

A Look At The Puya Vallenata From Its Execution On The Piano. Musical And Interpretative Analysis.

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Abstract

Vallenato, over the years, has transcended, evolved and has been marketed representing part of the Colombian cultural identity worldwide, remembering that in 2015 it was declared intangible cultural **heritage of humanity** by **UNESCO**. The puya occupies a relevant position within the indigenous musical airs of the Colombian Caribbean region, “since it demands from the instrumentalist a high degree of virtuosity and performance skills in the accordion” (Gutiérrez, 2015). For that reason and in response to the pedagogical assumptions of Zoltán Kodály, which refers to the importance of using indigenous musical language to access universal musical language (quoted by Pascua, 2006) the adaptation to the piano of the puya was proposed, “*me dejó solito*” by Colombian singer-songwriter Jorge Celedón. This essay addresses a novel topic in the Colombian musical field, as it intends to approach the puya vallenata since its execution on the piano, using for this purpose the musical analysis as a tool to understand the characteristic elements of the process of adaptation and interpretation to the piano of the theme “*me dejó solito*”, but focusing on the contributions that the technical difficulties of this musical air (such as polyrhythmia, sections in third and sixth intervals, rhythmic-melodic accompaniment designs with extensions of more than one octave, among others), and the results of the transcription for the piano by the author of this essay can contribute to the development of skills in the pianist in training.

Keywords: Folclore, puya, vallenato, piano, heritage, musical analysis.

I. INTRODUCTION

Colombian music presents a strongly marked division based on different artistic manifestations influenced mostly by indigenous, Spanish and African. Vallenato, as a musical manifestation belonging to the Caribbean region, has transcended, evolved and has been commercialized over the years, representing part of the Colombian cultural identity worldwide. In fact, it was declared in 2015 an intangible cultural heritage of humanity by UNESCO.

Within the vallenato genre there are four representative musical airs: the Son, the Paseo, the Merengue and the Puya. However, within the framework of this work, a work belonging to the subgenre called "puya" is studied, which, as Gutiérrez comments (2015) "is characterized by being one of the styles of vallenato music that requires greater virtuosity from the instrumentalist because it demands greater skill and execution in its interpretation". 'La puya' is recognized mainly in the festivals of the region for emphasizing improvisation on the part of the performing musicians and for demonstrating the virtuosity of the accordionist.

Traditionally, vallenato has been performed with the typical ensemble composed of the caja, the guacharaca and the accordion; sometimes the guitar is also included. However, with the passage of time, other instruments have been introduced, in which the inclusion of the electric bass, the timpani and the euphonium stands out.

Despite the above, in relation to the other subgenres of vallenato, 'la puya' has gradually lost its popularity; perhaps because it generates little commercial interest for the Colombian music industry, a phenomenon that has led vallenato music in general to a decline of poetry, metaphor, imagination and realism. On the other hand, vallenato is traditionally taught empirically, a situation that prevents musicians outside folklore from having reference material, in musical notation, that facilitates their learning; In the same order of ideas, there is also no bibliography on technical and interpretative analyses of these works for instrumental learning.

To problematize this issue, the following questions arise: Is it feasible to use the musical elements of the air of the puya vallenata for the development of piano skills? How to safeguard the elements of the vallenato puya from their possible disappearance? Is it possible that through piano transcriptions more people can be brought closer to this musical subgenre?

According to the problems exposed, this monographic essay proposes a musical and interpretative analysis of the work "*Me deja solito*" by the composer Jorge Celedón from a pianistic perspective. The importance of this process lies in the understanding of the musical elements of the air of the puya and the contributions to the development of piano skills that the transcription of these elements on the piano entails; in addition to transpolating a topic as important as the safeguarding of vallenato folklore and its exploration in instrumental formats different from the traditional ones, to the musical

academic field.

The methodology used within the research process prior to this essay privileged the qualitative paradigm and the narrative design, using documentary review as an information collection technique. The musical analysis tools used in this work are based on the morphosyntactic analysis method of the Spanish teachers Margarita and Arantza Lorenzo de Reizábal (2004) entitled: "*Musical analysis: Keys to understanding and interpreting music*" and the technical and interpretative exploration is based on the experience and the work carried out within the piano class sessions with maestro Ioseph Theodomirus Carrillo Rico.

It is also important to mention that there are other texts such as the Ministry of Culture's booklet entitled "*Ay 'ombe juepa jé*", which contains transcriptions of works belonging to the aforementioned musical air, but unlike this work it is not aimed at the piano performance of these musical pieces nor does it contemplate the technical and interpretative analysis of them.

For the reader's knowledge, it is worth mentioning that, in addition to the work that is the object of study in this essay, a musical repertoire has also been chosen for the realization of a recital in undergraduate mode, covering three periods of the history of Western music: baroque, classical and romantic periods. In addition to this, two jazz works and a chandé of Colombian folklore are addressed, as described below.

Prelude and Fugue No. 10 in E minor BWV 855 - Johann Sebastian Bach Sonata No. 16 in C major K545 - Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Estudio in F menor Op.25 N°2 - Frédéric Chopin In a sentimental mood - Duke Ellington

A night in Tunisia - Dizzy Gillespie Chandé para Mónica - Juan Carlos Lazzo

He left me alone, Puya- Jorge Celedón. Transcription for piano Iván Calderón M.

II. MUSICOLOGICAL CONTEXT

In Colombia, vallenato music originates from the Caribbean region on the northern coast of Colombia; specifically the old Magdalena Grande that included the lower course of the Magdalena River and the Guajira peninsula and that we currently know as the departments of La Guajira, Cesar and Magdalena. Within this musical genre there are different airs or subgenres such as: The son, the paseo, the merengue and the puya, made up of traditional instrumentation such as the caja guacharaca and accordion.

Vallenato is a musical genre that most Colombians easily identify due to the particularities of the sonority and the characteristic use of the accordion; it is perhaps the most listened to folk musical genre in the country due to its diffusion, its lyrics, its way of telling stories; also for its instrumentation, for its rhythms, for the virtuosity developed in the accordion and, in recent decades, for its commercialization. This music has been linked to the social life of the peoples of the Colombian Caribbean and incorporates within itself elements of miscegenation typical of our cultural identity. Thanks to radio

broadcasting and mass media, it has permeated other cultural environments in Colombia, generating followers at all social levels and promoting a brand of international recognition for our country.

III. INSTRUMENTATION

As mentioned above, the instruments with which vallenato has traditionally been performed are the guacharaca, the box and the accordion. Below is a brief commentary on the most relevant characteristics of each of them.

A. La Guacharaca

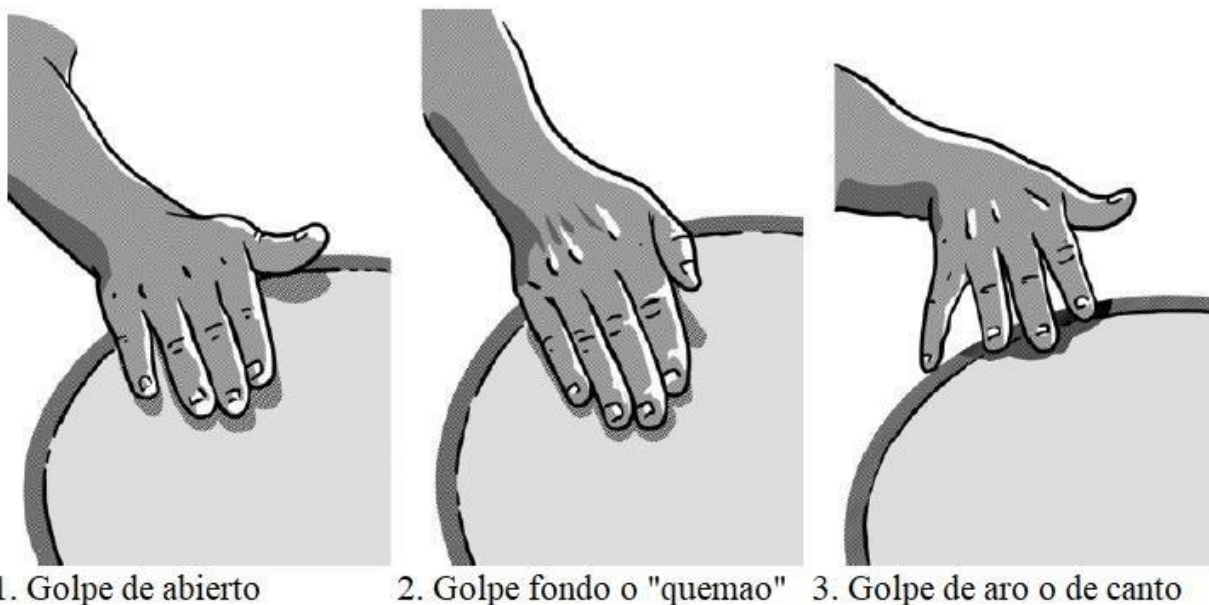
It is a percussion musical instrument belonging to the family of friction-type idiophones. The guacharaca has an indigenous origin and is made of cane. It is made up of two elements: the main body with a corrugated surface and the carving made of hard wire and a wooden handle with which the corrugated surface is rubbed.

B. The Caja

The snare drum concentrates in its execution the rhythmic characterization of the airs of the vallenato genre. It is a membranophone instrument. It is basically a conical drum of small dimensions. It is made up of a single patch at the top that is attached with tensioners to the cylindrical body made of Mucurutú, Cañahuate or Matarratón wood. Its head or membrane is usually changed depending on the type of event where the musical instrument is going to be played; if it is at a vallenato festival, a leather patch is used as Traditionally, the box used to be played, probably due to customary issues of the event; and if it is a particular holiday or any type of social event, the patch is usually used made of an X-ray sheet, since this makes its sonority brighter and allows the sound of the percussion of its membrane to be projected with more intensity.

With regard to the percussion of the blows of the hand on its membrane, Ahumada et. al (2015) classifies it into three types, depending on where the attack is executed on the instrument: open blow, groundstroke or "burning" and hoop blow or "edge". This makes it possible to obtain various timbral possibilities. Below you can see the graphs that illustrate this type of attack.

Figure 1. Types of Hit in the Box



Fountain: Ahumada, et al. (2015)

C. The Accordion

Coming from Austria, this musical instrument arrived in Colombia at the end of the nineteenth century but, as Ahumada et al. (2015), "it is in the twentieth century where it replaces the bagpipes because local musicians felt that, in itself, the accordion had incorporated in its sonority the timbres of the female and male bagpipes". This has made it one of the most representative timbral elements of the musical airs in which it is incorporated.

Among the different types of diatonic accordion with respect to its tuning, one of the most used is the accordion called "five-letter" but why is it called this way here in Colombia?

In order to answer this question we must bear in mind that one way to encrypt the pitches of the notes is through the letters of the alphabet, as in the English cipher: C, D, E, F, G, A, B. for the respective C, D, E, FA, G, A, B. The German cipher uses the same letters but differs in the use of the H for B natural and the B for B flat. Likewise, to identify a sharp, the letters "is" are added to the cipher, and to identify a sharp, Identify a flat the letters "es". In addition, if the cipher is a vowel and ends in flat, only the letter "s" is added.

Taking into account the above, it is possible that people from the Caribbean region began

to repair accordions empirically, finding within them an abbreviation such as "BEsAs", located there since its manufacture. This abbreviation actually indicates the tuning of the instrument with a musical notation in the German language, which translated into English means (Bb, Eb, Lab). This indication may have seemed curious to those people and, even today, to many empirical musicians in the region who do not know it or do not know its meaning. As a consequence of this, the pseudonym of "five-letter accordion" has become widespread within the jargon of vallenato musicians, referring to the number of letters of this abbreviation and at the same time to refer to this type of tuning in particular.

D. Different Types of Tuning

Since each diatonic accordion is limited to the use of certain major scales with their relative minor due to their harmonic construction, it is necessary to be able to have a variety of accordions in different keys or, failing that, to have a specialist technician to change the tones while maintaining the same intervals and their harmonic relationship; Only in this way is it possible to play the instrument in any of the 12 keys of the Western music. Each accordion uses a tuning in 4th perfect intervals, as we will show below:

1. E A D (*Mi La Re*).
2. Eb Ab Db (*Mib Lab Reb*).
3. F Bb Eb (*Fa Sib Mib*).
4. F# B E (*F# Si Mi*).
5. G C F (*Sol Do Fa*).
6. A D G (*The Only King*)
7. Bb Eb Ab (*Bb Eb Lab*). (*Five letters O BEsAs for their initials in German*).
8. B and A (*Yes M La*).
9. C F Bb (*Do Fa Sib*).
10. C# F# B (*Do# Fa# Si*).
11. D G C (*Re Sol Do*).
12. Eb Ab Db (*Mib Lab Reb*).

IV. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PUYA

The air of the puya, according to Gutiérrez. (2015)

"It is the oldest or at least, one of the oldest vallenato airs, because next to merengue, its twin, it was played by the bagpipes predecessors of the accordion, as well as by the first accordionists of the central and ribana schools, depicted by Valledupar and Fonseca respectively. This musical air is characterized by being the style of vallenato music that requires greater virtuosity from the instrumentalist, as it demands greater technical skill and musical execution in its interpretation." (p.16)

As for its rhythmic structure, in the same way as the vallenato merengue it is written in a measure of 6/8. But they differ in that the puya is characterized by the repetition of small phrases or rhythmic-melodic cells that characterize this air, as can be seen below:

My Piece of Accordion- Alejo Durán:



He left me alone- Jorge Celedón:

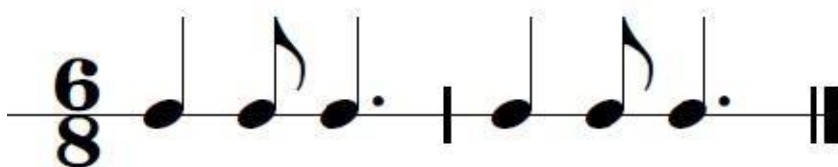


A characteristic element of this vallenato air is related to the accompaniment of the basses on the accordion and denotes a natural accentuation in the first and fourth eighth notes of each 6/8 measure. On the other hand, the rhythmic-melodic patterns present a rhythmic amalgam that together with the accompaniment pattern produce an interesting polyrhythm, which can be developed from the pianistic point of view, as we will see in the next chapter.

Melodic patterns of ternary subdivision with binary subdivision responses:



Another important element within the characteristics of the Puya is the "improvisation" or "solo" section. This section requires the technical skill of each of them from the performing musicians. From the formal perspective, it is also a fundamental part of thematic development. At the end of each musician's solo, it usually ends with a pattern rhythmic that works as a call to the group to continue with the theme. In the following figure you can see this rhythmic pattern or call:



In general terms, the Puya provides a series of musical elements that can be used in technical terms and adaptable to the creation of Colombian piano repertoire. Among them, the rhythmic aspect stands out, which provides difficulties inherent to the piano, such as the independence of the hands and the play with amalgams or rhythmic exchanges between binary and ternary time matrices. In the next chapter we will observe the elements of the transcription made for piano of the Puya "*Me deja solito*" and the relevant points for its interpretation and study on the piano.

IV. MUSICAL AND INTERPRETATIVE ANALYSIS.

In the previous chapter, the most important musicological aspects related to vallenato folklore and the air of the Puya were observed. The documentary review of this song provided fundamental elements to make the piano transcription of the song "*Me deja solito*" by Jorge Celedón. The score resulting from this transcription for piano can be found in the appendices of this work.

A. Overview of the work

"*Me deja solito*" is a folklore-type song composed by Colombian singer-songwriter Jorge Celedón Guerra, with arrangements and accompaniment on accordion by Jimmy Zambrano. This song was recorded in 2004 and released on the album "*Juepa jé*" (2004).

B. The Composer

Jorge Celedón Guerra, born in (Villanueva, la Guajira, March 4, 1968), is a renowned Colombian singer and composer who has stood out for incorporating into his albums the less popular rhythms of vallenato folklore, such as: son, merengue and puya. He has won four Latin Grammy Awards, for best Cumbia/vallenato album. He began his artistic career as a singer at the age of 13, where he recorded the song "Drama provinciano" by the composer Lenín Bueno Suárez. Later he recorded songs such as "Sueño de Niñez", "Bella ilusión", "Lejos de Ti" and "Vivir sin Ti". In 1996 he was part, together with Jean Carlos Centeno, of the emblematic vallenato group "El Binomio de Oro" and in 2000, he launched his first production as a soloist with accordionist Jimmy Zambrano. called "Romántico soy" which was followed by "Tercer Corazón", "No te olvidaré" and

"Blessed be God." In 2004 he released the album "*Juepa Jé*" where the single is found that is object of study in this work. In addition to all this, among the recognitions he is as the

winner of the Latin Grammy Award in the 2007, 2014, 2015 and 2017 editions.

C. Morphosyntactic analysis of the work

Below is a brief commentary on the main elements that characterize the puya of the master Jorge Celedón. Starting with the formal description presented below.

D. Form

Table 1. Musical Form of the Work

Section	Start in time	Ends in time	Remarks
Introduction	1	39	Piano solo
Bridge I	39	45	Piano solo Gives entrance to the melody of the song
AI Verse	45	67	Piano with melody of the singing
Pre-chorus	68	86	Piano with the melody of singing with repetition and Preparing the chorus
Chorus	86	99	Peak of the singing
Bridge	99	139	Piano solo
Box Only	140	160	Character Percussion
Only Guacharaca	162	177	Improvisatory Character Percussion
Solo Piano	178	201	Piano solo

			Improvisatory melodic and rhythmic variations in phrases Symmetrical
Bridge I (D.S. al Coda)	39	45	Piano solo From the entrance to stanza II compás 39 (sign)
Stanza II	45	67	Restates stanza I with a variation in the letter
Pre-chorus	68	86	Repetition of the first pre-chorus already exposed formerly
Chorus	86	99	Peak of the singing
Puente II (Coda)	203	221	Piano solo
Coda final	222	230	Prepare for the end of the song

Source: Authors.

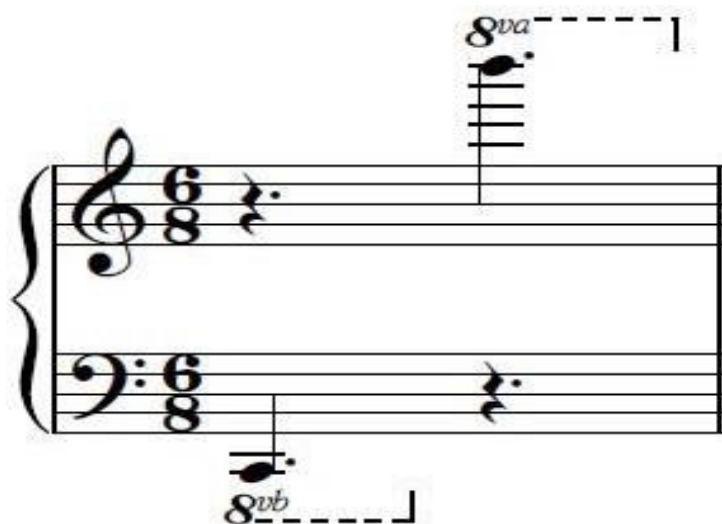
In general terms, the work has three differentiated sections related to the lyrics of the song: the first stanza, the chorus and the second stanza. The sections that revolve around present an instrumental deployment typical of the technical development of the instruments that originally intervene in the recording but that in turn allow transitions to the main parts of the musical theme.

E. Tonal melody

All the sounds of the work are based on a tonal center, and the predominance of the tonal degrees (I and V) is observed throughout the work, either diatonic major or its relative minor. This element is characteristic of most of the musical airs of the region, and is related to the development of skills in the rhythmic and melodic plane, whose melodic construction emphasizes the real notes of the chords of each measure and in other cases privileges the development of sequences based on the main motifs of each section.

F. Tessitura area

Distance between the lowest and highest sound of the work adapted to the piano



In the piano adaptation, it has been decided to use the entire instrumental range, taking advantage of the timbral capacity that the piano can offer to enrich the musical aspects of the work.

G. Melodic Profile

The work has two types of melodic profile, the wavy and the arpeggiated. In relation to the undulating melodic profile, the sequences of embroideries that allow the study of fingerings typical of this type of ornaments stand out, such as the one presented in the following example:

Adapt. Ivan R. Calderon

$\text{♩} = 100$ $\text{♩} = 135$

p *p*

7

12 8^{va}

17 (8)

1 2 3 1 3 1 3 2 3 2 1 3

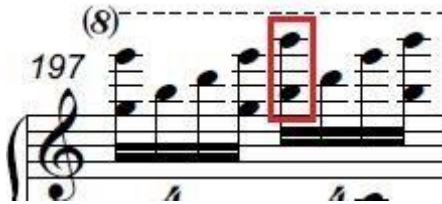
1 3 3 1 2 3 1 3 1 3 2 1 3 4 5 4 3 2 3 4 5 3 4 2

2 3 3 1 3 1 2 1 2 4 8^{va}

1 3 2 3 4 2

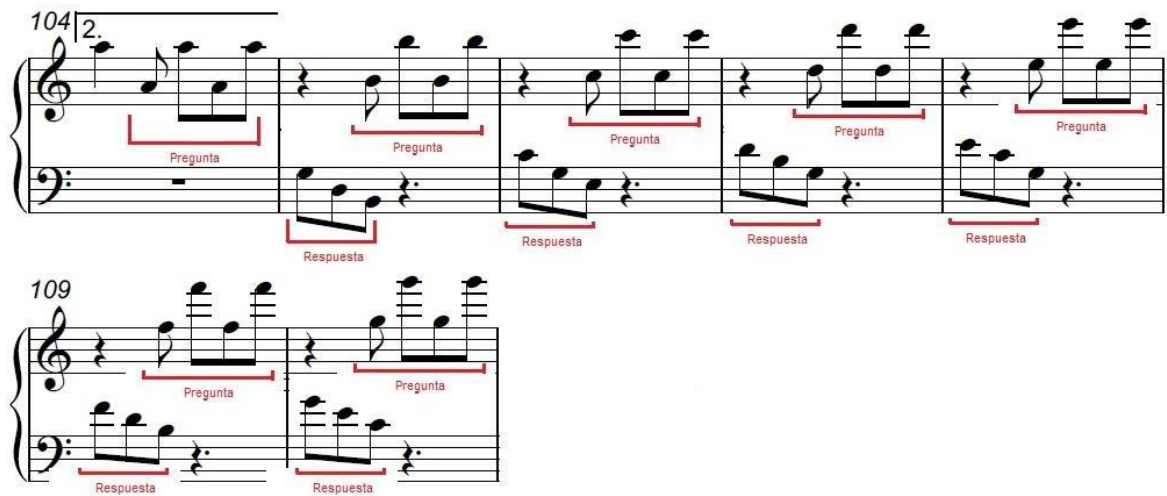
H. Highlight

The highest sound of the work is presented in bar 197, and in turn represents the climactic point of the section, which also works a sequence of broken arpeggios in both hands. This passage provides material for the mechanical study of these arpeggios.



I. Question-Answer

Another section of technical interest is the succession of motifs presented in bars 104-110. The left hand develops descending arpeggios and the right hand, as a question and answer, proposes a motif in octaves. This section should be studied taking into account, for the right hand, the rotation of the wrist that facilitates its execution.



J. Embellishment Notes

In the piano adaptation of the puya there are few ornamental notes: the most outstanding is the acciacatura in bar 20-24 and which is repeated again in bar 216-219. On the other hand, there are passing notes, embroideries and props within the melodic profile that allow variety within the melody.

K. Metric and Agogic

In the metrical aspect, Puya's air is written at 6/8; it is a fairly fast tempo compared to its companion the Merengue which is also written with the same measure of time. In the piano adaptation, at the beginning of the introduction, there is a change in tempo velocity from dotted quarter note equal to one hundred, to dotted quarter note equal to one hundred and thirty-five, on the fifth beat of the third bar. This is related to the calls of tamboras typical of the folkloric musical airs of the Caribbean and their invitation to dance.

L. Interpretive analysis

The following is a description of the most relevant technical difficulties encountered when interpreting the transcription of the puya al piano and the study possibilities applied for its technical solution.

M. Technical difficulties and possible solutions

One of the most complex technical difficulties of the work is found in the piano solo that goes from bar 192 to 201 (as can be seen in the score attached to this work). It is a section where the piano performs a sequence of arpeggios in different inversions in rhythm of quavers of sixteenth notes.

The image displays a musical score for piano solo, spanning measures 188 to 201. The score is presented in four systems, each with a treble and bass staff. The first system (measures 188-192) shows a treble staff with arpeggiated figures and a bass staff with a steady accompaniment. The second system (measures 193-197) continues the arpeggiated sequence. The third system (measures 198-200) shows a continuation of the arpeggiated figures. The fourth system (measures 201-202) shows the final measures of the sequence. Red boxes highlight specific arpeggiated figures in measures 192, 193, 194, 195, 196, 197, 198, 199, 200, and 201. A dashed line with a circled '8' indicates an 8-measure phrase starting at measure 188.

For the proper execution of this passage, which also involves the execution of sixteenth note quakers within a ternary rhythm, it is suggested to carry out this method of study.

N. Study recommendations:

- Study the arpeggios present there in blocks and with a relatively slow tempo. This guarantees that the 6/8 pulse is internalized and in addition to this, it allows the harmonic progression to be memorized, as presented below:

The image displays three staves of piano music, labeled 'Pno.' on the left. The first staff shows measures 188 to 192, with a yellow box highlighting the final measure (192). The second staff shows measures 193 to 200, with a yellow box highlighting the entire staff. The third staff shows measures 200 to 202, with a yellow box highlighting the first measure (200). The music is written in a 6/8 meter, featuring a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes in the right hand and chords in the left hand. A '8va' marking is present above the second staff.

- Second, it's important to start making the rhythmic transition into sixteenth notes and incorporate arpeggios. To do this, it is suggested to make the same sequence proposed by the blocks but in eighth notes within the ternary matrix of the 6/8 meter.
- As a third step, it is suggested to change the rhythm of the right hand into sixteenth note quakers, while the left hand continues to do the chords en bloc.

The image displays four staves of piano music, each labeled 'Pno.' on the left. The staves are numbered 188, 193, 197, and 201. The notation includes treble and bass clefs, with various rhythmic markings such as 4, 8, and 8va. The music features complex polyrhythms and is annotated with red and yellow boxes highlighting specific technical challenges.

- And finally we intersperse the previous exercise, that is, use the quadruplets in the left hand and the chords in the right. After that, you can start to increase the speed of the passage.
- In bars 26-38, as shown by the score, one of the great technical difficulties of music in general appears: the polyrhythm based on two different rhythms executed simultaneously between a binary measure of quadrilles of sixteenth notes against a ternary measure of eighth notes in 6/8.

The image displays a musical score for a piece titled 'Puya Vallenata' on piano. The score is written for a grand piano, with a treble and bass staff. The key signature is one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is 4/4. The score is divided into four systems, each containing measures 23-27, 28-32, 33-37, and 38-42 respectively. The first system (measures 23-27) shows a melodic line in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. The second system (measures 28-32) features a more complex rhythmic pattern with triplets and a 'mp' (mezzo-piano) dynamic marking. The third system (measures 33-37) continues the melodic and bass lines, with a '8va' (octave) marking above the right hand. The fourth system (measures 38-42) concludes the piece with a final melodic phrase and a 'mp' dynamic marking. Red boxes highlight specific rhythmic patterns in the right hand across all systems, and a red box highlights the bass line in the first system. A red 'mp' marking is also present in the first system.

- To do this, it is suggested to study in a percussive way using the palms, feet, clicks, voice, among others. On the one hand, the quadrille will be executed in the right hand and on the other the pulse will be taken. Then it will alternate with the triplet in the left hand. It is important to have the fundamental accompaniment of a metronome that will carry the stability and constancy of the pulse in order to intertwine the binary with the ternary. After mastering this polyrhythm, then proceed to execute from the instrument.

V. CONCLUSIONS

It was achieved through technical and interpretative musical analysis, to give an approach to the music of Colombian folklore such as vallenato in the air of the puya, emphasizing characteristics and stylistic aspects of the work "*he left me alone*" from the piano execution in particular.

Strategies must continue to be designed as reference materials in musical notation that facilitate the learning of these native airs of the Caribbean region for any type of musical instrument in general, and thus be able to build from another perspective different methods and studies to address this type of music. This could have an impact on Colombian and foreign musicians, unrelated to folklore, getting to know part of our Colombian musical culture.

On the other hand, the final concert in degree modality, together with the monographic essay as a documentary support, allow to link two necessary aspects so that the recital is not only the execution and interpretation of the selected works, but also contributes to the pedagogical development in the student's training, thus contributing to the growth of comprehensive musical education.

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ANNEXES

Me dejó solito

Comp. Jorge Celedón

Arre. Jimmy Zambrano

Adapt. Iván R. Calderón

♩. = 100 ♩. = 135

Piano

p *sfz* *f*

7

Pno.

12 *8va* *f* *p*

17 (8) *f* *mf* *8va*

23 (8) *mp*

2

28 (8)

Pno.

33

Pno.

38 (8)

Pno.

42

Pno.

45

Pno.

48

Pno.

51

Pno.

p

56

Pno.

61

Pno.

66

Pno.

sf *mp* *p*

71

Pno.

sf *mp* *p*

77

Pno.

1. 2.

sf *f*

4

81

Pno.

p

84

Pno.

p

87

Pno.

mp

91

Pno.

mp

96

Pno.

p

To Coda

101

Pno.

p

107

Pno.

5va

(8)

112

Pno.

f

mf

117

Pno.

mp

123

Pno.

5va

129

Pno.

f

mf

6 (8)-----|

134

Pno.

ff

139 Solo Caja Am Em

148 F C

157 Solo Guacharaca Am

169 Em F Solo Piano *mf*

179 8va-----|

The image shows a piano score for a piece titled "Puya Vallenata". The score is written for piano (Pno.) and includes various musical notations such as treble and bass staves, notes, rests, and dynamic markings. The score is divided into systems, with measure numbers 134, 139, 148, 157, 169, and 179 indicating the start of each system. The score includes a key signature change to one flat (F major/D minor) and a time signature change to 8va. The piece concludes with a final measure marked with a double bar line and a repeat sign.

185 ^{8va} 7

Pno.

191 (8)

Pno.

195 ^{8va}

Pno.

199 (8) D.S. al Coda

Pno.

203 Φ

Pno.

mp

8 208

Pno.

f

212

Pno.

8va

(8) 218

Pno.

8va

224

Pno.

227

Pno.

ff