Arturo Rodriguez: A Mexican Mosaic. A Discussion of His Life and Selected Works

Jorge Gonzalez

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ARTURO RODRÍGUEZ: A MEXICAN MOSAIC. A DISCUSSION OF HIS LIFE AND SELECTED WORKS

by

Jorge Ivan Gonzalez

A Dissertation
Submitted to the Graduate School,
the College of Arts and Sciences
and the School of Music
at The University of Southern Mississippi
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Musical Arts

Committee:

Dr. Jay Dean, Committee Chair
Dr. Christopher Goertzen
Dr. Joseph Brumbeloe
Dr. Michael Miles
Dr. Catherine Rand

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ABSTRACT

Arturo Rodríguez (b. 1976) is a Mexican composer living in Los Angeles, California. His music has gained tremendous popularity in México within the last ten years and is being performed regularly by some of the most prestigious professional orchestras in México and abroad. One of the most interesting aspects of his career is that he writes music for both the concert hall and motion pictures. His compositional output is abundant and covers a variety of genres including music for symphony orchestra, chamber orchestra, chamber music, and piano. Rodríguez has focused on the art of symphonic composition for the past fifteen years, writing works on commission for orchestras and institutions around the world, as well as conducting and orchestrating projects for film, TV, and multimedia.

No detailed documented information is available about the life and work of Rodríguez. As with many twenty-first-century musicians and artists, most promotion or marketing is done through the Internet or social media. This dissertation will contribute to the body of research concerning modern Mexican composers by documenting the musical life of composer Arturo Rodríguez, his influences, and his contributions to the symphonic repertoire. It will also provide a compendium of his works and an analysis of two of his orchestral nationalistic compositions: Mosaico Mexicano for symphony orchestra and Introducción, Canción de Cuna y Fiesta for string orchestra.

The purpose of the dissertation is to create awareness of the orchestral music of Mexican composer Arturo Rodríguez, particularly those that include Mexican nationalistic elements. This document represents the first comprehensive study of his life and two of his works. It will provide a detailed description of the background and
analysis for both Mosaico Mexicano and Introducción, Canción de Cuna y Fiesta to be used as a resource for future scholars interested in the development of Mexican composers of the twenty-first century.

This project is ongoing as Rodríguez’s compositional output continues to expand. Future editions of this research will be released to provide an updated catalog of Arturo Rodríguez’s compositional catalog.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude to my committee members for their guidance and support. I am especially grateful to my committee chair, Dr. Jay Dean, for his encouragement and support. He has been a mentor to me for many years and his guidance has allowed me to achieve the completion of this project. I also want to thank Dr. Christopher Goertzen for believing in this project and for his invaluable guidance in selecting resources for the research process.

I am extremely thankful to Dr. Wes Dykes and William Carey University for their support and encouragement to pursue this degree while serving on the faculty at the Winters School of Music. Thank you to all my colleagues and friends for their words of encouragement throughout this degree. Thank you to the wonderful string students at William Carey University for their preparation and passion poured into the performance of my DMA lecture recital. You were all intrinsic to the recital's success and the music's positive reception. Finally, I would like to thank Arturo Rodríguez for his willingness to sacrifice hours of his busy schedule to share his personal and musical life with me through the countless exchanges of emails and the extremely informative interview that helped shape the structure of this document.
DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to God. It is only through His grace and mercy that I can see the end of this project. Philippians 4:13 says, “I can do all things through him who gives me strength.” Psalm 28:7 says, “The Lord is my strength and my shield, my heart trusts in him, and he helps me.” These two verses have been my source of strength and endurance through this process.

To my wife, Gladys, and my children Ian and Alison: thank you for being patient and for your endless words of encouragement and support to finish this degree. I love you all with all my heart and thank God daily for each one of you.
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<tr>
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CHAPTER I – ARTURO RODRÍGUEZ

Figure 1. Mexican composer Arturo Rodríguez. (Photography by Martirene Alcantara)

Arturo Rodríguez was born in Guadalupe, a neighboring town of Monterrey in the state of Nuevo León, México on November 24, 1976. Even though he does not come from a family of musicians, from a very young age Rodríguez loved listening to classical music on the local radio station. Part of his daily routine was to run to the family radio every night at eight o'clock so he could listen to classical music. His first experience with the piano was at age eight when a piano teacher moved to his neighborhood. On his way to and from school, Rodríguez would walk by the piano teacher’s house and hear her play. He recalled that sometimes when coming back from school, he would sit on the sidewalk just to listen. This early love for the piano and the music performed by his neighbor created a fire inside young Arturo that motivated him to want to play the piano.
He said, “I was really stubborn with my parents, so I wanted to have piano lessons and have a piano at home.”¹

It was thanks to his constant requests that his mother started him on piano lessons. However, due to the lack of a physical instrument at home, his mother drew a keyboard on a piece of cardboard so the young composer could practice. On the day of his lessons, his teacher would let him arrive five minutes early so he could transfer his cardboard keyboard practice to the piano. His passion for music and composition started as soon as he was able to play some notes on the piano. He would go home and write notes on staff paper without even knowing the fundamentals of music notation. He did not realize then that these sketches would become his career path later in life.

While in high school, Arturo continued taking piano lessons at the Universidad Regiomontana (UR) and flute as his secondary instrument. Rodríguez then attended Preparatoria 22, a public high school as part of the local public university system where he would also earn a certificate in piano. Around 1992, he won a piano competition at the Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León (UANL). The award included a solo performance with the local professional symphony orchestra led by conductor Félix Carrasco. Rodríguez performed Beethoven’s Piano Concerto No. 2. The performance was such a success that a member of the audience approached Rodríguez and offered to help financially with his musical education. This person put Rodríguez in contact with a group of local wealthy benefactors who paid for Arturo’s music studies at the National Conservatory of Music in México City. He moved to the capital in 1994. This would be the first time Arturo would be away from home, but the young pianist was extremely

¹ Arturo Rodríguez, interview by Jorge Gonzalez, Zoom meeting, March 23, 2022.
excited about studying at the National Conservatory of Music to fulfill his dream of becoming a concert pianist. That same year, at the young age of 19, Arturo became the youngest recipient of the Mozart Medal, an extremely prestigious recognition awarded by the Austrian Embassy to very distinguished artists in México.

Rodríguez’s aspirations were limitless. While a student at the conservatory, he continuously looked for opportunities to reach his goal. Unfortunately, his experience at the Conservatorio Nacional did not meet his expectations. He loved being in México City but was not very happy with the education he was receiving. He mentions that the only class he enjoyed was 20th Century Music Analysis, which was taught by the late Mario Lavista.² Arturo withdrew from the conservatory after only 8 months to transfer to Texas Christian University in Fort Worth, Texas. He was awarded a scholarship to study piano with the great José Feghali, the 1985 Van Cliburn International Piano Competition Gold Medalist.

Rodríguez was a very serious and committed piano student who practiced eight to nine hours per day. However, the lack of regular breaks during his long practice sessions put extra stress on the tendons causing a chronic case of tendonitis. He was instructed by a physician to stop playing piano for eight months to allow the tendons to recover and heal, but the damage was so severe that he had to stop playing for much longer to allow for proper healing and avoid permanent damage. Rodríguez would wake up in the middle of the night in dreadful pain with swollen hands and arms. The constant arm and hand pain, in addition to the prescribed extended abstinence from playing the piano, created a time of uncertainty and depression for the young musician as he did not know what his

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² Rodríguez, interview.
future would hold. His dream of becoming a concert pianist seemed to be coming to an end. Oftentimes, injured students lack support or sympathy from their teachers and the institutions they attend. Fortunately, the administration of the school of music at TCU was very supportive and suggested that he continue his studies in music while he was recuperating. Since Arturo played flute as his secondary instrument, he was encouraged to join the university orchestra as third flute. It was during this time when Rodríguez demonstrated interest in conducting and started taking conducting lessons from Germán Gutiérrez, the conductor of the TCU Orchestra. Since Arturo did not have many orchestra assignments as a third flute player, he would bring the scores of the pieces being rehearsed by the orchestra and started studying the way composers wrote for specific instruments. Eventually, he started writing his compositions. It was a learning process to write music for him since he lacked knowledge of orchestration. He became an autodidact in terms of how to write properly for specific instruments through orchestration books he gathered from the university library.

Between 2000 and 2003, he attended the School of Music at Butler University in Indianapolis where he studied piano with Panayis Lylas, the 1981 Van Cliburn International Competition Silver Medalist, and orchestral conducting with Stanley DeRusha.

Rodríguez’s compositions include music for solo piano, chamber music, string orchestra, symphony orchestra, ballet, film, and television. His original compositions, orchestrations, and arrangements have been performed and recorded by orchestras that include the Philharmonia Orchestra, the Boston Pops, the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, the
Orquesta Filarmónica de la Ciudad de México, Orquesta Sinfónica de Minería, and others.

In addition to concert music, his passion for film music has been present since he was very young. However, it was not until he was studying conducting and orchestration that he began to look more in detail at how film music composers utilized the instruments to achieve different orchestral colors and define their style. He would spend hours listening to soundtracks by John Williams while analyzing and studying the scores. Arturo mentions that he was fascinated by how John Williams used certain harmonies and instruments to create the wonderful melodies and colors we all enjoy from the master film composer’s soundtracks, and he admits that there is a big influence of John Williams’ music in his writing.\(^3\)

\(^3\) Ibid.
In addition to writing his music, Rodríguez has been highly sought after as an arranger and orchestrator of music from the Mexican film music golden era. His interest in film music caused him to search for different opportunities that would foster his career as a composer. Rodríguez attended prestigious music programs for composers, including the Aspen Music Festival Film Music program in 2001, where he had the opportunity to study with contemporary music composer John Corigliano. He also attended the American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers (ASCAP) Film Scoring Workshop in 2003; the Sundance Film Music Institute in 2010; and the Tanglewood Music Festival in 2012 where he served as assistant conductor to John Williams for the “Film Night” concerts with the Boston Symphony Orchestra.
His work in Hollywood includes orchestral conducting for the music of films such as *Furious 7* and *IT* Chapter 2. As an orchestrator, he has worked on films such as *Lights Out* and for the Oscar-winning documentary *Free Solo*.

Recently, while living in Los Angeles, California, Arturo composed, orchestrated, and conducted the music for the Netflix film *The Mistress*. He also continued writing music for the 3rd season of the Cartoon Network’s animated series *Victor & Valentino* and recently wrote an original work commissioned by the Boston Pops and Maestro Keith Lockhart that premiered in December 2022.
CHAPTER II – HIS WORK AND INFLUENCES

The compositional background of a composer is determined by different factors. Oftentimes, composers have the freedom of choosing the subject and style for their compositions and sometimes they follow instructions from the patron who commissions a new work. In the case of Rodríguez, he has written music that does not include Mexican nationalistic elements. In fact, he does not consider himself a nationalistic composer.

Rodríguez’s compositional style is extremely varied and showcases a perfect blend of different influences that include Mexican nationalistic elements as well as his passion for film music. These influences have shaped a style that varies according to the purpose of the composition. Whether it is a piece of music written based on an interest by the composer or based on a commission with a specific topic in mind, the composer’s influences are evident in his writing. Rodríguez’s compositions include music for solo piano, chamber music, string orchestra, symphony orchestra, ballet, film, and television. The musical language used in his compositions both for film and the concert hall includes a mixture of tonal and non-tonal materials depending on the dramatic purpose sought. The use of exciting rhythmic patterns in his music built on the foundation of sesquialtera, or rhythmic groupings of two against three, and other polyrhythms make his works extremely appealing.

Throughout history, composers have been influenced by other great masters. Hungarian composer Béla Bartók, for instance, was directly influenced by the German tradition. His early compositions display a Brahmsian style. Bartók’s music was later influenced by the study of chromatically filled scores by Richard Wagner. Later, Bartók found the source of his more mature style in the music of Richard Strauss. Béla Bartók
was captivated by a performance he heard in 1902 of Strauss’ symphonic poem *Also Sprach Zarathustra*. That same year, Bartók made a transcription of Strauss’ *Ein Heldenleben* for piano solo. The influence of studying these two scores is evident in the Hungarian composer’s approach to harmony, tonality, and thematic material in his works.

The same can be observed in Arturo Rodríguez’s compositions. The influence comes from rhythms and dances from all of México, especially from the northeast region of México, which is where he is from. He would have heard music that influenced his compositions either in its original form or in a concert piece by one of the Mexican nationalistic composers. Also possible, could be that his inspiration or influence could come from film music of the great composers from the golden era in México including Manuel Esperón, Raúl Lavista, Antonio Díaz Conde, or Federico Ruiz.

**Nationalism in Music**

What makes an artist national? Not that he puts folk characteristics in the center of his work, but rather that his personality is impregnated with nationality in a non-arbitrary way. What makes him national is that he identifies with the national audience, generated out of a common language, history, and fate.

– Antal Molnar, “List the Hungarian composer” (1936)⁴

Béla Bartók is nowadays recognized as a pioneer in ethnomusicology as well as one of the most important nationalistic composers thanks to his research and use of traditional Hungarian folk tunes in the early twentieth century. A casual and spontaneous event in 1904 led Bartók to what would become the beginning of ethnomusicology. A casual encounter with Lidi Dósa, a young girl who was singing a popular song with modal inflection. Her style was different from what Bartók considered authentic

Hungarian folk music. This incident motivated the composer to investigate the music of the girl’s village in Transylvania and its neighboring towns. Bartók traveled through eastern Hungary in the summer of 1906 collecting and recording folk music that would later be used in his compositions.\(^5\)

Just as Bartók serendipitously heard Lidi Dósa singing folk tunes, Rodríguez heard a street performer playing a folk tune on the clarinet that inspired one of the melodies included in his *Mosaico Mexicano*. In an article written in 1921, Bartók explains the difficulties associated with the collection of folk tunes:

> Nothing is more difficult than the collection of melodies of this kind. We have to look for them among the simplest and poorest peasants, far away from the railroad, if we intend to find material untouched by the contaminating influence of the cities.\(^6\)

In *Introducción, Canción de Cuna y Fiesta*, Arturo Rodríguez uses the Christmas tradition of posadas as the program for his composition and the villancico as the musical foundation for this work. Villancicos and posadas have been in existence since the Conquista as a way for the Spaniards to evangelize the indigenous natives. Bartók also discovered that some melodies were associated with ceremonies and traditions in the different villages in Hungary. Certain Hungarian songs were used to celebrate Christmas, to celebrate weddings, harvesting season, and other specific rituals and ceremonies.\(^7\)

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Mexican Nationalism

The nationalistic ideology in México is a product of the Mexican Revolution of 1910. It has the objective of creating a nation with a unified cultural identity. The revolution was ignited by the discomfort of the Mexican population and the urgency to remove dictator Porfirio Díaz and his oppressive regime from power. This devastating episode in the history of México brought a desire to look for a new era of national identity. Following the capitulation of Porfirio Díaz, the new government sought to unify the Mexican people and establish a national identity.

This nationalistic ideology was centered around education and the arts and had as its main objective the creation of a unified system that would represent all Mexicans, a new national culture that would allow all citizens to identify regardless of their ethnic or social background.

José Vasconcelos, the minister of public education, believed that the best approach to building this new identity was through public education. His vision and leadership promoted the construction of rural schools to eradicate illiteracy, the distribution of new Mexican history publications, the creation of the National University, the creation of libraries and museums, and the promotion of arts through a nationalist framework.

José M. Bonilla, the inspector of general education, made the following remarks at a speech in Puebla:

One of the purposes of the SEP is to strengthen the ties of nationality because only then the Mexican homeland will be truly constituted. With this laudable aim, it is giving a great impulse to cultural aesthetics, which will make the beauty of

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our own soil be known and felt; which will cultivate the emerging Mexican music; which will make our poets and novelists sing our beauties; that architects cultivate indigenous styles in which they will find hitherto unknown beautiful motifs; that instead of being inspired by the masterworks of foreign artists, our painters will find inspiration upon the sublime and majestic creations of our exuberant nature; that the conceptions of art will have applications in the industries, and finally, that the joys that music, painting, poetry, drama provide will not be an exclusive privilege of a few, but heritage of all.⁹

Vasconcelos commissioned Diego Rivera and other well-known artists to paint murals at different city landmarks that would display the ideologies of the Revolution accessible even to those who could not read.¹⁰

The most important figure of the musical nationalist movement in México is, without a doubt, Carlos Chávez. His interaction and involvement with the post-revolutionary government allowed him to become a strong influence in the direction of music in México moving forward. His ideas on race, nationalism, cultural evolution, Mexican music education, and aesthetics became pivotal in his success as a national figure in the musical world in the country and abroad.

Before addressing the impact of Chávez’s progressive musical influence, it is important to mention, even if only briefly, a description of some of the most important musical figures in México before the revolution to emphasize the transition into the nationalist musical movement.

During the Porfiriato (the term known as the period of government in México under Porfirio Díaz’s government), many composers were offered grants to study in

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¹⁰ Avila, *Cinesonidos*, 118.
Europe and returned to México to enrich the cultural life of the aristocrats. Among these composers were Ricardo Castro and Manuel M. Ponce.

Ricardo Castro

Ricardo Castro was one of the young Mexican pianists and composers who benefited from these government grants. Castro received a monthly stipend from the Mexican government in 1902 to study in Europe.\(^{11}\) After a successful four-year European experience as both a composer and a performer in Paris, Castro returned to México to lead the National Conservatory. He was considered the most Europeanized composer of the nineteenth century in México.

Manuel M. Ponce

Ponce studied in Italy and then in Germany. While in Germany, he was encouraged to avoid the inclusion of Mexican folk music and focus on European style. In 1910, back in México, Ponce started a piano studio in México City having Carlos Chávez, then eleven years old, as one of his first piano students. Ponce was instrumental in bringing new European compositional techniques to México. In 1912, Manuel M. Ponce started composing a series of canciones Mexicanas. “Estrellita”, written in 1914, is part of this compilation of songs. It was during these years, in the middle of the revolution, that Ponce focused on writing arrangements of well-known Mexican tunes and on writing essays promoting the development of folk music in México.\(^{12}\)


\(^{12}\) Stevenson, 233.
Manuel M. Ponce paved the way for the new trend of writing in a Mexican nationalistic style in a less public manner. This excerpt from one of his essays is evidence of his posture on nationalism in music. Ponce said the following:

Our salons welcomed only foreign music in 1910… their doors remained resolutely closed to the canción Mexicana until at the last revolutionary cannon in the north announced the imminent destruction of the old order… Amid the smoke and blood of battle were born the stirring revolutionary songs soon to be carried throughout the length and breadth of the land. Adelita, Valentina, and La Cucaracha were typical revolutionary songs that were soon popularized throughout the republic. Nationalism captured music at last. Old songs, almost forgotten, but truly reflecting the national spirit, were revived, and new melodies for new corridos were composed… everywhere the idea gained impetus that the republic should have its own musical art faithfully mirroring its own soul. Ponce was the first composer to promote nationalism in music in México.

Carlos Chávez

Composer, conductor, pianist, and musical scholar, Carlos Chávez is perhaps the most well-known Mexican composer in the world. Through the support of José Vasconcelos, minister of public education, Chávez composed El Fuego Nuevo, a Mexican ballet based on an Aztec legend that incorporated indigenous musical elements. In addition to writing music for the concert hall, Chávez worked as an organist for the Teatro Olimpia in México City in 1925 for about one year. He was responsible for providing background music for films. Chávez was a natural leader. In 1928, he was

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13 Ibid.
appointed conductor of the Sindicato de Filarmónicos orchestra. This natural characteristic of leadership was evident in his ability to win support from government officials and private investors. Chávez was appointed Chief of the Department of Fine Arts, a bureau within the Mexican government that was tasked with promoting and developing all artistic activities in México.

A strong characteristic of his music is the heavy use of percussion instruments. Sometimes, his scores called for indigenous instruments including the teponaztli, a type of slit drum made from a single log. However, Chávez also provided a list of modern instruments that could substitute the indigenous instruments that were not easily accessible to most orchestras.

Chávez is responsible for the native indigenous music renaissance in México. He strongly encouraged Mexicans to look back at the origins of the Mexican traditions when he said the following in one of his speeches: “Reconstruct musically the atmosphere of primitive purity…the musical culture of the aborigines constitutes the most important stage in the history of Mexican music.”

Chávez strongly promoted the use of pre-Hispanic musical ideas for it is in them where one can find the deepest expression of the Mexican soul. In a lecture imparted by Chávez in 1928, he shared characteristics of the aboriginal music of the Aztecs. He explained that the Aztecs had an almost exclusive preference for the minor third and the perfect fifth intervals and that the use of any other intervals was rare. This musical

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15 Ibid.
revolution movement started by Chávez was soon followed by the most well-known Mexican composers of his time. They all started including indigenous music traditions in the works.

Silvestre Revueltas

Composer and violinist Silvestre Revueltas studied in Austin, Texas, and in Chicago, Illinois. Between the years 1926 and 1928, Revueltas lived and worked in San Antonio, Texas, and Mobile, Alabama as a theater violinist and orchestra conductor. In 1929, Revueltas was invited by Carlos Chávez to serve as his assistant conductor at the Orquesta Sinfónica de México. Eventually, Revueltas would assume a teaching position at the Conservatorio Nacional. Chávez encouraged Revueltas to resume composing. 

_Cuauhnáhuac, Esquinas, and Ventanas_ are three pieces of Revueltas composed between 1930 and 1931 as a product of Chávez’s encouragement.¹⁶

In the last five years of his life, Revueltas spent most of his time as a film music composer. In 1935, he wrote the music for the film _Redes_. He was well known for “painting” acoustic representations of Mexican landscapes in his compositions. His gift for melody was compared to the spontaneity of Schubert’s by Aaron Copland who said, “He composes organically tunes which are almost indistinguishable from the original folk material itself.”¹⁷

El Grupo de los Cuatro

“The Group of the Four” included four composers who enrolled in a composition class taught by Carlos Chávez at the Conservatorio Nacional entitled “Musical Creation.”

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¹⁶ Stevenson, _Music in México_, 252.

¹⁷ Ibid.
The members of this group include Blas Galindo, Salvador Contreras, Daniel Ayala, and José Pablo Moncayo. The group was given its name by a newspaper critic after a performance in 1935. Being labeled “The Group of the Four” gained them more attention as a group rather than trying to gain popularity as individual composers. This group of composers constitutes a pillar in the evolution of the nationalistic musical movement in México. They directly influenced Rodríguez’s music in the areas of rhythm, melody, harmony, and orchestration. He took elements from successful compositions by these composers and modified them to create his own works.

Blas Galindo

Blas Galindo was a Mexican composer of indigenous Huichol roots from the state of Jalisco. He studied composition with Carlos Chávez at the Conservatorio Nacional in México City and eventually became the director of the conservatory. One of Galindo’s most famous compositions, *Sones Mariachi*, was written after Chávez’s invitation for him to write a piece of music with a few well-known folk songs as the foundation. In addition to parallel thirds, one can find parallelisms of seconds, fifths, and sevenths as characteristics of Galindo’s music. You will also find these intervallic sonorities in the music of Arturo Rodríguez.

Salvador Contreras

It was Salvador Contreras who, in 1934, motivated the other members of El Grupo de los Cuatro to put together a program that included compositions they had written since the time Carlos Chávez stopped teaching his “Musical Creation” class at the conservatory. Contreras wrote music for small ensembles and symphony orchestra. His *Corridos for Choir, Soprano, and Orchestra* display a clear Spanish influence in the style
of the villancico as well as the use of traditional Mexican nationalistic elements such as the use of sesquialtera, foot-tapping rhythms, and melodic lines a third apart in parallel motion.

Daniel Ayala

Daniel Ayala was a violinist and composer from Yucatán. Among his composition teachers were Carlos Chávez and Manuel M. Ponce. Ayala was also a violin student of Silvestre Revueltas. Following the steps of his teacher Carlos Chávez, Daniel Ayala wrote music inspired by indigenous music.

José Pablo Moncayo

José Pablo Moncayo was a composer, pianist, and conductor born in Guadalajara, Jalisco. Although he has more works under his catalog, Huapango is his most popular composition. This work is one of the most performed orchestral pieces in the entire Mexican repertoire. Robert Stevenson compares Moncayo with Paul Dukas for both composers are known as “one-piece composers.”

Twentieth-century Mexican nationalism resulted in a very strong movement that caused many younger Mexican composers to seek different styles and influences beyond México to avoid being associated with this trend. This avoidance of the popular, Mexican-nationalistic style resulted in unsuccessful careers as it affected their acceptance and recognition both in México and other parts of the world as well. Rodríguez understood that the best way to gain recognition as a composer in México would be to

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18 Ibid, 260.
embrace the popular, twentieth-century nationalistic movement established by composers such as Carlos Chávez, Silvestre Revueltas, and José Pablo Moncayo.

Ceremonies and Traditions

To understand the origins of the music considered to be nationalistic in the early twentieth century, one must look back at the civilizations that existed before the Conquista.

There are no recorded sounds or music scores of ancient Aztec and Mayan music. However, pictographs of musicians in stone serve as a resource to prove the existence of music in these societies. These civilizations used music as a social language and as a way of expressing their identity. The songs and dances performed served the purpose of connecting the members of these communities with their gods. The performers were professional musicians, or cuicapiztles, who were recognized as the elite of the society strata. This special place in society came at a high price as it was expected to perform perfectly at the different ceremonies. These performances were offered to their gods and any mistake was believed to infuriate them. A mistake was cause for punishment that could include a severed foot or hand or being put to death.19

The sixteenth century was a pivotal era in the history of music in México. Spanish conquerors brought their traditions into the Americas and searched for ways to impose their music and customs on the natives. One of the difficulties that these conquerors encountered was the multiple languages and dialects spoken across the region now known as México. The language barrier forced them to use the universal musical

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19 Sturman, 36.
language as the perfect approach for the evangelization of the natives. The mixture of indigenous music with that of the Spanish would create a new type of music that contained elements of both cultures creating an effective approach to fulfill the evangelization mission in the Nueva España. The resulting music would showcase characteristics that included a) the use of instruments brought directly from Spain such as the violin and the guitar along with traditional indigenous instruments (teponaztli, chicahuaztli, and tlapitzalli), b) an expanded melodic range and harmonic scope in their compositions, and c) new genres such as the villancico and the flamenco.

The Spanish Conquistador, Hernán Cortés was in charge of making sure that the indigenous people received a Christian education. In 1523, the first missionaries arrived in México to start this mission. The missionaries’ first task was to learn the native language. One way that the friars found to be successful in their efforts to learn the language and to educate and convert the natives was by playing games with the indigenous children. Through the children, the friars tried to reach out to the adults but faced rejection. This led to the killings of indigenous people in the name of God. These violent acts did not convince the natives toward a peaceful conversion, but they were so afraid that they had no option but to allow the friars to educate their children.

The missionaries used Christian celebrations as educational functions. The celebration of the Eucharist in 1525 was the first time in México where the natives were part of a Christian celebration.  

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The dances and traditions of the indigenous people were not forbidden as long as they were not directed toward their deities. This granted the opportunity for the natives to apply their musical traditions to the new religion and convert to it naturally and peacefully.

The missionaries finally found a successful way to convert the natives and started to translate the Bible into their native language.

In preparation for the Christmas celebration of 1529, the friars permitted the natives to celebrate through their traditional dances and music. These celebrations started two months before Christmas Day. The celebrations attracted so many people that they could not fit all on the church grounds. The Christian doctrine could be heard all over town.

The European music tradition was introduced to the indigenous population without instruction through singing and praising at outdoor celebrations. The children, on the other hand, learned to sing, write music, and play instruments brought from Europe. 21

The evangelization in México was successful thanks to the conservation of traditional indigenous music. Rather than eliminating the natives’ musical language, the friars opted to adapt their Christian teachings to the indigenous musical language.

Matachines

During the Conquista, the Spaniards used religious dance dramas accompanied by lively music to convert native Mexicans to Christianity. The blend of regional traditions and European customs created new ways of expressing their religious veneration. These

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21 Turrent, 121-122.
ritual dance dramas include the already traditional indigenous practice of wearing masks and using pantomimes. The performers were called matachines. Previously, the ceremonies represented the king’s victory over evil. In the adaptation after the Conquista, the characters involved in these dramas represent the soldiers of Christ or, more commonly in festivals across México, they represent the soldiers of the Holy Virgin of Guadalupe.22

Posadas

The intergenerational participation in Mexican traditional activities or festivities shared between families and communities allowed the continuation of special religious events before Christmas nowadays referred to as posadas. The Christmas posadas are just one example of the festivities celebrated that display a mixture of traditions from before and after the Conquista.

The indigenous civilizations in México had a calendar full of ritual celebrations, some of which were open to the public and others took place in private homes. The purposes varied from religious celebrations to social celebrations, from things like asking for a good harvest season to other celebratory parties.

The posada tradition has been passed down from the Toltecs to the Aztecs and continues in México to this day.23

The hosting of Posadas is a strong tradition around the Christmas season, and they run from December 16th until Christmas Day. Posada means “inn” as in a place to stay. It

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23 Turrent, 73.
is an informal reenactment of Mary and Joseph looking for lodging at different inns and repeatedly being turned away. Posadas usually take place in different neighborhoods in México. The procession group parades around the block or neighborhood while singing the “posada villancico” as they go from house to house (or from inn to inn) looking for lodging. The people at each house sing back rejecting them forcing the procession on to the next house. The procession ends at the house designated as the host house welcoming everyone in for a posada party that involves traditional food, drinks, and the breaking of a piñata in the shape of a star representing the star of Bethlehem.

Villancicos

As the friars continued their mission of converting the natives, they eventually inserted biblical texts into their indigenous melodies accompanied by European instruments. As the natives continued studying the music taught by the Spanish friars, they were able to compose music following these learned styles.

The Spanish villancico is a form of art music with popular traditions that became one of the most popular genres during the colonization of the region. They feature sesquialtera which is a rhythmic characteristic associated with popular Spanish dance music. Villancicos in Latin America are associated with the popular posada processions before the Christmas celebration. These villancicos contained religious, non-liturgical texts about the journey of Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem and included drumming or dancing.²⁴

Traditional Dances and their Rhythm

The jarabe became the most popular national dance after the Spanish colonization of México. There were different versions of the jarabe dance during the 1900s until it eventually reached a standard version by the end of the nineteenth century.

The standardized nineteenth-century jarabe is described as fast-paced music in 6/8 or 3/4 with multiple sones of sixteen or twenty-four bars. In one meaning of the word son, one of the most important Mexican musical genres, it is an individual tune or song associated with social dance rather than ritual dance. In a son, a couple dances over a wooden plank to provide the foundation of the rhythmic essence of the music. Each sixteen-bar son was divided into two eight-bar sections. The first section was instrumental followed by a vocal eight-bar section with accompaniment. Twenty-four-bar sones were divided into three sections with an initial instrumental section followed by an accompanied vocal section and ending with another instrumental section.

The typical jarabe’s rhythmic structure would include the following: a) dotted rhythms and frequent syncopation with accents equally distributed on all beats of the measure, b) a preference for the major, c) a simplicity of tonic-dominant harmonies to accompany the melodies, d) the use of thirds and sixths intervals for the melodies as a rule, e) the absence of modulations within each son of the jarabe (although there may be modulations to the dominant or sub-dominant between sones), and f) up to two accidentals in the key signatures employed in the jarabes were the limit. Traditionally, the jarabe would end with a prepared climax.

The instrumentation used for the accompaniment of jarabe dances include a harp, string bass, small guitar, and flute. The bands that followed this instrumentation were known as Sones mariaches. As the mariachi bands grew, the guitarrón replaced the harp. This change of instrumentation made it possible for the band to move around as they performed. Other instruments were added to the mariachi band since then, creating the standard traditional instrumentation known today that includes trumpets.

As mentioned before, the jarabe was composed of different sones. There are different types of sones depending on the geographical region in México. They all share the general structure described above but they differ based on the influence of each region. The main difference between the different types of sones can be observed in the instrumentation used.

Of all the different types of sones in existence, the three most popular are the son de mariachi, the son jarocho, and the son huasteco.

Son de Mariachi

Also known as Son Jaliscience, it is found in the regions of Jalisco, Colima, and Michoacan. These sones are the most popular, not only in México but abroad. It is perhaps, the musical genre most representative of México.

Its popularity is in part due to the use of a mariachi ensemble as the accompanying band. Mariachi bands with their charro outfits became a symbol of México’s image around the world. The charro outfit is seen as a national emblem and a way to express Mexican heritage pride.

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26 Stevenson, Music in México, 217.

27 Heredia, “El Son.”
The popularity of the mariachi band gained its maximum splendor through its inclusion in the sound film music in México in the early twentieth century. It is through these films that the charro image and the son Jaliscience with the mariachi bands reached every corner of the world where the films were seen. This global exposure made mariachi bands musical ambassadors of México and the music they performed represented a proud Mexican culture.

Son Jarocho

The success of the son jarocho is due to its popularity within powerful social ranks and to the high demand for this type of music from the general population. It can be traced to the southeast region of the state of Veracruz. Some scholars believe in an African influence in the son jarocho due to its accented rhythmic characteristics. Others also considered a direct link to the European baroque line of music with the responsorial chant.

Son Huasteco

The son huasteco, with its huapango dance, represents the states of Tamaulipas, Veracruz, Hidalgo, San Luis Potosí, Querétaro, Guanajuato, Puebla, and Nuevo León. These states are part of a geographical area in the eastern part of México known as La Huasteca. Different indigenous groups lived in this area and their influence can be seen through the rhythmic accents in the music and in the lyrics with its peculiar reference to animals and nature.\(^{28}\)

\(^{28}\) Ibid.
Huapango means entablado (or surface covered with wooden planks) and comes from the Nahuatl word “cuauhpanco” which means on top of the wood. The name comes from the tradition of dancing a son on a tarima (wooden plank) from the Huasteca region.29

Huapangos included popular sones as part of its structure. Among the most popular sones are “La Malagueña”, “El Querreque”, and “Cielito Lindo.”

Traditional Instruments

Ancient traditional instruments were built generation after generation in the shape of animals and their corresponding deities to preserve their culture. These instruments were associated with the different attributes of the gods they worshiped. For example, a shell was associated with the wind, a bell was associated with a snake, a rattle was associated with rain, etc.

Mexican ethnomusicologists Vicente T. Mendoza and Daniel Castañeda paved the way in cataloging the history behind traditional pre-Hispanic instruments. Their research provided invaluable information regarding the instruments used by the Aztecs and other civilizations describing their indigenous names, purpose, and sonorities. Vicente T. Mendoza was the founder of the Folklore Society of México. Mendoza, along with his wife Virginia Rodríguez Rivera, documented a vast amount of Mexican folk and popular music.30


30 Sturman, 19.
According to Mendoza and Castañeda’s research, all Aztec instruments belonged to the idiophone, aerophone, or membranophone families.\(^{31}\)

The instruments described below represent in no way a full list of instruments used by pre-Hispanic civilizations in México. These instruments were chosen based on their relevance to the research for this document.

Rattles

The idiophone instruments *ayacachtli*, *cacalachtli*, *coyolli*, and *chicahuaztli* are rattles used for dances by pre-Hispanic civilizations. The Toltecs, and later the Aztecs, played drums, sang, and shook their ayacachtlis while dancing. The Spanish word for rattle in México is *sonaja*. However, the common name used for these types of rattles nowadays is *maracas*, a name given by sixteenth-century Brazilian Indians.\(^{32}\)

Flutes

Among the aerophone instruments used by Aztecs are the *chichtli*, the *chililitli*, and the *tlapitzalli*. These vertical flutes were used during sacrifices and other ceremonies.\(^{33}\)

Drums

The *huehuetyl* is considered the most venerated of the membranophone Mexican instrument. This cylindrical vertical wooden drum was able to produce two tones if

\(^{31}\) Stevenson, *Music in Aztec*, 22.

\(^{32}\) Ibid, 34.

\(^{33}\) Ibid, 40.
stroked at either the center of the drum or near the rim of the drum. The two tones produced by the huehuetl formed an interval of a fifth.\(^3\)

The *teponaztli* is a horizontal wooden drum that can also produce two tones. The difference between the teponaztli and the huehuetl, in addition to the playing position difference, is that the teponaztli does not have animal skin. Instead, it is a hollowed-out wooden cylinder with two slits at the top of the instrument cut in the shape of an “H.” These slits, or tongues, are struck with mallets or deer antlers. The range of the two tones produced could range from a major second to a perfect fifth.\(^4\) The most common intervals are a third or a fourth apart.

**Film Music**

Rodríguez’s music, particularly *Mosaico Mexicano*, was greatly influenced by Mexican nationalistic film music composers as well as the film scores of John Williams. Arturo Rodríguez’s film music was influenced by the “golden era” of Mexican film. The incorporation of nationalistic elements such as traditional mariachi instrumentation and the inclusion of dance genres such as the huapango are evidence of these influences. Musical example 1, on page 31, shows an excerpt from *Mosaico Mexicano* where the composer uses the string section to simulate a mariachi band playing a serenade. At the same time, the large orchestrations in his symphonic works, the perfect idiomatic use of instruments, the creative use of instrumental families’ colors, and the unorthodox yet exciting harmonic sequences present in Rodríguez’s music are also evidence of the influence of John Williams and the Hollywood tradition of writing music for films.

\(^3\) Ibid, 41.

\(^4\) Ibid, 63.
When comparing the instrumentation employed by John Williams and Arturo Rodríguez, ample similarities are obvious between the two.

A typical score by John Williams will include the following instrumentation:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instrument 1</th>
<th>Instrument 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Flute 1</td>
<td>Trombone 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flute 2</td>
<td>Trombone 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Piccolo (or flute double)</td>
<td>Trombone 3 (or bass trombone double)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oboe 1</td>
<td>Tuba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oboe 2 (or English Horn)</td>
<td>Timpani</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarinet in Bb 1</td>
<td>Percussion 1 (bass drum, snare, triangle, crash/suspended cymbal, tambourine, woodblock)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarinet in Bb 2</td>
<td>Percussion 2 (glockenspiel, xylophone, chimes, marimba, vibraphone)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bass Clarinet (or Bb clarinet/Eb clarinet double)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bassoon 1</td>
<td>Harp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bassoon 2</td>
<td>Piano/Celeste</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horn 1</td>
<td>Violin 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horn 2</td>
<td>Violin 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horn 3</td>
<td>Viola</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horn 4</td>
<td>Cello</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trumpet 1 in Bb or C</td>
<td>Contrabass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trumpet 2 in Bb or C</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trumpet 3 in Bb or C</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violin 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violin 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viola</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cello</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Here is Arturo Rodríguez’s instrumentation used in Mosaico Mexicano for comparison:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instrument 1</th>
<th>Instrument 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Piccolo (Flute 3)</td>
<td>Trombone 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flute 1</td>
<td>Trombone 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flute 2</td>
<td>Bass Trombone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oboe 1</td>
<td>Tuba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oboe 2</td>
<td>Timpani</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oboe 3 (English Horn)</td>
<td>Percussion I: Snare Drum; Bass Drum; High Tom-tom (or Indian Drum)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarinet in Bb 1</td>
<td>Percussion II: Güiro; Sonajas; Triangle; Piatti; Suspended Cymbal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarinet in Bb 2</td>
<td>Percussion III: Xylophone; Marimba; Vibraphone; Crotales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bass Clarinet (Clarinet 3 in Bb)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bassoon 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bassoon 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horn 1 in F</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horn 2 in F</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Horn 3 in F  Horn 4 in F  Harp  
Trumpet 1 in C  Violin I  
Trumpet 2 in C  Violin II  
Trumpet 3 in C  Viola  
Violoncello  
Contrabass

The combination of all these influential elements makes Rodríguez’s compositional output a unique, exquisite, and attractive style of writing music that appeals to multiple demographics.

Musical Example 1 – *Mosaico Mexicano*, mm. 270-273.
Music is crucial for a successful film experience. The use of music to accompany films has varied tremendously in the last 125 years and its sources differ depending on the region of the world. There have been different approaches to film musical accompaniment. Some countries have used art form and popular music while others have included indigenous music. Although some films were screened in silence, most were accompanied either by phonograph recordings or live music. Music commissions specifically for films in the United States started around 1910. However, these compositions were rather a compilation of symphonic works by European composers such as Wagner or Grieg, the inclusion of some patriotic tunes and popular songs, and newly composed tunes.  

Richard Wagner was one of the most influential composers in the field of film music. Through his “total artwork” theory, Wagner paved the way for the incorporation of music to support the drama that would eventually be used in film music. The use of leitmotifs from Wagner’s influence was also fundamental in the unification of the accompaniment to the film story and its characters. Max Steiner, considered one of the “godfathers” of film music during the golden era of Hollywood in the 1930s, was fundamental in the evolution of film music. He is credited with proving that the use of underscoring enhanced a dialogue scene.  

When told that he had invented movie music responded:

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Nonsense. The idea originated with Richard Wagner. Listen to the incidental scoring behind the recitatives in his operas. If Wagner had lived in this century, he would have been the number one film composer.\(^{38}\)

Without question, Wagner has been a tremendous influence on the development of film music.

The evolution of film music into the traditional Hollywood film score formula for background music was based on the following: a) music used during transitions to cover any gaps in the narrative, b) music used to emphasize the action of the narrative through proper music and image coordination, c) music used to help set the mood and atmosphere of the scene and d) music used as underscoring to accompany the dialogue.\(^{39}\)

The three most important film composers in Hollywood in the 1930s were Max Steiner, Erich Korngold, and Alfred Newman. These composers were then followed by Miklós Rózsa and Franz Waxman. It is important to mention that of all these composers, Alfred Newman was the only American-born composer. All the other ones listed here fled Europe due to Hitler’s Nazi regime.

Film composers come from different backgrounds. Some were known concert hall composers such as Shostakovich, Prokofiev, Copland, Vaughan Williams, Philip Glass, and John Corigliano. Others, like Erich Korngold, were opera house composers. Both Max Steiner and Alfred Newman wrote music for Broadway and Henry Mancini wrote for television. These composers added film music to their musical portfolio, and some were more successful than others.

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\(^{39}\) Kalinak, *Film Music*, 62.
Concert hall composers such as Aaron Copland started incorporating folk elements in their music to promote a national identity. Copland also wrote film music and transferred this ideology of using folk elements into his film scores. In the same way Copland inserted American folk song harmonic textures and modal melodies in his compositions, Mexican composer Silvestre Revueltas promoted nationalism by using traditional music elements in his compositions. Revueltas is the Mexican equivalent of Aaron Copland in terms of both being concert hall composers who also wrote film music. Both La Noche de los Mayas and Sensemaya are two compositions by Revueltas often performed in the concert hall that were originally written for films.

Mexican Film Music of the Golden Era

Cinema played an important role in the development of a Mexican national identity in the twentieth century. Through films and their music, Mexican symbols and traditions were distributed throughout the entire country. Cinema was used as a platform for the expression of national culture to modernize the Mexican population into a more homogeneous society through the inclusion of unified popular cultural practices.

The golden era of Mexican film encompasses the movies created between the 1930s to the mid-1950s. The title of “Epoca Dorada” was assigned due to the developments in the genre including the rise of the star system, the consolidation of the industry, and the promotion of the Mexican national identity.40

One of the most popular topics for filmmakers in México during the mid-1930s was the countryside scenery during the Mexican Revolution. Artists and intellectuals

40 Ibid, 6.
sought to create a new national awareness of the ideologies of the Revolution. Mexican cinema followed this trend through genres such as the *comedia ranchera* in which historical events from the revolutionary movement were used as their main plot. These films also built nationalist models of manhood and helped shape the image of the *comedia ranchera’s* main character, the macho Mexican cowboy. In addition, filmmakers focused their attention on melodramatic films about indigenous populations. Cinema helped to educate the entire country about underserved and often neglected demographic groups such as indigenous cultures. The music in these films was extremely important in providing an aural description of what indigenous music sounded like. Mike Slobin believed that films offer the audience a human society and that the music should provide the background to support the housing, clothing, language, and customs of the location. He said the following: “…every film is ethnographic, and every soundtrack acts like an ethnomusicologist.”

Manuel Gamio was a very important Mexican anthropologist who strongly believed in a homogenous nation. He incited Mexican artists to look at the indigenous culture for inspiration when he said: “The artistic features, which are perhaps what is the most valuable in the cultural heritage of native America, need to flourish spontaneously, as far away from the influence of their European counterparts as possible.”

Indigenous film music used pre-Columbian ideas that were promoted by Mexican nationalist composers such as Carlos Chávez. Nationalistic elements found in the

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Mexican cinema of the golden era include traditional melodic intervals, rhythms, instruments, and dances. National rhythms are used to bring the nation together as an identity mark.

As part of the countryside scenery used as inspiration for Mexican cinema of the golden era, filmmakers looked at the haciendas as the scenery for the comedias rancheras. Haciendas were vast portions of rural land used as agricultural estates. The principal character of these films was the “charro.” The charro character represented the lifestyle in the haciendas during the time of the Revolution. The charro character in the comedias rancheras gained so much popularity that it became the most representative visual and musical figure in Mexican films. These films provided a visual representation of rural life with the help of popular songs performed by the main character. The national identity outcome from these films resulted in an image of a primarily masculine macho identity. Golden era films in México depicted the charro actor as a heavy drinker, womanizer, and macho singer. The sones and songs used in this film genre were known as canciones rancheras [countryside songs] and were accompanied by mariachi bands that included strings and trumpets.43

Traditional dances were also used as the backbone of the national identity in Mexican cinema. The jarabes44 and huapangos, to mention a few, were genres often included in Mexican films of the golden era in the 40s and 50s that featured well-known

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43 Avila, Cinesonidos, 158.

44 Jarabe is a dance characterized by iconic zapateado (stomped) rhythms. This dance of Spanish origin was added to the Mexican dance school curriculum by the minister of public education Jose Vasconcelos in the 1920s.
singers like Jorge Negrete and Pedro Infante. The vocal technique used by actors in Mexican cinema in general followed the Italian bel canto tradition. However, the canción ranchera followed a style known as estilo bravío or forceful singing. The technique needed for this style called for an emphasized use of the chest and diaphragm to produce a bigger sound. The characteristics of this style can be described as raspy, commanding, and aggressive which perfectly fit the characteristics of the macho protagonist.45

Pedro Infante and Jorge Negrete were two stars during the Mexican cinema's golden era who became national charro icons in the 1940s. Jorge Negrete was a trained opera baritone who studied with the famous voice teacher and artist promoter José Pierson during the 1920s. Although Negrete was not initially interested in acting and singing in comedias rancheras, eventually he became a sensation that gained his stardom. The success of Negrete’s singing style was in part thanks to the film composer Manuel Esperón who was considered the most successful film composer of the 1930s and 1940s. Esperón shared an anecdote of Jorge Negrete’s first time singing a ranchera song:

Jorge arrived, listened to the pieces, got mad, and told me he was not a mariachi. As a result, he balled up a piece of paper and threw it under the piano and left. That was our first meeting as composer and performer. Later on, he came back because he had to fulfill the contract. At first, he sang because he had to, but just as he began to do so, and realized things were going well, he started to get excited, then he tried really hard, and the result is what I had imagined: success. He apologized and a twelve-year relationship was born that ended with his death in 1953.46

Arturo Rodríguez mentions that during the golden era, composers would write for orchestra or a fusion of mariachi band and orchestra accompanying charro singers. A

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45 Avila, Cinesonidos, 160.

46 Ibid, 181.
clear example of such influence can be found in *Mosaico Mexicano*. At measure 29, the composer describes the trombone solo as his interpretation of Jorge Negrete singing in his baritone range in the traditional charro style with sustained and powerful long notes.\(^{47}\)

Just like Sergei Prokofiev, Erich Korngold, and Aaron Copland, México also had concert hall composers who ventured into the film music industry. One of the most important figures was Silvestre Revueltas. Common in Revueltas’ film scores is the use of the full orchestra with iconic forceful abrupt appearances by the brass instruments while creating dissonant passages filled with polyrhythms. Silvestre Revueltas is credited with mixing popular Mexican songs with orchestral underscoring.\(^{48}\)

According to Jacqueline Avila:

> Mexican national cinema, from its early construction in the silent period to its development of recorded, synchronized sound film, juxtaposed and reorganized the character types, backdrops, narratives, and music that formed those genres now popular to Mexican audiences…this process functions as *cinesonidos*, the unique sonic fabric that crystalizes those distinct and diverse representations of perceived national identities on screen.\(^{49}\)

### John Williams and other Hollywood Film Composers

The influence of John Williams’s music comes from years of watching movies, listening to soundtracks, and studying his scores. As Rodríguez describes, “…growing up in the 1980s, my main symphonic sound influence was the sound of the movies that I grew up listening to, the soundtracks that I grew up listening to.”\(^{50}\)

\(^{47}\) Rodríguez, interview.

\(^{48}\) Avila, 215.

\(^{49}\) Ibid, 241.

\(^{50}\) Rodríguez, interview.
Since the premiere of *Star Wars: Episode IV - A New Hope* in 1977, Arturo regularly attended movies with his father, many of which contain musical scores by John Williams. For this reason, Arturo considers himself a “Star Wars kid.” Rodríguez remembers the time when his father took him to watch a special edition of *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*. He remembers how the soundtrack starts in an atonal way and how it turns into a more tonal harmonic language as the story of the film evolves. He was captivated by the unusual and expanded use of the harmonic language as well as the orchestra sound from John Williams’ music. Through the study of film scores of John Williams, James Horner, and Jerry Goldsmith, Arturo discovered fascinating musical colors through the innovative orchestration used by these master composers of iconic soundtracks from the 80s.

The success of soundtracks such as the *Star Wars* franchise and other works by film composers like John Williams reached global audiences and inspired young composers to write music that sounded like these amazing masterpieces. The distribution of soundtrack recordings, along with the reproduction of the films, allowed audience members to pay more attention to film music. There is tremendous impact in the music of the twentieth and twenty-first-century music from film music and some people even consider it the classical music of today. Most major symphony orchestras today program film music as part of their regular season. A composition by a film composer may be included in a program along with other works by traditional eighteenth or nineteenth-century composers. In some cases, orchestras even program a screening of a film with the symphony playing the soundtrack live.
Rodríguez admits that William’s *E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial* was a big influence on his compositions. It is evident in Arturo’s first commissioned work *From Earth to Mars*. He calls this work his “love letter to the film music from the 80s.” The composer says that *From Earth to Mars* also has a flying theme and a big ending just like E.T. He consciously imitated the master without copying tunes or structure. Even though he lacked a formal composition education then, he knew exactly the kind of sound he wanted for his compositions. Through the study of the scores, Rodríguez emulated the works of other composers the same way one would emulate his parents or the people with whom he grew up. He would experiment by imitating the orchestration and the instrumentation in search of the sounds produced by Williams and others. Arturo Rodríguez uses the analogy of a mechanic or a car engineer as follows:

> How could I do that? [write music like the master film composers] … I guess, the way an engineer would open a car and take the engine out and take all the pieces. Take the engine apart and then put them together…That’s kind of the only way to learn how to put together an engine.52

The way Rodríguez writes for the brass and how he distributes the harmony between the tuba and the trombones and horns reflects the study of John Williams’s scores. However, John Williams’s orchestration is not the only compositional device Arturo applied to his compositions. The instrument register for woodwinds and strings was emulated from the music in the film *Superman*.

This tradition of emulating or imitating successful compositional devices from other composers is not something new. John Williams did it himself. Even though

51 Ibid.

52 Ibid.
Williams followed the compositional traditions of Max Steiner and Erich Korngold, he has also been influenced by other great concert hall composers of the twentieth century. For example, the inspiration for the music behind the destruction of the Death Star in *Star Wars* comes from Gustav Holst’s final chords from “Mars” from the symphonic poem *The Planets*. John Williams also used a section from Stravinsky’s *Le Sacre du Printemps* for another scene in the same movie.53

**Conclusion**

Oftentimes, composers question whether to venture into the world of film music as it can be labeled as lesser music than concert hall music. Some of the best concert hall composers wrote film scores and found great value in this genre. Vaughan Williams advocated greatly in favor of this art form. He encouraged musicians to explore this genre as he considered it a serious and important outlet for composers. He said, “I recommend a course of it to all composition teachers whose pupils are apt to be dawdling in their ideas, or whose every bar is sacred and must not be cut or altered.”54

Webster defines the word mosaic as: “a surface decoration made by inlaying small pieces of variously colored material to form pictures or patterns.”55 Rodríguez’s style is a musical representation of the definition of the word “mosaic”: A compositional style made by inlaying small elements of different musical influences to create new works. The combination of influences ranging from Mexican nationalistic elements and

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Film music composers has made Arturo Rodríguez’s music a perfect blend appealing to a wide range of audience members around the world.
CHAPTER III – ANALYSIS OF TWO NATIONALISTIC WORKS

There is currently no documented information available on Mosaico Mexicano or Introducción, Canción de Cuna Y Fiesta. This document represents the first comprehensive study of these two compositions by Mexican composer Arturo Rodríguez. Scholars and conductors will have access to my research which includes the background and implementation of Mexican nationalistic elements in these two compositions as well as the instrumentation, influences, and an analysis for each one of them. This information will be pivotal in the programming preparation for conductors looking for compositions with a Mexican nationalistic background whether for symphony orchestra or string orchestra.

Mosaico Mexicano

Background

Mosaico Mexicano, Rodríguez’s first symphonic work, was written between December 22, 1998, and January 22, 1999, while he was a student at Texas Christian University. He worked on this composition between Fort Worth, TX, and Monterrey, MX while visiting his family for the holidays. His conducting professor at TCU asked him to finish this piece so it could be included in the Latin American Music festival being held at the university. Mosaico Mexicano premiered in March of 2000 at the Ed Landreth Auditorium in Fort Worth, Texas. A few months later, Mosaico Mexicano had its premiere at the professional level with the Dallas Symphony Orchestra.

The inspiration for this Mexican overture came from a period in Rodríguez’s life during which he suffered from loneliness, uncertainty, and his inability to perform on the piano; this was an extremely difficult time in his life. This work is dedicated to his
grandfather Evanúé Martínez Campos. Rodríguez said the following about *Mosaico Mexicano*:

> It is a symphonic love musical letter to my country and its music. I wrote this work while still in college and in the fourth year of living away from my country. A good cure against homesickness!\(^{56}\)

The composer describes *Mosaico Mexicano* as a composition that “pays homage to the music of the great Mexican concert hall composers of the 1940s and 1950s as well as the composers of the golden era of Mexican cinema.”\(^ {57}\)

*Mosaico Mexicano* incorporates different Mexican elements such as the use of traditional instruments, sesquialtera, and the huapango rhythm. Martin Ham describes sesquialtera as a form of ternary proportion in which it is required to perform three notes in the beat of two.\(^ {58}\) Sesquialtera is the equivalent of the term hemiola when employed in Latin American music. Also heard is the influence of matachines processions in the northeastern part of México during the composer’s childhood. In addition, the source for the melody used in the serenade section proves the influence of popular Mexican music in this composition as well.

Rodríguez explains that writing this composition was an excuse for him to explore the music of composers from the nationalistic era in México including José Pablo Moncayo, Silvestre Revueltas, Carlos Chávez, and Blas Galindo.

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\(^ {56}\) Rodríguez, interview.

\(^ {57}\) Ibid.

The tempo marking at the beginning of *Mosaico Mexicano* says Tempo di Huapango. Rodríguez refers to this marking as a “tip of the hat” to José Pablo Moncayo for his *Huapango*.\(^{59}\)

Pieces of information related to the background of this composition have been shared by the composer for over two decades. Rodríguez has shared small pieces of information related to this composition at promotional interviews or for program notes for the different performances of his work. However, a full description of the composition does not exist. The comprehensive information included in this chapter is vital to fully understand the influence and traditional elements found in *Mosaico Mexicano* and to provide an accurate interpretation of the composition.

Instrumentation

(2016/final edition)

The instrumentation for *Mosaico Mexicano* has been modified a few times over the years. The evolution of the instrumentation can be seen from Rodríguez’s sketches and the manuscript to the last version of the composition revised in 2016. Compare the instrumentation listed below to those of figures 3 and 4.

- Piccolo (Flute 3)
- Flute 1
- Flute 2
- Oboe 1
- Oboe 2
- Oboe 3 (English Horn)
- Clarinet in Bb 1
- Clarinet in Bb 2
- Bass Clarinet (Clarinet 3 in Bb)
- Bassoon 1
- Bassoon 2
- Horn 1 in F

\(^{59}\) Ibid.
Horn 2 in F
Horn 3 in F
Horn 4 in F
Trumpet 1 in C
Trumpet 2 in C
Trumpet 3 in C
Trombone 1
Trombone 2
Bass Trombone
Tuba
Timpani

(5 percussion players required)

Percussion I
Snare Drum; Bass Drum;
High Tom-tom (or Indian Drum)

Percussion II
Güiro; Sonajas; Triangle;
Piatti; Suspended Cymbal

Percussion III
Xylophone; Marimba;
Vibraphone; Crotales

Harp
Violin I
Violin II
Viola
Violoncello
Contrabass
Figure 3. Mosaico Mexicano, sketch of the instrumentation page.
2 FLUTES
PICCOLO
  (Flute)
2 OBOES
ENGLISH HORN
  (Oboe)
2 B CLARINETS
  (E Clarinet)
BASS CLARINET
  (B Clarinet)
2 BASSOONS

4 HORNS

3 C TRUMPETS

3 TROMBONES
TUBA

TIMPANI
PERCUSSION 1
  Snare Drum, Sonajas
PERCUSSION 2
  Guiro, High Tom-Tom
PERCUSSION 3
  Xylophone
PERCUSSION 4
  Bass Drum, Triangle
PERCUSSION 5
  Cymbals, Suspended Cymbal

HARP

STRINGS

Figure 4. Mosaico Mexicano manuscript (1999), instrumentation page.
Performance Time

Approximately 11:20 minutes

Analysis

*Mosaico Mexicano* can be divided into four contrasting sections based on rhythmic and thematic material:

The first section can be described as brisk, foot-tapping mariachi music (mm. 1 – 83) starting at the pick-up to measure 10 in the piccolo, flutes, violin 1, and violas.

Musical Example 2 – *Mosaico Mexicano*, foot-tapping motif at measures 10 and 11.

The rhythmic patterns used in *Mosaico Mexicano* come from traditional Mexican roots. The opening section uses a particular rhythm derived from sesquialtera known as huapango or son rhythm as it sounds when traditionally danced over a wooden plank.

Sesquialtera can be present in different forms. It can be presented in a vertical, or metric way, as described above by Martin Ham where three notes are played in the beat of two. The other way sesquialtera can be present is in a horizontal, or melodic way, in which case a measure of two strong beats in 6/8 is followed by a measure of three strong beats. Rodriguez uses both the vertical and the horizontal versions of sesquialtera in
Mosaico Mexicano with a clear predominance of the horizontal version throughout the composition.

The following examples represent the horizontal version of sesquialtera in its simplest form and two variations of the simplest form, and the Huapango rhythm and its variations.

First, we have the simplest form of sesquialtera represented in the following example:

Musical Example 3 – Sesquialtera, Simplest Form.

Here is an example of a variation of the simplest form. I will call it variation 1.

Musical Example 4 – Sesquialtera, Variation 1.
And here is another variation. I will call it variation 2:

Musical Example 5 – Sesquialtera, Variation 2.

The huapango rhythm uses portions from the sesquialtera’s simplest form and its variations to create a unique dance rhythm. Here is what the huapango rhythm looks like followed by two variations of it:

Musical Example 6 – Huapango (or son) Rhythm.

Here is a variation of the huapango rhythm. Which can also be considered a two-bar sequence. I will call it Huapango rhythm variation 1:

Musical Example 7 – Huapango Rhythm, Variation 1
Here is another variation of the huapango rhythm. I will call it variation 2:

Musical Example 8 – Huapango Rhythm, Variation 2.

And here is yet another variation of the huapango rhythm which is a mixture of the original form and variation 2. I will call it variation 3:

Musical Example 9 – Huapango Rhythm, Variation 3.

_Mosaico Mexicano_ uses the huapango rhythm, as employed in the Mexican sones labeled huapangos, as well as the variations described before.\(^{60}\)

A transition into the second section of the piece starts at letter C in the piccolo accompanied by the timpani and the strings employing the extended technique of col legno.

Musical Example 10 – *Mosaico Mexicano*, transition section starting at letter C.

As you can see in example 10 above, the use of sesquialtera in the melody and the accompaniment, as well as the use of the interval of a third are predominant in this transition. The melodic material used for this section could be analyzed as a new theme. Instead, the composer refers to this section beginning at letter C as a development section that serves as a transition into the new section. The melodic range for this transition is also very limited, as it only covers a range of one octave. The sixteen-bar melody used in this transition will then be played by the first oboe and the first violins at letter D. A portion of this melody is seen in musical example 11.
Musical Example 11 – *Mosaico Mexicano*, transition melody at letter D.

The composer recalls that the inspiration for this development section of the piece came from a time when he was working on *Mosaico Mexicano* while on vacation in Monterrey, México. He heard a matachin dancer playing flute outside of his house. This street dancer was going from house to house dressed as a matachin while playing a reed flute accompanied by a percussive instrument of some sort and rattles made from shells on his feet. The dancer was playing a tune that started with a minor third and then he would improvise a flourished melody around the repeated minor third interval. The percussive rhythmic accompaniment came from the dancer’s sandals. These wooden sandals had a double sole. When lifting the feet, the sandals made a sound described by the composer as “clang, clang.” The rhythm used by the street performer is based on sesquialtera and is repeated throughout the entire improvisation.

Rodríguez was looking for a tape recorder as he thought that it would be a great idea to use these elements from the street dancer in *Mosaico Mexicano*. The composer was unable to record the street dancer’s performance. However, he whistled the melody and the rhythm into the tape recorder and used them as part of his composition.

Rodríguez assigned the melody to the piccolo as he says that it is as close as the sound of the reed flute played by matachin. To represent the sound of the sandals, the composer

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61 Rodríguez, interview.
uses *col legno* on the timpani and the strings. As for the rattles played by the shells in the performer’s ankles, Arturo Rodríguez used sonajas to represent the shells.

As Arturo mentions,

…it all comes from the idea of trying to translate whatever you hear in the street into the orchestra world…keeping the essence of the sound but bringing it into the orchestra world.62

Also in letter D, the composer includes a portion of new thematic material that he will use later in the piece. The introduction of this partial thematic material appears in the first clarinet, the second violins, and violas at measure 100, as seen in musical example 12 below.

![Musical Example 12](image)

**Musical Example 12 – Mosaico Mexicano, partial new theme at letter D.**

The second section (mm. 120-209) starts at letter E and is marked by a theme in the style of indigenous Mexican music played by the first clarinet.

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62 Ibid.

This indigenous Mexican theme that was introduced by the first clarinet at measure 120 will then be played by the piccolo, flutes, and oboes at measure 128 as shown in musical example 14.

Musical Example 14 – *Mosaico Mexicano*, indigenous Mexican theme in the piccolo, flutes, and oboes at m. 128.

You can see beginning in measure 128 of musical example 15 that the composer added an ostinato figure to the drum to represent the traditional indigenous drum giving this second section a more authentic Mexican color. Arturo Rodríguez is not the only composer who uses modern instruments to replace original indigenous instruments.
Carlos Chávez often provided a list of modern percussion instruments in his compositions as substitutes for the original indigenous instruments not available to most orchestras.

At this point, Arturo Rodríguez introduces another very traditional instrument that supports the idea of the matachines’ influence in his composition. He introduces the sonajas or rattles as part of the accompaniment at measure 128. This addition completes the traditional instrumentation used for most matachines processions: Indian drum, sonajas, and flute.

Musical Example 15 – *Mosaico Mexicano*, introduction of sonajas at m. 128.

At measure 136, the first violins replace the oboes on the melody for the third appearance of the theme as seen in musical example 16.


Note. Third appearance now in the first violins at m. 136.
The eight-bar indigenous Mexican theme is presented a total of four times, but the fourth time serves also as a pivot into the next transition. The composer brings back the huapango rhythm at letter F played by the bass clarinet, French horns, trombones 1 and 2, and the double basses as seen below in musical example 17. Rodríguez maintained a very even and organic rhythmic accompaniment throughout the first three times the indigenous theme was present so as not to disturb the nature of the theme. However, on the fourth time the theme is performed, the huapango rhythm alters this peaceful nature to indicate that something new is about to happen.

Musical Example 17 – *Mosaico Mexicano*, return of the huapango rhythm at letter F.

During this long transition between measures 152 and 269, Rodríguez inserts and mixes fragments of every melodic and rhythmic material previously presented in the piece including the rhythmic motif introduced at measure 84, the huapango rhythm, the indigenous Mexican melody, the incomplete hinted new theme, and the foot-tapping rhythm. (See musical example 18.) In addition, the composer employs different
compositional techniques of expansion such as the use of stretto and key modulation. All these elements are successfully weaved in an organic way using different colors through the instrumentation chosen by the composer.

The Misterioso section at measure 210, a continuation of the prolonged transition, showcases a harmonic sequence that will eventually arrive at the third section of the piece. The sequence transitions up by step from C major to D major and E major, then descends to D minor into D-flat major and back to C major. It is evident that the composer is using non-traditional chord progressions. An example of these deliberate harmonic devices is the abrupt change from C major to F-sharp major or G-flat major that takes place at measure 242 as shown in musical example 19. The unorthodox use of enharmonic F-sharp and G-flat, along with C-sharp and D-flat, or A-sharp with B-flat during this part of the harmonic sequence supports two observations. First, it demonstrates the early stages of the composer’s compositional career. Musical example
showcases a four-bar section in C major at measure 238 that transitions to F-sharp major at measure 242 which is an abrupt modulation of a tritone. Upon realizing what he had done, the composer humbly admits that he “was too young and did not realize the tritone.”

Second, it shows the film music’s influence on the composer through his focus on accidentals rather than key signatures and the use of harmonic colors rather than conventional harmonic progressions. When asked about the harmonic sequence from F-sharp major to E minor, Rodríguez cites the influence of John Williams in the use of harmonic colors in his soundtracks.

Musical Example 19 – *Mosaico Mexicano*, tritone from C major to F sharp major in the cello and bass parts, mm. 238-242.

The third section of the piece starts at the Andante at measure 270 labeled Serenata [a serenade.]

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63 Rodríguez, interview.

64 Ibid.
Musical Example 20 – *Mosaico Mexicano*, Andante (Serenata) section at measure 270.

In the 2016 edition score of *Mosaico Mexicano*, the composer added the following dedication under the title: “Esta obra está dedicada a mi querido abuelo Evanué Martínez Campos.” (“This work is dedicated to my grandfather Evanué Martínez Campos.”)

**Figure 5.** *Mosaico Mexicano, 2016 edition score title page including a dedication to his grandfather.*

Arturo’s dedication to his grandfather was not included in the manuscript, however, this detail is important in deciphering the origin of the melodic material used in the serenade section. Rodríguez’s grandfather used to put him to bed at night as a child while softly singing the bolero *Dos Arbolitos* by Mexican songwriter Chucho Martínez Gil.

The melody composed by Rodríguez at the Andante section at measure 270 was influenced by the song *Dos Arbolitos*. Musical Example 21 showcases both the melody written by Chucho Martínez Gil and the one written by Arturo Rodríguez.
Musical Example 21 – Comparing the melody from *Dos Arbolitos* with the one from *Mosaico Mexicano* at m. 270.

The serenata section, at the beginning of the Andante, is performed by a string quartet as seen below in musical example 22. The serenata section is a representation of the Mexican serenades as performed by a mariachi band which includes violins and a guitarrón. In this instance, this is represented by the string quartet where the cello plays the role of the guitarrón.65

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65 Although it belongs to the Vihuela family, guitarrón literally translates into big guitar. It has six strings and functions musically as a bass guitar.
Musical Example 22 – *Mosaico Mexicano*, Serenata section starting at m. 270 with the mariachi band represented by a string quartet.

Rodríguez mentions that when he was working on this piece, the university orchestra at TCU was preparing Dvorak’s Symphony No. 9 “From the New World,” and that he got the idea of the string quartet from the slow movement of Dvorak’s masterpiece.\(^6^6\)

During the fourth and final section of *Mosaico Mexicano*, the composer returns to the opening foot-tapping material with the huapango rhythm adding the full version of

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\(^6^6\) Rodríguez, interview. This fact supports the influence from other great composers.
the new thematic material that was hinted at earlier in the piece. The new theme is presented for the first time in its entirety by the first clarinet at measure 335 during a transition into the final section of the piece.

Musical Example 23 – *Mosaico Mexicano*, new theme in the clarinet at m. 335.

The huapango rhythmic pattern is a very iconic nationalistic element that transmits a feeling of identity and pride to the Mexican people. José Pablo Moncayo’s famous *Huapango* for symphony orchestra became so popular that it has been unofficially considered México’s second national anthem. Arturo Rodríguez’s *Mosaico Mexicano* uses the same traditional rhythmic patterns and instruments associated with the popular *Huapango* by Moncayo. All these different traditional ingredients, plus his personal style, have made *Mosaico Mexicano* highly accepted by the general Mexican population and is steadily gaining popularity across the nation and abroad.

*Mosaico Mexicano* marked a breakthrough in the career of Arturo Rodríguez and is one of his most performed compositions to date.
**Introducción, Canción de Cuna y Fiesta**

Background

*Introducción, Canción de Cuna y Fiesta* for string orchestra was written in 2006 and is dedicated to Stanley DeRusha, Arturo Rodríguez’s orchestral conducting professor at Butler University in Indianapolis. The first performance took place on April 9, 2006, at the Indiana History Center in Indianapolis, Indiana.

Rodríguez had written other compositions after *Mosaico Mexicano* but, trying to avoid being labeled a nationalist, he refrained from using nationalistic elements. *Introducción, Canción de Cuna y Fiesta* represents the second time he incorporated Mexican nationalistic elements in one of his compositions in seven years.

There is no previous explanation or description available for this composition. The information provided in this document will become the first resource available for scholars. Rodríguez mentions that this piece represents a scene of a Mexican posada and that it is divided into three sections without breaks: Introducción, canción de cuna, and fiesta.\(^67\)

**Instrumentation**

- Violin I
- Violin II
- Viola
- Violoncello
- Contrabass

\(^67\) Ibid. An explanation of posada is included in chapter II.
The instrumentation for Introducción, Canción de Cuna y Fiesta is the standard string orchestra arrangement of Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Cello, and Double Bass. However, the piece requires two double bass players as the score calls for two soli basses.

It will not be possible to perform this composition accurately with a standard string orchestra where there is only one double bass player.

Musical Example 24 – Introducción, Canción de Cuna y Fiesta, basses soli section.

According to Robert Stevenson, “[Carlos] Chávez’s most incisive departure from standardized custom in the treatment of the string choir is his constantly independent treatment of the string basses.”\(^{68}\) Chávez often features the basses as melodic instruments without the need for support from the cello section.

There are other places in this composition, where the string sections are divided to produce a fuller acoustic sonority. There are sections in the piece where the first violins are divided into two or three parts and other sections where all the instruments are divided into two parts.

\(^{68}\) Stevenson, Music in México, 245.
Musical Example 25 – *Introducción, Canción de Cuna y Fiesta*, example of the strings being divided.

Performance Time

Approximately 9:00 minutes.

Analysis

The first section, *Introducción*, represents the seriousness and respect for the religious rituals and traditions around the Christmas season in México. The melodic material at the beginning of the piece, as shown below in musical example 26, has a solemn and religious quality that reminds us of a religious chant, thus, representing the seriousness of the season.
Musical Example 26 – *Introducción, Canción de Cuna y Fiesta*, opening section.

This solemn material morphs into a more tender and espressivo section where the rhythmic complexity is paused for a moment as the music transitions to the *Canción de Cuna* (or cradle song) starting at measure 33. Here, the viola section plays a repeated pattern of an oscillating minor third between D and F natural, and the melody is played by two solo violins a third apart. *Canción de Cuna* represents the posada procession singing a traditional villancico or carol to request lodging at the different houses in the neighborhood.

Musical Example 27 – *Introducción, Canción de Cuna y Fiesta*, second section, mm. 33-42.
The third section, *Fiesta*, represents the party at the host house and the breaking of the piñata as interpreted by the composer. It has a tempo marking of Rápido which means fast. The viola section, once again, is responsible for creating the atmosphere for the new section by playing eighth notes in a 6/8 meter alternating accents on beats one and four at specific measures. Perhaps these accents represent the striking of the piñata.


It is in this section of the piece where mixed meter is more evident involving 6/8, 7/8, 9/8, 5/8, and an occasional 2/4 meter. These rhythmic sequences serve as a compositional device to create tension until it reaches the climax at the Alegre! section at measure 88 as seen below in musical example 29. Alegre means happy and cheerful, and Rodríguez brings the melody from *Canción de Cuna* back at a faster and happier tempo to represent the fiesta or party at the posada.

It is of great importance to point out that the first violins are divided into three parts playing a third and a fifth apart and moving in a diatonic parallel way, thus creating parallel fifths throughout this section. By doing so, Rodríguez is implementing indigenous Mexican elements to reflect the pre-Columbian musical tradition.

At measure 163, the composer sets a rhythmic pattern of mixed meter. The first sequence, mm. 163-171, is in fact an eight-bar sequence made from alternating 5/8 and 3/8 meters.
Musical Example 30 – *Introducción, Canción de Cuna y Fiesta*, mm. 163-171.

A better conducting approach for this section can be seen in musical example 31. The suggestion is to treat the eight-bar sequence as a four-bar rhythmic phrase conducted as a 3-beat hyper-measure pattern with an internal configuration of 3+2+3 subdivisions per hypermeasure. Thus, establishing the four-bar rhythmic phrase that will continue for the next 24 bars. This hypermeasure conducting approach is supported by the composer himself when he explains the following:

…ultimately, that’s what music is for…I’m making music for you to enjoy and to figure out kind of, in your own personal way, how to feel it and how to best show that to your ensemble and to make it work.\(^{69}\)

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\(^{69}\) Rodríguez, interview.
Musical Example 31 – *Introducción, Canción de Cuna y Fiesta*, mm. 163-171 with hypermeasures marked.

The end of the posada comes to an abrupt stop at measure 200 followed by a slow and quiet section labeled “Lento” that represents the empty patio well into the night after all the guests have departed. The second violins play dotted quarter notes using the sul ponticello tremolo technique – the effect created by playing fast up and down bows in the upper half of the bow close to the bridge, to imitate the soothing sound of night creatures as fragments of the cradle song are played by two solo cellos echoed by two solo violas.
Musical Example 32 –*Introducción, Canción de Cuna y Fiesta*, sul ponticello tremolo played by the second violins at the Lento section, m. 201.

The piece ends with a fast section of chromatic oscillating sequences that leads to a series of fragmented whole-tone scales. This sequence creates an acoustic atmosphere of a dream resolving into a short and loud unison D as if saying, the tradition will return next year!

Musical Example 33 –*Introducción, Canción de Cuna y Fiesta*. Whole-tone scales at m. 235.
Conclusion

There are similarities found in both Mosaico Mexicano and Introducción, Canción de Cuna y Fiesta. The two compositions have a slow middle section that uses strings, and violins in particular, to emulate Mexican traditional music. Rodríguez uses iconic intervallic relationships of parallel thirds and sixths present in most Mexican traditional music for the melodies at the Serenata and at the “Canción de cuna.”

The rhythmic feature of sesquialtera is also present in both compositions. However, Introducción’s score demonstrates the composer’s musical evolution as he uses more advanced rhythmic devices such as cross-rhythms (or polyrhythms) as well as extensive use of mixed meters. These rhythmic juxtapositions serve both as a phrasal structure and as a unifying device between all three sections of the piece.
CHAPTER IV – SUMMARY

The research presented in this document provides valuable information for the scholarly community interested in the expanding knowledge of Mexican music. It will also promote awareness of the orchestral music of Mexican composer Arturo Rodríguez and in particular the ones that include Mexican nationalistic elements. The detailed description of the background and analysis for both *Mosaico Mexicano* and *Introducción, Canción de Cuna y Fiesta* will be available to be used by future conductors looking to program Mexican nationalistic repertoire. The perfect blend of influences in Arturo Rodríguez’s music makes it very appealing to audiences in México and abroad. Native Mexicans can identify their roots through the iconic rhythms and melodies associated with Mexican traditions, and the general listener can enjoy a cultural trip to México through these two works. These two compositions are not only wonderful additions to orchestral literature, but they also serve as a resource for the study of Mexican music traditions from pre-Columbian times which are still used in Mexican music today.

No matter the type of ensemble, his music reveals creativity, imagination, and originality, and his orchestration style is flexible. On the one hand, there is a clear Mexican nationalistic influence, and on the other, a vanguardist style with a fusion of concert hall and film music that demonstrates a more complex rhythmic and chromatic demand for the performers. The influence of great Mexican composers such as Carlos Chávez, Silvestre Revueltas, and José Pablo Moncayo, as well as American composer John Williams, can be heard throughout his compositions. However, his creativity remains predominant throughout his entire catalog.
As one of the leading Mexican composers actively writing orchestral music today, the legacy of the nationalistic Mexican style from the twentieth century will continue to impact future generations of musicians and concertgoers through Rodríguez’s compositions.
APPENDIX A – COMPLETE WORKS BY ARTURO RODRÍGUEZ

Symphony Orchestra

Desolación (1997) Duration: 8:00
Mosaico Mexicano (1998-99) Duration: 11:20
Cuando las Cosas Suceden [Main Theme] (2004) Duration: 2:00
Concert Chase (2004) Duration: 8:00
Carlota (2009) Duration: 10:00
Maximiliano (2010) Duration: 12:00
Gates of Creation (2013) Duration: 8:00
El Rostro de la Luna (2012) Duration: 17:00
Amor y Libertad (2014) Duration: 5:00
Alegria (2015) Duration: 5:00

Solo Piano and Orchestra

Fantasia Concertante (2007) Duration: 18:00
Tres Veranos (2022) Duration: 18:00

Formerly known as “El Campestre” Fanfare and Theme for Orchestra. It was premiered in Indianapolis in 2002.

A selection from the soundtrack to the motion picture “Cuando Las Cosas Suceden.”

Premiered in Chile in 2009.

Premiered in San Luis Potosí, México.

Commissioned by UdeM for the dedication of the building to the Department of Art and Design. The building was designed by famous architect Tadao Ando and entitled “The Gate of Creation.” The work was recorded by the Philharmonia Orchestra at Abbey Road studios in London.

Premiered in San Luis Potosí, México

Premiered in San Luis Potosí, México

Premiered in Korea
Solo Piano, Orchestra, and Choir
*Flight to Eternity* (2023)  
Duration: 7:12

Full Orchestra and Choir
*From Earth to Mars* Suite (2001/2014)  
Duration: 20:00

*Siembra el Futuro* (2012)  
Duration: 7:30

Full Orchestra, Choir, and Narrator
*Sinfonía Bicentenaria* (2010)  
Duration: 60:00

*Sinfonía Bicentenaria* SUITE (2010)  
Duration: 35:00

Concert Band
“*El Campestre*” Fanfare and Theme (2002)  
Duration: 13:36

Concert Band with Soloist
*Elegy and Rondo*, for violoncello solo and Concert Band  
Duration: 18:00

*When the Winds Speak*, or 2 Solo Flutes and Concert Band (2023)  
Duration: 11:00

Chamber Orchestra
Solo Violin and Chamber Orchestra
*Sueños de Luna* [On the Other Side of the Moon] (1999)  
Duration: 6:30

Recorder and String Orchestra
*Canto de la Noche* (2006)  
Duration: 9:13

String Orchestra
*Introducción, Canción de Cuna y Fiesta* (2006)  
Duration: 9:00

*Mexicanismos* (2022)  
Duration: 5:00

String sextet and Piano

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78 Premiered in Fort Worth, Texas in 2001 and in Sweden in 2015.

79 Premiered in Monterrey, México in 2012.

80 The original title was *Introducción, Canción y Fuegos de Artificio*. The composer later changed the title to the one listed above.
**Un Arrullo de Esperanza** (2006)<sup>81</sup>  
**String Orchestra and Harp**  
*Desolación* (1999)  
*Saudade* (2008)  
Duration: 4:00

**Chamber Music**  
**Piano Quintet**  
Piano Quintet No. 1 (2003) One Movement  
Duration: 8:00

**Cello and Piano**  
*Dos Canciones de Cuna* (1999)  
*Destello Azul* (2003)<sup>82</sup>  
*Segunda Canción Romántica* (2003)  
*Tango Sentimental* (2012)<sup>83</sup>  
Duration: 5:00

**Flute and Piano**  
*Introspección* (2021)  
*Little Spirit* (2021)  
Duration: 5:16

**Three Flutes**  
*Scherzo for Three Butterflies* (2022) [For Three Flutes]  
Duration: 5:30

**Piano**  
*Mountains* (1992)  
*Prelude* (1992)  
*Prelude* (1993)  
Duration: 1:31

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<sup>81</sup> A lullaby written and inspired by UNAC, an organization in Monterrey, México dedicated to raising funds for the research and development of things related to cancer in children. The original version was for piano solo. This version includes the title “Unidos por el Arte contra el Cancer Infantil.”

<sup>82</sup> It is also known as *Angel Azul.*

<sup>83</sup> From the theme to the film *The Maid’s Room*
Ciudad de Sierras (1993)  Duration: 1:00
Faraway (1995)  Duration: 5:00
Fantasia (1997)  Duration: 5:30
Full Moon (1999)  Duration: 5:00
Carlota (2004)\textsuperscript{84}  Duration: 8:00
Maximiliano (2004)  Duration: 12:00
Gran Vals Brillante [from Carlota] (2005)  Duration: 12:00
Un Arrullo de Esperanza (2006)  Duration: 4:00
Theme from Cuando Las Cosas Suceden (2006)  Duration: 2:43
Amanecer (2012)  Duration: 3:00
Reencuentro (2014)  Duration: 3:17
Obsession (2018)  Duration: 7:33
Suspiro (2021)  Duration: 2:36
Sempiterno (2021)  Duration: 3:19
Luminiscencia (2021)  Duration: 8:00
Wonderment (2021)  Duration: 3:13
Maximiliano y Carlota (2022)  Duration: 22:00

\textbf{Flute}

Flying Solo (2018)  Duration: 12:00

\textbf{Voice}

\textsuperscript{84} A pas de deux written for Ballet de Monterrey. This piano version was used to promote funding for a ballet version in two acts based on the lives of Emperor Maximiliano and his wife Carlota. It uses the theme from “La Paloma” by Yradier, a song from the period.
Voice and Piano

Duration: 7:00

*Para que Tú Me Oigas* (2004)  
Duration: 10:00

*Introspección* for contratenor and piano (2020)  
Duration: 5:16

Voice, Cello, and Piano

*Sirena* (2016)  
Duration: 8:32

Mass

*Misa 1* (1997) for Choir and strings  
Duration: 30:00

Duration: 6:00

*Misa 2* (2004) for Mezzo/Soprano, harp, percussion, and strings  
Duration: 30:00

Art Songs

Trio of Voices

Duration: 10:00

Arrangements

Symphony Orchestra

Duration: 13:00

Film

*Cuando Las Cosas Suceden* (2007)  
Composer

*The Least of These* (2008)  
Orchestrator and conductor

*The Maid’s Room* (2012)  
Composer and conductor

*Courting Chaos* (2014)  
Orchestrator and conductor

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85 Written for OSUANL and artistic director Félix Carrasco as a tribute to composer Silvino Jaramillo. Arrangement of three of Jaramillo’s villancicos.

86 The music for this film represents Rodríguez’s first collaboration in a feature length film. The movie, Cuando las Cosas Suceden, was written and directed by Antonio Pelaez.
Furious 7 (2015) – Conductor
Zipper (2015) – Orchestrator
Lights Out (2016) – Orchestrator
Birth of the Dragon (2016) – Orchestrator and conductor
Lights Out (2016) – Orchestrator
The Best People (2017) – Orchestrator
Monster Island (2017) – Orchestrator
The Ballad of Lefty Brown (2017) – Orchestrator
Ni Tu Ni Yo (2018) – Orchestrator
The Angel (2018) – Orchestrator
It Chapter Two (2019) – Conductor
The Banker (2020) – Conductor and orchestrator
American Night (2021) – Lead orchestrator
The Mistress (2022) – Composer and conductor
Until We Meet Again (2022) – Orchestrator and conductor

Television
Five Came Back (2017) – Orchestrator
Patriot (2017) – Orchestrator
Victor & Valentino (2019-2022) – Composer and orchestrator
Nine Perfect Strangers (2021) – Orchestrator

Short Films
The Maid’s Room (2013) – Composer
The Tale of Timmy Two Chins (2013) – Composer
Vivo, Ergo Tu Moris (2013) – Conductor
El Murmullo del Mar (2014) – Composer
The Garden Bell (2014) – Composer
Encierro (2014) – Composer
The Hunting of the Snark (2017) – Orchestrator and conductor

Documentaries

The Kids Grow Up (2009) – Orchestrator and conductor
Elemental (2012) – Orchestrator and conductor
All Work All Play (2015) – Orchestrator and conductor
Mully (2015) – Orchestrator
The State of Eugenics (2016) – Conductor
The Ivory Game (2016) – Orchestrator and conductor
Free Solo (2018) – Orchestrator
The Tides of Fate (2018) – Additional orchestrator

Video Games

Assassin’s Creed: Freedom Cry (2013) – Additional orchestrator and conductor
Fortnite (2017) – Orchestrator
Interview with Arturo Rodríguez, Zoom – March 23, 2022

Gonzalez: Arturo Rodríguez, it’s a pleasure to have you on this Zoom interview. Great pleasure for me to talk to you and to try to get a big picture of your life in general. Artistically, personally… so I am looking forward to this interview and hopefully, perhaps, many more.

Rodríguez: Thank you, Jorge and it’s a thrill to be here and I appreciate your interest in my music and my career, and my life so… ask away!

Gonzalez: Let’s begin with your life. I think that your music is very closely associated with your childhood. There are some different aspects of your life that are reflected in your music, in particular one of the pieces that I am analyzing, Mosaico Mexicano and so, could you tell us basically about your childhood, where you are from and, you know, be as detailed as you can be with your life.

Rodríguez: Well, I was born in Monterrey, México. I was actually born in Guadalupe, which is a suburb, I guess we can say, of Monterrey in 1976. November 1976. And I don’t come from a musical family although I always thought that if, maybe my father or my mother, or both… if they’ve had gotten a chance to have an instrument in their hands or have had the chance to have music lessons, they are probably musical. But I don’t think it comes from nowhere. I always liked music and I always liked classical music in particular and… You are from Monterrey as well, so I don’t know if you remember that growing up, there didn’t use to be a classical music [radio] station in Monterrey. There used to be a station called “Estereo Classic.” They would play classical music like after
eight p.m. or something like that. From eight p.m. until midnight and, you know, the station would go off the air for the rest of the night. I remember, from a very early age, looking for the radio, looking for that station, and like waiting for eight p.m. so that I could listen to a little bit of classical music. Classical music, in particular orchestral music, has always attracted me for some reason. When I was… I think it was 3rd grade in elementary school, a piano teacher moved like a block away from our house and so I used to walk to school. So, every time I walked to school I would listen to the piano, and then walking back from school I would listen to the piano again. Sometimes, coming back home from school, I would just sit by the sidewalk, and I would just listen to the piano. You know, I was really stubborn with my parents, and I really wanted to get into piano lessons, and I finally convinced them and started piano lessons. Maybe I was eight already when I started. We didn’t have a piano at home. My mom used to draw a keyboard on a cardboard, a piece of cardboard, and I practiced there until we got a piano later, but I used to practice there. Then the piano teacher would give me the chance to get there five minutes early and like try what I practice on my cardboard and try it out and then she would give me the lesson after that. So, I started studying music as a piano student but ever since I learned how to read music, I remember writing my own music. I remember using the little music notebooks with staff paper to write whatever I was able to write at that point, you know. I was only able to write, to compose, you know, pieces that were close to whatever I was reading in my piano lessons. If there were like 4-bar exercises, then you know, with one hand then, you know, I would go home and think of something that would be 4-bars and… for one hand because that’s all I was able to see how it was written. But I remember always having the inclination to come up with
something of my own and write it down ever since I learned how to read, basically, read music. And it was… I started a few… one year, two years maybe with that piano teacher… private lessons, and she was the one who recommended to my mom, to my parents that, you know, to probably move on to some more serious studies and my sister was also going into music. My sister and I ended up going to the music school at Universidad Regiomontana then which didn't have, now that I remember, it didn't have a department for kids so… I guess my mom was as stubborn, you know, to get us into lessons since I was wanting to take piano lessons that we finally got in, and I was able to, learn some theory from maestro David Garcia and from Joaquin Flores. I think I got there maybe 5th grade, 6th grade in elementary school, but I was, you know, with the older kids that were already getting harmony lessons and in theory lessons and classes. And I was already doing a little bit of counterpoint with Joaquin Flores at the UR, and… but I was still a pianist. I was studying piano at the time. I got into UR to study piano and the main reason why we moved into the music school is precisely because my first teacher recommended that, you know, I should probably learn more music theory and counterpoint and all to complement the piano lessons. And I loved it, I mean, I like, I loved the counterpoint lessons as, you know… It's still… I still write things thinking about some of the things I learned from that period.

And so, I was there for a while and then when I got into high school, I moved to Facultad de Música (Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León) and I started, I started because they had a program they had a kind of a piano certificate that, you know, it was two years, and my high school was going to be two years. I got into high school at
Preparatoria 22 from their university, from the public university as well so the plan was
to do two years of high school and do the piano certificate at the same time.

**Gonzalez:** Which is kind of like a technical certificate.

**Rodríguez:** Yeah, exactly. And I don't know if it's a pre-bachelor's degree or something
like that or maybe…

**Gonzalez:** Well, nowadays there are many different programs now, what they call middle
college where high school students can actually go to take classes at a community college
and get some sort of certification in the fields of medicine or you know, business, so
yeah, I mean, it's something that nowadays is becoming more and more common here but
back then it was, it was a special.

**Rodríguez:** So, I was there studying piano and, you know, we'll talk about this later, but
it never occurred to me that I could ever study composition and be a composer for life
and earn my living from it, I guess. And so, I was always very focused on piano. I'm
about to release a couple of piano albums in the next few months, and one of them
actually has, I don't know, like four or five piano pieces that I wrote while I was at the
Facultad de Música. It must have been between 91 and 93, maybe? 1991 and 1993. I was
already writing piano pieces, you know. Piano pieces that I look back on now and it's
like, yeah, this is good enough for me to add to this album, you know. It's, it's not… Back
then I didn't think of them much, you know, it's just, if I had a little bit of spare time
between homework, I guess, I would sit down and write something. If I had something in
my head. But now, in retrospect, it's kind of weird to think that I never thought, you
know, I never thought consciously to pursue a composition career. I was just composing
all the time, every time I could. And… But I was there studying piano and I was able to
get good enough too. I won two piano competitions two years in a row, and…Felix Carrasco was conducting the orchestra in Nuevo León back then, and I think it was the first or the second year, they started to do this young talent competition in which like, if you won, you got… you got to conduct, no, you get to play your instrument as a soloist with the orchestra. And I won. I don't remember if it was 91 or 92. It must be 92 and I played Beethoven’s second piano concerto with the orchestra like then, and then, the following year, I won again, played… I believe it was Mendelssohn's first piano concerto. And then, on the side, which I still don't understand. I look back at those years because I was going through high school, I was a good student in high school, and… I was going to high school in the mornings, and I was going to Facultad de Música in the afternoons, and I was going to my, you know, piano lessons and I'm taking all the theory classes and all this and I was writing my music on the, on the side. And at the same time, I was… I had a duet with flute player Miguel Lawrence from Monterey as well and we used to play a lot of concerts as gigs, you know, to earn a few bucks, and I remember we used to do a lot of educational concerts at private schools along town. And every once in a while, we would get, we would prepare a concert and would play concerts around town. I guess, you know, it was one of the first professional recitals that I played, and… I met Miguel Lawrence at Universidad Regiomontana actually. My first serious music school. He was my flute teacher there. It’s my secondary instrument. Go back a little bit right when I got into Universidad Regiomontana, I was studying piano as my main instrument, and I was studying flute as a secondary instrument. A recorder flute and then later into orchestral flute. But you know, I knew Miguel from Universidad Regiomontana and then we founded a duo later and it was in that duo that, once, we prepared a full concert of
music by Mario Lavista. And there was a concert that was organized by Radio Nuevo León, which is… which was pretty new back then but… We actually got a real music… classical music station in Monterrey, finally. And they would used to organize, I think they do still, they used to have a concert season of concerts that they organized whether it's chamber music or… But Miguel and I got to play in one of the first editions of this concert season and we prepared a full program of music by Mario Lavista for Radio Nuevo León. And we played, el museo que esta en Cerveceria, como se llama? [The museum near the brewery, what is its name?] We played a concert at the museum in Monterrey. And I met maestro Mario Lavista, he came to the concert. He gave a… It was half a concert for his music for flute and flute and piano, and we had the honor of having him there, at the concert, so he talked about the pieces that we were going to perform. And then we played the pieces, and it was… He was very encouraging with my, you know, my playing and he suggested I should get some kind of support and move on and go to México City and go to the Conservatory in which… He was teaching at that time. And so, at the same time, when I was playing… The first time I played with the orchestra, with the symphony orchestra in Monterrey, a person approached me and my family after the concert and he offered to, like, a very generous help. He said, you know, I don't have any money, but with that talent, you know, I could help you or guide you through getting in touch with some people that love art and love music and that might be interested in helping you fund your studies and get you out of Monterey. And that person is Javier Espinoza who is the brother of Leandro Espinoza who is another excellent composer… composer from Monterrey as well… or from Nuevo León, I should say. And so, you know, he introduced me to a couple of people that were interested in a very
generous way to help me out. And so, when time came and Mario Lavista encouraged me to find studies outside Monterrey, then we were going back and approached this person and, you know, he arranged a few meetings and I used to play private concerts for these people in Monterrey and… Everybody was very supportive, so I was like, I always thought I was very lucky to, you know, to look for these people, you know, to have these people kind of offer their help in a very generous way, and… So that's how I got out of Monterrey and went to México City. I was at the Conservatory in México City for about eight months I guess, and at the same time I was looking and searching for scholarships elsewhere, and when I was about eight months into studying in México City, I found out I got a scholarship to study piano, a piano certificate in Fort Worth, Texas. And, you know, I was happy. In México City I wasn't too happy. I was telling you earlier before the interview started that I, you know, the one class I really remember dearly from my studies in México City was the analysis of 20th-century music with Mario Lavista, which was an amazing class. And he had a very smart way of teaching and guide you through analyzing any piece of music, you know. I remember I used to analyze like a John Cage piece, and he would mention that the piece would have, had a formula which resulted in all the notes that were on the page but he wouldn't tell you what the formula [was.] But he would start giving you clues to how to find them and, by the end of the class, you know, you were like poof, we found the formula, and, you know, it's… I still remember everybody gathering around the score, and… I don’t know, it was a very exciting class. The late Mario Lavista, may he rest in peace, he was uh, you know, we all know him from his compositions, but I like, you know, remember him also by his teaching which was truly amazing as a teacher. And so I remember that class but I wasn't, I wasn't happy
with 100% of everything else that I was learning at school so, you know… But time came and I got a scholarship to go to Texas, you know, and I just packed my bags and went on to Texas. And in Texas, I studied piano with Jose Feghali, the late Jose Feghali also may he rest in peace, he won the Van Cliburn competition in 1985 and that's, you know… I started studying there in 1995 and, you know, it's just pretty amazing and inspiring to see all this… The Van Cliburn competition takes place in Texas at this school where I studied, Texas Christian University in Fort Worth TX. And so, the piano department, which is still an amazing piano department, with all this support from the Van Cliburn foundation and all this, you know, I got to hear amazing concerts that I got to hear amazing pianists and amazing chamber music ensembles and it was, it was a great school for me to be in. And I got to study piano with Jose Feghali, and… I started studying, one of the first things I studied with him was the second Piano Concerto by Saint-Saens and I got to go back to Monterrey, to my hometown, and play the Saint-Saens with the orchestra in Monterrey. And, right about that time, I messed up my hands practicing too much, and I was changing or trying to change technique at the same time. I was, you know, I got too excited, I guess, you know, like going to a school that I really liked. I was learning a lot from my piano teacher. I had to take again all the theory and harmony classes because the ones I had taken in Monterrey weren’t validated, I guess, and… But I didn't mind like the classes. I took everything again and, you know, I was like, I guess I got too excited practicing piano too much, I was, you know. Nobody has to study piano more than a few hours a day. I was practicing maybe eight, nine hours a day and they ended up like really hurting my… injuring my tendons which is a… I got a pretty acute case of tendonitis and I had to stop playing piano. The doctor said for eight months and
ended up being more than that and, but when that happened, which you know, I had been, I guess, hurting my hands and my arms for months or maybe years and I didn't know it. But when I realized that I had hurt myself practicing too much it was pretty much overnight you know was practicing one night and went to bed and then I woke up the next day with my hands swollen, my arms swollen like you know my arms were all black because blood wasn't circulating because, you know, the tendons were so swollen and they were making pressure against the membrane that surrounds the wrists. All of a sudden I wake up and I have no, no hands and I'm and I'm a pianist because I'm thinking that my whole life that, you know, I'm a pianist that I'm starting to become a concert pianist and so, I don't know, it was a pretty traumatic experience then because, in my head, that’s… that was my whole life. That's all I knew how to do, and I was spending, like I said, like nine hours with my piano every single day so… And that was taken away from me it was, you know, I was going crazy literally and, you know. I have to thank my teacher because he was very supportive of, you know, me having to take a break from piano for a while. And the director of the music school, Kenneth Raessler back then. He was really amazing. May he rest in peace. He suggested that, and he probably saved my… saved me from going crazy. He suggested that I get involved with anything that had to do with music, whether it was the orchestra, whether it was me going to the library and checking out some books and study, and getting full, somehow, with, you know, involved with music and then write reports. Then, my homework was to stay involved with whatever was going on musically at the school, and studying whatever I could, whatever I wanted, and then on Fridays he would take like an hour out of his schedule, and he would receive me in his office at 1:00 PM every Friday. And I would have to
bring a report of like the things that I did during the week. So, it was then that I started really… I wouldn't say focusing but spending more time writing the music that I had always been writing on the side. And that's when I got involved with the orchestra at the university as well. I got close to the orchestra conductor and was trying to get involved in any way I could. I always played flute so, you know, I could, you know, I can't play piano, but I can still… it hurts but I could still hold my flute and then maybe play a little bit so… So, I got involved with the orchestra playing flute with the orchestra. Playing like assistant to the third flute so I was I wasn't playing at all, but I was there. And for the first time, I was able to be inside of the orchestra hearing an orchestra from inside. And since I didn't have to play much flute while I was at orchestra rehearsals, I would check out all the music that we would be studying, that we would be playing, and I would be, you know, studying the score while I was hearing the music around me which, you know… How lucky can one get if, you know, if you are interested in composition and you are interested in orchestration and, all this for me to be able to have the opportunity of being there sitting down and have the time to have a score, you know, and then would be like, wait a minute, you know. What was that color? Who is playing with who? And, you know, you will get this color like, oh! that's, you know, the cellos are being doubled by the bass clarinet or, you know, or the timpani supporting the basses. I can't even hear them from here but it's like they are right there it’s in the score. And so like, you know, it was kind of a practical orchestration lesson that I was able to take, you know, as a result of this injury which I thought it was, you know, it… At the time, I thought it was a tragedy in my life, and it ended up being a blessing in disguise and so, I started taking conducting lessons as well. I still couldn't play piano but I could hold the baton, so I'll
take conducting lessons. Whatever the same I guess technique that for since childhood, you know, if we were… if they were doing and create a string orchestra suite with the orchestra at school or if they were studying, you know, the Tchaikovsky serenade for strings, you know, then I would be there analyzing the string writing and the string orchestration and like just reading orchestration books on the side. And if that's what we were doing, then I would go home and do an exercise myself on the type of music that we were doing in the orchestra. So, I have, you know, string orchestra things from that time.

I have a lot of chamber music from that time and… My first, I guess, successful or the first pieces of music that I wrote for string orchestra and harp, which is called “Desolación” and the other one “Sueños de Luna” which is for solo violin and chamber orchestra are all from that period of I was, you know, getting into orchestration. And they were pieces of music that took me, I guess, a while to write because, you know. I was about to write something for the clarinet, and I would have to go to the orchestration book and like, well, make sure that the clarinet was playing in the right range or whatever, you know. I was doing a lot of critical listening at the time too. If I heard anything… if I heard a really good horn solo like if I heard the horn solo from Strauss’ “Don Juan” which is like written exactly where it is supposed to be written then, you know, I would go in and look at it and try to memorize it and try to, you know, get that picture in my brain. And, you know, this sounds great because it's orchestrated great. Because the instrument is in the right range. Because it's supported by the right instruments and etcetera, etcetera.

And so, I wrote my first two, I guess, orchestral pieces. They weren't full orchestra pieces, but I wrote the first string piece, string and Harp, and then violin solo and
chamber orchestra during that period. It must have been 1997-1998. And then, when I really wanted to tackle the full orchestra and practice... Do the exercise of going through the physical act of writing a piece for full orchestra and writing every single note. Which to me, at that time still seemed like magic, you know, the fact that a composer can write every single note for everybody in the orchestra. For me, it seemed like something that would take a lifetime just to sit down and write it. It was like, it's still something... It still is, you know, if I go listen to a premier it's like, how did they do it? How long did it take them? Where did they get it from? It's like, you know, where did the ideas come from? And so, I wanted to go through the exercise of actually sitting down and do a full orchestra piece just for the thrill of it and to get a sense of, you know, how long it was going to take me. Like if it was possible or not, you know, and... I had really good teachers around me and then I had teachers that, you know, I would take my works to them, and they would give me very good advice on whatever I was writing at the time, but I never had a composition teacher that I got close to. You know, I met Mario Lavista, but I was, I never saw him actually sit down and write a piece of music, so I didn't have like a visual example of somebody who did that for life, for a living. And so, I started writing my, what became my "Mosaico Mexicano" which was the first orchestral piece that I wrote and it's one of the only, I guess, few of them in my records, or one of the only nationalistic pieces, I guess you could call them. And, you know, it was the time when I was studying outside my home country. I was not going through a good time because of, you know, my life was changing completely from... I still thought I could get better from my hands and continue being a pianist. That was the plan in my head. But you go through that, you know, missing my country, missing México and its music, and the food, and the
family, and all that. So “Mosaico” was a combination of wanting to try to write a…
wanting to sit down and write an orchestral piece and also, you know, like a love letter to
my country and… A way of sharing with my friends about our music, our rhythms, our
orchestral colors, or our different dances from different parts of México. And also have a
kind of antidote to homesickness, I guess.

Gonzalez: If I may interject in here, Arturo…

Rodríguez: Yeah, of course.

Gonzalez: This is, you know, we can spend hours talking about all of this and, you know,
I’m just getting more and more information about, oh! Now I want to talk about this and
that. But trying to channel this a little bit better. You talk about being or feeling homesick
and using rhythms and perhaps influence from melodies from different parts of the
country from México. You dedicated that piece to your grandfather, right?

Rodríguez: Mm-hmm!

Gonzalez: And you said, I believe in one of the interviews for a newspaper, that it was
basically hearing, or that’s what you… how you could portray your childhood in music.
Those are the sounds of your childhood, right? Are any of these melodies, are they all
original? Can you kind of pinpoint what part of or what region from México do the
rhythms come from? And, I'm going to let you say this because I have my own opinion of
this. And I want to get your opinion based on my opinion, but tell us a little bit about that,
please.

Rodríguez: That's a very good question and I don't remember saying that in an interview,
but it sounds about right. And the piece is…it is dedicated to my grandfather. He used to
put me to sleep when I was a baby. He used to put me to sleep singing “Dos Arbolitos”
which is a bolero ranchero. You could find a little bit of “Dos Arbolitos” in the serenade in the middle section with the quartet in the middle section of “Mosaico.” My main idea was to use “Mosaico” when I was composing it to give me an excuse to really dig into, you know, our great composers from the nationalistic era in México: Moncayo, Revueltas, Chávez, Blas Galindo. And, you know, kind of putting them all together in the same pot and coming up with a sound or with a style that would have a little bit of everybody in it without sounding like a copy. And also, when I started writing it, I didn't want to write. I really didn't want to compose an arrangement of traditional songs. I didn't want to take “Adelita” and make it orchestral. I wanted to write a piece of music that learning from all these works that I was studying at the time and do something that would work structurally. That would have, you know, a nice structure that would hold people's attention for whatever it lasts 11-12 minutes. So, my… I very consciously tried not to use tunes in particular. The only tune that is almost there, but it's not, is “Dos Arbolitos.” Which is something my grandfather used to sing to me as a lullaby when I was a baby. But I, you know, I turned it around a little bit towards. It's, it's only the first six notes at the beginning of the serenade for the string quartet and I turned around a little bit and then I turn and then I take it someplace else. So, it is kind of like an echo of a quote of a piece of music. It’s more of the memory of that song than the song itself that I wanted to have in the piece of music. And then everything else it's rhythms and dances from all over México. More from my region in particular that, you know, that I heard whether it was like in its original form when I was growing up in México, or that I heard in a concert piece by one of the nationalistic composers. Or, you know, which is something that people didn't use to mention at all when I was growing up. The great composers that
we had in the golden era of Mexican film: Manuel Esperón, Raul Lavista, Antonio Díaz Conde, Federico Ruiz which, you know, they were writing music like crazy. They were writing I don't know how many hundreds of films that were being produced in México. There were hundreds of films, and they had an orchestra and they would write the music for this orchestra or they would get together a mariachi with an orchestra and do the fusion, you know, of these styles. And so, you know, a lot of “Mosaico” also comes from. The trombone solo towards the beginning of the piece, you know, could be Jorge Negrete’s singing because that's his, you know, his baritone range. Or you get like a sunrise scene towards the end of the piece right before the recapitulation. It could be a sunrise scene from a Gabriel Figueroa photograph singing in a Mexican movie. So, it’s a combination of a little bit of everything. A little bit of my influence from the nationalistic composers, the Mexican film composers from the 40s and 50s, my grandfather singing to me while I was growing up, homesickness, you know, it's a little bit of everything. So, it's a medley of things I loved from México, you know. Not particular songs or rhythms but feelings, I guess, more than anything else. And the score very, like a tip of the hat at the very beginning says “Tempo di Huapango” because of, you know, because of Moncayo’s “Huapango.” And I wrote it out in exactly the same way he wrote it. Not to copy the “Huapango”, Moncayo’s “Huapango,” but, you know, it’s a tip of the hat like, you know, this is an orchestral piece influenced by this era of music composition in México so, you know, I would write that down. And my “Huapango”, if you call it a huapango, which is the main theme in my “Mosaico Mexicano.” It's actually more of a northern huapango than the “Huapango” by Moncayo, you know. It sounds more like banda from Sinaloa or, you know, like the snare drum is more like a snare drum from a trio, a northern trio that
has accordion and bajo sexto and bass, and then the one guy playing the snare drum, you know.

**Gonzalez:** Let me add this, I mean. And this is where I would like your input on this because… You know, oftentimes, when critics or musicians hear a new composition and there's not a lot of information available, well, they start analyzing the music. They start coming with their own conclusions. They may be right, may be wrong. And this is a great example of where you can actually get the right information from the composer and get rid of wrong information. So, you mentioned, you know, Tempo di Huapango and, of course, I went and did some research about the rhythms and which parts of México and where it comes from the term huapango and what it means. Basically, it can be either called huapango rhythm or son rhythm which is similar if not the same, and the use of sesquialtera, which is the Latin term for hemiola. And so, that's basically what I am, you know, using as the foundation for my analysis for “Mosaico Mexicano.” But since you used the word of homesickness and memories from your childhood… You mentioned I'm also from Monterrey, México. I don't know if this is part of the influence or not of your memories, but the “matachines.” Growing up with the “matachines.” I did my research and “matachines” use the exact same rhythm as the huapango or the son which is that sesquialtera kind of rhythm. And then the use of the Indian drum that you include in your instrumentation. It makes sense to me that whether you thought about it or not, you can prove me wrong, but, in a way, it can also be part of that same cell of the composition, you know. I believe it's all related or all associated.

**Rodríguez:** Before the 3/4, 6/8? Yeah. I hadn't, I was writing the piece and I had the beginning of the piece, and I had the last part of the piece. And I was writing, I was
working on the little development, which, you know, it's like, you could call it a development. The one by where, you know, it's the same tune and it's like keeps changing keys and modulating and all that. And then I really wanted to do that indigenous part of it to the piece. But I didn't know what to do. And I was trying, I was trying different rhythms, and I was trying, I was trying different tunes. And I was thinking maybe this sounds too much like “Sinfonia India” [by Carlos Chávez.] This sounds too much like this. So, I had, I had that space of time still to fill in “Mosaico.” And I was on vacation in Monterey for, I don’t know if it was Christmas break or when it was, but I was, I was at the piano working on the development section and then I heard a “matachin” outside my, of, like the machines that go house to house playing flute and playing… It was only one guy. And the ones that have the drum here and he was playing the drum with one hand and he was playing the flute with the other hand. And he was playing the (Rodríguez singing the matachin rhythm) over and over and over and over and over and over again. And then he was playing with the “flauta de carrizo” (reed flute) a tune that started with a minor third and then it went to something else. He did like a big improvisation flourished around a minor third. But the rhythm stuck with me, and then… and the minor third. And I swear, you know, I was working on “Mosaico” and I was hearing this so I… I had like a little Sony tape recorder where I don't know, probably like this big back then, you know. It's like a tape recorder like, I have to go and record this guy and maybe I can use a little bit in the development and use a little bit of this for “Mosaico.” And I kept hearing him and I kept searching and searching and searching. I was never able to find him and so, you know, I whistled into my recorder whatever I could remember and that's it. And that's what… where the little minor third motif came from. And mainly where the rhythm came
from which, like you said, it's so related to the, to this. I mean, it's the same thing basically three-four. Three against two rhythms, you know, that is used in the son and in all these other rhythms and in México. So it was, you know, now that I had a tune and then I had a rhythm that originally it was a rhythm that I wanted to develop and maybe do a, you know, make it a little more complex or whatever but… I heard this guy play the rhythm again and again and again the same rhythm for maybe two hours, you know, like from far away until he was like close to the house but it, I never got to see him. So, it's like why not, you know, just add that rhythm, and just use that rhythm throughout the whole section without changing it just, you know, add colors with the orchestration. So, that's where the, that's where that section comes from.

Gonzalez: So that's one point in my favor then. Yeah, I mean, grew up with the same, like you said, around Christmas, you know, to honor the Guadalupana, the virgin. That's where the matachines… the tradition. And I did find out that most of the melodies and rhythms that they use are based on songs. So, it was really neat to find that out.

Rodríguez: And, in terms of orchestration, you have the section that starts with the piccolo because it is what sounds the closest to the type of flute, the wooden flute that he was playing. And, in order to kind of emulate the double sole wooden sandal that they use to dance, the matachines that you mentioned. They have this double sole thing so it is like they lift their foot and then it goes like this “clang, clang.” So, they have that as a percussion, and they also have these shells in their ankles. So, they have shells in their ankles, they have the wooden sandals, the flute, and the rhythm. So, for the sandals I chose, that’s why I chose the col legno on the strings too. Which is like wood against wood against the instrument. And then the “sonajas” for the shells later in the piece as
well. But it all comes from the idea of trying to translate whatever you hear in the street into the orchestra world without, you know. Like keeping the essence of the sound but bringing it into the orchestra world.

_Gonzalez:_ Very interesting. And I will try to come back… well, I will not try… I will definitely come back to “Introducción” in a little bit but now, since we got into “Mosaico.” I want to ask you this… I don't know how it is in California. Definitely, México is a different world but at least in this part of the United States. In the eastern, the south, Mississippi, and this area here, people do not know much about Mexican composers. Let me clarify this. Living Mexican composers and that's the main reason why my focus is on you, a living composer. How do you feel about your career, the success of your career outside of México? Like, I know your music has been performed in the United States often. But have you encountered experiences where people really do not know you and how has that reaction affected you?

_Rodríguez:_ Yeah, I mean, it's an interesting question because, for a time, my music was being programmed in the US and other parts of the world and not in México. So, for a while, you know, I tried to focus on, you know, getting my music into México as much as I could. And it kind of comes and goes in waves. Sometimes I get to hear my music played by Mexican orchestras a lot and then, you know, it kind of disappears for a while. And then one conductor decides to do the piece and the other conductor listens to it and wants to do it too and so it comes and goes. And it also has to do with how much time I invest in actually promoting my music which is…I've never been very good at promoting my own music and I like composing a lot. So, maybe sometimes I get so much into composing that I forget, like we were talking about earlier, to update my website or to
actually have a repertoire list on my website with, you know, the instrumentation and duration of pieces and things like that and… Which is, you know, I'm working on right now actually. But, for a time, I got to hear my music played outside México more than México itself. And it's always interesting where the invitation comes from. If it is a commission or if it is an orchestral piece that comes… the commission that comes from somebody who knows me from my concert background. Or if it is something that comes from somebody going… knows me from my film and TV or multimedia work. It is interesting. I don't, I wouldn't say it is racist because, you know, that I guess I could, you know, I feel very lucky to always have had support from both sides of the river, I guess you could say. But sometimes people want, you know, a Mexican composer to write something “Mexican,” you know. So that's always been, not a conflict inside of myself, you know, not something that I would debate with myself. I say, you know, maybe I should be writing this type of music or not but… Because my music mostly has not been nationalistic except for a few pieces when I really wanted to do it. But it's, you know, it's always interesting outside of México how people sometimes will put a composer in a box. I don't personally, I don't want to be a Mexican composer, you know, or a Latin-American composer. I don't want to be… the same way that I don't want to be a film composer. I just want to be a composer. And I don't want to be an orchestral composer, I want, you know, I… It's one of the things that I enjoy the most writing for the Symphony Orchestra but, you know, if I get a commission to write a clarinet solo piece or a chamber music work, you know, I'll take the challenge, you know. Maybe I don't have too much chamber music repertoire in my repertoire list, but I would like to consider myself a composer. So, you know, my style has, I wouldn't say, changed through the years, but
I've been lucky enough, I guess, to, you know… If I get a commission to write whatever, you know, whatever I want to write. If I feel that it’s appropriate to have some Latin American elements in my next piece because, you know, the commission calls for it. Or, you know, something like that. Like “Introducción” which was composed by commission by a, for a Latin American arts festival in Indianapolis and it just felt right to write that type of piece. And it wasn't something that was imposed to me but, at that point. I don't know, I mean, it's, I guess, it's not my issue, you know. Sometimes it could be, I guess, hard for a conductor or for a presenter to, you know, to program… Okay, let's program something by a Mexican composer and then like oh, but this doesn't sound Mexican. Well, you know, he is still a Mexican composer. And I found both, both… what's the right word? I found both things on, you know, in México and outside of México, you know. There are some conductors in México that would rather program my music that doesn't sound traditional or nationalistic and then, you know, same thing outside México whether the conductor is from México or Latin America or not, you know. Some conductors are very supportive of, you know, this is music, and music is supposed to be universal and, you know, the composer should… It doesn't matter which country you are from, you know. But this is the composer’s style or voice or whatever and we'll present that. So, I don't know, does that answer your question?

Gonzalez: Absolutely! Yes, definitely. And this actually brings me to my next aspect. I'm going to use Mario Lavista also as an example here. He was a student of Carlos Chávez, or he was in his class, composition class and, you know, doing research, I read where he said that he did not want to be typecast as a nationalist composer and that's why he took a different route writing more avant-garde music and, you know, trying different music.
More modern music. And he was very successful in a higher level, I want to say, intellectual music world. And I don't think… I'm not saying that he was not successful, but his music is not as often performed as other composers for whatever reason. Right? And, going back to “Mosaico.” I know “Mosaico Mexicano” is a very successful piece. I mean, as a Mexican, I feel very attached, very identified with the piece because of all the Mexican traditional nationalistic aspects in it. Do you think that was a breakthrough for you in your career? And had you composed, you know, more traditional, universal kind of style, would you think had the same success?

Rodríguez: If I had continued writing in this style?

Gonzalez: Not actually continued but, instead of writing music in a nationalistic way, write more universally. Your, let's say, first symphonic work.

Rodríguez: I don't know because I didn't do it in another way so I couldn't answer that question in that way. What I could tell you is like it was definitely a breakthrough for me in my career to have written, to have had written a piece that, you know, as I was telling you before, I got really lucky that, when I hurt my hands, there were people that supported me and still in music, you know. I didn't have to go outside of music to find my way. And so when I was studying conducting in college, you know, that I would tell my conducting teacher “I have this, I'm working on this string orchestra piece” and he would say “Okay, get the parts ready in a week and you can have the last 10 minutes of the rehearsal to try it out.” And, or, you know, same thing happened with “Mosaico.” Once I finished “Mosaico” like “get the parts ready and we'll try it out and see what happens.” So that happened with “Mosaico.” It was something that I wrote for myself, and I never expected it to be performed. I never expected to have a premier or anything.
And the year that I finished it my… same thing, my teacher said “Okay, get the parts ready by next Wednesday and we will try it out.” And, this is in the time before, I don’t…I don't know which version of Finale or whatever was around, but “Mosaico” I wrote by hand. It’s written with pencil on paper. So, if it's Wednesday and your teacher tells you “Mosaico”, you know, like, you know, “let's read “Mosaico” next week,” that means I have to write down the parts by hand. Which is what I did, you know. And so he heard it. And they were organizing a Latin American music festival that year and so he said “let's add it to the Latin American music festival. And, you know, I was… Suddenly, I was there mingling with Latin American composers from, you know, from over Latin America and Brazil. Marlos Nobre and Blas Emilio Atehortua from Colombia and other composers. And my piece was very successful at the, you know, at the premiere. And I had a big standing ovation and, you know, the applause lasted for… we had to repeat I think the last part of “Mosaico” because it was very successful. So, that was March 2000 and my conducting teacher at that time, who was the one who programmed it and, in March, was already scheduled to conduct a Latin American music concert in Dallas in May that same year in 2000. And, he said, you know, he saw the reaction of the audience and he's like “I'm going to…” and now we had a recording, so he proposed it for the Dallas symphony concert and they said yes. So, it was premiered the same year by the Dallas Symphony Orchestra which is, you know, basically the year I finished writing it. I finished writing it the year before actually, but I didn't get to hear it until a year later. It was when I had the chance to, you know, do the parts, and try it at the, you know, with the orchestra. But basically, I got the chance to hear with a professional orchestra a piece that I had just finished writing months before. So, for me, that was the breakthrough. I
could, you know, I could spend hours and hours and hours locked in a room writing and thinking of orchestra colors and orchestrating and then either be standing in front of an orchestra and then getting it all back, you know, like, you know, and augmented by all these souls that are, you know, playing it and. Just the thrill of hearing it back and, you know, the only... Having had the opportunity of living that experience because of “Mosaico Mexicano” or, you know, I, you know... I owe it a lot to that piece. It’s a piece that I like a lot. I love it, you know, it's like it took me places, you could say. Or, you know, it helped me, you know, to start veering and take my career, which I still thought it was going be a piano career, elsewhere. So, it's still like you said, a piece that it's, from my repertoire, a piece that gets performed the most and... We talked about this because... we're going to talk about “Introducción,” but I've been... The only thing that I've been trying to do very consciously through my career and through the things that I've written is that I don't want to, you know, fall into that, you know, having to write Mosaico no. 2 and then Mosaico no. 3 and... We haven't talked about this yet but it's, but growing up in the 80s, my main symphonic sound influence was the sound of the movies that I grew up listening to, the soundtracks that I grew up listening to. So, I was...

**Gonzalez:** Can you give us some examples of some of those soundtracks?

**Rodríguez:** I was born in ‘76 so, I'm basically a Star Wars kid. I was, Star Wars wasn't my big thrill when I was growing up but I guess it was in 1980 because the movie came out in 77 but it would take a while until we got to see them in México. I heard, I saw in the movie theater, my father took me to see the special edition of “Close Encounters of the Third Kind” and I still remember the, like, exactly the seat where I was sitting when I saw what I saw visually from all the wonderful special effects at the end of the, of the
movie and hearing all this music that, if you have seen the movie you know that its soundtrack that starts as an atonal soundtrack and as the music progresses it becomes more and more tonal and then when we know that the aliens are our friends and everything is going to be fine, then everything becomes extremely tonal and romantic at the end. So that's a style of music, and a piece of music, and the sound of... an orchestral sound that left an imprint on my ear and my brain, I guess. And I've been, not searching for that sound because, you know, I've been able to look at that score and study it and all that but, you know. You could always find, maybe not musically and harmonically, but you could always find, in terms of colors and orchestration, influences from especially John Williams but also from James Horner from the 80s. The things he wrote in the 80s and Jerry Goldsmith and all these composers from that time. Mostly John Williams and “E.T.” is also the, it's one movie that musically really influenced me. And after I wrote “Mosaico” in college, I got my first like real commission. I was asked to write what became From Earth to Mars which is basically the same way that “Mosaico” was much too, a love letter to the music, orchestra music from México, traditions from México, and not much to Mexican composers. My From Earth to Mars was my love letter to the music from the film music from the 80s and it has a big flying theme just like E.T. and it has a big ending just like E.T. and it's... You know, I tried, just like in “Mosaico,” obviously not to copy tunes or structure or anything but it's... You know, I never, I wasn't afraid to do that back then because I was doing it very consciously. It's, it was... Since I didn't have a formal composition education but I knew the types of sounds that I really liked, that I really wanted my own orchestra works to sound like, the only way I could find, that I could learn how to do it is, you know, the same way we emulate our parents or
uncle or the people that we grew up loving, you know. It's like I really want to do this, you know. You start, you know, imitating or emulating or, you know. I would copy, you know, the things that I could copy. I would copy orchestration, instrumentation like okay, how did he get that sound? What kind of orchestra? It’s a full orchestra but it’s like what is it threes or twos or, you know, does it have piano or celesta or harp or no harp or, you know. The essence of the music and the colors, that's what, you know, I'll go directly to that like… I want my music to sound like that. Well, on my music to sound like that I don't want to make a copy or an arrangement of, you know. How could I do that? It's like, I guess, the way an engineer would open a car and take the engine out and take all the pieces. Take the engine apart and then put them together, you know. That's kind of the only way to learn how to put together an engine. So, it was the only practical way that I thought I could learn how to do it from, you know, just to really get inside all of those styles of music and then try them myself.

**Gonzalez:** It makes sense, I mean, learn from the best ones, right? Why not. So, a couple of similarities that I noticed. You said, you know, influence or the admiration, I would say also, for John Williams and his music. You are talking about orchestra colors. Very iconic in his music is the use of the brass and the way he creates the harmonic atmosphere based mostly on the brass instruments and the brass family. Is that one thing that you learned by studying his scores? Is that also something you tried to emulate in a way?

**Rodríguez:** Yeah. When I need the brass to sound a certain way you would say. Like, maybe the last tutti in “Mosaico” you could say. The trumpets are voiced more like the Moncayo “Huapango”, but the lower brass is definitely. Like, the way it is voiced, the
way the harmony is distributed like the tuba and the trombones and the horns. It is
definitely more John Williams than Moncayo you could say. I mean, I can tell you, I am
not afraid because it does not come from a place where I am trying to copy something in
particular but taking something that works and then trying to apply it to whatever I am
writing at the time. The horn solo from “Mosaico” is in exactly the same range from the
horn solo in “Don Juan” as I mentioned before. Or the runs in the woodwinds and the
strings are in the same register as the runs in the “Superman” march. You know, if you
put it in context with “Mosaico” and with the music that I am orchestrating, it does not
have anything to do with the “Superman” march, but the way that the piccolos and the
flutes and the woodwinds and the strings are doubling, that is where it comes from. You
said, you copy from the best and you paint. It’s like you borrow a color collage from this
title from this composer and from this time from this composer. From music or from
composers that really thrill me. It’s like a movie director would tell you, I want to write
movies that I want to go to the movie theater and see. It comes from that place. It comes
from me wanting to write music that I really want to go to the concert hall to listen to. So,
the influences are there even if harmonically or musically or melodically… that’s not
John Williams but what’s that woodwind and strings run doing there. In context mixed
within itself… its styles you could say.

Gonzalez: And I think it is interesting to see how some composers influence new
generation composers and create different styles in a way that becomes not just belonging
to one composer but that becomes part of a new generation of composers. This brings me,
for example. I know John Williams uses certain harmonic progressions to create certain
atmospheres, certain colors that are not very traditional in, let us say, classical music. For
example, one thing that I noticed is common in John Williams and I actually, forgive me if I am wrong, but, you know, trying to find similarities between John Williams’ music and some of your music. In “Mosaico,” there is a place where I found a relationship of a progression for a tritone in C major to F sharp major. These sorts of things I found that John Williams uses as well. Is this something that could say, yes this is something that I learned from him or not?

Rodríguez: Sometimes it is conscious, sometimes it is not. I don’t remember that one in particular and if I don’t remember. Probably that’s the influence but probably it’s something that I didn’t do in a conscious way. It is something that I have definitely in the back of my brain somewhere, you know. And then, if I am trying it on the piano and I am looking for incorporation and it clicks, that’s probably the reason why it clicks with me. But I would say, I don’t know if harmonically, whenever I look for examples to follow is usually more for color than…

Gonzalez: And I am not trying to imply that you copy or that you are using that.

Rodríguez: I know. What I could tell you too is that what I am mostly, personally, not afraid is to talk about this in particular because I do think, at least in the type of music that I like to write, that I don’t consider myself an inventor. You know, I am not trying to find a new scale or a new chord progression. My music has always been very tonal and if I find… Something where I can find great pleasure is to search for new orchestral colors. Whenever I am orchestrating, I go crazy when the hard work of composing has been completed and it has something and it actually kind of makes sense, you know, and I am happy with it, then I get to color with it, especially if I am working with a full orchestra. But it always comes from somewhere and I am not saying that all composers should
compose like that. Great minds that need to explore new ways of writing music and new techniques of writing whether it is tonally or not or inventing something else. I always thought of myself as somebody who, you know. I come from this line because it is the music that I like, and I want to follow this line. It is kind of like following your family in a certain tradition. All this music that John Williams has been writing for film scores comes from Korngold and Korngold comes from the Vienna tradition of course and that type of orchestration and harmonic language comes from that line. So, when it comes time to say, you know. I’ve learned also not to take it as an insult when someone says your music sounds like this or your music sounds like, you know…Wonderful! Especially if you are compared to somebody who is good.

**Gonzalez:** But you know. My point with this is that throughout the history of Western music…it repeats itself. Where such composer borrows this or that from that other composer and it becomes like a way of communicating through music in a way, or to honor that other composer as well. Learning, taking from what works. I mean, if you think something is beautiful, why not use it as well? It’s a way to honor the other composer and to share that knowledge through your music as well. I can share this section, this excerpt later with you can say, well maybe it makes sense to call it like it is related to what John Williams does or uses here and there. I just thought it was kind of neat to find that relationship there with the chord progression.

**Rodríguez:** Do you have a bar number?

**Gonzalez:** It’s exactly around letter K.

**Rodríguez:** I am looking right now. Because maybe it is and, once I see it, I can tell you oh yeah, you are absolutely right… Oh, yeah!
**Gonzalez:** You know, enharmonically, taking D flat, thinking about C sharp, G sharp, F sharp…

**Rodríguez:** The tritone…

**Gonzalez:** And then, the relationship from G flat major, if you want to call it like that, into four measures later the E minor, or the F sharp major to the E minor. That sequencing…

**Rodríguez:** That one. That one it is. The one at 246 could be more Williamnesque, Williamsesque. The one in 242, I was really young. You know, probably the fact that. Okay, I am in C major, and this is the development section…I’m going to go from C major a tritone up to F sharp major. That was probably why I did that.

**Gonzalez:** But like you said, it works.

**Rodríguez:** Yeah.

**Gonzalez:** I’ve been fascinated with the music. And the more you kind of use a spotlight to find things and you discover things. It’s like a light bulb light up. It's really interesting. Really interesting finding things like this. So… another point in my favor?

**Rodríguez:** Yeah. Absolutely!

**Gonzalez:** Now… I’m very curious about “Introducción” for different factors but, first of all, its change of name. Is there a reason or is there a different piece, or am I wrong about this where it was first called “Introducción, Cancion de Cuna y Fuegos de Artificio”?

**Rodríguez:** I've never been happy with the title of that piece and I'm usually not good… I usually write the pieces and then try to find a title for them. I've never been good with words so it's…” Introduction,” I could tell you exactly what it is and then you know… Also going with the fact that I kind of… Maybe it's a mistake that trying to go against
maybe you know sounding like a nationalistic composer. I think “Introducción” could have been the first Mexican-sounding piece that I've written after “Mosaico”, and it must be from… Do you have the composition year there?

Gonzalez: 2006

Rodríguez: 2006. Yeah, “Mosaico” is from, I wrote it in 98-99. So, it was the first one that was kind of going back to… Not the style of “Mosaico” because I don't think it has to do that much with “Mosaico” but to go back to something that sounded more Latin American or Mexican. It's pretty much a scene from a “posada” Mexicana. The introduction, you know how it's… We get very serious in México about our traditions. Especially that time of the year so “Introducción” is a little bit of seriousness and…Maybe not drama but that seriousness that one finds and respect that one finds and… You know, the religious rituals of Christmas in México and… “Cancion de Cuna” is pretty much a villancico, and the last part, which is the “Fiesta” is pretty much the breaking of the pinata at the end. My style, you could call it.

Gonzalez: This is something that I'm really thankful for this opportunity with the interview because this is the first time I hear or find any information like this specific about this piece. So, this is of great value for whoever encounters this composition and wants to present it and know the background behind it. It all makes sense now to me. I know it has been performed in different places here in the United States. I know I can tell you for a fact two different places. One where it was premiered, the other one is a different university, and I could not find any information behind the composition, so this is great.
Rodríguez: It's weird because it's a piece that kind of it's been living out on its own. Because I don't promote it that much and I don't know why because I think it's a good piece. And I don't have that many pieces for string orchestra alone. The only thing I don't, I'm not really crazy about is the last three-four bars which I've always thought, you know, next time I’m asked for the piece, if somebody is going to do it, I might change the very last part of the piece but… Basically, the main reason why I don't promote the piece is because I can't find a good title for the piece. It's pretty much saying that this is a piece in three movements and there's the first movement, the second movement, and then the third movement. That's basically what I'm saying in the title. It's like an introduction, a song, and then a presto. Never been able to find a good title for the piece. Maybe embracing the idea of where it comes from in my mind. You could help me find a better title for the piece, but I didn't want to put the piece with like, you know, this is a nationalistic piece.

Gonzalez: And speaking of being or not being nationalistic. There is some indigenous background in it in the rhythm and stuff like that. Whether it's not 100% accurate like, for example, there's no huapango or something like that, rhythmically speaking. But the way of the structure of the 5/8 versus 6/8 versus 7/8. It makes it sound indigenous.

Rodríguez: And the villancico you could say is more of an indigenous song than a traditional Mexican song.

Gonzalez: And that was my whole point with the relationship between the two pieces with “Mosaico” and this, the middle section. You know, the tradition of mariachi or the trio, or the serenade as it is labeled in “Mosaico” in the middle portion. The use of the quartet in “Mosaico” or the use of the two violins in “Introducción.” The relationship between the thirds, the interval of the third or the sixth. It's all part of the tradition of
mariachi music for the serenade and so that's what makes it very nationalistic in a way by itself.

Rodríguez: And that's exactly where it comes from. The two singers or the two solo instruments. The two mariachi violins or the violins during the two voices. Or the two singers singing in thirds, that's where it comes from, and “Mosaico” is a blend of that. And I think we were doing the symphony “From the New World” that year at the university too. And I was playing first flute, I got to play first flute in the orchestra my last two years in college and… You know, you get the quartet in the slow movement of the Dvorak so it's like, you know… I need to do that too. And you get the guitarrón, so it ends up being a mix which is why I'm not afraid of talking about this because it's not my process, is not I'm going to copy this thing but it's all, you know. I guess it is what art is all about, you know. You are inspired by everything that thrills you artistically or musically or whatever and then you mix all whatever it is that you process inside. So, as you say, the quartet in “Mosaico” is the two Mexican singers singing the serenade. It starts sounding like “Los Dos Arbolitos” but turns into something else. And the quartet from Dvorak’s New World Symphony but the cello is doing a guitarrón baseline. And it's the combination that makes it work. I think the combination makes it work and makes it something apart from all the influences. Some of it, you know, and the harmonic style and all that, I guess, makes it something that hopefully is original.

Gonzalez: Definitely. Talking about how to classify this piece. What can you tell me about the harmonic structure of the piece? The form of the piece and the style in general of Introducción.
Rodríguez: Let me go through my mind very quickly because I haven't heard it in years. I definitely wanted to do something... This is a time where I was really obsessed for some time in writing adagios for orchestra. You know, exploring the adagios as a structure by itself, not inside a symphony structure. And I wrote several pieces at that time, all of them adagios. One is “Saudade” for harp and strings which was recorded last week. And I wrote an adagio for piano and orchestra that is based on one of the film soundtracks that I wrote back then 2004, 2005, or something. And I wrote it, the adagio version for piano and orchestra I think I wrote it in 2006 as well. And I got obsessed with the adagio for like, I don't know, maybe 8 years or something like that. So, my second conducting teacher, the conducting teacher I had in Indianapolis, IN. He asked me for a piece for a Latin American music concert in 2006. I was already living in New York City, and I wanted to write, I wanted to compose something for him as a conductor. Like the same way you write something you know if you have… if you're writing by Commission and you're writing for an ensemble in particular and... For me, it's a thrill and it's sometimes easier just to visualize exactly who's going to perform it was true you're writing it for. It's like cooking for somebody who, you know, for somebody that you know, and you know exactly who's going to come home for dinner. So, I wrote it for him thinking that I wanted to write something that was you know that it was interesting to conduct and that it was fun to conduct. So, it was very hard for me at that time to write something that was not an adagio although I'm sure he would have liked it if I had just written an adagio. But also, and I used to do this a lot back then. I don't do it anymore but if I'm writing something for a concert in particular and they already know what the rest of the program is going to be, I used to like to know the rest of the program to know kind of
where the piece was going to fit within the structure of the concert. And he probably sent me the repertoire for the rest of the concert and decided to do something that was, you know, that had that structure and that had a fast section at the end. We talked about it being kind of influenced by the ritual and tradition of posadas in México. Is also if it is based on that. It's very loosely based on that. It's the same way if I'm not writing to lyrics then, you know, maybe if I have a lyric in mind, you know, I could do something that's based on that, but I could go anywhere from there so... “Introducción,” even though we talked about the introduction having to do a little bit with the seriousness of the tradition or the ritual, you know. It also not necessarily has to, you know, it's a combination of that and me wanting to write something very expressive for the conductor and the orchestra to perform. So, it's always a combination of everything. I think if I remember well, having the villancico style of song in the middle it just made sense after the introduction. I mean, I tend to kind of outline structurally what I'm going to do when I'm composing but I usually compose in a through composed way. And if I feel like we've had enough of this introduction, then we go onto something pretty and a bit more romantic and then we have to end with a bang or something. There's a point where I have to let go and then have kind of the piece dictate where it needs to go next. So, all those ideas that we talk about is like they are in my brain but it's not something like that. A very rigorous structure before I start writing.

**Gonzalez:** So, one question that I have. There is no key signature, but you can tell there is a D... the key center is a D of some sort. It feels like in D minor basically but it’s D the main center key, right? Is there a specific formula for harmonic structure in general for this piece?
Rodríguez: There is a practical reason for it not to have a key signature and it comes from the Hollywood tradition of writing for film here [in California.] And maybe this will be disappointing because it doesn't have like a very brainy… It's not like a breakthrough brainy answer. The only reason why I write, and this is for all of my music, I write it with no key signature. And I like myself to have my full orchestra scores as transposed scores which are nowadays, you know, you could find a little bit of both you know some composers and some conductors like to use a C score when some composers like to see a transposed score. But I got used to writing with no key signatures. First, because of John Williams. If you see the scores, they are all transposed scores and no key signature. It doesn't mean it's atonal or it doesn't mean if, like if it's in D minor that it's in some kind of a modal D. Basically, in Hollywood, we write everything with no key signature so that you have the alterations bar by bar because most of the time players are sightreading and you have very little time to record and it's better to, sometimes, to have, you know, the key signatures as they happen rather than have a key signature or key signature changes. Copyists used to go through the trouble of having, you know, the accidentals alterations bar by bar because of that reason. I don't remember, I'll get the score right now because, you know, as I said before my music is very tonal. So, it's tonal but it keeps modulating too so… On the other hand, I also found that having no key signatures was more helpful for the type of music that I write because it's, you know, it's like the passage you just pointed out in “Mosaico Mexicano.” It’s in C major because of F sharp major and then it goes to E minor and it goes, and then it just like flies around and goes back to C. But it has a tonal center. Did you go around back to, but, you know, I've just found that it's
more practical for me to compose over no key signature and for the player to read it, you know. Especially if they're running it for the first time. Does that answer your question?

**Gonzalez:** Absolutely! You know, one thing that I found, in a way, kind of unusual because of the type of composition, the size of an orchestra in mind normally for a chamber orchestra, a string chamber orchestra… To use two basses, it's kind of unusual.

You know, there's a passage there where the basses have a solo line, a melodic line in there towards the end. And…

**Rodríguez:** Do they have a solo?

**Gonzalez:** Well, two soli, yeah. This is measure 118.

**Rodríguez:** Oh, that's cool… Yeah! Son los dos borrachos… They are the two drunken guys at the posada.

**Gonzalez:** You see, now more interesting facts in here.

**Rodríguez:** Because it's uncomfortable and it's uncomfortable for the two bases to play a solo up there and to play in thirds. You know, they are the two drunken guys at the party.

**Gonzalez:** So, I know, usually you don't have two bass players in a string orchestra. So, looking for recordings of this piece, I found one where it's performed with just one base.

And so, I know that's the reason behind why there's not a second bass in that performance. Because normally you do not have two basses. So, when we are about to… We are going to perform this three weeks from now. And we will have two basses.

**Rodríguez:** Wonderful!

**Gonzalez:** It will be fun to hear, you know, for the first time, I guess for me, you know, with the two basses. The third relationship in there.
Rodríguez: Yeah! And that is the same motif from the villancico, so they are probably making fun of it. Like they are singing it with the wrong lyrics or something.

Gonzalez: Right!

Rodríguez: There used to be an edition with a missing time signature. Did you find it?

Gonzalez: Yes. It's in measure 138.

Rodríguez: So, I haven't corrected it yet and I should do it.

Gonzalez: Yeah, I had to put a fire off with the students here.

Rodríguez: Let me write it down because I am working on a new edition of it. If you have any other notes for this one because I'm working on it.

Gonzalez: Yes, actually there is… at the very end of the piece. There is one place where you used two different ways of notating a rhythm. Sixteenth notes in a quadruple group versus dotted sixteenth notes. I cannot remember exactly where that is. Let me see if I can find it very quickly.

Rodríguez: So, it's the 6/8 missing right in 138?

Gonzalez: Correct. I’ll have to look for that other place… Oh yes, if you can…

Rodríguez: So probably… You said quadruplet like…

Gonzalez: Like, if you look at measure 58, you know, you write this, the second part of the measure as dotted sixteenth notes. And there's someplace else where you just write it as a quadruple. I am trying to find where it is. And it's an example of where I'm talking about the cross-rhythm.

Rodríguez: 115

Gonzalez: Exactly! So, would it make more sense, or is there a specific reason why?
Rodríguez: No, this is exactly the same thing so, you know, for consistency it should probably be written as a dotted sixteenth, right? Because of everything else. It's like the “Salon México” by Copland. Which is, you have the duplets instead of the dotted rhythms. I feel like the dotted rhythms are clearer to the eye and to the… For some reason, it's just me personally. The quadruplet makes sense and, I mean, if you think about publishing something like this, like engraving a copier plate then a quadruplet makes more sense than having to add all the dots.

Gonzalez: And, you know, with our reading through the piece, I noticed that it was a lot easier to read the quadruplet than the dotted rhythms.

Rodríguez: Which one?

Gonzalez: Every time they had a quadruple was a lot easier to read than…

Rodríguez: The quadruplet is easier? Okay, okay. That’s good to know.

Gonzalez: Immediately, when they saw the dotted sixteenth notes, they started trying to subdivide them and…

Rodríguez: They have to count. Ha, ha, ha!

Gonzalez: The other way you just fit it within the beat.

Rodríguez: That’s good to know. Okay!

Gonzalez: So, questions and comments in here and, you know, just my personal input in here. There are some places where I found it easier, at least for me, to conduct in what some people consider hypermeasures. You know, like for example, this session at measure 163. It's a sequence of 5/8, 3/8, 5/8, 3/8. Instead of conducting 123-12-12-123-12-123, it seems easier for me and for the ensemble, and for the structure of this section here, to conduct 123-12-123 like a three-beat pattern between the 5/8 and the 3/8.
Rodríguez: Mm-mmh!

Gonzalez: And so, I did a couple of those things whether it’s a 5/8 followed by a 3/8 or a 6/8 followed by a 3/8 just for the flow of the piece in this section.

Rodríguez: I think, I mean, you are absolutely right, and I think it's clearer to write it the way it's written and then to let you, the conductor to... I mean, you are hearing the melody you are hearing where the phrase is going and you can feel, you know, the general pulse of the phrase. And then, you know, you can decide how to best conduct it to achieve that. But I tend to, like, to write it this way just because it's... I think it's clearer to write this way. And, you know, the same thing if I have a, like a 3/4 in a 2/4 instead of a 5/4 just because, you know...

Gonzalez: Yeah, and I thought, you know, it simplified things not just from the conductor’s perspective but also for the ensemble. And, you know, that section at measure 163. This one you mentioned about the melody and the sequence here, melodic sequence here. I found it interesting, you know, these groups of 5/8 3/8 and how many patterns of this. You know, we have four groups of this sequence and then you go into the sequence of four measures of 5/8 and then four measures of the 7/8. Rather than thinking in terms of a melody, a phrase, I look at it as a rhythmic phrase, you know. Four groups of this pattern, four groups of this pattern and it forms a full phrase.

Rodríguez: Right.

Gonzalez: Is it correct to think of that way in this little section here or is it more of a melodic sequence rather than a rhythmic sequence?

Rodríguez: What do you think?
Gonzalez: Well, this is exactly the point I made earlier where, you know, critics or musicians can make their own assumptions about…

Rodríguez: Yeah, I mean, this is a great point because it's… Like I told you before, you know, this is something that I wrote for somebody else to conduct and, you know, ultimately that's what music is for you know. I love to conduct my own music but it's something that I'm making for you to enjoy and to figure out kind of, in your own personal way, how to feel it and how to best show that to your ensemble and make it work. And it also has to do with the ensemble, and you know your ensemble and you know how to make it sound the best. How to sound better, how to communicate all these things to them. I don't know how I would conduct it but, you know, what you are telling me makes total sense.

Gonzalez: And I’m sure I will look at this 5, 10 years from now and I will do it differently.

Rodríguez: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Absolutely! And that's the beauty of it.

Gonzalez: You know, I want to just make one more comment about this. We have some students from México here at the university and when we got to… There's a section. If you look at measure 116. Right where the double basses play the drunken. One of these Mexican students mentioned that this reminded her of black and white films from México.

Rodríguez: Nice! I'm getting goosebumps.

Gonzalez: You know, we have been discovering things, many different things as we have been working on this, and it is quite a lovely experience discovering this piece and
getting to know it. You know, it's definitely been a challenge putting it together, I have to admit it.

**Rodríguez:** It is not an easy piece.

**Gonzalez:** Not an easy piece but the more that we work on it, the more things that we discover and we enjoy them, we like it so…

**Rodríguez:** Which section did you say? That section with a double bass?

**Gonzalez:** Yeah. Basically, well, you know, since we don't have the double bassists with us right now yet, so it's just the violins, violas, and cellos playing this.

**Rodríguez:** Like that and then the counterpoint with the first violin probably.

**Gonzalez:** You know, there are things that you get flashbacks from, memories from growing up. But everything has been really enjoyable.

**Rodríguez:** There's even a Cantinflas movie, I can't remember which one it is, with Revueltas’ music. If you think of all this, you know, amazing composers that worked in the film industry at that time and that, you know, they had to eat. You know, they had to make a living and, you know. I don’t say that as a bad thing, you know, I don't think movie music is less or more than any other type of music, I think a lot of people have taken too much time to realize that it's just another, not genre but another field in music composition. Is, you know, the same way that a composer would write music for ballet or opera, you know, for orchestras. Now there's, you know, it’s been around for over 100 years but now there's film as well. It's like, you don't have to be a film composer only, or… You know, Revueltas was there. We have great soundtracks by Revueltas that people don't know come from films, you know. People don't know [that] “La Noche de los Mayas” is a film soundtrack, that “Redes” is a soundtrack. But, yeah, I mean, all this
music, I think I was, I have to say I was probably more influenced by the Mexican composers that wrote for film that by the Mexican composers that wrote for the concert hall just because you know, I grew up watching all these movies on TV as well. And I like them, you know, I still watch them, and I watch Mexican films from the 40s of 50s regularly. I've been involved in some projects like with the L.A. Phil. not too long ago where I had the chance to... There are no scores so whenever there’s, you know, a concert like this has to happen somebody has to sit down and transcribe things by ear. We had to transcribe several film soundtracks from México for that concert because there were no scores. I think they were all burned when the Cineteca burned down in the 70s or 80s but yeah, I mean, I'm so happy that it clicks with them in that way because it's absolutely where it comes from.

Gonzalez: Well, I know we've been here a long time and, like I told you at the beginning I could go on and on, I mean...

Rodríguez: We could go on forever my friend. Besides the fact that we haven't seen each other for decades, you know, we could be here for hours.

Gonzalez: Right! But I really appreciate the time. Sharing all this information, your life, and your compositional output. You know, there's still so much to talk about and to continue exploring but, you know, we'll be more in contact about some other questions that I may have here and there, but I think this interview. Well, first of all, it's going to be in the document that I will present for sure. But, you know, the file will be available for future references if not online for anybody to get it but, you know, anybody who researches that dissertation may be able to contact me and, you know, get access to this
interview and perhaps the video. I think it will be really interesting to have access to this information. Anything that you may want to add to this interview?

Rodríguez: No, nothing except to thank you for your interest in my music, you know. It's fun just to sit down and look back and look at these scores that I haven't seen in years and... I mean, it's a thrill that anybody cares at all about this, you know. You know I don't have any, you know, whenever I'm writing a piece of music, I'm thinking about like the “Introducción,” I'm thinking about the conductor I wrote it, the ensemble that I wrote it for, and I'm just hoping that they enjoy, you know, what they're seeing on their music stands. And the, you know, the experience that we musicians have of making music together, you know. It's just, I'm always hoping that it's a good experience playing anything that I've written. But I never expected to go any further than that performance that I'm writing the music for, you know. And I spend a lot of my spare time writing more music for myself, you know, for me as a pianist, for myself hoping to have some dates to hear it sometime should be because that's why the process of putting these things on paper I enjoy it a lot. So, the fact that I have that added, you know, value that somebody makes me dig out things like this from at least a decade ago, right? It's, I mean, it's very inspiring, you know. It just makes me want to, you know, keep writing music so I thank you for the time that, I mean, we have only spent a couple of hours today, but I know that you've been doing the research and it sounds like you've been doing your research. It sounds like you know my pieces better than I do. And the fact that you're programming my music and that you're, you know, you are really getting into studying them, I can't thank you enough. And thank you for this dissertation that it's like, you say, it's a record of, you know, things that it's probably the first time I've talked about
them. It’s the first time anybody asked me, so it's fun to go back and, you know, to try to remember why I did things or just remember that I did them just because of a thought process or just because, you know, it just felt like the right thing to do. But just the exercise of, you know, going back and looking at the scores is very rewarding and I thank you for your time and for your interest in my music.

**Gonzalez:** Thank you. I really appreciate all the time, the information shared with us and with me. Looking forward to performing this piece and more of your music in the future for sure.

**Rodríguez:** Thank you! And keep me posted with the next step in your research.

**Gonzalez:** Thank you so much, Arturo.
APPENDIX C – LETTERS

Request for Approval Letter

March 17, 2022

Mr. Arturo Rodriguez
Sueños de Luna Music Publishing
Los Angeles, CA

Dear Mr. Rodriguez,

I spoke with you a couple of days ago to request permission to cite portions of Arturo Rodriguez’s Mosaico Mexicano and Introducción, Canción de Cuna y Fiesta in a DMA dissertation which I am preparing.

Thank you for your verbal approval given over the phone. I would appreciate, however, having the same in writing.

Thank you again for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Jorge Gonzalez

P.S. If an up-to-date listing of Mr. Rodriguez’s published compositions is available, please forward a copy to me.

March 23, 2022 - Approved: Sueños de Luna Music Publishing (ASCAP)
Publisher Approval Letter

Sueños de Luna Music Publishing
Los Angeles, CA (zip phone, Email)

March 21, 2022

Mr. Jorge I. Gonzalez
Department of Music
The University of Southern Mississippi
Hattiesburg, MS 39401

Dear Mr. Gonzalez:

Thanks for your letter of March 17, 2022.

This will confirm our phone conversation of the 17th in which we authorized the use of portions of Arturo Rodríguez’s Mosaico Mexicano and Introducción, Canción de Cuna y Fiesta in the doctoral dissertation you are preparing.

It is requested that any excerpt of this work be credited as follows:

For Mosaico Mexicano:
Copyright © 1999/2016 by Sueños de Luna Music Publishing (ASCAP)
All Rights Reserved. Used by permission

For Introducción, Canción de Cuna y Fiesta:
Copyright © 2006/2009 by Sueños de Luna Music Publishing (ASCAP)
All Rights Reserved. Used by permission

With kind regards to you,

Sincerely,

Arturo Rodríguez
Composer & Publisher
APPENDIX D – SKETCHES AND ORIGINAL MANUSCRIPT

Page 135 – Arturo Rodríguez’s ink tests and writing style for *Mosaico Mexicano*. The original manuscript was handwritten as he did not have access to any music notation software then.

Page 136 – Sketches of the opening section of *Mosaico Mexicano* dating back to 1995. Rhythmic ideas used in the composition can be seen on this page.

Page 137 – Sketch of what would eventually become the melody used in the Serenata section.

Page 138 – First page of the original handwritten manuscript of *Mosaico Mexicano*. 
APPENDIX E – IRB WAIVER LETTER

March 14, 2022

To Whom It May Concern,

Acting on behalf of The University of Southern Mississippi Institutional Review Board, in accordance with Federal Drug Administration regulations (21 CFR 26, 111), Department of Health and Human Services regulations (45 CFR Part 46), and University guidelines, I have reviewed the following project and have determined that review by USM’s IRB is not necessary.

Principal Investigator: Jorge Gonzalez


Date Submitted: March 14, 2022

Formal IRB review is not required in this instance as the project does not meet federal or institutional definitions of “human subjects research.”

Sincerely,

Samuel V. Bruton

Director of the Office of Research Integrity
BIBLIOGRAPHY


https://doi.org/10.3998/mp.9460447.0006.203