beats of each measure; on the second beat its syncopation is accented by placing it over eighth notes in the left hand. Of interest is the repetitive tritone movement in the bass (F-B); this is one of León’s most common compositional practices.

Example 12. *Momentum*, mm. 30-33

Melody

The eclecticism of León's compositional style is perhaps most evident in her melodic language. Clear references to melodic characteristics of Latin American music and jazz are on equal footing with highly chromatic lines. Melodic material is drawn from numerous sources, including the diatonic, chromatic, whole-tone, octatonic, and blues collections. While lyrical melodies do exist, for example in *Oh Yemanjá (Mother's Prayer)* from the opera *The Scourge of Hyacinths*, the majority are in the form of short motives or long, quasi-improvisational rhapsodic lines. Angular melodic contour is generated by predominantly large interval content and infrequent use of immediately repeated pitches. Prevalent use is made of major and minor seconds, their inversions (major and minor sevenths), and their equivalents after octave displacement (major and minor ninths). Plentiful ornamentation consists mainly of grace notes, glissandi, flutter-tonguing in wind instruments, and tremolos in strings.

One of León's most common practices is octave displacement. In the following excerpt from *Indígena*, a horizontal line utilizing the harmonic root (B), seventh, and lowered seventh scale degrees becomes an angular, disjointed melody.

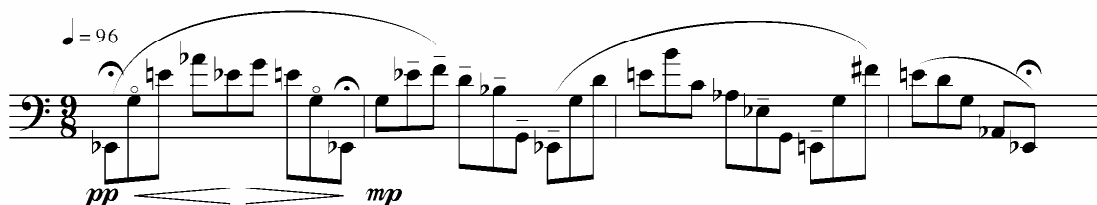


Example 13a. *Indígena*, m. 37, clarinet



Example 13b. *Indígena*, m. 37, author's reduction

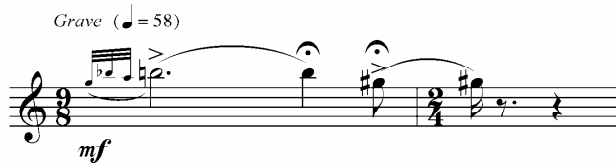
The technique presented above is often combined with another of León's most favored compositional devices – the *acciaccatura*, or “crushed tone.” In her adaptation, one or more pitches of a tertian harmony are joined by chromatic nonharmonic tones; the resulting dissonance significantly alters the character of the original sonority. (The technique is frequently applied to harmonic, as well as melodic, material.) The following excerpt from the first of the *Four Pieces for Violoncello* is set in Eb Major; this is reinforced with registral importance of the harmonic root, carefully placed *fermatas*, and agogic accents. However, this tonality is partially concealed with the addition of the three upper chromatic neighbor notes: {E,Ab,B}.



Example 14. *Four Pieces for Violoncello, I*, mm. 23-26

Exact melodic repetition is essentially absent in León's compositions, yielding a consistently fresh sound. However, short motives often receive substantial repetition, and slight alterations provide variation while retaining melodic continuity. For example, *Batá* begins with a short, germinal motive that appears in various guises throughout the work; this is shown in Example 15.⁵⁵ Examples 16 and 17 retain the character of the opening motive, but interval content is changed to a sequence of ascending minor thirds and descending major seconds.

⁵⁵ This motive was inspired by León's memory of her father's whistling to announce his return home.



Example 15. *Batá*, mm. 1-2, piccolo



Example 16. *Batá*, mm. 41-42, bassoon



Example 17. *Batá*, mm. 99-100, trumpet

The first of the *Four Pieces for Violoncello* opens with a melodic motive based on the whole-tone collection containing pitch-class C, commonly referred to as WT_0 . E centricity is communicated through registral importance and agogic accents.



Example 18. *Four Pieces for Violoncello, I*, m. 1

The motive is repeated in measure 4, and in measure 5 it features a slight change in melodic contour, and makes exclusive use of WT₀.



Example 19. *Four Pieces for Violoncello, I*, m. 5

The motive is then absent until measure 31, when its first five pitches are repeated; this initiates a reprise of the opening section of the work. Shown below, a final statement concludes the piece. E and G# are now presented as a harmonic root and third, which functions as the dominant of A, the centric pitch of the piece.



Example 20. *Four Pieces for Violoncello, I*, m. 35

Much of León's melodic material exhibits a long-range contour that reflects goal-directed linear progression. This is evidenced in passages such as the one shown in Example 21. An overall descending line, shown by dotted slurs, is masked by angular internal melodic contour. Note the grace notes expanded through octave displacement, and their impact on melodic shape.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ This passage is discussed further on page 43.



Example 21. *Indígena*, mm. 1-2, flute

The influence of jazz is heard to varying degrees in León's compositions, with the most common elements being references to improvisation and usage of the blues scale; both of which will be discussed in Chapter Three with regard to *Indígena*. Some of León's most overtly jazz-inspired work can be found in *Momentum* for solo piano, an interpretation of the blues. The influence of the blues is clear in the main theme of the work; E⁷ is arpeggiated in the left hand, with a subtle reference to one of the most common blues chord progressions: I-IV-I-V-I.⁵⁷

Adagio, ad lib.

Example 22. *Momentum*, m. 35 (author's chord symbols)

Commonly known as blue notes, the third, fifth, and seventh scale degrees are often lowered by a semitone to create dissonance with dominant seventh and minor seventh chords. These pitches, as well as two common altered scalar extensions, the lowered ninth (F) and thirteenth (C) degrees, are prominent in the melody shown above. Note that, in the melody, the lowered third

⁵⁷ The tonic chord in the blues is generally a dominant seventh chord.

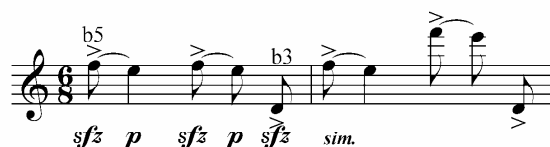
completely replaces the natural third. This is in keeping with jazz performance practice, in which the blue fifth is almost always used in conjunction with the blue third.⁵⁸ Also note the presence of *acciaccaturas* (the root is surrounded with its chromatic neighbors, D# and F), and the expansion of semitones through octave displacement.

As shown below, Example 22 can be separated into three measures. By omitting metric divisions, León prevents metrical accents and instead focuses on the notated agogic and dynamic accents, thereby enhancing the improvisational character of the passage. Example 23 shows how the passage would differ with the insertion of metric divisions.



Example 23. *Momentum*, m. 35 (metric divisions inserted by the author)

Another example of the use of the blue third and fifth is found in measures 42-43 of *Indígena*. In this section, the accompaniment outlines a B⁷ chord with a lowered fifth degree, and blue notes are repeatedly emphasized in the clarinet solo.



Example 24. *Indígena*, mm. 42-43, clarinet

⁵⁸ Gunther Schuller, *Early Jazz*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), 52.

Returning to *Momentum*, simultaneous usage of the major and minor third degrees is also employed in the central portion of the work. A two-beat motive is repeated for two measures and followed by a one-measure phrase extension. Though centered on A, this tonality is not harmonically reinforced. Instead, each repetition is punctuated by dissonant, non-related sonorities.

Example 25. *Momentum*, mm. 11-13

A final example is found in the first of the *Four Pieces for Violoncello*. The following passage projects a D^7 chord with four altered extensions: the lowered and raised ninth, raised eleventh, and lowered thirteenth degrees. This sonority is prevalent in post-bebop jazz, and in this case would be labeled D^{ALT} .⁵⁹

Example 26. *Four Pieces for Violoncello, I*, mm. 2-3

⁵⁹ Post-bebop jazz will be discussed in Chapter Three with regard to *Indígena*.

León occasionally writes aleatoric passages, although these are generally governed by strict parameters. In *Crossings* (1992), three trumpeters are instructed to sequentially sound a series of pitches at a moderate tempo, and with even spacing. The entrance of each player corresponds with the beginning of measures 3-5, and dissonance is controlled by using pitches drawn from the C major scale.

♩ = 96-104
Even spacing of notes at moderate tempo

Tpt. I in C
Tpt. II in C
Tpt. III in C

(m.3) (m.4) (m.5) (m.9)

p *mf*

Example 27. *Crossings*, mm. 3-10, trumpets

León has not utilized dodecaphonic techniques, although she has studied the music of Schoenberg, Berg, and Webern.⁶⁰

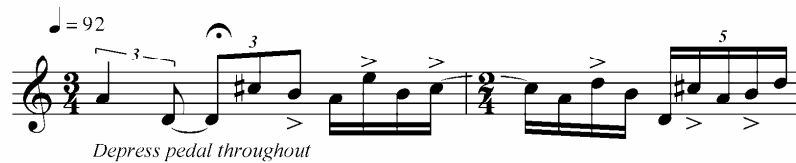
Harmony

León has developed a complex harmonic language that draws upon functional harmony, atonality, and chromaticism. On the surface level, her work appears largely atonal, but it is conceived in a tonal framework,⁶¹ and analysis reveals centricity as the main basis of harmonic organization. *Ascend* (1983) is grounded in D major, which is maintained by the chimes throughout the work in passages such as the following. This tonality is obscured by numerous

⁶⁰ Tania León, interview by author.

⁶¹ Ibid.

tertian harmonies played by the brasses; most are unrelated, and many are used functionally to briefly tonicize other pitches.



Example 28. *Ascend*, mm. 50-51, chimes

The underlying centricity in León’s music is often difficult to recognize without knowledge of the score. This is due to the striking harmonic complexity present in the foreground, which is achieved through numerous nonharmonic tones, nonfunctional triadic harmonies, frequent tonicization, and the use of numerous collections based on the same centric pitch. For example, *Indígena* employs the octatonic, diatonic, chromatic, and blues collections, all based on G; these will be discussed later in this document. In addition, numerous harmonies result from the interplay of multiple melodic layers.

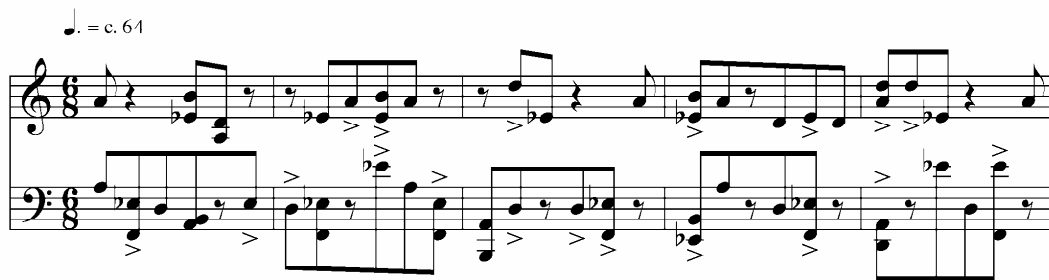
Common sonorities include tertian and quartal harmonies as well as tone clusters. Frequent use is made of seventh chords, which are often decorated with altered and unaltered scalar extensions. Certain voicings reveal the influence of the piano on León’s approach to harmonic construction. She confirmed in an interview, “When I was becoming a pianist, my training was eight hours playing daily. It’s something that my fingers haven’t forgotten.”⁶² The nearly symmetrical chord shown in Example 29 uses B³ and C⁴ as its axis; an internal fourth yields F# in octaves, and both hands span a major ninth.

⁶² Tania León, interview by Jenny Raymond.



Example 29. *Indígena*, m. 28, piano

Common in León's music are passages in which a foundational harmony is maintained while other layers add non-structural sonorities. Rather than presenting this harmony vertically, she often employs an efficient means of accompaniment in which running eighth notes simultaneously provide harmonic reinforcement and rhythmic vitality. An example of this was shown in Example 8; another exists in measures 45-49 of *Indígena* (Example 30), where the strings repeat five pitches: {D, Eb, F, A, B}. Note that in prime form these pitches form the octatonic subset (02368). The importance of the octatonic collection in the construction of *Indígena* will be discussed in Chapter Three.



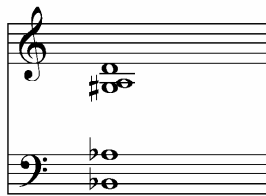
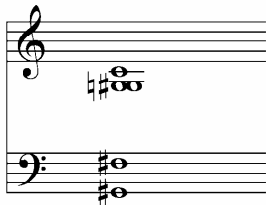
Example 30. *Indígena*, mm. 45-49, strings (reduction)

The same pitches are later employed in a similar passage, with the exception of Eb, which is changed to E. This reflects León's switch from octatonic to diatonic material in the second half of the work.



Example 31. *Indígena*, mm. 107-111, violin I

As mentioned earlier, *acciaccaturas* are often used to enhance harmonic, as well as melodic, events. Shown in Example 32 are two examples taken from *Indígena*. In both cases, the additional pitch is a semitone away from the harmonic root, and is voiced one octave higher for further integration into the sonority.



Example 32. *Indígena*, chords of mm. 4 and 7

Form

León's approach to structural organization is varied; many compositions loosely adhere to traditional formal models, others are through-composed, and some seem to defy all preconceived labels. Discussed earlier, the *Four Pieces for Violoncello* is cast in the mold of a

four-movement symphony. The opening *Allegro* is the most formal of the four movements; a declamatory motive based on the whole-tone collection sets the tone for the work, both in character and in melodic language. The second movement, *Lento doloroso, sempre cantabile*, is much slower and more lyrical. The third movement functions as a *scherzo*; its dance-like quality is immediately evident through León's departure from Italian character markings in favor of *montuno*, an Afro-Cuban stylistic label. This character is furthered by Afro-Cuban rhythmic references, as well as nontraditional performance practices including dramatic *glissandi* to extreme registers, foot stamping and knocking on the soundboard. Marked *vivo*, the final movement is a *tour de force* that displays the virtuosity of both composer and performer.

Ternary design is often evoked with a reprise of melodic material near the conclusion of a composition; this can be heard in *Batá*, *Momentum*, and the first of the *Four Pieces for Violoncello*. Other compositions, such as *Ritual* (1987) and *Indígena*, loosely adhere to binary form. Works of shorter length, including *Ascend* (1983), *Crossings* (1992), and *Fanfarria* (2000), are often through-composed. Regardless of León's chosen design, careful attention to overall proportion and the balance of contrast and repetition is universally evident.

Large-scale formal divisions are generally conveyed through typical means, including changes in centricity, tonality, thematic material, rhythmic language, tempo, texture, and orchestration. While global apportionment is typically clearly articulated, local divisions are often intentionally obscured. Phrases are generally irregular in length and, when repeated, altered through extension. Melodies are joined through elision, and often begin in the foreground, temporarily yield to secondary material, and subsequently reemerge in a slightly altered form. A particularly effective technique is the alteration of contrasting musical elements at slightly different times; the resulting formal ambiguity is specifically important to the structure

of *Indígena*. In summary, León's music is carefully proportioned, yet also highly continuous and nearly void of clear internal boundaries.

Texture

As stated earlier, much of the complexity in León's compositions results from her use of polyphonic textures. The interplay of contrapuntal material yields numerous nonfunctional harmonies and polyrhythms, and a myriad of timbral colors. When combined, these characteristics form a sound that can be compared to constantly changing kaleidoscopic visual images.

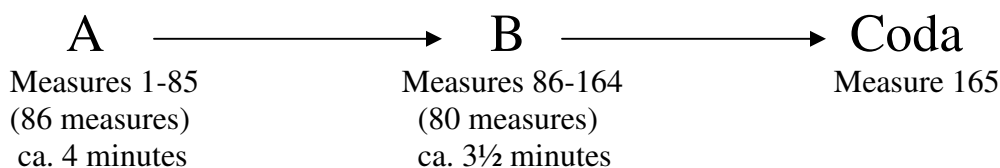
While polyphony is most prevalent, León employs numerous other textures, including homophonic, monophonic, and pointillistic; all of which are present in *Indígena*. Orchestration ranges from unaccompanied solos to thick textures, however there is very little doubling of parts, and *tutti* scoring is extremely rare; this yields a high degree of density and complexity. These aspects of her compositional style will be discussed in further detail with regard to *Indígena*.

III. INDÍGENA: THEORETICAL ANALYSIS

Overview

Indígena was composed in response to a commission from New York City's Town Hall with support from the Mary Flagler Cary Charitable Trust for the Solisti New York Chamber Players. The work was premiered in 1991 with Ransom Wilson conducting. Approximately eight minutes in length, it is scored for thirteen instruments: flute, oboe, clarinet in Bb, bassoon, horn, trumpet in Bb, piano, two violins, viola, violincello, contrabass, and one percussionist.⁶³ The instrumentation of the ensemble was dictated by the performing forces of the Solisti Players; the length, style, and difficulty of the work was at the composer's discretion.⁶⁴

Indígena consists of 165 measures which are organized in a binary form, with its two parts approximately equal in size and duration. The final measure of the work functions as a coda, and is to be repeated to total a length of fifteen seconds.



This chapter will show how the form shown above is generated, and furthermore that the internal proportions of Section A mirror those of the piece as a whole. Section B is essentially a digression from the remainder of the work – in form, harmonic and melodic language, rhythm, texture, and mood; most notable are the prevalence of Afro-Cuban melodic, rhythmic, and instrumental references.

⁶³ Percussion instruments include 2 tom-toms, 2 roto-toms, 2 porcelain mugs, marimba, bass drum, and shaker.

⁶⁴ Tania León, interview by author.

Indígena was composed soon after León returned from a visit to Cuba, and the work brilliantly evokes her journey through musical elements. The title is a cognate of *indigenous*, which in one form means native-born, or originating in a country or geographic location.⁶⁵ During her visit she met her young nephew for the first time. It was he and his youthful spirit that inspired the title of the piece. León recalled, “He was the most indigenous person I met in my family...He was...like a mango, like a palm tree.”⁶⁶ We will see that much of *Indígena* is programmatic, and that this aspect of the work’s construction was a generator of local formal design.

Formal Design

Section A of *Indígena* is organized in two subsections and a codetta.

<u>Subsection</u>	<u>Phrase</u>	<u>Featured Instrument(s)</u>	<u>Centricity</u>
I	mm. 1-7	flute	G
	mm. 8-13	clarinet	
	mm. 14-15	bassoon	
	mm. 16-21	piano	
	mm. 22-25	<i>tutti</i>	
	mm. 26-35	‘cello, piano	
II	mm. 36-44	clarinet	B
	mm. 45-54	horn	
	mm. 55-62	horn, viola	
	mm. 63-73	piano	
	mm. 74-78	<i>tutti</i>	
Codetta	mm. 79-80	<i>tutti</i>	G
	mm. 81-85	oboe	

Figure 1. Subdivision of *Indígena*, Section A

Subsections I and II are separated by a centric shift from G to B; G centricity returns in the codetta. Most of the phrase divisions are not clearly articulated, and changes in texture,

⁶⁵ E.M. Kirkpatrick, ed. *Chambers 20th Century Dictionary* (London: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1983), 640.

⁶⁶ Tania León, interview by author.

tempo, centricity, and instrumental color rarely occur simultaneously. For this reason, much of the local formal design is open to interpretation.

For example, the phrase division between measures 13 and 14 could also be placed between measures 14 and 15. Supporting the former division is the textural change between the two measures, as well as the initiation of the bassoon solo. However, a division between mm. 14 and 15 is supported by harmonic and rhythmic events. The harmony of m. 13, a G¹³ chord in first inversion, is released with the punctuating eighth note of m. 15, and the abrupt cessation of the pulse on the fourth beat of m. 14 contributes to a sense of conclusion.

León employs a presentational strategy in the first half of the piece, with all of the wind instruments except trumpet progressively featured as soloists. In an interview with this author, she described the programmatic foundation of this choice. Each of the wind soloists represents a person she met on her visit to Cuba, and with each passage she attempted to depict their speech patterns and accents. Taking this into consideration, it seemed appropriate to divide sections according to changes in solo instruments. The rhythmic break between measures 14 and 15 can then be interpreted as a temporary pause in the bassoon solo, rather than a formal division. According to León, “The stops are abrupt because that is the way of conversation. You see someone, stop, and then continue the conversation.”⁶⁷

In Section B, León discontinues the systematic presentation of the wind instruments in favor of a series of extended trumpet solos.⁶⁸ A brief interruption by the piano solo of measures 121-126 serves as an interlude and contributes to an allusion to ternary design for the section as a whole. Because G centricity is prominent throughout, the C# centricity of measures 123-124 contributes to this formal division, and also foreshadows the coda.

⁶⁷ Tania León, interview by author.

⁶⁸ The programmatic nature of this textural change will be discussed later in this chapter.

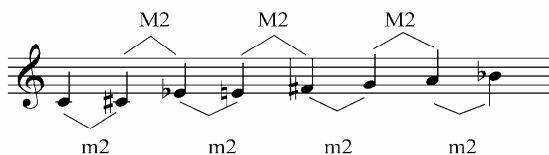
<u>Subsection</u>	<u>Phrase</u>	<u>Featured Instrument(s)</u>	<u>Centricity</u>
I	m. 86-92	piano, horn, oboe	G
	m. 91-93	trumpet	
	m. 94-102	trumpet	
	m. 103-105	trumpet	
	m. 106-120	trumpet	
II	m. 121-126	piano	C#
I ^v	m. 127-130	trumpet	G
	m. 131-140	trumpet	
	m. 141-151	piano, percussion	
	m. 152-164	trumpet	
Coda	m. 165	piano	C#

Figure 2. Subdivision of *Indígena*, Section B

Octatonic Properties

At the surface level, it may appear that the three sections of *Indígena* have little in common; they differ in harmonic construction, melodic content, texture, and mood, and Section B begins with almost no preparation. The coda also comes as a complete surprise; as such, it is one of the most effective points in the work. However, further examination reveals León's use of centricity and a carefully maintained tonal progression to join these sections and propel the work forward to its unique conclusion.

The overall form of *Indígena* is principally generated by manipulation of the octatonic collection. Named in 1963 by Arthur Berger,⁶⁹ it includes eight pitches in an alternation of minor and major seconds, and can be written to begin with either of those intervals.



Example 33. Octatonic collection

⁶⁹ Arthur Berger, "Problems of Pitch Organization in Stravinsky," *Perspectives of New Music* 2.1 (Fall/Winter 1963): 11.

This collection has many features that make it attractive for post-tonal composition; its symmetry is foremost among them. It maps onto itself at four levels of transposition: T_0 , T_3 , T_6 and T_9 (as does its complement, the diminished seventh chord). Consequently, it is limited to only three transpositions. Within this document, the three octatonic collections will be labeled in accordance with the system of Joseph Straus; each is identified by its first two pitch-classes.⁷⁰

The image shows three musical staves, each representing an octatonic collection. The first staff is labeled OCT_{0,1} and contains the notes C, C#, E, E#, G, G#, B, B. The second staff is labeled OCT_{1,2} and contains the notes C#, D, F, F#, A, A#, C, C#. The third staff is labeled OCT_{2,3} and contains the notes E, E#, G, G#, B, B, C, C#. To the right of each staff is its corresponding pitch-class set: [0,1,3,4,6,7,9,10] for OCT_{0,1}, [1,2,4,5,7,8,10,11] for OCT_{1,2}, and [2,3,5,6,8,9,11,0] for OCT_{2,3}.

Example 34. Octatonic collection at three transpositions

This symmetry proved useful in the transpositional and inversional processes of many influential twentieth-century composers, most notably Igor Stravinsky. Olivier Messiaen systematically presented numerous symmetrical scales in his *Technique de mon langage musical* (1944), in which he refers to them as modes of limited transposition.⁷¹ The octatonic collection is his second mode, and is compared to the diminished seventh chord, which is limited to four transpositions and inversions. This sonority is not only a subset of the octatonic collection, it can be viewed as the essential material of its construction. Shown below, the juxtaposition of two diminished seventh chords separated by a minor second yield the octatonic collection. The final diminished seventh chord is its complement.

⁷⁰ Joseph Straus, *Introduction to Post-Tonal Theory*, 2nd Ed. (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2000), 120.

⁷¹ Olivier Messiaen, *Technique de mon langage musical*, trans. John Satterfield (Paris: Leduc, 1956), 59-62.

Example 35. Diminished seventh chords and the octatonic collection

Given its inherent tonal ambiguity, it might initially seem that exclusive use of the octatonic collection in the tonal development of a work would prove difficult. On the contrary, clear tonal implications can result from use of its subsets, which range from traditional tertian harmonies to more conventionally dissonant pitch-class sets. If ordered to begin with a minor second, major and minor triads can originate on the first, third, fifth, and seventh degrees of the collection. As triads can be used to reinforce pitch classes, this symmetry can produce a centric conflict. According to Straus, “Sometimes, tritone-related pitch classes are poised against one another, competing for priority.”⁷²

This centric polarity is exploited in the fundamental structure of *Indígena*. The majority of the work employs G as its centric pitch, and at the coda suddenly shifts to C#. This is one of the most effective moments in the work, as at first listening it appears to have no preparation. Reexamination of OCT_{1,2} shows that this shift of a tritone is generated by the natural division of the octatonic collection. This is shown by the dotted-slurs in Example 36.⁷³

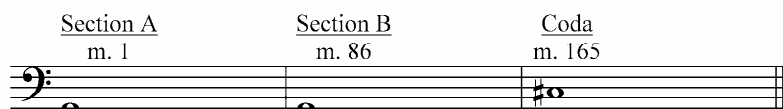
⁷² Straus, 125.

⁷³ This reveals another parallel with Stravinsky, who often exploited this tritone relationship. The reader is referred to pp. 18-26 of Arthur Berger’s article, “Problems of Pitch Organization in Stravinsky,” (cited in the bibliography of this document) for a description of octatonic tritone polarity in *Les Noces*.



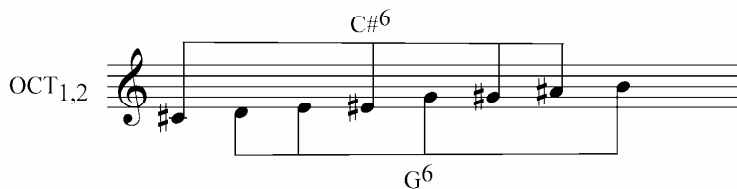
Example 36. Tritone division of $OCT_{1,2}$

It follows that if the collection is transposed to begin on G, C# will be at the center of the collection. Revisiting the formal chart of *Indígena* with regard to the primary centric pitch of each section, we see that this is important to the fundamental architecture of the piece.



Example 37. *Indígena* centricity

This relationship is further clarified by examining the G^6 chord that begins Section B (m. 86) and the $C\#^6$ chord that concludes the piece (m. 165). A major triad with an added sixth degree, (0358) in prime form, is an octatonic subset; it follows that because these chords are separated by a tritone, when joined together they produce $OCT_{1,2}$, the predominant collection of the work.



Example 38. $OCT_{1,2}$ generated from added sixth chords separated by a tritone

The added sixth chord was a favorite octatonic subset of many twentieth century composers, including Stravinsky and Messiaen. Stravinsky employed it as a chord of resolution in the “Soldier’s March” of *L’Histoire du Soldat* (1918), as well as the final movement of the *Symphony in Three Movements* (1946), and Messiaen devoted a chapter of *Technique de Mon Langage Musical* to added sixth chords. This chord received frequent use in his compositions, often joined by the raised fourth; he referred to this pentachord as, “the typical chord of the second mode of limited transpositions.”⁷⁴

Returning to *Indígena*, reexamination of Section A (mm. 1-85) reveals that OCT_{1,2} is fundamental to local, as well as global, organization. This is shown in the following bass-line sketch:

Measure: 1 3 7 8 9 15 21 22 26 36 45 55 76 79

Example 39. *Indígena*, Section A, bass-line sketch

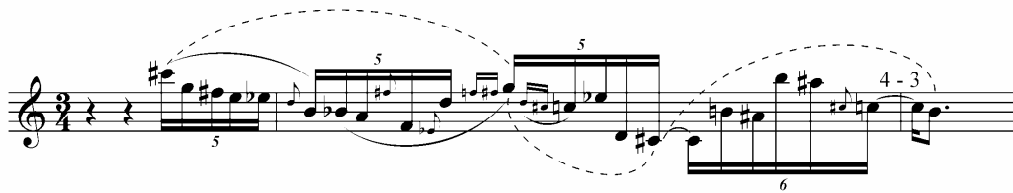
Note the tritone relationship between G# and D in subsection A, and between B and F in subsection B; locally, this echoes the global progression from G to C#. Example 40 shows the above pitches in scalar form; included are all but one pitch of OCT_{1,2} centered on G. The absence of C# as a structural pitch is not accidental; in the background it is being withheld in preparation for its appearance in the coda.

⁷⁴ Messiaen, 48.



Example 40. *Indígena*, Section A, scalar reduction of bass-line sketch

In the foreground, however, the importance of C# and its relationship to G is evident in the first measure of the piece. In the style of a recitative, the flute plays a long quasi-improvisational passage centered on G (Example 41). Following the melodic contour with dotted-slurs, it begins with C#⁶, descends to G⁵ (midway through the passage), and continues on to C#⁴; it is then raised to C#⁵ at the end of the second measure, and finally resolves by descending semitones to B⁴. The rhythmic elongation of C⁵ produces a 4-3 suspension over G. Note that G#, the dominant of C#, is not present in this collection; it is otherwise chromatic.



Example 41. *Indígena*, mm. 1-3, flute

According to Joseph Straus, “The diatonic and octatonic collections make a particularly effective pair...”⁷⁵ As stated earlier, this is especially true in regard to the many diatonic harmonies that are also octatonic subsets. Section A of *Indígena* exhibits usage of both collections on a structural level. Referring to the bass-line sketch of Example 39, the most important structural pitches reinforce G centricity by arpeggiating a G major triad.

⁷⁵ Straus, 123.

Before addressing octatonic pitch-class sets, it will be helpful to describe briefly the analytical labeling system devised by Allen Forte. In this method, all of the twelve chromatic pitches are assigned a numerical integer from 0 to 12; beginning on C with C=0, each pitch sequentially receives the next integer until B=11. To prevent the use of more than one integer, Bb is often labeled as *t* rather than 10, and B is commonly written as *e* rather than 11. This system relies on the principles of octave and enharmonic equivalence, which means that C¹, C², and C⁴ are all written as 0, and C# and Db are both written as 1.

Sonorities generated by combinations of the twelve chromatic pitches are referred to as pitch-class sets, commonly abbreviated as pc sets. When identifying a pc set, one must perform two procedures: arranging the set in normal order, and then determining the prime form. In normal order, the pitches are listed in ascending order within a single octave, with the smallest possible boundary interval. For example, a tetrachord consisting of G, D, B and Bb would be represented by the integers 7, 2, 11, and 10. Arranged from lowest to highest, the set would be [2,7,t,e]. To place the set in normal order, the set is cyclically permuted to find the smallest boundary interval. If the same boundary interval is shared by more than one set, the one with the smallest intervals on the left is chosen.

[2,7,t,e]

[7,t,e,2] → This version of the set is in normal form; it features the smallest boundary interval (7 semitones).

[t,e,2,7]

[e,2,7,t]

To achieve prime form, or “the most normal” of normal forms,⁷⁶ the set is transposed so the first integer is 0, thus [7,t,e,2] becomes (0347). Then, invert the set and repeat the same process; the

⁷⁶ Straus, 49.

form of the set that has the smallest boundary interval, and is most densely packed to the left, is in prime form. In this case, (0347) is prime.⁷⁷

Numerous pc sets are generated by the octatonic collection; one of the most often used is the octatonic tetrachord mentioned above, (0347). This pc set is often called the major-minor chord because in its prime form it includes both the major and minor third degree; if centered on C, it would read {C,Eb,E,G}. It is useful not only for its unique sound, but also for its transpositional symmetry. As an octatonic subset, it can be transposed at T_3 , T_6 and T_9 without introducing any pitches outside of the collection. Because of this characteristic, it was often employed in the compositions of Igor Stravinsky. As Stravinsky was a formidable influence on León's compositional language, it is interesting to find that set (0347) functions as the initial sonority of *Indígena*. As the following section will show, the final sonority of the work is also an octatonic tetrachord.

As we learned in undergraduate theory, examination of the first and last measures of a work often reveals the tonic key. Although this approach may seem simplistic when analyzing contemporary music, it proves useful when examining *Indígena*. In the first two measures, (0347), a subset of $OCT_{1,2}$, is played by the strings.



Example 42. *Indígena*, opening tetrachord

⁷⁷ Note that a set in prime form is enclosed by parentheses rather than brackets, and the integers are no longer separated by commas.

It is not accidental that although there are five pitches in the preceding example, it is labeled here as a tetrachord. The root of this sonority is G, but its identity is obscured by the presence of F# in the contrabass. The insertion of this additional pitch provides another example of León's use of *acciaccaturas*.

Turning to the final measure of the work (Example 43), we see the aforementioned C#⁶ chord in the left hand of the piano part. G⁷ and A⁷ are not being considered as part of the sonority because of their registral separation, and because in relation to the chord tones of G# and A#, they function in the same manner as the F# in Example 42.

Example 43. *Indígena*, final sonority

In summary, *Indígena* begins and ends with octatonic subsets, which reinforces the structural use of that collection. León's choice of these sonorities also reflects her treatment of tonality and dissonance. Much of the piece is locally atonal, but in the overall progression of the work, dissonance is treated traditionally. The inherent dissonance of the major-minor chord at the outset creates a sense of drama, whereas the conclusion on an added sixth chord projects a feeling of finality and resolution.

Accepting that G and C# are the main centric pitch-classes in *Indígena*, and that both belong to OCT_{1,2}, one question remains: Is the piece set in G or C#? Due to the inherent

symmetry of the octatonic collection, we have no audible clue such as that of the dominant-tonic relationship in the diatonic collection. The sheer amount of the work that projects G centricity enables it to make a lasting aural impression, however the purity of the final C# major triad is also quite compelling. Perhaps there is no correct answer, and the octatonic collection was chosen specifically for its ambiguity. Many formal divisions of *Indígena* are not clearly articulated; that is in keeping with León's compositional style. Listeners have the opportunity to perceive the work on their own terms, and to draw their own conclusions.

Jazz References

The information presented above is analytically interesting, but will likely go unnoticed by the listener. Much more recognizable will be references to jazz in the first half of the work, and to Latin American sources in the second portion. Section A exhibits the character of improvisation, the melodic inflection of blue notes, and the harmonic and melodic vocabulary of post-bebop jazz. To fully understand the latter term, the following will provide a brief synopsis of bebop.

The style of jazz called bebop was developed by influential and virtuosic performers in the mid-1940s; among the leaders of this movement were John "Dizzy" Gillespie (trumpet), Charlie Parker (alto saxophone), Bud Powell (piano), Thelonious Monk (piano), Charlie Christian (guitar), Jimmy Blanton (bass), and Max Roach (drums). Bebop was characterized by a marked increase in rhythmic, harmonic, and, perhaps most importantly, melodic complexity. Melodies and soloists' improvisations became highly angular and chromatic, and featured asymmetrical phrases, irregular accents, and a sophisticated vocabulary featuring altered scalar extensions and pitches borrowed from other tonalities.

In subsequent years the term bebop was shortened to “bop,” and used to describe various descendent genres, including cool jazz, west coast jazz, and hard bop. The innovations of bebop created a divisive stylistic change that permanently altered jazz; therefore, to be clear when discussing the language of jazz, it is necessary to differentiate between pre- and post-bebop.

It is common in jazz improvisation to simultaneously or alternately play the major and minor third degrees in relation to a dominant seventh chord. This follows the tradition of utilizing the lowered third, fifth, and seventh degrees, called blue notes, to create dissonance. Shown below is the blues scale based on G; note its similarity with OCT_{1,2}. Both collections feature the three blue notes, and the octatonic collection includes two altered chord extensions: the lowered ninth and thirteenth.⁷⁸

Example 44. Blues and octatonic scales in relation to G⁷

Melodic employment of the blues scale in Section A of *Indígena* includes the passage shown in Example 45. This transition begins with an excerpt from the F# major pentatonic collection, briefly alludes to the pervading G centricity, returns to F# pentatonic, and finally employs a fragment of the D blues scale (using all pitches except F, the blue third) to lead to D centricity in the following measure.

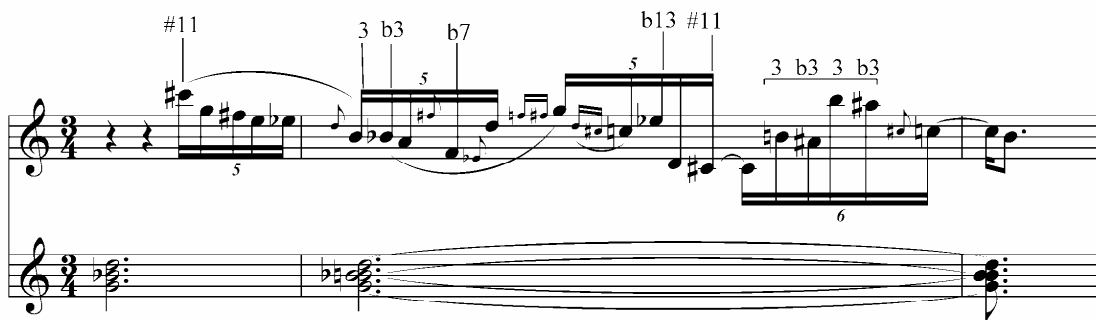
⁷⁸ Extensions are notes comprising the upper structure of seventh chords. These are often altered to create further dissonance; the most common are b9, #9, #11 and b13.



Example 45. *Indígena*, mm. 24-25, reduction

The harmonic shift (F#-G-F#) in the above passage highlights a jazz improvisational technique commonly referred to as “side stepping,” or temporarily moving a semitone away from a given chord.⁷⁹ Due to the close proximity of the pitches, “the ear can easily relate the line to its actual harmonic base and conceive the logic in the dissonance.”⁸⁰

In the flute solo of measures 1-7, the combined sound of the G major-minor chord and the melodic material provides further references to jazz improvisational practices (Example 46).



Example 46. *Indígena*, mm. 1-3, reduction

Numerous chromatic passing tones, altered extensions, and the juxtaposition of the natural and blue third are joined by prevalent octave displacement. Note that the melodic contour highlights important chord tones and extensions; the passage begins on the raised eleventh, falls to the blue seventh (then the lowered thirteenth), rises to the root, falls to the raised eleventh, rises to the

⁷⁹ Mark Levine, *The Jazz Theory Book*, (Petaluma, CA: Sher Music, 1995), 187.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

third, and finally resolves on that chord tone in the third measure. This use of “goal tones,” as well as the chromatic melodic language of the passage, is quite common in jazz improvisation. This is illustrated by comparing it with excerpts of solos by the saxophonist John Coltrane and the trumpeter Miles Davis, printed in David Liebman’s book, *A Chromatic Approach to Jazz Improvisation*. Coltrane’s solo exhibits a gradually descending melodic contour, and, like the passage presented above, is framed with the third and raised eleventh scale degrees.



Example 47. John Coltrane, solo excerpt⁸¹

The chromaticism of Davis’s solo is even more obvious. Note his usage of internal melodic contour to highlight goal-directed linear movement: rising to the lowered ninth, falling to the lowered thirteenth, and finally resolving to the third degree. The dotted-slug shows the overall horizontal contour of the line, which joins C⁵ and forms a long-range 4-3 suspension.



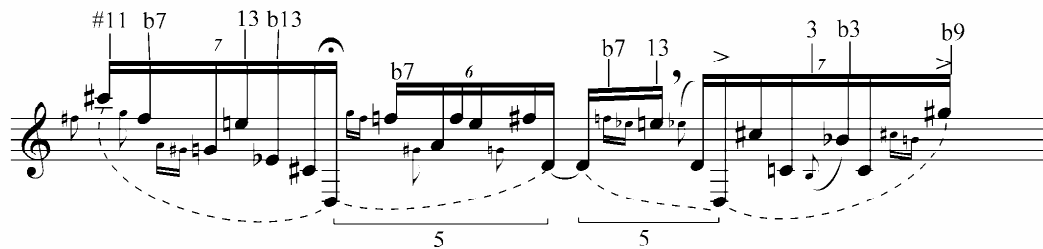
Example 48. Miles Davis, solo excerpt⁸²

Returning to *Indígena*, the sonority that began the piece is restated on the last sixteenth note of measure 7, and the clarinet solo of measure 8 continues to function in relation to G

⁸¹ David Liebman, *A Chromatic Approach to Jazz Harmony and Melody*, (Germany: Advance Music, 1991), 73-74.

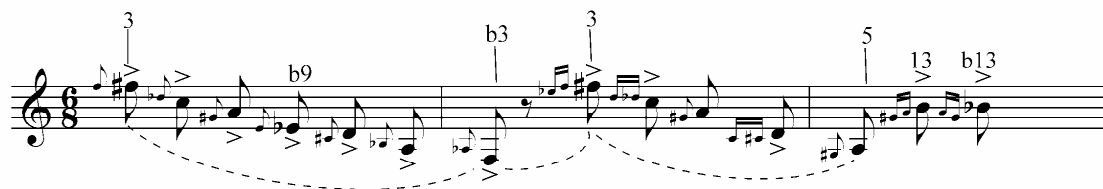
⁸² *Ibid.*

centricity. Shown by dotted-slurs, chord tones and extensions occupy pivotal points in the melodic contour. The fifth degree (D) is particularly prominent; it is used to prepare a shift to D centricity in the following measure. The passage begins and ends on altered extensions: the raised eleventh and lowered ninth degrees. The natural and blue third degrees receive much more subtle presentation than in the earlier flute solo.



Example 49. *Indígena*, m. 8, clarinet

The solo clarinet continues in measures 9 through 11, arpeggiating an embellished D^7 chord. Note the structural importance of the natural and blue third, as well as the fifth, degrees. The lowered ninth and thirteenth degrees are also featured. Given that the blue third could also be called the raised ninth, one additional altered extension, the raised eleventh, would yield a D^{ALT} chord.⁸³ Numerous grace notes provide another example of the use of chromatic neighbor tones in melodic construction.



Example 50. *Indígena*, m. 9, clarinet

⁸³ See Example 26 on page 28.

The piano also has important melodic material in measures 9 through 11. The D centricity of the clarinet solo is reinforced, but with great subtlety. In Example 51a, the dotted-slurs follow the persistent alternation between D and D#, echoing the juxtaposition of G and G# throughout Section A. The bracketed passage highlights a short descending line that is quite reminiscent of bebop jazz improvisation; it begins on the dominant, and then moves to its tritone substitute.⁸⁴ Example 51b contains the author’s interpretation of the passage, including a typical jazz articulation pattern and a hypothetical resolution on the ninth degree of the tonic.

Example 51a. *Indígena*, mm. 9-11, piano

Example 51b. *Indígena*, m. 10, piano (interpretation by the author)

⁸⁴ Tritone substitution is common in post-bebop jazz improvisation. Basically, for any dominant sonority one can substitute its tritone. This yields additional scalar material for the soloist, a more interesting harmonic progression, and often smoother voice-leading. For example, a ii-V-I progression in G would typically be Em⁷ – A⁷ – D; a “tritone sub” results in chromatic root movement: Em⁷ – Eb⁷ – D.

The passage bracketed in Example 51a makes a second appearance in the winds and strings of measure 27. Interestingly, it is accompanied by the most important tritone in the piece: G/C# (see marimba).

In summary, jazz references in Section A are subtle, yet extremely important, contributors to the melodic and harmonic construction, mood, and character of the music.

Afro-Cuban References

Section B of *Indígena* was designed to evoke a *comparsa*. In its current use, this term refers to Afro-Cuban street bands assembled by city districts or neighborhoods for participation in Carnival celebrations.⁸⁵ In addition to energetic music and elaborately choreographed dance routines, *comparsa* members typically wear decorative homemade costumes, carry a banner bearing their name, and compose original songs for the occasion. Instrumental combinations generally feature a lead trumpeter and an ensemble of trumpets and other brasses, various percussion instruments, sometimes the *corneta China*⁸⁶, and many other instruments improvised from household materials, including bells, whistles, frying pans, and tire rims.⁸⁷

Derived from African cultural traditions, *comparsas* descend from sixteenth century slave celebrations on Epiphany, or *Día de Reyes*, which is celebrated throughout Latin America on 6 January. *Comparsa* is a Spanish word that originally referred to the extras in a theatre company, later to the dancers in a Carnival troupe, and finally to both the dancers and the musicians of a Carnival ensemble. In early years, *comparsas* were formed by *calibos*, social groups organized by free Afro-Cubans. Each assembled on *Día de Reyes* because that was the one day each year when African slaves were permitted by authorities to publicly engage in native cultural practices.

⁸⁵ Robin Moore, *Nationalizing Blackness: Afrocubanismo and Artistic Revolution in Havana, 1920-1940*, (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1997), 62.

⁸⁶ The Chinese cornet is a double-reed instrument similar to the oboe; it was introduced in Cuba by Chinese immigrants who arrived in that country in the mid-1800s.

⁸⁷ Moore, 64.

A procession led to the city center for performance for members of the local government. The intense volume generated by the *comparsas*, in addition to the movements of masked dancers in full African costumes, contributed to a general opinion among middle-class Cubans that the practice should be abolished; this came to pass in the late 1800s.

Despite this restriction, *comparsas* continued to perform with some frequency through the early decades of the twentieth century, and many of these same groups remain today. Their participation in Havana's Carnival was finally reauthorized in 1937, and they have since become an integral part of Carnival celebrations. Songs in traditional *comparsas* are sung in the Yoruba language and Spanish; in modern *comparsas* it is common to hear songs popular on Cuban radio.⁸⁸ The following account describes the 2005 Carnival celebration:

At Carnival, the rhythm starts at the climax and maintains it throughout, pure fast and furious percussion with *coros* and *guías*, calls and responses. Dancing can be hypnotic. Some of the *comparsas*...are staged on top of floats, pulled - in an endearing Cuban way - by big tractors. On these floats, the singers have microphones and are accompanied by percussion musicians, brass instruments and female dancers that adorn the sides, fronts and backs of the floats, dressed in bikinis and feathers, gyrating away.⁸⁹

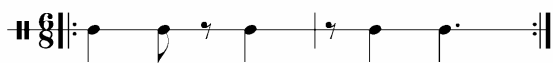
Comparsas play a musical genre called *conga*, which has been adapted for use in Carnival celebrations and become known as *la conga comparsa*. It is played in cut-time at fast tempos, and features call and response passages between the lead vocalist and the other singers, as well as improvised solos by the lead trumpeter.⁹⁰ The exact sound of *la conga comparsa* is extremely varied, due in part to regional differences (for example the *conga Habanera* and *conga Matanzera*), and to the improvisatory nature of the performances. The main constant is its rhythmic foundation which, as with all Cuban rhythms, is found in the *claves*.

⁸⁸ Martin Karakas, "Carnival-La Habana," *Timba.com*, 27 February 2005, http://www.timba.com/artists/havana/index.asp?page=Carnival_La_Havana.htm, (12 November 2005).

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ Uribe, 191.

The rhythmic concept of the *clave* originated in Africa, but due to the integration of African culture in Latin America, it has influenced the music of nearly all of the Caribbean islands, Central, and South America. In Afro-Cuban music, *clave* rhythms have been codified in two patterns: *clave de son* and *clave de rumba*, each of which can be played in duple or 6/8 meter. The rhythms are two measures long, and are typically repeated without variation. Shown below are both forms of the *clave de son*.



Example 52a. 6/8 *clave de son*



Example 52b. *clave de son*

In the *clave de Rumba*, the final note of the first measure is displaced by one eighth note.



Example 53. *clave de rumba*

The *claves* above are classified as 3-2 *claves* because the first measure contains three notes. They also can begin on the second measure to better accommodate melodic rhythm; in this case they are called 2-3 *claves*.

The following example of a *conga de comparsa* is printed in Ed Uribe's book, *Afro-Cuban Percussion and Drum Set*.⁹¹ It is played in ϕ time, with a tempo of approximately $\text{♩} = 130$. In this case, the polyrhythmic texture is built on the foundational *son clave*. Section B of *Indígena* is informed by this layering process, as well as the instruments and their characteristic rhythms.⁹²

Example 54. *Comparsa* percussion instruments⁹³

⁹¹ Uribe, 191.

⁹² It is important to remember that actual *conga de comparsa* rhythms are quite varied as a result of regional differences and the improvisational techniques of individual performers.

⁹³ The *conga*, *rebajador*, *salidor* and *quinto* are *conga* drums of different sizes. In performance, their rhythms are colored with complex playing techniques including open and closed tones, slaps, and palm tones; this is notated on the *salidor* passage above.

The most audible method by which León integrates Afro-Cuban music into Section B of *Indígena* is in instrumental treatment. In Section A, the woodwinds and horn are featured as soloists, but in the second half of the piece, they join the strings in an accompanimental role, and are used for their percussive quality in a manner similar to that of Stravinsky. These instruments are given melodic material on only two occasions, and *tutti* rhythms simulate the *comparsa* brass section. The trumpet, which is relatively unimportant in Section A, is featured throughout, clearly in reference to the lead trumpeter of the *comparsa*.

The percussion part of Section A features the marimba, which generally adds to the accompaniment of the piano and strings. In Section B, this instrument is eschewed in favor of non-pitched percussion. Although León does not employ any of the Afro-Cuban instruments shown in Example 54, those that are used have similar timbres and employ characteristic rhythms. These instrumental similarities are shown with the following comparison:

<u>Indígena instruments</u>	<u>Corresponding Afro-Cuban instruments</u>
roto toms	<i>timbale</i>
floor toms	<i>congas</i>
bass drum	<i>bombo</i>
porcelain mugs	<i>sartenes</i>

At the outset of Section B, the winds and strings join the *comparsa* percussion section. Measure 85 initiates a repeated G major chord in the woodwinds and strings, with the sixth degree added by the oboe. For the first time in the work, G centricity is clearly audible, and is reinforced by a shift to the IV chord (C major), in measures 90-91, and a subsequent return to G major in measure 92. Harmonically, this provides a clear reference to traditional Afro-Cuban music, which is largely built on I, IV, and V chords. The passage “sweeps away” the

chromaticism of the previous section, creates a change of mood, and serves as an introduction to the trumpet solo. Shown below are the first three measures of this ostinato:



Example 55. *Indígena*, reduction of mm. 86-88, woodwinds and strings

The passage is constructed from four one-beat germinal rhythmic motives, and does not exhibit a repetitive pattern; this contributes to an improvisational quality. In character, it is perhaps informed by the Afro-Cuban *campana*, or cowbell. This instrument has a function similar to the ride cymbal in jazz, playing syncopated rhythmic figures over a steady pulse. An example of this was shown earlier in the *conga de comparsa* (Example 54). In *campana* performance practice, the bell is held loosely in one hand, with the index finger used as a method of dampening the bell to produce open and closed tones which translate to accented and unaccented notes.

In the passage shown in Example 55, León combines characteristic *campana* rhythms with chordal accompaniment, withholds the underlying pulse, and sets the passage in 3/4 time, a meter that is rarely used in Afro-Cuban music. In a process perhaps best described as filtering, the source material is altered through her interpretation. To make the similarity more clear, Example 56 sets the rhythm of measures 86-88 in duple time and against the 2-3 *son clave*.

Example 56. *Indígena*, reduction of mm. 86-88 (author's interpretation)

Chief among the Afro-Cuban references in *Indígena* is the quotation of a melodic fragment from the folk melody, *La Jardinera* (*The Gardener*). León remembered this tune from her childhood; it was sung by revelers passing beneath her window.⁹⁴ The first statement of the melody is played by the trumpet in measures 116-117, and is immediately echoed by the winds. It is initially set in the tonic key of G major.

Example 57. *Indígena*, mm.116-117, trumpet

In measures 118-120, it is played in the keys of A and D major by the flute and horn, and clarinet and bassoon, respectively (Example 58). The oboe begins the melody in F# major, but E# is lowered to E to remain within the surrounding keys. Of interest are the sonorities that begin and end the passage. The eighth note preceding measure 118 contains an A⁷ chord with an added G#, which is reminiscent of the chords of measures 1, 3, and 7. The final sixteenth note of the passage contains all but the root of an E⁷ chord; this is immediately supplied by the oboe. Therefore, both versions of the melody are framed by their respective dominants.

⁹⁴ Tania León, interview by author.

The image shows a musical score for five instruments: Flute, Oboe, Clarinet, Bassoon, and Horn. The music is in 2/4 time and consists of four measures. The Flute, Oboe, and Clarinet parts are written in treble clef, while the Bassoon and Horn parts are in bass clef. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The melody is a sequence of eighth notes: G4 (flatted), A4, B4, C5, D5, E5, F#5, G5, F#5, E5, D5, C5, B4, A4, G4. The Flute and Oboe parts have a grace note on the first G4. The Clarinet part has a grace note on the first G4. The Bassoon and Horn parts have a grace note on the first G4.

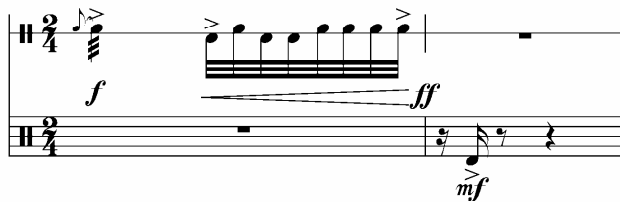
Example 58. *Indígena*, mm. 118-120, woodwinds & horn

The new key centers of D and A in the above excerpt are important, as this begins a melodic progression through the circle of fifths. In the next statement of *La Jardinera* (mm. 135-137), the trumpet and flute are again set in D, and the final statement (mm. 152-155) is in the key of E major. This echoes much of the chordal organization in Section B of the piece. While the first half of the work primarily features tertian harmonies and chord clusters, many in Section B are quintal harmonies. For example, in measures 95-96, the three punctuating sonorities are comprised of {G,D,A,E,B,F#}, {G,D,A,E,C#,G#}, and {D,A,E,B,F#,C#,G#}, respectively.

As shown earlier, the percussion writing of Section B is informed by Afro-Cuban instruments and rhythms such as those used in the *comparsa* ensemble. Another influence may have been the contemporary timbale-based Afro-Cuban drum set, which allows one person to simulate an entire percussion ensemble. It commonly includes at least two and up to four

timbales, a variety of cowbells and cymbals used for “ride” patterns, a kick bass drum, and a wood block.

The first percussion entrance in Section B is in measure 94, where the roto-toms provide an introduction, and then the bass drum “kicks the band.”⁹⁵



Example 59. *Indígena*, mm. 94-95, percussion

The passage above is reminiscent of a characteristic *timbale* rhythm called the *abanico*, which in Spanish means *fan*. The roll evokes the sound of a fan unfolding and leads the ensemble in a new direction.⁹⁶ The *abanico* is repeated in measures 106 and 122; both passages also prepare new material.

Another interesting aural effect begins in measure 116 with the entrance of two porcelain mugs. For the remainder of the piece, these maintain rhythmic vitality with a “ride” pattern that on an Afro-Cuban drum set would be played on two cowbells of contrasting pitch. The mugs are employed in response to a memory from Ms. León’s childhood, when extemporaneous musical performance was an integral part of her family’s daily life. She recalls evenings at a full dinner table, when everyone joined in an improvised “groove” using tabletop items as percussion instruments; among these were coffee cups played with silverware.⁹⁷

⁹⁵ The technique of “kicking” the band is common to both jazz and Latin big band drummers. Usually on a bass or snare drum, the “kick” lends a more percussive attack to an ensemble entrance.

⁹⁶ Uribe, 117.

⁹⁷ Tania León, interview by author.

Examination of Additional Passages

The remainder of this chapter analyzes portions of *Indígena* that are locally significant. The following portion addresses León's method of creating transitional material in a work that otherwise has very few clear formal divisions.

In measures 21, 76-78, and 165, pulse and meter are eliminated, and all musical events are repeated for a specified amount of time. These passages feature chromatic, arrhythmic planes in the violins and viola which are to be played *piano* and *sul ponticello*. When combined, they yield a “wash” of sound in which individual pitches are not discernible and thus project no tonality or centrality. As such, they effectively draw focus away from previous material and anticipate the next event. In this document, these transitions will be referred to as “scene changes.”

The first such passage occurs in measure 21, in which the piano and marimba combine to project D as a dominant bridge between areas of G centrality. The strings' “scene change” blurs this progression and separates the texture of measures 1-20, which features wind soloists, from that of measures 22-35, which is pointillistic. Shown below, each line includes 25 notes and is mainly chromatic; absent pitches are shown in parentheses. The construction of this passage is rather mysterious. It may seem that the universal omission of B \flat is important, but A \sharp is present in the piano material. In fact, all excluded pitches are present elsewhere in the measure. The first violin passage is framed by D⁴ and D⁵, but the other parts do not share this parameter. This author can find no evidence of systematic linear construction, and must assume that each line was generated intuitively.

The image shows a musical score for three string instruments: Violin I, Violin II, and Viola. Each instrument has a single staff with a treble clef. The music consists of a continuous chromatic line. Violin I's line starts on Bb and moves through F and F# to G. Violin II's line starts on Bb and moves through D and D# to E. The Viola's line starts on Bb and moves through C#, D, F#, and G# to A. The notes are written as eighth notes with stems pointing up.

Example 60. *Indígena*, m. 21, strings

The second “scene change” occurs in measures 76-78. The strings return to the pitches of measure 21; the first violin and viola have an exact repetition, and the second violin repeats the final 13 pitches. The flute has the same pitch content as first violin, but the other woodwinds do not mirror the strings. As in measure 21, all twelve chromatic pitches are present.

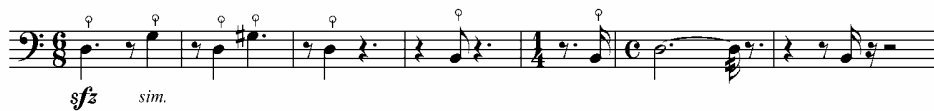
In this transitional section, the two centric pitches of the previous section, B and F, are initially reinforced by the marimba (downbeat of m. 75) and piano (m. 76). This is echoed by the “scene change” material of the bassoon, which is framed by B¹ and F³. By measure 77, this sound has dissolved and an A pedal is maintained in the marimba until measure 82, when G centricity is reaffirmed by the oboe. The passage concludes with measure 78, but “scene change” material continues in the first violin and viola; the viola repeats the pitches of measures 75-76, but the first violin draws solely on the G major scale. This not only prepares the “G-ness” of the oboe solo, but also the nearly exclusive use of diatonic material in the second half of the work.

The final “scene change” is played by the violins in the final measure of the work. Combined with the purity of the C# major tonality, it creates the wistful, retrospective mood intended by the composer. Violin I includes all 12 chromatic pitches, and violin II is missing C

and D. Because these pitches are played by violin I, which obviously has the same timbre, their omission cannot be perceived by the audience, and thus have limited analytical significance.

Other Passages of Interest - *Indígena*, Section A

In measures 3-8, the G# pedal maintained first by viola, and then by marimba, is locally significant. It functions first as the root of a G#⁷ chord (mm. 3-4), then, assuming enharmonic equivalence, briefly as the minor seventh of a Bb⁷ chord (m. 7). While it may seem tempting to label the G#⁷ chord as a long-range preparation for the C# major chord that ends the piece, it is virtually impossible to make that connection without examining the score. It is more logical to view it as an *acciaccatura* in relation to G, as well as a preparation of D centricity in measures 9-11, which echoes the work’s global tritone progression (G – C#). This is reinforced by the bass line in measures 9-11, in which D alternates between movement to G and G#. It finally resolves on a G¹³ chord in first inversion in measure 15.



Example 61. *Indígena*, mm. 9-15, contrabass

It is important to remember that in Section A, the octatonic collection is a generator of melodic, as well as harmonic, events. An example of this is the bassoon solo of measures 14-15, in which OCT_{1,2} is the primary collection. The three pitches outside the collection (C, D#, and F#) are marked below with an “X.”



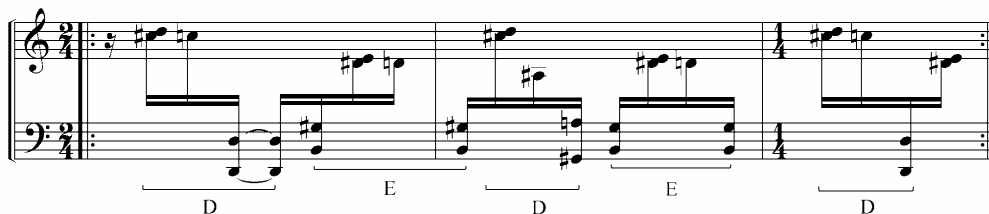
Example 62. *Indígena*, mm. 14-15, bassoon

In measures 16-20, the piano emphasizes D, which joins the dominant sonority of measures 9-14 with that of measure 21. In this passage, all but three chromatic pitches are used: F, F# and G. These omissions are significant because the right hand begins and ends the passage with chromatic clusters comprised of C, C# and D, the root, seventh, and lowered seventh of the dominant; the pitches omitted from the passage have the identical function in relation to the tonic.

The material discussed above is retained in measure 21. With D as the root of the overall sonority, the oboe has the ninth degree, and the marimba trills between the third and fifth. Shown by brackets, the piano continues to registrally emphasize the root. Note the dissonance created by *acciaccaturas*, as well as the repeated tritone movement of D-G#.

Example 63. *Indígena*, m. 21

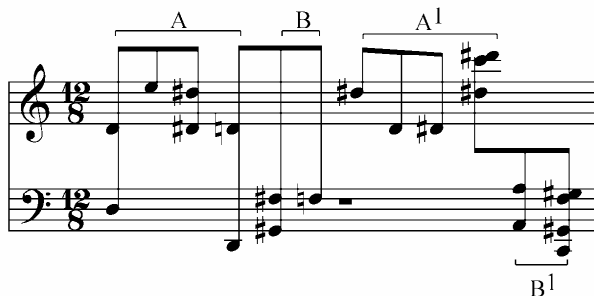
Further examination of the piano part reveals another interesting (and extremely subtle) alternation between D and E centricity; this is bracketed in Example 64.



Example 64. *Indígena*, m. 21, piano

Measure 22 returns to G centricity; the winds combine on a tetrachord centered on G, (0157), and the strings play a quartal cluster (C,G,D,A,E,B). These form chordal punctuations of the piano, which retains the melodic material of the previous measure.

The brief glimpse of pointillism in measure 26 creates an audible textural change. The passage can be analyzed as a decorated D^7 chord. It is horizontally organized in groups of four, two, four, and two eighth notes, respectively; these are labeled below by “A, B, A¹, and B¹.” “A” and “A¹” surround D with upper and lower neighbors, while “B” and “B¹” apply the same technique to F# and A, the chordal third and fifth. The dominant seventh sonority is completed with the addition of C² on the final eighth note.



Example 65. *Indígena*, m. 26, piano (author’s reduction)

The same technique is applied in the 'cello solo of measures 29-30, which also projects D centricity. The pitch content of the solo is repeated by the woodwinds in measure 32, and by the piano in measures 33-34.



Example 66. *Indígena*, mm. 29-30, 'cello

IV. INDÍGENA: CONDUCTOR'S ANALYSIS

Indígena presents considerable challenges for collegiate players. The score is not immediately accessible to young musicians, and if not presented correctly, they may become daunted by the dissonant harmonies, angular melodies, rhythmic complexity, and passages of extreme technical difficulty. Despite the relatively large size of the ensemble, the performers must approach their parts with the same level of responsibility that is necessary in a more traditional chamber group; occurrences of exact doubling are extremely rare. Also, the score and parts are printed in manuscript, and, while extremely well-written, are not as clear as engraved copies.

Initial rehearsals will, of course, address the many issues presented above in the pursuit of an accurate performance. However, if the performance is only accurate, it will have missed its mark. In order to prepare a musically fulfilling performance of *Indígena*, the conductor must motivate the players to look past the work's technical difficulties and gain a concept of the piece as a whole. Students more accustomed to classical or romantic repertoire may perceive as contemporary music as inherently cerebral or academic; while at times this may be true, *Indígena* does not fit into that category. As with much of León's music, it is both goal-oriented and programmatic, and it communicates her recollections and interpretation of her cultural heritage.

The players must be reminded that the composer is taking the audience on a journey – to Cuba, and to the nephew she met there for the first time.⁹⁸ Each of the wind soloists represents a person she met, and therefore must strive for a personal and individualistic interpretation of the material. The trumpeter acts as the leader of the *comparsa*, and must play aggressively, boisterously, and with great enthusiasm. Finally, the coda symbolizes the airplane that returned

⁹⁸ Tania León, interview by author.

the composer to her new home in New York. A gradual diminuendo evokes its ascent and disappearance into the sky, and “scene change” material in the strings, which throughout the piece was used as a means of preparing a new section, seems to say, “to be continued,” and projects the piece beyond the sound of the final pitches. In portraying the retrospective mood of the final leg of León’s journey, the pianist must employ an extremely light touch, and the *sul ponticello* sound of the strings should be almost transparent. In short, if the players are to give a convincing performance, they must understand the programmatic aspects of the work, and attempt to convincingly transmit the composer’s intentions to the audience. They must surpass technical proficiency and contribute artistic performances.

Before beginning the rehearsal process, the issue of tempo must be addressed. In an interview with this author, Ms. León discussed the observation of her tempo markings. She feels that the performer or conductor must be allowed to deviate slightly from the indicated tempo; the organized sounds of music should not be strictly regulated, for this is not the case in naturally occurring sounds, such as the human heartbeat. “Tell your heart to beat a tempo...the ticking of the heart is not calibrated exactly...In order to preserve the natural flow of a piece of music, one must allow for slight variation in pulse.”⁹⁹ This comment grants a certain degree of interpretive license to conductors of León’s music; while it is certainly not advisable to stray far from her notated tempos, in some cases slight deviations may be appropriate. This is supported by the following chart, which chronologically lists the most important metronome and/or character markings printed in the score, as well as the tempos employed on the recording of the work conducted by the composer.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ Tania León, interview by author.

¹⁰⁰ The reader is referred to further information about this recording listed in Appendix II of this document.

<u>Measure</u>	<u>Tempo/character marking</u>	<u>Tania León conducting</u>
1	<i>Andante ad libitum</i>	♩ = ca. 56
5	<i>Sub mosso</i>	♩ = ca. 70
9	<i>Energico</i> - ♩ = 84-90	♩ = ca. 76
14	<i>Meno mosso</i>	♩ = ca. 60
15	<i>Rubato ad libitum</i>	♩ = ca. 76 (beginning in m. 16)
21	♩ = 84	♩ = ca. 84
22	♩ = 88-92	♩ = ca. 88
26	♩ = ♪	♩ = ca. 68 (ca. 72 at m. 63)
74	<i>Meno (mosso)</i>	♩ = ca. 80
79	<i>Adagietto</i> - ♩ = 50	♩ = ca. 63
84	♩ = 100	♩ = ca. 76
86	♩ = 66	♩ = ca. 76
94	♩ = 92-98	♩ = ca. 84
106	♩ = 96-100	♩ = ca. 88
122	(no marking)	♩ = ca. 78
127	♩ = 88-96	♩ = ca. 80
131	<i>Poco piu mosso</i>	♩ = ca. 96
141	(no marking)	♩ = ♩
165	♩ = 92 (for piano only)	♩ = ca. 66

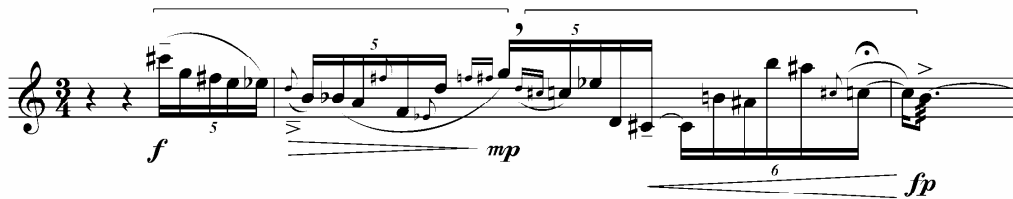
Figure 3. *Indígena*, tempo considerations

It is advantageous to begin rehearsals with the second half of the work (m. 86). As a whole it is more readily accessible and engaging, and the milder dissonances in this part of the piece will prepare the players for the more complex harmonic language in the opening section. In addition, the clear Latin American references provide an appropriate context in which to discuss Ms. León's cultural heritage and to introduce the many programmatic aspects of the work.

The following are suggestions in reference to specific passages in the score; all of which resulted from the author's preparation of *Indígena* with a collegiate chamber ensemble.

Measures 1-7

The opening flute solo must set the tone for all wind solos in the work. It is, of course, not necessary to beat time through measure 2. Instead, allow the player total freedom in interpreting the passage. Increase the initial dynamic to *forte* so as not to sound tentative, and delay the *decrescendo* until after the beginning of measure 2. The *piano* dynamic in measure 2 might also be increased to *mezzo piano*. If the flutist is unsure how to properly pace the passage, suggest perceiving it as two sub-phrases. Place agogic accents on structurally important pitches, and it may be appropriate to include a subtle *ritard* into the concluding fermata.



Example 67. *Indígena*, m. 2, flute (author's interpretive markings)

Also in the first measure, the strings must understand the accompanimental role they retain throughout the majority of the piece; they must always be sensitive to the wind soloists, and adjust their dynamics accordingly.

The violist will likely not give enough emphasis to the *sforzando* attack in measure 6. Be sure she/he reaches a true *piano* on the downbeat of measure 6, and finishes near the frog. This prepares a strong down-bow on the *sforzando*, an up-bow to follow, and finally a down-bow at the *sforzando pianissimo* of measure 7.

The flute solo (m. 3) is the first of many passages in which the winds are asked to flutter-tongue. While this technique is commonly required of the flute, trumpet, and horn, the oboist, clarinetist, and bassoonist may require extra effort to master this technique. If they cannot, an option might be to resort to “growling,” a technique by which tonal distortion is produced in the throat, rather than by the tongue.

Measures 8-13

The clarinet part of measure 8 includes a misprint: written D³ should be changed to E³. The transition from measure 8 into 9 is difficult to negotiate, as there is no preparation for the new tempo (♩ = 84-90). This problem is solved by asking the clarinetist to place a short fermata on the final note (G#⁵ concert) at a *mezzo forte* dynamic, and crescendo to *fortissimo* (to sustain the energy) during the conductor’s preparatory gesture. Balance the ensemble so the clarinet is still heard as the soloist in measures 9-11.

The strings should produce an extremely sharp, percussive tone on the “snap” *pizzicati*. Measure 12 should begin with a down-bow and change direction for the following dotted quarter. This greatly enhances the *forte piano*, and also prepares for a down-bow on the *sforzando* at the end of measure 13.

The quarter note pulse of measure 13 should equal the dotted quarter of measure 12. This slows the pulse in preparation of the *meno mosso* in measure 14, at which point the tempo should be approximately ♩ = 72.

Measures 14-21

In measure 15, the ensemble repeats the chord of the last sixteenth note of measure 13. It seems logical that the trumpet’s note should be changed to written F#⁵, and the viola should be G#³. Measure 15 is best negotiated by not beating time at the beginning of the measure to allow

the bassoonist freedom. The ensemble receives a cue for the *tutti* sixteenth note, and the following fermata provides time for a preparatory gesture into measure 16. (This should return to the tempo of measure 14.)

The piano should be clearly audible in measures 16-19. Note that the oboe has no harmonic fingering for E⁵; ask the player to use the normal fingering and strive for a true *pianissimo*. In measure 18, the viola should play a G#, rather than G.

The piano part of measure 21 breaks down into two measures of 2/4 and one of 1/4, and should be repeated three times to equal approximately nine seconds. Maintain a tempo of ♩ = 84 through passive gesture, and give an active preparatory gesture for the full ensemble in measure 22. The pulse should then immediately accelerate to ♩ = 88-92. The strings in measure 21 should strive for an extremely soft and transparent tone; be sure they are playing very close to the bridge. Remind the players that throughout the piece the *sul ponticello* passages act as “scene changes” designed to pull focus from previous sounds and prepare the audience for new material.

Measures 22-35

Measures 24 and 27 should be conducted with a small three-pattern.

The composer indicates that the eighth note should remain constant between measures 25 and 26. To prevent the pulse from being too slow after the metric change, set a tempo of ♩ = 92 at measure 22; the tempo of measure 26 will then be approximately ♩ = 64.

Due to the difficulty of articulating measure 27 at the indicated tempo, the winds may need to flutter-tongue and slur the entire passage.

Measures 36-44

All but the clarinet should produce short, dry articulations throughout this passage. Beginning in measure 42, the horn is marked with “x.” This is a misprint, and should read “+,” or stopped.

Measures 45-62

Due to the low register and difficulty of the horn solo, it is imperative to reduce the dynamic of the accompaniment in this section. Ask the strings, pianist, and percussionist to change their dynamic to *piano*, and consider amplifying the horn with a baffle placed behind the bell of the instrument.

In measures 55-60, all strings except contrabass should assume a *legato* articulation. The violins will likely need to reduce their dynamic level to balance with the ‘cello. Beginning in measure 56, the viola should share equal importance with the horn solo. To draw attention to this material, ask the violist to *crescendo* into the pitch changes of measures 58 and 60. The winds should slur measures 61-62 in the same manner as measure 27.

Measures 63-73

Beginning in measure 63, the flute and oboe combine on one plane, and the clarinet and bassoon form another. Each pair must match volume and articulation style.

The pianist should bring out the descending chromatic line beginning with A⁵ in measure 68; this provides contrast to the horizontal contour of the other layers.

Measures 74-85

The transition from the tempo of measure 73 to the *meno mosso* of measure 74 is quite difficult. One suggestion is to insert a very short fermata after the final bass drum eighth note of measure 73; this permits time for a new preparatory gesture in the slower tempo of measure 74.

Measures 74 and 75 should be conducted with a five-pattern, and it seems appropriate for the tempo to be approximately ♩ = 80. In this passage Ms. León is depicting a hearty laugh by all of the people represented in the first half of the piece.¹⁰¹ While it represents a “coming together,” try not to err on the side of caution; a slower tempo will be too conservative and precise, thus negating the jovial, raucous mood portrayal.

All players must reach a true *pianissimo* in measure 76, with special attention paid to the transparent tone of the strings. All repeat only the bracketed notes. Keep time with passive gestures through measures 77 and 78 (♩ = 60), as this will help the percussionist in pacing the dynamic contour.

It is helpful to subdivide the final beat of measure 80, and conduct measure 81 with a three-pattern. Stop on the downbeat of measure 82 to allow the oboist freedom with the fermata, and conduct through the final three beats of the measure. Use this same strategy in measure 83. Measures 84 and 85 should also be conducted in three. Note that the marked tempo of m. 84 (♩ = 100) is a misprint; it should actually read ♩ = 66, the tempo of measure 86.¹⁰²

Measures 86-92

Allow sufficient time for the fermata prior to measure 86 (at least four seconds). This allows the audience to absorb the sudden change in tonality, reinforces the work’s symmetrical architecture, and “clears the air” for the second half of the piece.

Through measure 92, the ensemble must clearly articulate the accented pitches while retaining a dynamic parameter of *piano*. The eighth notes should not be *staccato*; a useful analogy is to compare them to “brush strokes.” Remember that this rhythmic pattern is informed

¹⁰¹ Tania León, interview by author.

¹⁰² Ibid.

by the Afro-Cuban cowbell, and it may be useful to ask the percussionist to play the passage on that instrument to illustrate the drastic difference between open and closed tones.

Though not indicated in the score, the trumpeter should stand for the entrance in measure 91, and remain standing for the remainder of the piece.¹⁰³ The performer should be reminded that the solo passages require considerable interpretive license so as not to sound careful or contrived. In tone, articulation, and vibrato, the player must stylistically approximate the sound of a *comparsa* musician. The descending *glissandi* should be produced through a half-valve technique so individual partials are not audible.

Measures 107-121

In measures 107-116, the winds and strings should reduce their dynamic to *mezzo piano* to allow the horn, percussion, piano, and trumpet to be clearly audible. It may be necessary to again stress the differentiation between accented and unaccented articulations.

In this author's performance, the volume of the porcelain coffee mugs was insufficient; they were replaced with porcelain mixing bowls played with snare drum sticks. Small towels were placed in the bowls to slightly reduce their resonance.

In measures 117-120, the winds simultaneously present the first melodic fragment of *La Jardinera* in the keys of A, D, and a modified version in F#. All should increase their dynamic to *forte*, and the flute should be balanced to the fore.

The fermata prior to measure 122 should be just long enough to allow for a preparatory gesture. The pianist should sustain the last notes of measure 121 until the following measure begins.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

Measures 131-140

A tempo of $\text{♩} = 96\text{-}100$ seems appropriate at the *poco piu mosso*. The second melodic fragment of *La Jardinera* (m. 136-37) is the high point of the section, and the only passage in the work in which the ensemble unites in the *comparsa* “groove.” The woodwinds should increase their dynamic to *forte* in measure 136, but the trumpet should retain prominence.

Measures 141-165

Though not indicated in the score, the dotted quarter note pulse of measure 141 should equal the quarter note of the previous measure.¹⁰⁴ This will begin an *accelerando* culminating with measure 164. The winds and strings should be reminded of their accompanimental role; after the initial *sforzando*, reduce their dynamic to *mezzo piano* and focus their attention on the pianist and percussionist.

Note that in measure 154, A^3 in the piano part should be changed to G^3 .

In measure 164, do not rebound after conducting the downbeat; prepare and give a second cue for the following dotted eighth note, again with no rebound; finally, give a preparatory gesture for beat 4 in the tempo of the following measure.

Beat: 1 2 (3) (prep)4

Example 68. *Indígena*, m. 164, author’s conducting suggestions

¹⁰⁴ This is the case in the recording conducting by León. Also, on that recording the following *accelerando* was not observed.

After the pianist has begun the final measure, the conductor may stop beating time and provide exit cues for the wind instruments. As shown in Example 60, the printed tempo of the piano material is $\text{♩} = 92$, but on the recording conducted by León it is played at ca. $\text{♩} = 66$. In this author's experience, that tempo seems much more appropriate in portraying the desired mood. Instruct the pianist to leave the sustain pedal down after the final release, and not to stop the sound before it naturally dissipates.

V. SUMMARY

Tania León is one of the most distinctive composers in contemporary music. Her unique combination of tonal harmonic construction, atonal surface material, and the influences of jazz and Latin American music yield a sound that is uniquely original and American.

With this document the author provides an overview of León's biography and compositional style; both of which are further detailed with the analysis of *Indígena*, her work for large chamber ensemble. While this analysis is by no means exhaustive, it is designed to provide conductors with the essential features of the work's construction, many of which should be communicated to the performers to aid their comprehension of the work.

With regard to León's harmonic practices, we see the importance of centricity as a means of harmonic organization, and the simultaneous usage of numerous pitch collections based on one referential pitch. In *Indígena*, the diatonic, blues, and octatonic collections are of chief importance, with the latter collection serving as a generator of local and global formal design, as well as melodic and harmonic material. Her eclectic harmonic language includes tertian harmonies that are often colored with altered and unaltered scalar extensions, quartal sonorities, and chord clusters.

León's melodies rarely fit within one pitch collection, and nonharmonic tones are often in the form of *acciaccaturas* a semitone away from chord tones. Melodic contour is generally angular as a result of large leaps and frequent octave displacement of minor and major seconds. Exact melodic repetition is virtually nonexistent, but short, germinal motives are often repeated and developed with subtle alterations. The melodic influence of jazz is heard in her usage of blue notes, "side-stepping," and quasi-improvisational material. Occasional glimpses of Latin

American melodies infuse her music with yet another distinctive sound; *Indígena* features a melodic fragment of the folksong, *La Jardinera*.

Perhaps the most the most recognizable aspects of León's compositional style are rhythmic vitality and complexity. Characteristic Latin American and jazz rhythms permeate her work, though generally in extremely subtle presentations. Numerous polyrhythms result from her dense polyphonic textures, and they often simultaneously project contrasting meters or subdivisions.

Tutti passages are employed only in climactic sections, and exact doubling is rare. Color is extremely important in her orchestration, but her usage of the instruments is essentially traditional; wind instruments are featured as soloists, and the strings are treated as a section, with the exception of occasional soloistic passages. Instrumental writing is technically demanding, and occasionally unidiomatic. Her percussion writing is particularly noteworthy; she exhibits a thorough knowledge of the instruments, and deftly integrates Latin American, African, and European instruments in a diverse, yet manageable, collection.

Indígena exhibits León's predilection for formal construction that, while carefully proportioned, defies traditional demarcation. While the three main sections of the work are readily discernible, subsections and phrase divisions are much less clearly articulated. This is one of León's hallmark compositional practices, and it gives her music an extremely cohesive character.

Although Tania León has an international reputation as one of America's most important living composers, her music is essentially unknown to wind conductors. This document provides an introduction to a fascinating composer, and to a potential contributor of exciting new music to the wind ensemble or symphonic band repertoire.

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APPENDIX I:

TANIA LEÓN – LIST OF PUBLISHED COMPOSITIONS

Opera

Scourge of Hyacinths Full Opera (1999)

Chamber Opera (1994)

Libretto by T. León, based on a play by Wole Soyinka

M, 3T, 3Bar, B, 3 spkrs; 1(A fl, pic)-1(Eb, b cl)-A sax(T sax)-1(cbn); 1-1(cnt)-T tbn-0;

3 perc, pf; solo str

Commissioned by the Munich Biennale for New Music Theater; full orchestra edition premiered by the Grand Théâtre de Genève, Switzerland

(duration ca. 90 minutes)

Ballet

Douglas [with Geoffrey Holder] (1974)

2 fl, perc

For the Dance Theatre of Harlem

(duration ca. 20 minutes)

Haiku (1973)

fl, bn, 5 perc

Commissioned by the Dance Theatre of Harlem

(duration ca. 25 minutes)

The Beloved [with Judith Hamilton] (1972)

fl, ob, cl, bn, pf, vc, db

For the Dance Theatre of Harlem

(duration ca. 10 minutes)

Tones (1970)

2-2-1-0; 1-0-1-1; timp, 2 perc, pf, str

Commissioned by the Dance Theatre of Harlem

(duration ca. 18 minutes)

Mixed Genre

Samarkand (2005)

Text by Wole Soyinka

Speaker, SATB, children's chorus, A fl/sax, 2 perc, 3 bata drums, pf, 2 vc

Commissioned by *Southern Crossroads* in celebration of the opening of the Shaw Center for the Arts, Baton Rouge, Louisiana

(duration ca. 60 minutes)

Duende (2003)

Baritone; 3 bata drums; 4 percussionists

Commissioned by Fest der Kontinente, Berlin, Germany in honor of the 80th birthday of Gyorgy Ligeti.

(duration ca. 18 minutes)

Drummin' (1997)

fl (pic)-cl (b cl)- sax (sop/alto/tenor); bn (contra bn)-hn-2 tpt-tbn; 2 perc - trap set; pf (synth); vn-va-vc-db (b gtr); ethnic percussion ensembles

Co-commissioned by Miami Light Project, Miami-Dade Community College, Arizona State University, and the New World Symphony

(duration ca. 60 minutes)

Orchestra

Desde... (2001)

2(pic)-2(eh)-2(b cl)-2(cbn); 4-2-3-0; timp-2 perc; str

Commissioned by the American Composers Orchestra with support from the Koussevitsky Music Foundation, Inc.

(duration ca. 18 minutes)

Horizons (1999) 1

Commissioned by the NDR Sinfonie Orchester, Hamburg, and Hammoniale Festival der Frauen, Germany

(duration ca. 10 minutes)

Seven Spirituals (arr. Ryan, orch. Léon) (1995)

Bar solo (or B Bar); 2(pic)-1-1-1; 2-2-1-1; 2 perc, pf, str

For the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra

(duration ca. 20 minutes)

Para Viola y Orquesta (1994)

Va solo; 2(pic, A fl)-2-2(b cl)-2(cbn); 2-2-1-0; timp-2 perc, cel; str

Commissioned by Meet-the-Composer / Reader's Digest Commissioning Program

(duration ca. 18 minutes)

Carabalí (1991)

2(pic)-2,eh-2,b cl-2,cbn; 4-3-3-1; timp-3 perc, hp, pf, cel; str

Commissioned by the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra

(duration ca. 17 minutes)

Kabiosile (1988)

Solo pf; 2(pic)-2(eh)-2(b cl)-2(cbn); 4-2-3-0; timp-2 perc; str

Commissioned by the American Composers Orchestra

(duration ca. 8 minutes)

Batá (1985, rev. 1988)
2(pic)-2(eh)-2(b cl)-2; 2-2-2-1; 2 perc, hp, pf, cel; str
Commissioned by the Bay Area Women's Philharmonic
(duration ca. 7 minutes)

Concerto Criollo (1980)
Solo timp, solo pf; 2-2-2-2; 4-4-3-0; perc; str
Commissioned by the National Endowment for the Arts
(duration ca. 20 minutes)

Band/Wind Ensemble

Alegre (2000)
2 Fl (Ob may substitute for Fl 2), 2 Cl in Bb, Alto Sax, T Sax, 2 Tpt in Bb, Trbn, Bar, Tuba, Perc
(4 players: 2 bongos, 4 Ttoms, Maracas, B Dr)
Commissioned by the American Composers Forum for New Band Horizons
(duration ca. 3 minutes)

Instrumental Chamber Ensemble

Caracol (2000)
vn, va, vc, perc, pno
Commissioned by the Manchester Music Festival
(duration ca. 7.5 minutes)

De Memorias (2000)
fl, ob, cl, hn, bn
Commissioned by The Mexico City Woodwind Quintet with support from the Mexico/US Fund
for Culture
(duration ca. 9 minutes)

Fanfarria (2000)
4 tpt, 2 tbn, bass tbn, 1 Perc (lg sus cym, tamburo ten, med bass dr, lg bass dr)
Commissioned by The Library of Congress for the Copland Centennial Celebration
(duration ca. 3 minutes)

Satiné (2000)
2 pianos
Commissioned by Mirta Gomez
(duration ca. 7 minutes)

Entre nos (1998)
cl, bn, pno
Commissioned by Trio Neos
(duration ca. 12 minutes)

Saóko (1997)

For the Meridian Arts Ensemble

brass qnt

Commissioned by the South Florida Composers Alliance/Center for Cultural Collaborations International

(duration ca. 9 minutes)

De Color (1996-97)

vn, mar

Commissioned by Marimolin

Hechizos (1995) 15:00

fl/pic, ob, cl(A and B-flat), b cl/sop sax/ten sax; hn, tpt(B-flat), tbn;

2 perc, pf/cel/hpsd, gui; vn, va, vc, cb

Commissioned by Ensemble Modern

(duration ca. 15 minutes)

Tau (1995)

electric oboe, electric bass and electronic keyboards.

Commissioned by First Avenue

sin normas ajenas (1994)

fl(pic), ob, cl; pf, 2 perc; 2 vn, va, vc

Commissioned by the U.S.-Mexico Fund for Culture

(duration ca. 7 minutes)

Son Sonora (1993)

fl, gui

Commissioned by Duologue

(duration ca. 15 minutes)

Ajiaco (1992)

for electric guitar and piano.

Commissioned by the Schanzer/Speach Duo

(duration ca. 7 minutes)

Arenas d'un Tiempo (1992)

cl, vc, pf

Commissioned by the NY State Music Teachers Association

(duration ca. 12 minutes)

Crossings (1992)

hn, 4 tpt, 4 tbn, tuba

Commissioned by the City University of New York

(duration ca. 1 minute)

Indígena (1991)

fl, ob, cl, bn, hn, tpt, pf, perc, 2 vn, va, vc, cb
Commissioned by New York City's Town Hall
(duration ca. 8 minutes)

Parajota Delaté (1988)

Commissioned by the Da Capo Chamber Players, 1988
fl, cl, vn, vc, pf
For the Netherlands Wind Ensemble, 1990
fl, ob, cl, bn, pf
(duration ca. 4.5 minutes)

Elegia a Paul Robeson (1987)

violin, cello and piano

A La Par (1986)

pf, perc
Commissioned by the Whitney Museum
(duration ca. 13.5 minutes)

Ascend (1983)

4 hn, 4 tpt, 3 tbn, tba, 3 perc
Commissioned by the Queens Symphony
(duration ca. 3 minutes)

Permutation Seven (1981)

fl, cl, tpt, perc, vn, vc
Commissioned by the Lincoln Center Institute
(duration ca. 15 minutes)

Pet's Suite (1980)

fl, pf
Commissioned by Composers' Forum
(duration ca. 20 minutes)

Instrumental Solo

Tumbao (2004)

piano
Commissioned by Elena Riu
(duration ca. 3 minutes)

Hebras d' Luz (2004)

electric viola
Commissioned and premiered by Martha Mooke
(duration ca. 8 minutes)

La Tina (2004)

piano

Commissioned by the Lucy Moses School
(duration ca. 3 minutes)

Variación (2004)

piano

Commissioned by the Gilmore Festival

Mistica (2003)

piano

Commissioned and premiered by Ursula Oppens
(duration ca. 12 minutes)

Axon (2002)

violin and interactive computer

Commissioned for ISCM, Hong Kong, and premiered by Mari Kimura
(duration ca. 12 minutes)

Bailarín (1998)

guitar

Commissioned and premiered by David Starobin
(duration ca. 4 minutes)

Rituál (1987)

piano

Commissioned by Affiliate Artists, Inc.
(duration ca. 7 minutes)

Momentum (1984)

piano

Commissioned by the Women Composers Congress (Mexico)
(duration ca. 7.5 minutes)

¡Paisanos Semos! (1984)

guitar

(duration ca. 4.5 minutes)

Four Pieces for Cello Solo (1983)

(duration ca. 12 minutes)

Vocal Ensemble

A Row of Buttons (2002)

Text by Fae Myenne Ng

SA Choir

Commissioned by the New York Treble Singers

(duration ca. 4 minutes)

May the Road Be Free (1999)

Text by John Marsden

Children's chorus & percussion

Commissioned by Lincoln Center for the Tree Lighting Ceremony (New York)

(duration ca. 4 minutes)

Sol de Doce (1997)

Text by Pedro Mir

12 Solo voices (SSSAAATTTBBB)

Commissioned by Chamber Music America

(duration ca. 7 minutes)

Batéy [with Michel Camilo] (1989)

Text by T. León, M. Camilo

2 Sopranos, Countertenor, 2 Tenors, Bass

Commissioned by The Western Wind Vocal Ensemble

(duration ca. 30 minutes)

Heart of Ours - A Piece (1988)

Texts by R. Sandecki; American Indians

T solo, men's chorus; fl, 4 tpt, 2 perc

Commissioned by the Vietnam Veterans' Theater Company

(duration ca. 8 minutes)

De-Orishas (1982)

Text by Betty Neals

2 Sopranos, Countertenor, 2 Tenors, Bass

Commissioned by The Western Wind Vocal Ensemble

(duration ca. 11 minutes)

Drume Negrita [Grenet, arr. León] from "Two Cuban Songs"

12 solo voices (SSSAAATTTBBB)

Commissioned by Chanticleer

(duration ca. 3 minutes)

El Manisero [Simons, arr. León] from "Two Cuban Songs"
12 solo voices (SSSAAATTTBBB)
Commissioned by Chanticleer
(duration ca. 3 minutes)

Spiritual Suite (1976)
Narrator, 2 sopranos, chorus and amplified ensemble

Namiac Poems (1975)
Voices and mixed ensemble
Written for NYU Contemporary Ensemble

Rezos (2001)
Text by Jamaica Kincaid
SATB choir
Commissioned by Terry Knowles and Marshall Rutter to honor Grant Gershon, Music Director,
Los Angeles Master Chorale. Premiered 8 March 2003, Los Angeles, CA
(duration ca. 12 minutes)

Vocal Solo

Love After Love (2002)
Text by Derek Walcott
Soprano and marimba
Commissioned by Mary Sharp Cronson, Works and Process
Premiered by Elizabeth Farnum at the Guggenheim Museum

Canto (2001)
Song cycle for Bar, cl (Bb/b cl), mar, vc and pf
Commissioned by Mutable Music for Thomas Buckner
(duration ca. 15 minutes)

At the Fountain of Mpindelela (2000)
Commissioned and Premiered by the National Musical Arts program, "Africa Spirit Ascending,"
in honor of Nelson Mandela (Kennedy Center, Washington, DC)
(duration ca. 14 minutes)

Ivo, Ivo (2000)
Text by Manuel Martin
Sop, cl, b cl, va, vc, db
Commissioned and Premiered by Sequitur, Joe's Pub at the Public Theater, New York
(duration ca. 5 minutes)

Turning (2000)

Song cycle for Sop, Pno and Vc

Commissioned for the Ann and Richard Barshinger Center for Musical Arts in Hensel Hall,
Franklin and Marshall College

(duration ca. 15 minutes)

Singin' Sepia (1996)

Five Songs on Poems by Rita Dove

S, cl, vn, pf four hands

Commissioned by the Continuum Ensemble

(duration ca. 12 minutes)

"Or like a..." (1994)

Text by John Ashbery

Bar, vc, perc

Commissioned by WNYC

(duration ca. 15 minutes)

Journey (1990)

High vocalist, fl, hp

Commissioned by the Jubal Trio

(duration ca. 6 minutes)

To and Fro (1990)

Four Songs on Poems by Alison Knowles

Med vocalist, pf

Commissioned by the International Society for Contemporary Music

(duration ca. 8.5 minutes)

Pueblo Mulato (1987)

Three Songs on Poems by Nicolás Guillén

S, ob, gui, db, perc, pf

Commissioned by the Cornucopia Chamber Ensemble

(duration ca. 12 minutes)

Theater

The Golden Windows (1982)

A Play in 3 Acts, commissioned by Byrd Hoffman Foundation

Text by Robert Wilson

fl(pic, a fl), ob(Eh); tpt; perc-hpsd-pf; str

(duration ca. 30 minutes)

Maggie Magalita (1980)

Incidental music to the play

fl, cl, vc, 2 perc, pf, gui

Text by Wendy Kesselman

Commissioned by the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts

(duration ca. 25 minutes)

APPENDIX II:

TANIA LEÓN - DISCOGRAPHY

A La Par

A City Called Heaven. Peggy Benkeser and Laura Gordy, (ACA Digital Recordings: CM20064), 2003.

Percussion. Edith Salmen and Dieter Lallinger, (Castigo: 02419), 2004.

Indígena. Chris Lamb and Virginia Perry Lamb. (Composers Recordings: CRI622), 1994.

A La Par. Kane Richeson and Kathleen Murray, (Composers Recordings: CRI823).

Allegre

Bandquest. American Composers Forum, (www.bandquest.org: promotional recording).

Batá

First Edition Recordings. Louisville Orchestra, Lawrence Leighton Smith, music director (First Edition Recordings: LCD010), 1995.

Batéy

Indígena. The Western Wind, (Composers Recordings: CRI662), 1994.

Blessings and Batéy. The Western Wind, (Western Wind: WW2001), 1993.

Carabalí

First Edition Recordings. Louisville Orchestra, Lawrence Leighton Smith, music director, (First Edition Recordings, LCD010), 1995.

Ciego Reto

La Habana-Rio Conexión. Paquito D’Rivera & Brooklyn String Orchestra, (Universal Music Latino: 2453607112), 2005.

De Memorias

Visiones Panamericanas. Mexico City Woodwind Quintet, (Urtext Records: JBCC051), 2002.

De Orishas

The Western Wind, (Newport Classic: NPD 85507)

Entre Nos

Mujeres de las Americas, Music of Women of the Americas. Trio Neos, (Quindecim Recordings: QP043).

Indígena

Indígena. Continuum, (Composers Recordings: CRI662, 1994).

Journey

Jubal Songs. Jubal Trio, (Composers Recordings: CRI738), 1997.

Momentum

Character Sketches. Nanette Kaplan Solomon, (Leonarda Records: LE334), 1995.

Oh Yemanjá (Mother's Prayer)

World So Wide. Dawn Upshaw & Orchestra of St. Luke's, David Zinman, Conductor, (Nonesuch: 79458-2), 1998.

Paisanos Semos

We've Got (Poly)Rhythm. Ana Maria Rosado, (Albany Records: TROY087), 1995.

Parajota Delaté

Indígena. Continuum. (Composers Recordings: CRI 662), 1994.

Pueblo Mulato

Voices of Change. Voces Americanas, (Composers Recordings: CRI773), 2001.

Rituál

Dark Fires. Karen Walwyn, (Albany Records: TROY266), 1997.

Indígena. Clemens Leske, (Composers Recordings: CRI662), 1994.

Sonoric Rituals. Martha Marchena, (Albany Records: TROY242), 1997.

Tumbáo

Salsa Nueva. Elena Riu, (Somm Recordings: 237), 2005.

APPENDIX III:

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VITA

A native of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, James Spinazzola received a Bachelor of Science Degree in Music Education from Duquesne University (1995). After teaching at the high school level, he earned a Master of Music Degree in wind conducting from the University of Colorado at Boulder (1999). From 1999 until 2003, he served as the Associate Director of Bands and Assistant Professor of Saxophone at Tennessee Tech University. His duties included the direction of the Marching Band, the Concert Band, and the saxophone studio. He has also served on the faculty of the Tennessee Governor's School for the Arts.

Spinazzola is featured as saxophone soloist on the compact disc, *Discovery – New and Existing Works for Saxophone and Symphonic Band*, recorded in collaboration with the Tennessee Tech Symphony Band, and his playing has earned praise in *Saxophone Journal*, *Downbeat*, and *Bandworld* magazines. He has generated numerous arrangements, transcriptions, and original compositions for concert, marching, and jazz bands; his wind transcription of John Adams's *Lollapalooza* is published by Boosey & Hawkes. Spinazzola was accepted into the doctoral program in wind conducting at Louisiana State University in 2003.