

The Multicultural and Eclectic Art Songs of Manuel M. Ponce

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## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis focuses on the art songs by Mexican composer Manuel Ponce. Details about his life and education will relate to his synthesis of eclectic musical styles. In particular, the poems to which he sets music exemplify his broad sources that he draws upon spanning continents and generations. Topic theory will point out salient elements of Ponce's multifaceted musical discourse, as he valued the voices of music from different corners of the world.

The path of research to pursue these sources took me to the archives of Mexico's National University Library. A predominant amount of these materials has been translated for the purpose of this research, and this effort will result in a positive contribution to our body of knowledge on Latin American art song.

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## **The Multicultural and Eclectic Art Songs of Manuel M. Ponce**

### **Introduction**

Latin American art songs are often unfamiliar to many academics and performers in the United States. Although a large number of Latin American composers contributed to this genre, most of their output is virtually unknown and seldom performed, researched or taught at universities and conservatories. On the other hand, numerous German *lieder* and French *mélodies* are part of the standard repertoire, and are frequently programmed by singers and pianists all over the world. Thus, it is important to disseminate academic research, and promote the performance of the rich body of Latin American art songs that has been neglected for a long period of time.

In particular, several songs discussed in this essay will make a reference to Latin America's intercultural diversity, showcasing the multifaceted influence of Spanish, French, Chinese, and Cuban topics. Topic theory will be a resource to provide a stylistic analysis of selected art songs, pointing out Ponce's text painting through the assimilation and fusion of Spanish music, French Impressionism, Chinese Pentatonicism, and Cuban musical elements. Ponce's eclectic sets of art songs are a clear representation of the composer's synthesis of heterogeneous and intercultural elements.

In his biography of the composer, Pablo Castellanos proposed a classification of Ponce's work into Romantic and Modernist stages. The first period included Ponce's childhood and early training in Mexico, study abroad in Italy and Germany, a two-year exile in Cuba, and professional activities up to 1924; while the Modernist phase consisted of the composer's nine-year stay in Paris from 1925 to 1934, and his last fourteen years



in Mexico City.<sup>1</sup> In addition, Jorge Barrón suggested the existence of a transitional period (1915-1925).<sup>2</sup>

Despite being a prolific art song composer, Ponce's stylizations and arrangements of approximately sixty-two *canciones mexicanas* (folk songs) have become more familiar than his neglected art songs, which are rarely performed both in Mexico and abroad.

Among art songs written by Latin American composers, it is worth highlighting and providing a survey of compositions for voice and piano by the Mexican composer Manuel Maria Ponce (1882-1948), who wrote over sixty original vocal works in Spanish, Italian, French, English, and German. His output of original songs also includes twelve folk-like *canciones* in which he used his own lyrics. Existing research on Ponce's music shows the urge to do further study and performance of the composer's vocal music, while also mentioning the role of Clementina Maurel, a Mexican mezzo-soprano of French roots that became Ponce's wife, and premiered all of her husband's vocal compositions.

Ponce's vocal output deserves to be recognized as an important contribution to the corpus of Latin American art song, as the composer set music to more than fifty poems in five different languages by poets from nine nationalities. Ponce's eclectic sets of art songs are a clear representation of the composer's cosmopolitan interest, in setting to music, works by Latin American, European and Asian poets. Thus, Ponce's first-hand experiences and syncretic ideology demonstrate the diverse topics that he incorporated

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<sup>1</sup> Pablo Castellanos, *Manuel M. Ponce*. Compiled and revised by Paolo Mello (Mexico City: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1982), 75.

<sup>2</sup> Jorge Barrón Corvera, *Manuel Maria Ponce: A Bio-Bibliography* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2004), 22.

into his songs, showcasing his preference towards a plural and international style, as a way to depict the eclectic identity and diversity of Latin America.

### **Early years in Mexico**

The Mexican composer Manuel M. Ponce was born on December 8, 1882, in Fresnillo, a town located sixty miles away from the capital of the state of Zacatecas. He was born during a temporary stay of his family in Zacatecas, leaving the neighboring state of Aguascalientes, their place of origin. A few months later after Manuel's birth, the Ponces moved back to the town of Aguascalientes, where Manuel spent most of his childhood together with his eleven elder siblings. The family lived in the San Juan de Dios neighborhood, surrounded by fountains and gardens. The son of Don Felipe Ponce and Maria the Jesus Cuellar, Manuel showed musical talent from an early age. Noticing his musical interest, Manuel's elder sister Josefina taught him his first piano lessons. Although Manuel's parents did not have a musical background, they were receptive of Manuel's artistic inclinations.<sup>3</sup>

Ponce composed his first piece at age five, the piano piece *Dance of the small pox*, during a recovery season after he unfortunately had contracted that illness. Manuel had one of his first performances a year later, when he played the popular *March of Zacatecas*, a Mexican patriotic song and the anthem of the state of Zacatecas.<sup>4</sup>

While living in Aguascalientes, Manuel had his first musical experiences. At age ten, he enrolled in piano lessons with Cipriano Avila. Manuel became a member of

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<sup>3</sup> David López Alonso, *Manuel M. Ponce*, (Mexico City: Ediciones Botas, 1971), 11.

<sup>4</sup> Jorge Barrón Corvera, *Manuel M. Ponce: A Bio-Bibliography* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2004), 1.

church choirs and soon he started playing the organ during catholic services at local churches. Around this time, Ponce wrote his only choral piece in Latin, the *Ave Gratia Plena* motet, which he dedicated to the Virgin Mary. The homophonic and imitative sections of this piece recall the *stile antico* from the Renaissance period.

Besides his local church activities, Manuel also enjoyed spending time at the annual State Fair of San Marcos, where he had his first encounter with vernacular songs from different regions of the country.<sup>5</sup> When he was eighteen years old, Ponce felt that the town of Aguascalientes had limited opportunities left for his artistic growth, and he made the decision to continue his education in Mexico City. After taking some private piano and theory lessons, he decided to enroll in Mexico's National Conservatory of Music.<sup>6</sup>

Ponce had mixed feelings regarding his decision to move to Mexico City. He composed his first salon pieces for the piano, such as mazurkas, gavottes, and other dances. Taking part in the thriving cultural environment of the capital of Mexico, Ponce frequented social gatherings that were organized by friends with artistic backgrounds. On the other hand, he perceived that the pace of his studies at the National Conservatory of Music was not meeting his expectations, as he was not being allowed to take placement exams, as he recalls:<sup>7</sup>

The director refused to take into consideration the studies I had already completed. . . and that compelled me to return to Aguascalientes, where I gave

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<sup>5</sup> Corazón Otero, *Manuel M. Ponce and the Guitar* (Westport: Bold Strummer Ltd., 1994), 7.

<sup>6</sup> Otero, 8.

<sup>7</sup> Jorge Barrón, *Manuel Ma. Ponce: A Bio-Bibliography*, 2.

private lessons and was the organist for the church of the Tercera Orden de San Francisco, until 1904, when without any official backing, I decided to go to Europe.<sup>8</sup>

### **First trip to Europe**

After a long transatlantic trip, Ponce continued his studies in Italy. Ponce's compositions from this period are deeply rooted in the long-lasting influence of Romantic pianist-composers, such as Chopin and Liszt. In Bologna's *Liceo Rossini*, the young Mexican composer took some composition lessons with Enrico Bossi, who regarded some of Ponce's early works as "too old fashioned." However, Bossi noticed the student's potential and he recommended him to receive further instruction from the pianist Luigi Torchi and the composer Cesare Dall'Olio, who was one of Puccini's pupils.<sup>9</sup>

Following Dall'Olio's death in 1905, Ponce moved to Berlin and enrolled at the Stern Conservatory of Music, where he took piano lessons with Martin Krause, a renowned piano pedagogue and one of Franz Liszt's late pupils. Ponce's studio classmates were interested in the folk music of their country and at the time of their Mexican colleague's farewell, and they gave him a copy of Albert Friedenthal's "*Stimmen der Völker*" ("Voices of the People"), a collection of folk songs that included a chapter on Mexican music. Members of Krause's studio enthusiastically listened to some of Ponce's first arrangements of Mexican popular songs, such as "harmonizations of "Marchita el Alma"

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<sup>8</sup> F. Gómez Hidalgo, "Creadores de Mexico, El maestro Ponce," ("Creators from Mexico, Maestro Ponce"), *Estampa* (Mexico City), (February 1943): 9.

<sup>9</sup> Jorge Barrón, *Manuel M. Ponce: A Bio-Bibliography*, 3.

(Faded Soul), “Ven, oh Luna” (Come, oh Moon), “La Barca del Marino” (The Sailor’s Boat), and “Perdí un Amor” (I Lost a Lover).”<sup>10</sup>

Upon his return to Mexico in 1907, Ponce resumed his teaching activities. He kept an active private studio and obtained a piano professor position at the National Conservatory, where his students premiered the music of Debussy in Mexico. One of Ponce’s pupils was a young boy named Carlos Chavez, who later became one of Mexico’s most prominent composers. Chavez performed “Clair de Lune” from the *Suite Bergamasque* in an all-Debussy piano recital.<sup>11</sup>

### **Advocacy of Mexican folk song**

In addition to his teaching and compositional activities, Ponce took part in some lectures that focused on his research on Mexican popular song. Some of them were published in magazines from Mexico City. One of these lectures occurred in August of 1912, where the composer stated that:

. . . I consider it the duty of every Mexican composer to ennoble the music of his native country, giving it artistic form, dressing it with polyphonic clothing and preserving with love the popular melodies which are the expression of the national soul.<sup>12</sup>

Inspired by collections of vernacular music, Ponce composed stylized transcriptions and original compositions that recaptured the sonority of Mexican popular

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<sup>10</sup> Barrón, “Three Violin Works by Mexican Composer Manuel Maria Ponce (1882-1948): Analysis and Performance” (D.M.A. diss., University of Texas at Austin, 1993), 4.

<sup>11</sup> Robert Stevenson, *Music from Mexico* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1952), 233.

<sup>12</sup> Ricardo Miranda, *Manuel M. Ponce: Ensayo sobre su vida y obra* (Manuel M. Ponce: An Essay on his Life and Works) (Mexico: Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes, 1988), 23. Trans. by the author.

songs. During this time, Ponce began to explore the use of large forms, and also quoted Mexican *canciones* in some of his piano works, such as “El Durazno” (“The Peach,”) and “Acuérdate de mí” (Remember me) in the *Balada Mexicana*, and “Las Mañanitas” (Mexican Happy birthday song) in the set of variations of his Mexican Rhapsody No. 2.

As a result of his research, Ponce outlined the characteristic features of Mexican song. He concluded that the standard *canción mexicana* is in binary form, leading to a dramatic climax at the B section. These songs tend to have a harmonic motion from the tonic to the dominant, and they are often in four-part harmony with an arch-like melodic contour. The expression of love is a central topic in many of these compositions, such as in Ponce’s set of *Twelve Canciones Mexicanas*, published in 1912.<sup>13</sup> One of these love songs was “*Estrellita*” (Little Star), which undoubtedly became the composer’s best known and most performed song. Also during this time, Ponce composed his only two art songs in German with poems by Adolf von Schack: “Breit über mein Haupt dein schwarzes Haar” (Spread over my head your black hair), and “Ihr Lerchen” (You larks). The former poem was also set to music by Richard Strauss three decades before Ponce’s setting. Two years after the publication of his *Canciones Mexicanas*, Ponce wrote “Si tu pouvais venir” (If you could come), a song in French with lyrics by the Swiss poet Charles Fuster. Also in 1914, he wrote “Ho bisogno...” (I need...), a song in Italian with a poem by Adda Negri. In his other two songs in Italian, Ponce set music to the poems “Forse” (Perhaps) by Marco Lesona, and “Sperando Sognando” (Waiting, Dreaming) by Enrico Golisciani.

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<sup>13</sup> Leonora Saavedra, “Manuel M. Ponce y la canción mexicana”, *Heterofonía*, No. 142 (2010): 155-182

### **Wife and collaborator: Clema Ponce's background**

During his tenure in the 1910s at Mexico's National Conservatory, Ponce met the voice student Clementina "Clema" Maurel (1891-1966), a Mexican mezzo-soprano of French descent, whose parents were the French businessman Sarrazin Maurel, and Columba Villagra, a Mexican woman from the capital of the state of Coahuila.<sup>14</sup>

Reminiscing Robert Schumann's increased interest in *Lieder* composition after he met his wife Clara Schumann, Clema also became the inspiration of and dedicatee of most of Ponce's vocal works since the start of their relationship in 1913. However, the couple soon experienced physical distance when Manuel joined a group of self-exiled Mexican artists who left their country as the result of social and political instability, which was provoked by the Mexican Revolution of the 1910s.<sup>15</sup> Ponce lived in Cuba from 1915 to 1917, keeping a long-distance relationship with Clema through love letters, such as one that he sent her soon before his return to Mexico:

Havana, Cuba, April 4, 1917, Ponce to Clema Maurel:

. . . And the sweet emotion that your memory arouses joins with the emotion of the music that I have been hearing in my mind. . . And now my soul speaks with yours in the peace of the evening, speaking and singing all the phrases of love.<sup>16</sup>

Only a couple of months after this letter, Ponce moved back to Mexico and got married to Clema in September of 1917. She kept all the love letters that her fiancé had

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<sup>14</sup> Jorge Barrón, *Escritos en torno a la Música Mexicana* (Zacatecas, México: Universidad Autónoma de Zacatecas, 2014), 46.

<sup>15</sup> Otero, 10.

<sup>16</sup> Yael Bitrán, "Manuel M. Ponce. Love Letters from Cuba (1915-1916)", *Heterofonía: Revista de Investigación Musical* 118-119 (1998): 106. Trans. by the author.

sent her, and she became Ponce's romantic partner and musical collaborator. The composer dedicated several of his pieces to her, such as the *Romance of Love* for piano. Clema also premiered most of her husband's vocal works, and she aimed to promote the publication of her husband's compositions.<sup>17</sup>

Clementina completed her musical training with several voice teachers. At the National Conservatory, she took her first lessons with the Italian dramatic tenor Carlo Pizzorni, who sang leading roles of several of Verdi's operas. Travelling to New York, Clema also studied with the Italian-American vocal coach Delia Valeri (1870-1947). Further instruction in Paris included masterclasses with the Swiss contralto Lina Falk (1889-1943), and the French soprano Cecile Ritter-Ciampi (1859-1939).<sup>18</sup> One of Clementina's most prominent mastercourse teachers was the French mezzo-soprano Claire Croiza (1882-1946), who taught at the École Normale de Musique and the Paris Conservatory, at which the French baritone Gérard Souzay became one of her most renowned pupils. Hélène Abraham, another one of her students, documented some recollections of her teacher's focus on articulation and diction. As an interpreter, Croiza championed French *mélodies*, and collaborated with prominent composers such as Gabriel Fauré, Henri Duparc, Claude Debussy, Maurice Ravel, and Francis Poulenc.<sup>19</sup>

### **Activity as music critic, researcher and professor**

After their wedding, the Ponces remained in Mexico City for eight years. Manuel M. Ponce became the principal conductor of Mexico's National Symphony, a position

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<sup>17</sup> Yael Bitrán, 107.

<sup>18</sup> Jorge Barrón, *Escritos en torno a la Música Mexicana*, 50.

<sup>19</sup> Betty Bannerman, *The Singer as Interpreter, Claire Croiza's Masterclasses* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1989), 43.



that he held for two years. In addition, he maintained an active career as a composer, professor and writer. As the founder, contributor, and co-editor of several musical magazines, Ponce wrote close to forty articles that discussed a variety of different topics, such as musical aesthetics, Mexican popular music and the music of Stravinsky. Some of these essays were published in the *Mexico Moderno* (Modern Mexico) magazine, which was led by the Mexican poet Enrique Gonzalez Martinez. Moreover, Ponce directed the monthly publication of the *Revista Musical de Mexico* (Musical Magazine of Mexico) from 1919 to 1920.<sup>20</sup>

A new collaboration emerged in 1923 when Ponce met the virtuoso guitar player Andres Segovia from Spain, who edited and performed many of Ponce's guitar works. The communication between these two artists was documented in *The Segovia-Ponce Letters*, published by Miguel Alcazar. Segovia encouraged the composer to increase the literature of guitar works. Ponce's compositions have become part of the standard repertoire of the guitar, in a catalogue that includes multiple sonatas, suites, variations and a concerto, the "Concierto del Sur" (Concerto from the South) for guitar and orchestra.<sup>21</sup>

### **Studies in Paris**

In 1925, the Ponces moved to Paris, where they remained for the next eight years and the composer had first-hand contact with some of the most prominent artists of his time. At age forty-two, Ponce had the ambition to update his compositional language and desired to study under the guidance of Paul Dukas at the École Normale de Musique de

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<sup>20</sup> Barrón, A Bio-Bibliography, 11.

<sup>21</sup> Otero, 18.

Paris. In his *Nuevos Escritos Musicales* from 1948, Ponce described his teacher's masterclasses, where the French composer examined the compositions of his students before analyzing standard works from the musical literature, such as some of Beethoven's string quartets.<sup>22</sup> The composer of *L'apprenti sorcier* complimented his pupil's progress during his studies in Paris, stating that:

The compositions of Manuel M. Ponce have the stamp of the most distinguished talent. They cannot be classified according to any scholastic criteria. I would feel reticent to assign him a grade even if it was the highest one, in order to express my satisfaction at having had a disciple so outstanding and personal.<sup>23</sup>

Encouraged by the Cuban poet Mariano Brull, from 1928 to 1929 Ponce directed the *Gaceta Musical*, a Spanish-language musical magazine that discussed the activities of contemporary composers from multiple countries, including essays written by distinguished musicians, such as Dukas and his pupils Manuel de Falla, Joaquín Rodrigo and Heitor Villalobos. The contributors of the *Gaceta musical* had a special interest in Spanish, French and Latin American topics.<sup>24</sup>

Ponce's compositions from his Parisian period reveal a synthesis of a wide variety of influences that include elements of Spanish and Latin American music with some references to Neoclassicism and French Impressionism. Ponce's harmonic vocabulary

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<sup>22</sup> Manuel M. Ponce, *Nuevos Escritos Musicales* (Mexico: Editorial Stylo, 1948), 25.

<sup>23</sup> École Normale de Musique de Paris, Notes on the student Monsieur Manuel M. Ponce (grades corresponding to 1929-1930). Quoted in Pablo Castellanos, *Manuel M. Ponce* (Mexico City: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1982), 43.

<sup>24</sup> Barrón, A Bio-Bibliography, 16.

became increasingly chromatic, exploring the use of polychords and unresolved dissonances in his sets of art songs.

In the 1930s, Ponce's first four song sets were performed in Paris by Clema and the Russian-Jewish pianist Julian Krein, who was a member of Manuel's circle of friends. The event took place at the École Normale de Musique de Paris, where in a concert review published in *Le Figaro*, Mussy stated that "the influence of the French masters is noticeable in the *Mélodies* . . . Ponce uses a cosmopolitan language with a craft worthy of distinction."<sup>25</sup>

### **Final years in Mexico and prizes**

In 1933 Ponce returned to Mexico, where he lived for the remainder of his life. There he composed his last three sets of art songs, as well as his final orchestral, chamber, and solo works. As a professor and lecturer at some of Mexico City's most important institutions, Ponce became a pioneer in ethnomusicological studies in Mexico, taking the first steps to research and preserve the music of his country.

During his lifetime, Ponce received multiple medals by institutions from several Mexican states and he was awarded honorary membership positions in Argentinian, Costa Rican and Cuban associations. Ponce had the privilege of being the first recipient of Mexico's National Arts and Sciences Award in 1948, honored as the first musician and composer to receive it. In a ceremony that took place a couple of months before Ponce's death, the prominent Mexican composer Carlos Chavez praised the achievements of his

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<sup>25</sup> Georges Mussy, "Le Compositeur Mexicain Manuel M. Ponce" ("The Mexican Composer Manuel M. Ponce") *Figaro* (Paris), February 14, 1934. Clema Ponce, voice; Julien Krein, piano. The Parisian premiere of Ponce's first four sets of art songs occurred in 1934 at the *École Normale de Musique de Paris*.

teacher, who he considered as one of the first “explorers of popular Mexican art.”<sup>26</sup>

Suffering from poor health conditions during the last years of his life, Ponce died in April of 1948.

### **Catalogue of Art Songs**

#### **Ponce’s Literary Sources**

Most of Ponce’s poets were contemporaries, and he selected several works from Latin American poets who were associated with Modernism, a literary trend that occurred in the last decades of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century. Originally designed to label the writings of the Nicaraguan poet Ruben Dario, Hispanic Modernism favored verbal eloquence, exoticism, and universalism. Building up on the philosophy of Hispanic Modernist writers, Ponce’s universalist ideology is shown through his heterogenous choice of poems:

*Two Songs* (1925, Editions Maurice Senart; 1928, Gaceta Musical de Paris).

Ponce’s *Two Songs* are in English: “I Plucked your Flower, O World!,” and “One Morning in the Flower Garden;” with Spanish and French versions written by the Cuban poet Mariano Brull. The composer set music to two poems from "The Gardener" collection by Rabindranath Tagore. In addition to the set of *Two Songs*, Ponce also set music to Tagore’s *La Mort* poem. A contemporary of Ponce, the Indian poet Tagore studied both Oriental and Western poetry, and believed that universalism should be the

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<sup>26</sup> David López Alonso, Manuel M. Ponce (Mexico City: Ediciones Botas, 1971), 125-126.

strategy to deal with “arrogant nationalism.”<sup>27</sup> Using the metaphor of a rose to describe the individuality of different cultures in relation to universalism, Tagore stated that:

As the mission of the rose lies in the unfoldment of the petals which implies distinctness, so the rose of humanity is perfect only when the diverse races and the nations have evolved their perfect distinct characteristics but all attached to the stem of humanity by the bond of love.<sup>28</sup>

The 1913 Nobel Prize in Literature was awarded to Rabindranath Tagore —the first recipient of this award outside of Europe— who frequently described the beauty of Nature, often linked the image of flowers with women’s existence.<sup>29</sup> In the poem called “I Plucked your Flower, O World!”, Tagore recalls the temporality of life, relating the pain of life to a thorn prick. Continuing on the same mood, “One Morning in the Flower Garden” is a poem where Tagore incorporates the image of a lotus flower as a symbol of feminine purity.

In an effort to match the poetic images of faded flowers and thorns, Ponce avoids providing a clear tonal center in his set of “Two Poems,” relying on chromaticism and unresolved harmonic progressions. In “I Plucked your Flower, O World!”, the composer frequently incorporates planing on ascending and descending ninth chords. On the other hand, the second song contains open arpeggios with polychords that move in contrary motion. Moreover, the composer inserts some displaced accents that disrupt the *soavissimo* mood.

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<sup>27</sup> Prabhakar Machwe, “Tagore, the Oriental and the Modern,” *Indian Literature*, Vol. 19, No. 5 (September-October 1976): 80-94, 81.

<sup>28</sup> Mohammad A. Quayum, In Search of a Spiritual Commonwealth: Tagore's "The Home and the World," *Journal of South Asian Literature*, Vol. 31/32, No. 1/2 (1996/1997): 32-45.

<sup>29</sup> Sukanta Chaudhuri, *Cambridge Companion to Rabindranath Tagore* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 67.

**Example 1:** Polychordal contrary-motion arpeggios in mm. 1-3 of “One Morning in the Flower Garden” from Ponce’s set of Two Songs:



*Tres Poemas de Lermontow (Three Poems by Lermontow)* (1926; Universidad Nacional de Cuyo). This set has poems by Mikhail Yuryevich Lermontow, a nineteenth-century Russian poet. Lermontow admired the poetry of Pushkin and Lord Byron, whose poems have the sort of the “agitated emotional intensity” characteristic of Lermontow’s works.<sup>30</sup> Ponce dedicated this cycle to his wife, and selected three of Lermontow’s poems: “Las Estrellas” (The Stars), “El Angel” (The Angel), and “La Gitanilla” (The Gypsy Girl). Marie Nageotte Wilbouchewitch translated these poems from Russian to French. Besides the original setting in French, singers can also use Ponce’s own Spanish translation or Roberto Esteva’s English version of the poem.

As one of the best-known nineteenth-century Russian poets and a contemporary of Pushkin, Lermontow wrote several poems that have been set to music by more than fifty composers. Most of these musicians were from Russia, such as Sergei Rachmaninov, whose Chorus Op. 15: No. 6 contains a version for female chorus of “The Angel” poem.<sup>31</sup> Also containing poems by Lermontow, Franz Liszt’s song “Das Gebet”

<sup>30</sup> Janko Lavrin, “Notes on Lermontow’s Romanticism,” *The Slavonic and East European Review*, Vol. 36, No. 86 (Dec., 1957): 69-80, 73.

<sup>31</sup> Nina Vernadsky, “Lermontov in Russian Music,” *The Slavonic and East European Review*. American Series, Vol. 2, No. 1 (Mar., 1943), 6-30.

S. 331 and Ponce's second set of art-songs are examples of works by non-Russian composers.

In his musical setting of Lermontow's "The Stars" poem, Ponce provides a piano introduction with a dense polychordal texture that exploits the opposition of black and white keys. In addition, the composer incorporates text-painting into the piano part by placing both hands in the high register of the instrument, alluding to the representation of the stars and sky. In a similar fashion, the last stanzas of Ponce's "The Angel" art song include a reminiscence of the contrary motion arpeggios that he used in his musical setting of "One Morning in the Flower Garden", suggesting tonal and metric ambiguity as musical devices to depict the verses: "an angel is going to a world of tears" and "it could forget heaven's sweet song". In the third and last song of the set, Ponce explored the gypsy musical topic through the frequent use of augmented seconds to set music to Lermontow's "The Gypsy Girl" poem. In addition, the gypsy girl's reference to her "thousand remedies" is depicted with static ostinato harmonies, occasional ornaments, and rapid arpeggios.

*Tres Poemas de M. Brull (Three Poems by M. Brull)* (1927-1931; Editions Maurice Senart). These poems in Spanish were written by Mariano Brull (1891-1956), a Cuban poet who was affiliated with the Hispanic Modernist literary movement. Brull spent part of his life in Spain and France, where he collaborated with Ponce in multiple

projects, such as the 1928 edition of the *Gaceta Musical*, a Spanish language music periodical based in Paris.<sup>32</sup>

Ponce dedicated “Granada” (Granada) to his friend and guitar virtuoso Andrés Segovia; whereas “Por el Ir del Rio” (Going Through the River), and “Verdehalago” (Verdehalago) were dedicated to Clema Maurel. In the “Verdehalago” poem, Brull inserted some made-up words that he called *jitanjáforas*, which he chose for their phonetic sound instead of for their real meaning.<sup>33</sup>

*Poésies Chinoises (Chinese Poems)* (1931-1932; Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México). In this set, Ponce set music to “Les deux flutes” (The Two Flutes), “Petite fête” (Little Party), “L'orage favorable” (The Favourable Oracle), “Nocturne”, and “La Calamité” (Calamity). Four of the five Chinese poems that Ponce used were originally written during the seventh and eighth century —the Golden Age of Chinese art— while China was under the rule of the Tang Dynasty. One of the most prominent Chinese poets from this period, the seventh-century poet Li-Bai, wrote two poems that Ponce used in his cycle: “The Two Flutes” and “Little Party”. Ponce selected another three poems: “The Favourable Storm” by Chang-Wou-Kien (1879-1931), “Nocturne” by the eighth-century poet Wang-Tchang-Ling, and “Calamity” by the Tang Dynasty poet Yang’ Khiong.<sup>34</sup> Ponce used five French translations by 20th- French writer Franz Touissant, who collected and published them in the 1920 publication of *The Jade*

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<sup>32</sup> Ricardo Lárraga, “Mariano Brull y la poesía pura: Bibliografía y Evolución” (PhD diss., New York University, 1981), 118.

<sup>33</sup> Lárraga, 142.

<sup>34</sup> Joerissen, 1



*Flute*. Three years later, Gertrude Laughlin Joerissen published *The Lost Flute*, an English translation of Touissant's work.<sup>35</sup>

Over a decade before Joerissen and Touissant's publications, the German poet Hans Bethges published his "Chinese Flute" collection of German translations of Tang Dynasty poems. Several of these poems were written by the prominent poet Li-Bai, and Gustav Mahler set music to four of them in his *Das Lied von der Erde* (Song of the Earth), which includes allusions to pentatonic collections.

Pentatonicism was an important syntactic-structural element in music from different continents, and was used by many Western composers during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Among several others, Debussy and Ravel frequently used pentatonic collections to depict musical exoticism. In addition, pastoral primitivism associated with the flute can be found in "La Flûte de Pan" from Debussy's *Chansons de Bilitis*, and "La Flûte Enchantée" (The Enchanted Flute) from Ravel's *Shéhérazade* song cycle.

Another exotic-pastoral song is Ponce's "Two Flutes" from his set of *Chinese Poems*, where the composer provides ten unrepeated pitches that bring to mind the idea of chromatic saturation. In addition, a dialogue between two flutes—mostly represented in the voice and right-hand piano part—is depicted with the use of the high register of the piano, trills, and rapid right-hand figurations.

During his time in Paris, Ponce sent a letter to his wife in 1932, in which he mentioned the Chinese names of the pentatonic scale: "Gong (palace), Shang (minister),

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<sup>35</sup> Gertrude Laughlin Joerissen, *The Lost Flute and other Chinese Lyrics* (London: T. Fisher, 1923), 1.

Jiao (horn), Zhi (manifestation), and Yu (wings.)”<sup>36</sup> Pointing out that any of these pitches could be used as the beginning of the scale and that pentatonic collection do not contain half-steps,<sup>37</sup> Ponce constantly used the major pentatonic scale in his set of *Chinese Poems*. In particular, both the vocal and piano part of the second, third, and fifth songs of the set - “Little Party,” “The Favourable Storm,” and “Calamity”- have references to collections on the “Gong” pentatonic mode, which consists of three ascending whole steps, followed by a minor third and another whole step:

**Example 2:** “Gong” F pentatonic collection in mm. 3-4 of “Calamity” from Ponce’s *Chinese Poems*

The image displays a musical score for two measures of a piece. The top staff is a vocal line with lyrics in French: "Les feux du bi-vouac il - lu -" and "mi - nent le ciel." The bottom staff is a piano accompaniment. The piano part features a prominent pentatonic scale in the right hand, which is the "Gong" mode (F major pentatonic). The left hand has a more complex accompaniment. The page number 38 is visible at the bottom right.

Ponce incorporated the pastoral-exotic pentatonic topic in his set of “Chinese Poems,” while the songs contain frequent allusions to nature, such as references to flowers, rivers, wind, rain, sky, and moon. Similarly to his other song sets, the composer played with the juxtaposition of passages on white and black keys in the “Petite Fête”

<sup>36</sup> Ho Lu-Ting and Han Kuo-huang, “On Chinese Scales and National Modes,” *Asian Music*, Vol. 14, No. 1 (1982), pp. 132-154

<sup>37</sup> Adei Berea Núñez, *Epistolario Intimo y Cronología* (México: 1ra edición Kindle, 2016), 211.

38 Ponce, Manuel M. *Poésies Chinoises* (Mexico City: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2001)

(Little Party) song, the opening of which presents a F# pentatonic scale on black keys, while the right hand plays rustic parallel fifths on white keys:

**Example 3:** Rustic parallel fifths and pentatonic allusions in the “Little Party” song



Regarding the harmonic language of the set of *Chinese Poems*, Ponce also exploits the use of common materials of 20th century music, such as added-note, tertian and quartal chords. Moreover, the toccata-like “Calamity” contains allusions to whole-tone collections, interspersed with parallel voice leading, and open chordal sonorities that recall the opening of Debussy’s “Cathédrale Engloutie” (Sunken Cathedral) piano prelude.

In terms of the relationship between music and text, Ponce’s “Calamity” includes clear examples of text painting, such as knights galloping across the mountain, which are depicted by ascending pentatonic scales in a quartal-chord texture. Other instances of text depiction include the use of short and pianissimo sixteenth-notes in the lowest register of the piano, in reference to an ocean that is asleep. On the other hand, a climatic coda contributes to the representation of a lightened-up sky.

*Cuatro poemas melancólicos (Four Melancholy Poems)* (1931-1935). In this set, Ponce used two poems in Spanish by the Mexican writers Frias and Urbina. Additionally, he selected works in French by the female poets Pomès and Noailles. For the first and fourth songs of the set, Ponce selected José D. Frias' "Poema de primavera" (Poem of Spring), and Luis Gonzaga Urbina's "La Visita" (The Visit).

Dedicated to Ponce's wife, the second and third *Melancholy Poems* are Mathilde Pomès' "Le nuage" (The Cloud), and the Comtesse de Noailles' "Poème LXVIII L'Honneur de souffrir" (Poem LXVIII The Honor of Suffering) from 1927. Ponce's set of *Four Melancholy Poems* is the only song cycle that remains unpublished. However, the manuscripts can be consulted at the Ponce Archive of the National University of Mexico's School of Music in Mexico City.

In the *Melancholy Poems* —his only song set in two different languages — Ponce makes use of diverse musical materials. Although all of these four songs are short and have non-functional harmony, the first one of the set is the most diatonic of the set. In contrast, "The Cloud" song is full of constantly changing harmonies, counterbalanced with static rhythmic ostinatos throughout the piece. In a similar fashion, the saturated chromaticism of the last song of the set represents a dense and unstable path to death. Dedicated to the memory of a deceased brother, Ponce concludes this song with a reference to God and a place of eternal rest, musically depicted with a hollow Bb chord in the lowest register of the piano.

*Cuatro poemas de Francisco A. de Icaza (de la vida honda y de la emoción fugitiva), Four Poems by Francisco A. de Icaza (of Deep Life and Fugitive Emotion)* (1936-1937; Ediciones Clema M. de Ponce; Southern Music). In 1922, the Mexican Modernist poet Francisco de Icaza (1863-1925) published his collection of poems from the *Songbook of Deep Life and Fugitive Emotion* in Madrid, Spain.<sup>39</sup> Ponce selected four poems from this collection: “De oro” (Of Gold), “La sombra” (The shadow), “La fuente” (The Fountain), and “Camino arriba” (Up the Road). As an alternative option to the original setting in Spanish, Roberto Esteva provided an English version of the poems, whereas J.M. Gonzalez de Mendoza wrote an optional French translation.

Similarly to his other song sets, Ponce skillfully incorporates text painting to relate the music to the poems. In the first song of the *Four Poems by Icaza*, a static windmill is represented with frequent tritones and eerie ostinato patterns in the low register of the piano, followed by a *piu mosso* section where the singer narrates that the windmill is put in motion. In a similar mood, dotted rhythms in the key of E major in the second song refer to a journey towards the East, whereas the appearance of a shadow is depicted with a change to the minor mode. Also with E as a central pitch, frequent pedal notes, and seventh chords, the third song refers to a still and cooing fountain. In contrast, Ponce incorporates perpetual motion, hemiola, cross-hand figuration, as well as double and repeated notes as a musical representation of the pains of unrequited love, thus having some parallelisms with the topic of Franz Schubert’s *Schöne Müllerin* song cycle.

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<sup>39</sup> Rafael Federico Castillo, “La Figura Literaria de Icaza” (PhD diss., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1975), 48.

*Seis Poemas Arcaicos (Six Archaic Poems)* (ca. 1938; Editorial Cooperativa Interamericana de Compositores). Ponce set to music six poems from the Spanish Renaissance *Cancionero Musical de Palacio* (Palace Songbook). The text of “Mas quiero morir por veros” (I Would Rather Die to See You) is by the fifteenth-century Spanish poet and composer Juan del Encina, who was the author of multiple *villancicos*, an important genre in Spanish Renaissance music. Ponce also selected five anonymous poems from the *Palace Songbook*: “Zagaleja del Casar” (Shepherdess from Casar), “De las sierras” (From the Hills), “Sol, Sol, Gi, Gi” (Sol, Sol, Gi, Gi), “Desciende el valle” (Descending the Valley), and “Tres Morillas” (Three Moorish Girls).

For his penultimate set of songs, Ponce selected six poems from Francisco Asenjo Barbieri’s edition of the *Cancionero Musical de Palacio*. The *Cancionero*’s manuscript was discovered towards the end of the nineteenth century by Gregorio Cruzada at the Palacio Real in Madrid, Spain.<sup>40</sup>

The *Cancionero Musical de Palacio* (Palace Songbook) is the most comprehensive collection of Spanish music from the Renaissance period. The *Cancionero* contains almost five hundred songs, with part songs that were composed between the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. This period of time has been defined as Spain’s *Siglo de Oro* (Golden Age), as it has been described “an era of great artistic and cultural productivity when Spain enjoyed a prestige unequaled in her history.”<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>40</sup>Edward Soto, “A Study of the Villancicos of Juan del Encina in the *Cancionero Musical de Palacio*.” (Master’s Thesis, California State University, Fullerton, 1985), 9.

<sup>41</sup> Soto, 9.

Ponce's setting of "Mas Quiero Morir por Veros" is in ABA' form. The middle section of this piece deals with the topic of courtly love, alluding to the battles of a Spanish *Caballero* (Spanish knight). The piano part in mm. 18-30 recaptures the sound of the guitar, an instrument of paramount significance in Spanish music, as the ostinato pedal notes in the bass line imply the sound of the lowest string of the guitar.

Intriguingly, the "Zagaleja del Casar" poem contains shifts in the level of discourse with its bilingual setting: after some lines in Spanish, the poetic persona shifts to Italian, while "*A Napoli voglio andar*" (I want to go to Napoli), occurs at the end of the first stanza. Additionally, further cases of disjunction might be found in the third *Archaic Poem*: the first stanza of "From the Hills" narrates the beauty of a landscape, whereas the second stanza is a warning towards people who are not willing to move to a different place. Furthermore, the fourth poem discusses the narrator's love to his mother, alternating it with references to solfège syllables:

**Example 4:** Solfège syllable "Re" in "Sol, Sol, Gi, Gi" from Ponce's Six Archaic Poems, m. 40:



Piano interludes with harmonic progressions in stepwise motion introduce two of Ponce's *Poemas Arcaicos*. In "Desciende el Valle", Ponce harmonizes an ascending tetrachord with Dm, E, F7, and G chords. On the other hand, the opening of "Mas Quiero

Morir Por Veros” presents a descending tetrachord in Western terms might be analyzed as i-VII-VI-V, a harmonic progression that is commonly used in Andalusian music.<sup>42</sup>

In the *Seis Poemas Arcaicos*, Ponce recaptures modal sonorities, which evoke music from the Renaissance period. At the beginning of “Mas quiero morir por veros,” Ponce incorporates the G Aeolian mode. In mm. 10-11, firm hope is depicted with an allusion to the B Lydian mode:

**Example 5:** Lydian mode in Ponce’s “Mas Quiero Morir por Veros” from *Seis Poemas Arcaicos*, m. 10



The melodies of Moorish music from Southern Spain relate to different *maqāmāt* (sets of modes). Two of these modes have been used for several centuries: the *bayati*, which corresponds to a natural minor scale; and the *hijaz*, which resembles a Phrygian scale with raised third and sixth degrees.<sup>43</sup> Ponce incorporates the *hijaz* mode in m. 26 of “Zagaleja del Casar” –the second song of his *Seis Poemas Arcaicos*– where he provides a tetrachord with A as a tonal center: A-Bb-C#-D. The piano interludes of this song

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<sup>42</sup> Manuel, 73.

<sup>43</sup> Peter Manuel, “Modal Harmony in Andalusian, Eastern European, and Turkish Syncretic Musics,” *Yearbook for Traditional Music*, Vol. 21 (1989): pp. 70-72.



alternate the use of the Phrygian mode with an altered version of the *hijaz*. This mode is also used to depict three Moorish girls in “Tres Morillas,” the last song of the set.

Ponce profusely uses the Phrygian mode in his *Seis Poemas Arcaicos*: the pastoral siciliano-like pattern in 6/8 meter of “De las Sierras” (From the Hills) –the third song of the cycle– is followed by a quasi-glissando E Phrygian scale. Statements of the A Phrygian mode occur in the last two songs of the set: “Desciende el Valle” (Descending into the Valley) and “Tres Morillas” (Three Moorish girls).

***Tres Poemas de Enrique González Martínez (Three Poems by Enrique González Martínez)*** (1939; Editorial Cooperativa Interamericana de Compositores). González Martínez’s poetry has multiple allusions to the sea, earth and sky. In his metaphorical language, the poet frequently refers to the sea as a signifier of death.<sup>44</sup>

During the 1920s, Ponce and the Mexican Modernist writer Enrique González Martínez collaborated in the *Mexico Moderno* magazine from Mexico City.<sup>45</sup> Almost two decades after this editorial project, Ponce musicalized three poems by González Martínez: “Nocturno de las Rosas” (Nocturne of the Roses), “Onda” (Wave), and “La Despedida” (The Farewell).

In “Nocturne of the Roses,” sorrow is depicted by painful ostinato seconds in the key of F minor with occasional whole-tone references, whereas “hope” is set in the major mode. In the next song, an allusion to water is made by pairing a barcarolle pattern in the bass line with undulating arpeggios. To complete his last set of songs, Ponce provided

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<sup>44</sup>José Maria Topete, “El Mundo Poético de E. González Martínez” (PhD diss., University of Southern California, 1949), 6.

<sup>45</sup> Barrón, *A Bio-Bibliography*, 11.

constant guitar-like pedal points with changing harmonies to depict a last greeting and final farewell.

### ***First Performances***

In 1929, the first performance of *Two Songs*, and “Granada” from *Three Poems by M. Brull* took place at a high school in Mexico City, where Ponce collaborated with the singer Dolores Pedrozo. Ponce dedicated the *Two Songs by Tagore* to his wife, who sang a symphonic transcription of them with the National Symphony of Mexico in 1935.<sup>46</sup>

A year before, the Parisian premiere of Ponce’s first four song cycles occurred in February 9 of 1934 at the École Normale de Musique de Paris, where Clema Ponce sang an unpublished transcription for voice and string quartet of the *Two Songs by Tagore*. In addition, Clema premiered the sets of *Three Poems by Lermontow*, *Three Poems by Mariano Brull*, and the *Chinese Poems* in collaboration with the Russian pianist Julian Krein.<sup>47</sup> In March 12 of 1937, Ponce and his wife premiered the *Four Poems by Francisco A. de Icaza (of Deep Life and Fugitive Emotion)* at the Reforma Hotel’s Beethoven Hall in Mexico City.<sup>48</sup> Two months later, the Ponces travelled to the state of Nuevo Leon, Mexico, where they performed selected songs from *Three Poems by Brull*, *Four Poems by Icaza*, and *Two Songs by Tagore*. In September of 1938, Clema and her husband premiered the *Six Archaic Songs* in the state of Michoacan. There are reports of other Mexico City singers and pianists who performed the *Archaic Songs* in 1948, 1949,

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<sup>46</sup> Gerónimo Baqueiro Foster, "La Sinfónica de México inauguró su temporada en Bellas Artes." (The Mexican Symphony Orchestra inaugurated its season at the Fine Arts Palace) *Excelsior* (Mexico City), (June 1935): 78.

<sup>47</sup> Barrón, 77.

<sup>48</sup> Barrón, *A Bio-Bibliography*, 77.

1950, and 1958. The last of these performances involved an orchestral transcription of this set, performed by the soprano Rosa Rimoch and Mexico's National Conservatory of Music Symphony Orchestra.<sup>49</sup> Ponce and Clema premiered two of the *Poems by Gonzalez Martinez* in August of 1939, a performance that took place at Mexico City's *Palacio de Bellas Artes* (Palace of Fine Arts).<sup>50</sup>

### ***Recordings***

After decades of neglect, selected art songs by Ponce were finally recorded for the first time in the last decade of the twentieth century, almost five decades after the composer's death. In the 1990s, the *Cameristas de Mexico* ensemble recorded a voice and string quartet setting of the *Two Songs by Tagore*. In the same decade, the mezzosoprano Gabriela Thierry was invited by this Mexico City-based string ensemble to record a transcription for chamber orchestra of half of the *Archaic Poems*.<sup>51</sup> In 2000, a member of the *Cameristas* recorded an unpublished transcription for cello and piano of Ponce's "Granada" from *Three Poems by Mariano Brull*.<sup>52</sup>

In 1997, the baritone Jose Manuel Delgadillo and the pianist from Zacatecas Alfonso Vazquez travelled to Mexico City, where they recorded Ponce's "Le nuage" (The Cloud), a song in French from the set of *Four Melancholy Poems*.<sup>53</sup>

The following year, the Mexican mezzo-soprano Encarnacion Vazquez and the Polish-Mexican pianist Josef Olechowski recorded the sets of *Three Poems by Gonzalez*

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<sup>49</sup> Barrón, *A Bio-Bibliography*, 248.

<sup>50</sup> Barrón, *A Bio-Bibliography*, 81.

<sup>51</sup> Barrón, *A Bio-Bibliography*, 248.

<sup>52</sup> Barrón, *A Bio-Bibliography*, 81.

<sup>53</sup> Jorge Barrón, *Ponce: A Bio-Bibliography*, 230.

*Martinez* and *Four Poems by Icaza*. A few months later, the same two artists recorded the voice and piano setting of the *Six Archaic Poems*. Also in 2000, the Mexican soprano Lourdes Ambriz and the Mexican pianist Alberto Cruzprietto recorded the set of *Six Archaic Poems*.<sup>54</sup>

In 2005, the soprano Silvia Rizo and the pianist Armando Merino recorded Ponce's eight song cycles, which up to date is still the only recording that includes all of Ponce's sets of art songs. Rizo and Merino's project was sponsored by the Quindecim record label, and the School of Music of the National University of Mexico. Fifteen years later, the Mexican pianist Alejandro Barrañón and the Romanian soprano Anne-Marie Condacse recorded "Por ti mi Corazon," "Espera," as well as two of Ponce's songs in French: "*Un Soir*" (An Evening), and "*Si tu pouvais venir*" (If you could come).

### **Stylistic Analysis of Selected Art Songs**

Ponce's set of *Three Poems by Brull* is a perfect example of Ponce's interest in universalism, in which he integrates a wide variety of influences that include elements of Spanish and Cuban music, with some references to French Impressionism. In this chapter, I will point out particular musical topics that highlight aspects of Ponce's international style. In "Granada" from *Three Poems by Brull* Ponce recaptured the sound of the guitar and a musical depiction of the Alhambra Palace's decorated walls. In "Going Through the River," the composer focused on the topic of water, which had been previously explored by Schubert, Liszt, and French Impressionist composers. Lastly, Ponce's "Verdehalago" contains rhythmic patterns that are frequently found in Latin

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<sup>54</sup> Barrón, *A Bio-Bibliography*, 81.

American music, such as the *Cinquillo Cubano* that Ponce also incorporated into some of his solo piano works.

### **Spanish Topic – “Granada”**

Ponce and the Cuban poet Mariano Brull (1891-1956) worked together on multiple projects.<sup>55</sup> A result of their collaboration was the 1928 edition of the Spanish language *Gaceta Musical* music journal, which had featured frequent articles written by Spanish, French, and Latin American composers.<sup>56</sup>

Ponce composed the set of *Three Poems by Mariano Brull* in France, which was premiered in 1934 at the École Normale de Musique de Paris by the Russian-Jewish pianist Julian Krein and the Mexican mezzosoprano of French descent Clementina Maurel (1891-1966), who was Ponce’s wife and musical collaborator, and whom the composer dedicated the second and third songs of the set. Ponce dedicated the first song of the set to his friend Andres Segovia, one of the most prominent Spanish guitarists of the twentieth century.

Ponce’s first song is an ode to Granada, the capital of Andalucia—*Al-Andalus* became the Arabic name for this southern region of Spain—which fell under Muslim rule from 711, and ended with the fall of the Granada Emirate in 1492.<sup>57</sup> Granada was the

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<sup>55</sup> In a concert review, Brull wrote in "Manuel Ponce, notable compositor y pianista americano." (Manuel Ponce, prominent composer and pianist from the American continent) *El Figaro* (Havana) 32, no. 24 (19 November 1916): 693: "With a program integrated in its totality by his own works and performed by him too, the artist Ponce won one of the most pure and legitimate successes that any artist has ever won among us. . . ."

<sup>56</sup> Jorge Barrón, *Manuel Maria Ponce: A Bio-Bibliography* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2004), 16.

<sup>57</sup> Jonathan Shannon, "Performing Al-Andalus, Remembering Al-Andalus: Mediterranean Soundings from Mashriq to Maghrib," *The Journal of American Folklore* 120, no. 477 (2007): 308-34, 311.

capital of this Emirate, and Mercedes Garcia argues that “ the fact that an Arabic and Muslim tradition existed in Spain constituted, as we have said, a very notable singularity with respect to other European regions.”<sup>58</sup>

### **Melismatic *cante jondo***

The most impressive architectural landmark of Granada’s Muslim tradition is the Palace of the Alhambra. The Muslim Nasrid Dynasty built this palace from 1238 to 1492, which became a staple of its political and cultural power.<sup>59</sup> The Nasrids covered the walls and ceilings of the Alhambra with ornate Arabesque decorations, which embellish and beautify this architectural milestone. Similar to the Alhambra palace’s architecture, Ponce inserts decorations to his “Granada” song from *Three Poems by Mariano Brull*. The *scherzando* chords of mm. 28-32 are full of mordents, which bring up to mind the abundant ornamentation of the Moorish construction. Moreover, seventh chords and chromatic motion are additional elements of this richly decorated texture:

**Example 6:** Arabesque decorations in m. 28 of “Granada”, from *Tres Poemas de Mariano Brull*



<sup>58</sup> Mercedes García-Arenal and Fernando Rodríguez Mediano, Sacred History, Sacred Languages: The Question of Arabic in Early Modern Spain," *The Teaching and Learning of Arabic in Early Modern Europe* (January 2017): 153.

<sup>59</sup> Olga Bush, "The Writing on the Wall: Reading the Decoration of the Alhambra," *Muqarnas*, Vol. 26 (2009): 119.

Ponce's "Granada" includes allusions to the arabesque singing of the *cante jondo* from Southern Spain. The Moors introduced *cante jondo* to Spain when they conquered the Iberian Peninsula at the beginning of the eighth century. As Spain was under Moorish rule during eight centuries, from 711 to 1492, Spanish music incorporated "ornamental figures, which are found in Oriental and Persian music."<sup>60</sup>

*Cante jondo* flourished in the region of Andalucia, in Southern Spain. Herrera y Sanchez claims that in this style of singing, "we find synthesized the racial distinction, the elegance, sadness, frustration, dreams, love, and the individualism of the *andaluz*." The lyrics may include the allusion to "solitude, physical pain, resignation, sorrow and melancholy." In this music, the *cantaor* (singer) performs virtuosic melismatic passages, in richly ornamented rising and falling gestures.<sup>61</sup>

Manuel de Falla, a Spanish composer who was a contemporary of Ponce, frequently incorporated *cante jondo* textures into his music, such as in the last movement of *Noches en los Jardines de España* (Nights in the Gardens of Spain), a concertante work for piano and orchestra in which the soloist performs multiple ornate arabesques.

Falla used similar arabesque ornaments in the first movement of his *Nights in the Gardens of Spain* for piano and orchestra. This movement is titled *En el Generalife*, which refers to the name of the gardens of the Alhambra Palace. The Spanish composer frequently incorporates these mordents in the *Poco calmo* section, leading to the

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<sup>60</sup> F. Herrera y Sánchez, "Cante Jondo: The Soul of Andalusia," *Hispania*, Vol. 36, No. 1 (Feb., 1953): pp. 88-90.

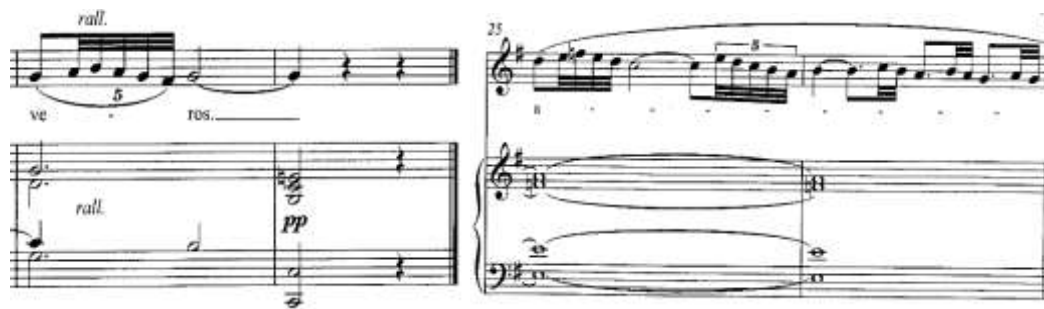
<sup>61</sup> Herrera y Sánchez, *Cante Jondo*, 88.

recapitulation of this movement, while second violins, oboes, clarinets, and the English horn alternate statements of these decorative mordents.

In a similar fashion, Ponce decorates the vocal line of his set of *Poemas Arcaicos* with melismatic passages. In mm. 32-33 of “Mas Quiero Morir por Veros,” Ponce alludes to the sorrowful character of *cante jondo*, as the *cantaor* admits to feel *gran tormento* (great torment). Melismatic passages in m. 39 and 40 refer to the passionate desire to meet the beloved.

“Sol, Sol, Gi, Gi” –the fourth song of the *Seis Poemas Arcaicos*, which includes solfège letters in its title and the first stanza– also contains ornate arabesques. In its second stanza, Ponce inserts melismatic passages to recapture the longing of the *cantaor*, who wishes to see her beloved mother, as he sings: *iba a ver a mi madre / a quien mucho amé* (I was going to see my mother, who I loved so much).

**Example 7:** Cante Jondo in Ponce’s *Seis Poemas Arcaicos*: “Mas Quiero Morir por Veros,” m. 39-40; “Sol, Sol, Gi, Gi” mm. 25-26



## The guitar

The Moors introduced the qīthārah (guitar) and its family of chordophones to the Granada Kingdom. Consequently, lutes, vihuelas and guitars have been a staple of



Spanish music for several centuries. Chordophones of different sizes and with diverse amount of strings were widely used in court and popular music settings.<sup>62</sup>

Ponce's association with the guitar comes from his lifelong friendship with the prominent Spanish guitarist Andres Segovia, one of the foremost guitar players of the twentieth century. Segovia collaborated with and premiered many of Ponce's guitar works, also proposing changes of certain passages for idiomatic purposes. Ponce's most important composition for the guitar was his *Concierto del Sur*, for guitar and orchestra.

After a brief orchestral introduction in the first movement of his *Concierto del Sur*, Ponce provides a grand opening statement of the guitar with sonorous strummed chords. Strumming is an important element of guitar music, and several composers have used this device while writing piano works that recapture the sound of the guitar, such as Isaac Albeniz, who incorporates this texture at the beginning of his "Granada" from the *Suite Española* Op. 47, for solo piano. Strummed chords are also frequently used by Ponce in his "Granada" song from *Three Poems from Mariano Brull*:

**Example 8:** Guitar Strumming in Ponce's "Granada" from *Tres Poemas de Mariano Brull*, mm. 1-2



<sup>62</sup> Adolfo Salazar, "La Guitarra, Heredera De La Kithara Clásica." *Nueva Revista De Filología Hispánica* 7, no. 12 (1953): 118-26.122

<sup>63</sup> Manuel M. Ponce, *Three Poems by Mariano Brull* (Paris: Editions Maurice Senart, 1931)

Allusions to guitar plucking are also occasionally found in certain compositions, such as in Alberto Ginastera's "Dance of the Old Herdsman," the first piece of his *Argentinian Dances* for piano, op. 2. Ponce also recaptures the sound of each of the open strings of the guitar (from lowest to highest) in the piano part his "Granada" art song, inserting it three times: twice during the second stanza and a final statement in the last two measures of the piano postlude:

**Example 9:** Allusion to the sound of the open strings of the guitar in Ponce's "Granada", m. 36



Mariano Brull's "Granada" poem has five stanzas. In Ponce's musical setting of the poem, the topic of the strummed guitar is found on the first and last stanzas. On the other hand, quartal chords are prominent in the *un po' più lento* second stanza, whereas in the next stanza, Ponce makes use of ornate arabesques that lead to some quintuplets in the piano part, causing a sense of metric shift to duple meter in the piano postlude, as the composer highlights the first and third beats of the measure. After a return to the strummed-guitar topic, the final piano postlude contains a restatement of the quintuplet figuration.

## **“Going Through the River” - The water topic**

The pianistic representation of water has been a recurrent topic for several centuries. Among the most significant, the piano parts of 48 of Schubert's *Lieder* have textures that allude to this imagery, with “thrilling accompaniments of unprecedented intensity, extraordinary difficulty, and unifying power.”<sup>64</sup> The poems of Schubert's art songs refer to brooks, river streams, lakes, fishermen and the sea. Schubert skillfully depicted this imagery with nuanced figurations, particularly repeated notes, tremolos and continuous arpeggios.

Liszt transcribed fifty-six songs by Schubert and ten of them deal with the topic of water. The Hungarian composer mostly followed the structure of Schubert's original pieces, and sometimes enriched and filled out the textures of some sections. Liszt inserted some cadenzas in some of these transcriptions, such as in his rendition of “Die Forelle,” where in mm. 4-7 he wrote a pentatonic setting on black keys in a descending arpeggio figuration. A reference to Liszt's attraction to the nuances and colors of water can be traced in one of his letters:

At the place where I am staying, I can hear the melancholy sigh of the waves breaking over the pebbles and see the last rays of the setting sun gild the mountain tops. If you only knew what magic colors it casts on the waves as it leaves them!<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Alexandra Lewis, “Evocations of water at the piano, From Schubert to Liszt and Ravel,” (PhD. diss., City University of New York, 2005), 46.

<sup>65</sup> Franz Liszt, *An Artist's Journey, Lettres d'un bachelier ès musique, 1835-1841*, trans. and annotated by Charles Suttoni (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 66.

Liszt wrote several solo piano works that are inspired by the theme of water, such as “Au lac de Wallenstadt” (The Lake of Wallenstadt), “Au bord d’une source” (Beside a Spring), and “St François de Paule marchant sur les flots” (St. Francis of Paul walking on the waves). One of Liszt’s most significant works from the 1870s is “Jeux d’eau a la Villa d’Este” (The Fountains of the Villa d’Este), where he foreshadows the fluid arpeggio figurations of Debussy and Ravel.

Both Debussy and Ravel composed some pieces where water is a central topic. Besides the orchestral *La Mer*, Debussy wrote seven piano works that evoke water; while Ravel composed three—*Miroirs*, *Gaspard de la Nuit* and *Jeux d’eau*—virtuosic renditions of representations of liquid textures.

In order to examine the compositions with evocations of water imagery, it is important to study the gradations of musical shaping. Concerning musical contour, De Woolfson states that “global characteristics of the water topic include repetition, cyclicity, and sequencing of musical material, both in terms of phrase and arpeggiated, sweeping gestures.” She points out parallelisms between the shaping of musical phrases and the motion of waves in the ocean, regarding these musical gestures as successions of multiple swells.<sup>66</sup>

Inspired by a century-long tradition of pianistic evocations of water, Manuel Ponce incorporates this musical gesture in his “Por el Ir Del Rio ” (Going through the River) art song, the second one of the set from *Three Poems by Mariano Brull*, where it is

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<sup>66</sup> Emily de Woolfson, “Harmony Adrift: The Influence of the ‘Water Topic’ on Compositional Choices in Ravel’s *Jeux d’eau*,” (Master’s thesis, Pennsylvania State University, 2018), 15-22.

possible to detect some parallelisms between Liszt's *Jeux d'eau* and Ponce's "Going Through the River"; as both pieces have the same key signature, duple meter and thirty-second note arpeggio figurations.

However, Liszt and Ponce's arpeggio figurations oscillate in different ways. While Liszt's opening arpeggios are constantly in ascending motion, Ponce's undulating gestures have more fluctuations in terms of frequency of direction changes. Both hands tend to move in the same direction in one-beat-long patterns but sporadically the oscillating textures change to contrary motion. Moreover, the former used continuous arpeggiations on C#7 and F# in the opening measures; whereas the latter incorporates the opposition of white and black keys, as in the opening F# arpeggio in the left hand followed by an A minor one in the right hand. The last note of the first beat and the first note of the second beat are often a half-step or a whole-step apart.

**Example 10:** Ponce's "Going Through the River" from *Three Poems by Mariano Brull*, mm. 1-2

**II. POR EL IR DEL RIO**

Poema de  
**Mariano BRULL**

Manl. M. PONCE

Allegretto mosso

CANTO

PIANO

*pp*

*ad. simile*

*p*

For el

In the "Going Through the River" poem, the Cuban poet Mariano Brull used the metaphor of water as a depiction of a journey. Ponce's stream of fluctuating arpeggios

alludes to the poetic persona's desire to escape to a different place. The poem's references to "crazy water/ dead water/ muddy water" allude to the conflicted psychological state of the narrator, and the potential allegory of water as a symbol of death. Ponce's musically depicted the content of the poem with the use of continuous chromatic arpeggios, frequent dynamic and melodic contour changes and the lack of a clear tonal center. Ponce's piano postlude builds up to a *più mosso* splash of sound that gradually loses momentum and fades away.

Besides Ponce's setting of "Going Through the River", another art song with undulating gestures is Ponce's "Onda" (Wave), from his set of *Three Poems by Enrique Gonzalez Martinez*. In this song, the pentatonic right-hand arpeggios are paired with a barcarolle left-hand accompaniment:

**Example 11:** Pentatonic right-hand arpeggios paired with a barcarolle left-hand pattern in mm. 1-3 of "Onda" from Ponce's *Three Poems by Gonzalez Martinez*.

**ONDA**  
(Wave)

Poema de  
Enrique González Martínez

Manuel M. Ponce

**CANTO** Allegretto vivo (♩ = 68)

**PIANO** *pp* *p*

En - la - rro - yo te -  
This break un winds its

67

Most barcarolles have a characteristic long-short rhythmic pattern set in 6/8 meter, and had been favored by composers such as Chopin, Mendelssohn, Faure,

<sup>67</sup> Manuel M. Ponce, *Three Poems by González Martínez* (Montevideo: Editorial Cooperativa Interamericana de Compositores, 1943)

Offenbach, among others. In the realm of art song, the poems from Ponce's "Onda" and Franz Schubert's "Goldenfahrer" (Gondolier) D. 808 contain allusions to water as a journey towards death.

Before the "Onda" art song, Ponce had previously composed solo piano barcarolles, such as the second movement of his *Cuban Suite*, as well as his *Mexican Barcarolle Xochimilco*. Similarly to barcarolles' longtime association with the gondolas of Venice, Ponce titled his Mexican Barcarolle after the *trajineras*, which are colorfully decorated wooden boats that float on the canals of the Xochimilco Lake, located about seventeen miles south of Mexico City. Ponce's *Xochimilco* barcarolle calls attention to a folk-like melodic quality, as the composer frequently harmonizes his melodies with thirds and sixths.

### **Cuban Topic**

Almost sixteen years before the publication of the *Three Poems by Mariano Brull*, Ponce lived in Havana from 1915 to 1917. Trying to attract the attention of Cuban audiences, he incorporated Cuban musical elements into some of his piano works from this period, such as the *Cuban Prelude*, *Elegy of the Absence*, *Cuban Rhapsody* and *Cuban Suite*.

In 1916, Ponce composed his Cuban Suite for piano, which evokes his nocturnal impressions of the island. The Cuban suite has three movements: "Serenata Marina" (Marine Serenade), "Plenilunio" (Full Moon), and "Paz de Ocaso En el Rio Damují" (Peace at Twilight by the Damují River). The serenade movement is in ABA form, beginning with an introduction that consists of *come accordando* (like a memory)

augmented chords, followed by an A section in G minor that recaptures the sound of the guitar, as well as a lyrical singing line from m. 21. After brief modulations to the keys of C minor, E major, and a return to G minor; the B section—in Bb major—is full of parallel fourths and fifths, ending with an eight-measure transition of augmented chords that leads to the restatement of the A section.

The “Plenilunio” movement of the Cuban Suite is a placid barcarolle in G major, occasionally disrupted by the use of hemiola. Contrastingly, the *con profundo dolore* (with intense pain) B section in Eb minor modulates to Gb major and Bb major, where Ponce incorporates the characteristic rhythmic pattern of the *Cinquillo Cubano* in mm. 45 and 49. A restatement of the A section occurs, followed by non-chord decorations of the theme, ending with a right-hand trill and a harp-like ascending arpeggio.

The opening of the last movement anticipates the impressionistic-like textures of some of his works from subsequent decades. In “Peace at Twilight,” Ponce makes extensive use of unresolved seventh and ninth chords, which are often supported by pedal points that last several bars. After a gentle breeze-like introduction of fifteen bars, the composer incorporates twenty-seven statements of seventh chords, which have a one-bar ostinato rhythmic pattern that includes eighth notes and sixteenth-note triplets that lean into the second beat of every bar. In this section, the melodic line is found in the inner voices:



**Example 12:** Ending of the breeze-like introduction and first ostinato bar in “Peace at Twilight” from Ponce’s *Cuban Suite* for piano, mm. 12-15:



### **Cuban Topic -The *Cinquillo Cubano***

In his Cuban-inspired works, Ponce frequently used rhythmic ostinatos. One of the most prominent is the *Cinquillo Cubano*, a pattern that includes two statements of an eighth note followed by two sixteenth notes, in which the third note is tied to the eighth note of the next beat. This syncopated pattern is found in many Cuban dances, such as in the slow-paced *Danzón*. Ponce incorporated the *Cinquillo* in several of his works, and this rhythmic pattern is frequently found in different sections of his Cuban Rhapsody for solo piano.

The highly chromatic forty-eight-measure introduction of Ponce’s *Rapsodia Cubana* contains multiple statements of the *Cinquillo* rhythmic pattern. The “Cuban Rhapsody” has an A theme in F# major in *tempo di danzón*, followed by an *Allegretto espressivo* B theme in D minor and an A’ section with virtuosic contrary-motion octaves. Additionally, the parallel sixths and thirds of the barcarolle C theme in F# major bring up to mind a folk-like sonority:

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<sup>68</sup> Manuel M. Ponce, *Suite Cubana* (Mexico City: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2000)

**Table 1:** Ponce's *Rapsodia Cubana* for piano:

Measures	Section	Key	Features
1-48	Intro	F#m	Highly chromatic, octaves on multiple registers, cadenza
48-105	A theme	F#m	<i>Tempo di Danzón</i> , moderate-paced syncopated dance + sequences and polyrhythm (LH <i>cinquillo</i> vs RH triplets)
106-161	B theme	Dm	<i>Allegretto espressivo</i> followed by Liszt-like filigrees
162-242	A'		Virtuosic <i>Cinquillo</i> octaves in contrary motion + cadenza
243-325	C theme	F#	Barcarolle theme + RH “concert paraphrase” over LH melody

**Example 13:** Rhythmic pattern of the *Cinquillo Cubano* in the introduction and first theme of Ponce's *Cuban Rhapsody* for piano, mm. 1 and 49:



69

The pattern of the *Cinquillo Cubano* is also found in some art songs by Ponce, such as “Espera” (Wait), “Insomnio” (Insomnia), and “Un Soir” (An Evening). Both “Espera” and “Insomnio” have constant *Cinquillo* patterns, as well as an A section in the minor mode followed by a B section in a parallel major key:

<sup>69</sup> Manuel M. Ponce, *Rapsodia Cubana* (Havana: Anselmo López, 1915)

**Example 14:** *Cinquillo Cubano* rhythmic pattern in mm. 1-3 of Ponce’s “Insomnio”

English Adaptation by  
RINA de TOLEDO

Insomnio  
(Alone)

Words and Music by  
MANUEL M. PONCE

Moderato

70

On the other hand, the *Cinquillo* only occurs in mm. 19-23 of the “Un Soir” (An Evening) song, where the poem refers to “death as a protector of the unknown, she is sour from the useless noise of sobs”:

**Example 15:** *Cinquillo Cubano* rhythmic pattern in mm. 19-21 of the “Un Soir” song

un po piu mosso

La mort pro te de l'inconnu o, elle est

71

Another example of the *Cinquillo Cubano* is the ostinato added-note and seventh chords of mm. 20-31 and 42-49 of “Verdehalago,” the last song of the set of *Three Poems*

<sup>70</sup> Manuel M. Ponce, *Insomnio* (Mexico City: Promotora Hispano Americana de Música, 1949)

<sup>71</sup> Manuel M. Ponce, *Un Soir* (excerpt of unpublished manuscript from 1921, Alejandro Barrañón’s score copied by Ponce’s student Armando Montiel Olvera)

by Brull. The syncopated left-hand pattern of these sections is referred to as “anticipated bass” in Cuban popular music and it can be regarded as a rhythmic augmentation of the Cuban Cinquillo or a tied-sixteenth note version of the habanera dance rhythm. This elided bass pattern had its roots in Afro-Cuban popular music.<sup>72</sup>

In his “Verdehalago” poem, the Cuban writer Mariano Brull explored the rich sound of the consonants in the Spanish language. He particularly focused on the sound of the “r” and “v” consonants, as in Ponce’s mm. 26-28 of Ponce’s setting, where the poet explores the characteristic sound of the rolled “r” in Spanish. In addition, the title and many of the lines of this poem have words that start with the letter “v”, such as “verde” (green), “virgen” (virgin), “vengo” (I come), and “verdura” (vegetable).

**Example 16:** Expressive use of the rolled R in Spanish; Cuban Cinquillo and anticipated bass rhythmic pattern in mm. 26-28 of “Verdehalago,” from Ponce’s *Three Poems by Brull*.



The musical score for 'Verdehalago' by Mariano Brull, from Ponce's *Three Poems by Brull*, shows the vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line is in treble clef and features a rolled 'R' (r) and the lyrics 'en mi verde li'. The piano accompaniment is in bass clef and features a syncopated left-hand pattern, which is referred to as 'anticipated bass'. The score is marked with 'pp' (pianissimo) and 'ppp' (pianissimissimo). The page number 73 is visible in the bottom right corner.

The title of this poem by Brull is a made-up word, where he combines two words that have real meaning in the Spanish language: “verde” (green), and “halago”

<sup>72</sup> Peter Manuel, “The Anticipated Bass in Cuban Popular Music,” *Latin American Music Review / Revista de Música Latinoamericana*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (Autumn-Winter, 1985): pp. 249-261.

<sup>73</sup> Manuel M. Ponce, *Three Poems by Mariano Brull* (Montevideo: Editorial Cooperativa Interamericana de Compositores, 1943)

(compliment). The Cuban poet referred to his made-up words as *jitanjáforas*, which he chose from their phonetic sound instead of for their real meaning.<sup>74</sup> Brull used two *Jitanjaforas* with the letter “v” in the “Verdehalago” poem (“verdularia” and “verdumbre”), which does not exist in the vocabulary of the Spanish language.

## Conclusion

Manuel M. Ponce (1882-1948) was one of the most significant Mexican composers of the twentieth century. Despite his efforts to research and stylize Mexican folk songs and the composition of several sets of eclectic art songs, Ponce’s vocal music is still little known and deserves to be recognized as a relevant contribution to the corpus of art song, as his musical output exemplifies the coexistence of national and multicultural identities.

Ponce’s eclectic sets of art songs are a clear representation of the composer’s synthesis of heterogeneous and diverse elements, as he set music to poems by Latin American, European and Asian writers, such as the set of *Two Songs* with poems in English by Tagore from India, and French translations of six seventh-century Chinese poems. Additional songs in French include the set of *Three Poems by Lermontow* and two of the *Four Melancholy Poems*, with texts by the female poets Mathilde Pomès and Anna de Noailles. Ponce selected poems in Spanish in his sets of *Three Poems by Mariano Brull*, *Six Archaic Poems*, *Four Poems by Francisco de Icaza*, and *Three Poems by Enrique Gonzalez Martinez*.

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<sup>74</sup> Ricardo Lárraga, “Mariano Brull y la poesía pura: Bibliografía y Evolución” (PhD diss., New York University, 1981), 118.

Ponce's compositions for voice and piano clearly illustrate the composer's strong interest in nationalism and universalism. Attracted to the local popular songs of his country, he composed and arranged *canciones mexicanas* (popular songs) that depict his interest in Mexican Nationalism. Ponce's arrangements and stylizations of popular songs peaked during the 1910s, a time when he took part at several lectures that pointed out the significance of depicting a national identity through popular songs. As the result of his research, Ponce became a pioneer in the ethnomusicology field in Mexico, while his activities as a professor influenced the next generation of composers who followed his interest in the folk music of their homeland.

Setting to music sixty-seven poems in five languages—two in English, two in German, four in Italian, fifteen in French, and over forty in Spanish—by poets from nine different nationalities, Ponce definitely valued the cultures of different corners of the world, and his travel experiences allowed him to explore and assimilate a wide variety of influences such as elements of Spanish and Cuban music, with some references to French Impressionism. After living in different countries and assimilating diverse influences from multiple backgrounds, Ponce's composition of Mexican popular songs significantly decreased during his Modernist period. On the other hand, the composer's preference towards the belief in the universality of the musical experience is depicted in his eclectic sets of art songs, through his synthesis of diverse and unique musical elements from different corners of the world.

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## Appendix: Translations of Selected Art Songs

**“Ven, oh luna!” Canción del Bajío** (“Come oh moon!”) Folk Song from Central Mexico. Trans. by Charbel Yubaile

Ven oh luna! Y tu luz deliciosa  
De mi horrible sufrir sera testigo;  
Deja oh luna! Que llore contigo  
De mi amante la ausencia fatal.

Come oh moon! And your delicious light  
Of my horrible suffering will be witness  
Let me moon! To cry with you  
The fatal absence of my lover.

Y si acaso estuviera cercano  
De mi vida el instante postrero  
Dile oh luna! Por Dios que yo muero  
Sin dejarla un instante de amar.

And if it was nearby  
the final instant of my life  
Tell her, oh moon! That I die  
While my love for her never stopped.

**“Estrellita”** (“Little star”) Words and music by Ponce. Trans. by Charbel Yubaile

Estrellita del lejano cielo,  
que miras mi dolor que sabes mi sufrir,  
baja y dime si me quiere un poco  
little  
porque yo no puedo sin su amor vivir.

Little star from the far away sky,  
you look my pain, you know my suffering,  
come down and tell me if she loves me a  
little  
Because I can’t live without her love.

Tú eres! oh estrella! Mi faro de amor  
Tu sabes que pronto he de morir  
Baja y dime si me quiere un poco  
little  
Porque yo no puedo sin su amor vivir.

You are! Oh star! My lighthouse of love  
You know that soon I will die  
Come down and tell me if she loves me a  
little  
Because I can’t live without her love.

**“Breit über mein Haupt dein schwarzes Haar”** (Spread over my head your black hair)  
Poem by Adolf von Schack. Trans. by Richard Stoke

Breit über mein Haupt dein schwarzes Haar  
Neig zu mir dein Angesicht  
Da strömt in die Seele so hell und klar  
Mir dein Augen Licht.

Spread over my head your black hair,  
Incline to me your face,  
there flows into my soul so bright and clear  
Your eyes’ light.

Ich will nicht droben der Sonne Pracht  
Noch der Sterne leuchtenden Kranz,  
Ich will nur deiner Locken Nacht  
Und deiner Blicke Glanz.

I desire not the glory of the sun above  
nor the stars’ shining garland,  
I desire only your curls’ night  
And your glances’ luster.

**“Un soir”** (An evening) Poem by Mad. Cedron Norbens. Trans. by Charbel Yubaile

La brise froide a mis des fleurs sur les cyprès The cool breeze put flowers on the cypress

La nuit m'a par la main menée au bord des tombes Sur la pierre où pas une immortelle ne tombe Je n'ai pas lu le simple nom que j'espérais Qu'importe un nom? La mort protégé l'inconnue; Elle est sourde au bruit inutile des sanglots	The night carried my hand to the graves' edge on the stone where not an immortal falls I have not read the simple name that I hoped A name doesn't matter? Death protects the unknown; She is sour from the useless noise of sobs
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Ah! Comme tu dois bien dormir morte perdue Sans oraisons, sans fleurs fanées et sans falots La bas sont les humains et la bas les lumières Qui est pour toi? Qui donne y songe sans ennui? Je t'apporte des lis et des roses trémières Et mon coeur va sur toi pleurer toute la nuit Toute la nuit.	Ah! You must sleep well, hopeless death Without prayers, wilted flowers and lanterns Over there, the humans and the lights Who looks for you? Who thinks of it without harm? I bring you lilies and hollyhocks And my heart will cry over you all night All night.
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**“Si tu pouvais venir”** (If you could come) Poem by Charles Fuster. Trans. by Charbel Yubaile

Si tu pouvais venir avec le matin frais, Par les pres nébuleux et sur les fleurs paisibles, O toi que je poursuis de baisers invisibles, Je m'enfuirais, peut être ou je sangloterais!	If you could come with the cool morning by the misty meadows and peaceful flowers you whom I pursue with invisible kisses, I would run away, perhaps, where I would sob!
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Si tu pouvais venir avec le matin frais Je sentirais avoir le ciel humide et pâle Que mon coeur a perdu sa pudeur virginal Ces bras tendus déjà je les refermerais	If you could come with the cool morning I would feel the humid and pale sky that my heart has lost its virginal modesty I would close these already strained arms
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Si tu pouvais venir avec le matin frais M'offrant ton baiser pur comme l'eau de baptême Je te cherissais trop pour te dire je t'aime Et c'est sur des yeux morts que tu me baiserais Amour de ma jeunesse o fleur du matin frais!	If you could come with the cool morning Offering me your kiss pure like baptismal water I would cherish you to tell you that I love you and it is on dead eyes that you would kiss me Love of my youth, flower of a cool morning!
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*Tres Romanzas Italianas* (Three Italian Romanzas) Translated by Charbel Yubaile

**“Ho bisogno...”** (I need...) Poem by Ada Negri.

Quite solo, te solo ah! Lascia lascia  
Ch'io sfoghi nel tuo cor tutti singulti  
De tant' cunni nel petto accumulati  
Tutti gli affanni e i desiderio occulti  
Ho bisogno di pianto, Ho bisogno di pianto...

Alone, alone ah! Let me, let me  
That I show into your heart all the sobs  
stored in my chest for a long time  
all the troubles and hidden desires  
I need to cry, I need to cry...

Sul tuo sen palpitante oh! Lascia lascia  
me  
Ch'io riposi la testa affaticata  
Come timido augello sotto l'ala  
Come rosa divelta e reclinata  
Ho bisogno di pace.

On your beating breast oh! Let me, let  
me  
Lay down my tired head  
Like a timid bird under the wing  
like a plucked and reclined rose  
I need peace.

Sul tuo giovine fronte oh! Lascia lascia  
Ch'io preme il labbro acceso e trepidante  
Ch'io ti susurri l'unica parola  
Che m'inebri al delirio a un instante...  
Ho bisogno d'amore... Ho bisogno d'amore!

On your young forehead oh! Let me  
place my open and trembling lips  
that whisper a single word  
which intoxicates me in an instant...  
I need love... I need love!

**“Forse”** (Perhaps) (1914) - Lyrics by Marco Lesona (Italy)

Forse, perche tu a lungo hai contemplato  
Nell' ore meste le stelle, Hai negli occhi  
la grande dolcezza del lor raggio.  
Perche ascoltasti sì a lungo,  
La voce calma delle cose universe.  
Tu e fondi nella stanca anima mia  
Come un senso de profonda quiete  
Quando tu parli, o cara!  
Ah! Non strapparmi a questo dolcissimo sogno  
Parlami ancora, guardami ancora.

Perhaps, since you have contemplated  
the stars in somber hours,  
The great sweetness shines within your eyes.  
Perhaps, since you listened for so long  
The calm voice of things in the universe.  
You satisfy my exhausted soul  
with a deep feeling of stillness  
When you speak, my beloved!  
Ah! Don't take this gentle dream away.  
Talk to me again, look at me again.

**“Sperando sognando”** (Hoping, Dreaming) (1905) Lyrics by Enrico Golisciani

Se amassi... e un battito  
Non di dolore  
Il muto core  
Svegliasse un dì!...  
Sogno dolcissimo!  
Gioia infinita!

If I loved... and a beat  
Not of pain  
The silent heart  
Wake up one day!  
Sweetest dream!  
Infinite joy!

Ma i giorni s'involano,  
S'invola la vita  
Sperando  
Sognando--così!

But the days fly by,  
life takes off  
Waiting  
Dreaming so!

Se amassi... e credere  
A'l novo incanto  
D'un angiol santo  
Potessi un dì!  
Speme che a gaudi  
Di ciel m'invita!

If I loved, and believe  
the new enchantment  
of a holy angel  
Could one day!  
Hope that the joy from  
Heaven invites me!

Ma i giorni s'involano,  
S'invola la vita  
Sperando  
Sognando--così!

But the days fly by,  
life takes off  
Waiting  
Dreaming so!

***Two Songs*** (Tagore)

“I plucked your flower, o world!”

I pressed it to my heart and the thorn pricked.  
When the day waned and it darkened,  
I found that the flower had faded but the pain remains.

More flowers will come to you with perfume and pride, o world!  
But my time for flower gathering is over  
And through the dark night I have not, have not my rose  
Only the pain remains, only the pain remains.

“One morning in the flower garden”

One morning in the flower garden  
A blind girl came to offer me a flower chain in the cover of a lotus leaf.  
I put it around my neck, and tears came to my eyes  
I kissed her and said: “You are blind even as the flowers are  
You yourself know not how beautiful is your gift”

***Tres Poemas de Lermontow*** (Three Poems by Lermontow) Trans. by Charbel Yubaile

“Les étoiles” (The Stars)

Pure est la porte celeste  
Claire l'étoile lointaine  
Comme le bonheur de l'enfance, oh!

The sky's vault is pure  
clear the distant star  
As the happiness from childhood, oh!

Que ne puis je dire aux étoiles claires vous êtes  
claires vous êtes  
Comme mon bonheur, comme mon bonheur!

That I cannot say to the stars  
How bright you are  
As my happiness, as my happiness!

“L’ange” (“The Angel”)

Un angel volait dans le ciel de minuit  
Il chantait un hymne très doux  
La lune, les astres en foule autour  
Suivaient la suave chanson  
Et l’ange chantait le bonheur éternel  
Des âmes au divin paradis  
Et il célébrait la gloire de Dieu!

An angel was flying through the midnight  
He was singing a very sweet hymn  
The moon, the stars gathering around to fly  
follow the sweet song,  
and the angel was singing the eternal happiness  
Of the souls in divine Paradise  
Which celebrated God’s glory.

Sincere était sa louange.  
Une âme nouvelle, blottie dans ses bras,  
Allait vers les monde des pleurs.  
Le chant demeura sans paroles  
Revivant dans l’âme exilée sur la terre.  
Et l’âme, longtemps,  
dans le monde languit  
Remplie de d’un désir merveilleux.  
Les tristes chansons de la terre ne peuvent  
Lui faire oublier celle des cieux.

Sincere was her praise.  
A new soul, nestled in his arms  
Was going to the world of tears.  
The song without words  
Went on living in the exiled soul on Earth.  
And for a long time,  
the soul languished in the world  
Filled by wondrous desires.  
The sad songs of this world could not  
Make her forget all the Heavens’ songs.

“La Bohémienne” (The Gypsy Girl)

Je suis jeune bohémienne  
Bohémienne pas commune  
Car je suis dire la bonne aventure ah!  
Car je suis la bonne aventure ah!

I am a gypsy girl  
but of a kind that is not common  
Because I know how to reveal one’s fate  
Because I know how to reveal one’s fate, ah!

Mets dans ma main dans ma menotte  
Des piécettes bien sonnantes.  
Et je dévoile la bonne étoile  
Bonne ou mauvaise  
Je te devolle ton étoile ah!

Put in my hand, my little hand  
The noisy little pieces.  
And I uncover the good star  
Good or bad  
I reveal your star ah!

S’il t’arriv’ quelqu’ aventure  
Ou alle chagrin t’opresse  
Fais moi querir J’ai mille remèdes  
Fais moi querir J’ai mille remèdes  
Et je te tire ma reverence

If any adventure falls on you  
or if worries overwhelm you  
Seek me, I have a thousand remedies  
Seek me, I have a thousand  
And I bow to you in reverence

Mon tourtereau joliet tendre,

My pretty and tender lovebird,

Car le temps presse et je me sauve,  
Et je me sauve.  
Le temps presse et je me sauve ah!

Since time is pressing and I am escaping  
And I am escaping  
Time is pressing and I am running away ah!

*Tres Poemas de Mariano Brull (Three Poems by Mariano Brull)* Trans. by Charbel Yubaile

“Granada” (Granada)

He respirado a Granada  
En luz toda voz de olores  
Tierra fragante de adentro  
De lejos todo florece

I have breathed in Granada  
In light, all voice of odors  
Fragrant land from inside,  
From far away, everything blossoms.

Carne viva del alma.  
Toda pecho desnudo.  
Guitarra sepulta:  
Cantar eterno de tu cordaje de agua.

Live flesh of the soul.  
Fully bare-breasted.  
Buried guitar:  
Eternal song of your strings of water.

Que nudo anuda mi carne  
Raíz de aire que me enlaza  
A música de temblores  
En párpados de alma.

A knot ties my flesh  
Root of wind that wraps me  
To trembling music  
in the eyelids of the soul.

Oleo de torva hermosura  
Granada, en la noche grande:  
Seña perdida de la angustia  
Ya sin fatiga de antes.  
Múltiple de amaneceres  
Qué bella entonces, ahora  
Tan cerca ya de lo mío  
Claveles de Resonancia.

Oil painting of grim beauty  
Granada, in the grand night:  
Lost sign of sorrow  
without the exhaustion from past times.  
Multiple dawns  
So beautiful then, and now  
Already so close to what is mine  
Carnations of resonance.

“Por el Ir del Río” (Going Through the River)

Por el ir del río  
Por el ir del río  
Espero el nuevo venir  
Río abajo de mi vida  
Tan turbio de tanto huir

Going through the River  
Going through the River  
I wait for the new beginning  
Down the river of my life  
So muddy after so much struggle

Agua ida, agua muerta  
Para mi agudo vivir:  
Que en el ir, que en el ir del río  
Espera el nuevo venir

Gone water, dead water  
For my painful life:  
That in the journey through the river  
Awaits for the new beginning



Agua viva, agua loca  
Loca de correr, de ir  
Por el ir largo del río  
Por el ir largo del río  
Para llegar y seguir

Live water, crazy water  
Crazy from running, of going  
Along the river  
Along the river  
To arrive and keep going

“Verdehalago”

Por el verde, verde vertería de ver de mar  
R con R  
Viernes, virgula, virgen  
Enano verde, verdularia cantárida  
R con R

Along the green, green, green, to see the sea  
R with R  
Friday, comma, virgin  
Green dwarf, verdularia cantárida  
R with R

Verdor y verdin  
Verdumbre y verdura  
Verde, doble verde de col y lechuga  
R con R  
En mi verde limón, pájara verde.

Greenness and green bird  
Verdumbre and vegetable  
Green, double green of cabbage and lettuce  
R with R  
In my green of lime, female green bird

Por el verde, verde,  
Verdehalago humedo  
Extiéndome, extiéndete  
Vengo de Mundo Dolido  
Y en Verdehalago me estoy  
Verde, verde, verde, verde, verde!

Along the green, green  
Humid Verdehalago  
I spread myself, spread yourself  
I come from Mundo Dolido (hurt land)  
And in Verdehalago I am  
Green, green, green, green, green!

***Cuatro Poemas de Icaza*** (“Four Poems by Icaza”) Trans. By Roberto Esteva

“De Oro” (Of Gold)

Bajo el oro vespertino  
Bajo las mieles doradas,  
Mueve sus aspas dentadas  
Pausadamente el molino.

Beneath the sunset’s gold,  
beneath the harvest’s golden grains  
Moves its dentated wings  
Slowly the windmill.

Con enormes paletadas  
echa del cielo al camino  
sobre las mieses doradas  
el tesoro vespertino.

With enormous shovels  
throws from the sky to the road  
on the harvest golden’s grains  
The sunset’s treasure.

“La Sombra” (The Shadow)

Ibamos hacia el oriente cara al sol!

We went eastwards, facing the sun!

Amanecía y todo era luz al frente  
ahead  
Nuestra sombra nos seguía.

It was at dawn and everything was light  
Our shadow was following us.

Hoy, con el sol del ocaso  
al proseguir la jornada  
Una sombra prolongada  
Va precediendo mi paso.

Today, with the setting sun,  
as my journey still proceeds,  
a lengthened shadow goes on,  
Which precedes my steps.

“La fuente” (The Fountain)

Lo mejor de mi espíritu  
De mis labios no brota  
Hay algo en mis palabras  
De la corriente ignota,  
que viene de muy lejos  
y deja gota a gota  
Filtrarse entre las piedras un hilo de cristal.

What is best in my spirit  
Does not spring from my lips  
My words are somewhat like the unknown  
flow that slips,  
which comes from far away  
and drop by drop drips  
Filtering among stones a crystal thread.

Si te place el arrullo  
con el que el agua borbota,  
Piensa en el hondo abismo,  
y en la cima remota  
De donde nace y fluye  
el limpio manantial.

If you like the cooing  
with which the water trips  
Think of the deep abyss,  
and the far summits  
Where takes birth and flows on  
the clear spring.

“Camino Arriba” (“Up the Road”)

Va camino arriba el mozo  
cantando esta caminera  
Cuando las penas son muchas,  
Al juntarse se consuelan.

When our worries are too many,  
and he is singing this road song.  
When the worries are too many,  
They get lighter if they throng.

Llora el pobre sus fatigas  
Aunque tiene quien lo quiera;  
Te duele el rico de amores  
Pues no le quieren de veras.  
Sin dinero y sin amor,  
Todo es igual en la tierra.  
Cuando las penas son muchas,  
al juntarse se consuelan,  
al juntarse se consuelan.

The poor boy weeps for his hardships  
though somebody loves him,  
The rich man complains of loving  
As he is not truly loved.  
Without money and without love,  
All is the same in the world  
When our worries are to many,  
they get lighter if they throng,  
They get lighter if they throng.

“Les deux flûtes” (The Two Flutes) Poem by Li-Bai

*Un soir que je respirais le parfum des fleurs au bord de la rivière,  
Le vent m'apporta la chanson d'une flûte lointaine.*

During an evening in which I was breathing the perfume of the flowers by the river bank,  
The wind brought me the song of a distant flute.

*Pour lui répondre je coupait une branche de saule  
et la chanson de ma flûte berça la nuit charmée.*

To reply to him I cut the branch of a willow tree and the  
Song from my flute cooed the enchanted night.

*Depuis ce soir-là tous les jours, à l'heure où la campagne s'endort,  
les oiseaux entendent se répondre deux oiseaux inconnus  
dont il comprennent cependant le langage.*

Since that afternoon everyday, at the time the forest  
Goes to sleep, the birds understand the reply of  
Unknown birds which language, though, they understand.

“Petite Fête” (“Little Party”) Poem by Li-Bai

*Je prends un flacon de vin, et je vais le boire parmi les fleurs.*

*Nous sommes toujours trois en comptant, mon ombre et mon amie la lune brillante.*

I take a bottle of wine, and I'm going to drink it among the Flowers.

We are always three, counting my shadow and my friend the bright moon.

*Heureusement, que la lune ne sait pas boire et que mon ombre n'a jamais soif!*

Thankfully, the moon does not drink and my shadow is never thirsty.

*Quand je chante, la lune m'écoute en silence. Quand je danse,  
mon ombre danse aussi.*

When I sing, the moon silently listens to me. When I dance,  
My shadow dances as well.

*Après tout festin, les convives se séparent.*

After all parties, the guests get separated.

*Je ne connais pas cette tristesse. Lorsque je regagne ma demeure,  
la lune m'accompagne et mon ombre me suit.*

I did not know this sadness. As I get back,  
The moon accompanies and my shadow follows me.

“L'orage favorable” (“The favorable storm”) Poem by Chang-Wou-Kien

*Je maudissais la pluie qui faisait résonner mon toit et m'empêchait de dormir.*

I cursed the rain that resonated on my roof and did not let me sleep.  
*Je maudissait le vent qui saccageait mon jardin.*  
I cursed the wind that devastated my garden.

*Mais, tu es arrivé!*  
But, you have come!

*Et je remercie la pluie, puisque tu as dû ôter ta robe mouillée, et j'ai remercié le vent,*  
*qui venait d'éteindre ma lampe.*  
And I said thanks to the rain, because you had to take off your wet dress, and I thanked  
the wind, which had just extinguished my lamp.

“Nocturne” (“Nocturne”) Poem by Wang-Tchang-Ling

Nonchalante, son luth a la main,  
elle roulait le rideau de perles  
afin que l'odeur de printemps  
inondât sa chambre.

Nonchalant, with the lute on hand,  
she rolled over the curtain of pearls  
so the essence of spring  
Flooded her bedroom.

Mais elle vu la lune et c'est  
Le chagrin qui est entrée.  
Le visage dans son bras replié,  
Elle évoque un jardin bleui de lune  
Où elle entendit jadis des paroles de amour.

But she saw the moon and it was  
Sorrow that entered.  
With her head under her arm,  
she evokes a garden turned blue by the moon  
Where a long ago she heard words of love.

“La Calamité” (Calamity) Poem by Yang' Khiong

Les feux di bivouac illuminent le ciel.  
La neige alourdit les étendards glaces.  
Les cavaliers galopent dans la campagne.  
Siao! Siao! Siao!  
Le général en chef  
a reçu la tablette d'ivoire  
Et pris conger de l'Empereur.

The fires from the campsite lit the sky  
The frozen banners get heavy with the snow  
The horsemen gallop in the forest.  
Siao! Siao! Siao!  
The commander in chief  
has received the ivory tablet  
And said goodbye to the emperor.

Voici revenu le temps  
où le moindre guerrier  
est plus considéré  
qu'un illustre lettre.  
Voici revenu les temps ou les mères  
et les épouses s'endormant, chaque soir,  
le visage tourne vers l'Est!  
Les feux du bivouac illuminent le ciel.

The time has come back  
when the weakest soldier  
is more highly regarded  
than an illustrious man of letters  
The time has come back when mothers and  
spouses go to sleep, each evening,  
with the head turned towards the East!  
The fires from the campsite lit the sky.

*Cuatro Poemas Melancólicos* (Four Melancholy Poems) Trans. by Charbel Yubaile

‘Poema de Primavera’ (Poem of Spring) Poem by Jose D. Frias

Porque preferida  
Flor le dé a tu vida  
Su aroma mejor.  
Y de tu camino  
Se aparte el espino  
Mortal del dolor.  
Sé Irene, como eres hoy,  
Entre los seres sencilla y cordial  
El bien que tu hagas  
Vencerá las plagas  
Mas fuertes del mal  
Y la primavera será siempre tuya  
Gritará Aleluya  
Quien tu arribo espera  
Y en amor de paz crecerá a tu vera  
La felicidad.

As the preferred flower  
gave to your life  
The best aroma.  
And from your road  
goes away the mortal  
Hawthorn of pain.  
Be Irene, you are today,  
Between people, simple and cordial  
Any good you do  
Will defeat the plagues  
Stronger than evil  
And the spring will be always yours  
Will shout, Alleluya  
Whom your arrival awaits  
And in love of peace will grow by you  
The Happiness.

Poem 68 “L’Honneur de souffrir” (The Honor of Suffering) Poem by Anna de Noailles

Universe je t’ai regarde  
D’un œil qui loue et qui défie,  
J’ai perdu, car tes coups de des  
Ont frappé et vaincu ma vie.

Universe, I look at you  
With an eye that lauds and defies  
I have lost, because your toss of dice  
Have hit and defeated my life.

Mais ce qui fut reste existant:  
J’ai fait lutter d’un cœur constant  
Ma force avec l’onde et ses voiles  
Mes désirs avec tes printemps  
Et mes yeux avec tes étoiles!

But what used to be still exists:  
I have made a constant heart fight  
My force with the waves  
My desires with your spring  
And my eyes with your stars!

“Le Nuage” (The Cloud) Poem by Mathilde Pomès

S’embarquer, ô lente nef  
A ton bord sans capitaine;  
S’embarquer, ô blanc vaisseau,  
A ton bord sans gouvernail,  
Aller, voguer, dans une douce de rire  
Sur une mer sans couleur,  
Vers des îles sans contour;  
Voguer, aller, le silence diaphane  
Tenant lieu de pur espace

To embark on, oh slow boat  
On board without captain  
To embark on, oh white vessel,  
On board without a rudder,  
Go, sail, in a sweet smile  
In a sea without color,  
Towards islands without contour;  
Sail, go, diaphanous silence  
Being located in pure space

Le cœur ne martellant	The heart without a pulse
Plus la scansion des secondes	plus the scansion of seconds,
Qu'en battements étouffés;	that in muffled heartbeats;
Aller, voguer, voguer,	Go, sail, sail,
À chaque coup de roulis,	with each roll,
Perdre un peu de sa figure,	loses a little of her figure,
Perdre un peu de sa substance;	loses a little of her substance;
Voguer, aller, jusqu'à ce pointide	sail, go, up to that point
Al où la mer du ciel se combe	In which the sea touches the sky
Pour baigner le clair visage	shower the clear appearance
D'une terre plus fleurie;	of a more flowery earth,
Mon esquif plus frêle que neige en avril	My vessel, smaller than snow in April
Fondue au soleil,	melted by the sun,
La haute mi saine,	the deep sea cures me,
l'étrave rongée par les alizés	the bow corroded by the
Du beau port en vue, mollement couler!	Wind of the beautiful port in sight, weakly sinks.

“La Visita” (The Visit) Poem by Luis G. Urbina

Ha de venir, vendrá cuándo?	It has to come, when will it come?
No sé, pronto escucho ya su voz remota	I don't know, I already hear his remote voice
Y sus pisadas oigo	And his footsteps I hear
Abre la puerta, alma, que no tenga que llegar	Open the door, soul, so I don't have to call
Y que esté dispuesto todo apagado el fogón,	And that all is ready, off the fireplace,
Limpia la casa y el blanco cirio de la fe en el fondo	Clean the house and the white candle
Ha de venir, vendrá! Calladamente	It has to come, it will come! Silently
Me tomará en sus brazos	will take me in her arms
como la madre al niño	like a mother to a son
Que volvió cansado de correr bosques	who is tired of running in forests
Y saltar arroyos	and jumping on creeks
Yo le diré en voz baja: bienvenida!	I will tell her quietly: welcome!
Y sin miedo ni asombro	And without fear or surprise
me entregaré al misterio	I will surrender to the mystery
Pensaré en Dios y cerraré los ojos.	I will think of God and I will close my eyes.

*Seis Poemas Arcaicos* (Six Archaic Poems) Trans. by Charbel Yubaile

1. “Más quiero morir por veros” (I would rather die to see you) Poem by Juan del Encina

Más quiero morir por veros	I would rather die to see you
que vivir sin conoceros.	than to live without knowing you
Es tan firme mi esperanza	My hope is so firm
que jamás hace mudanza	and never changes,
teniendo tal confianza	having such confidence
de ganarme por quereros.	of winning myself thanks to loving you.

Mucho gana el que es perdido  
Por merescer tan crecido  
Y es vitoria ser vencido  
Sin jamás poder venceros.

A lot is won by the one who is lost  
to be so deserving  
and it is a victory to be defeated  
without ever being able to defeat you.

Aunque sienta gran tormento  
Gran tristeza e pensamiento  
Yo seré de ello contento  
Por ser dichoso de veros.

Even though I feel great torment  
Great sadness in my thoughts  
I will be joyful  
For being able to see you.

2. “Zagaleja del Casar” (Shepherdess from Casar)

(Spanish)

Zagaleja del Casar

Ves aquí la Via Adversa

(Italian)

Meschinella che son persa

A Napoli voglio andar

(Spanish)

Como vas perdida ansina

Que tu via no es a questa?

(Italian)

Con el acqua e la tempesta

Mi son persa sta matina

A Napoli voglio andar

Girl from Casar

You see here the Via Adversa

The poor girl who is lost

To Napoli I want to go

How do you keep going that way

Is not that your way?

With the water and the storm

I was lost this morning

To Napoli I want to go

3. “De las Sierras” (From the Hills)

De las sierras donde vengo

Vi tal ható y tal placer

Allá me quiero volver

¡Oh qué sierras! Oh qué prados!

¡O que huentes! ¡Qué lugar!

From the hills where I come from

I saw such crowd and such pleasure

To that place I want to go

Oh, such hills! Oh, such meadows!

Oh such a place!

Dichosos son los cuidados

Que se saben emplear

Quien no se sabe mudar

Nunca debiera nacer

Allá me quiero volver

Allá me quiero volver

Fortunate are the careful ones

Who know how to employ themselves

The one who does not know how to change

Never should be born

To that place I want to return

To that place I want to return

4. “Sol, Sol, Gi, Gi” (Sol, Sol, Gi, Gi)

Sol, sol, gi, gi, A,B, C

Enamoradico vengo

Sol, sol, gi, gi, A,B, C

Enamoured I come

De la, sol, fa, mi, re  
Iba a ver a mi madre  
A quien mucho amé  
Ibame cantando lo que os dire:  
Sol, sol, gi, gi, A, B, C  
Enamoradico vengo  
De la, sol, fa, mi, re

From la, sol, fa, mi, re  
I was going to see my mother  
Who I loved so much  
She used to sing to me what I will tell you:  
Sol, sol, gi, gi, A, B, C  
Enamoured I come  
From la, sol, fa, mi, re.

5. “Desciende el Valle” (Descend the Valley)

Desciende el valle, niña  
Non era de dia  
Niña, de rubios cabellos  
Desciende a los corderos  
Que andan por los centenos  
Non era de dia  
Non era de dia

Descend the valley, girl  
It was not day time  
Girl, of blonde hair  
Descend into the lambs  
that are by the ryes  
It was not day time  
It was not day time

6. “Tres Morillas” (Three Moorish Girls)

Tres morillas  
me enamoran en Jaén,  
Axa y Fátima y Marién  
Tres morillas tan garridas  
Iban a coger olivas  
Cautivaron mi ventura y mi bien  
Axa y Fátima y Marién

Three Moorish girls  
make me feel in love in Jaén,  
Axa, Fátima, and Marién  
Three graceful Moorish girls  
Were going to pick olives  
They captivated my fate  
Axa, Fátima, and Marién

Con su gran hermosura  
Crianza, seso, y cordura  
Cautivaron mi ventura en Jaén  
Axa y Fátima y Marién

With their great beauty  
Manners, sense, and sanity  
They captivated my fate  
Axa, Fátima, and Marién

Tres morillas tan lozanas  
Iban a coger manzanas  
Tres morillas tan lozanas de Jaén  
Axa y Fátima y Marién

Three youthful girls  
Were going to pick apples  
Three youthful girls from Jaén  
Axa y Fátima y Marién

***Tres Poemas by González Martínez*** (Three Poems by Gonzalez Martinez)  
Trans. by Clara Svecenski

“Nocturno de las rosas” (Nocturne of the Roses)

Tres rosas en el ánfora,  
de diverso matiz de igual belleza

Three roses in this amphora,  
of varied hues, alike in beauty



Oh dolor, Oh recuerdo, oh, esperanza!  
El perfume de antaño me envenena...  
Luego el dolor no mata?  
Solloza el árbol en las hojas secas.

Oh sorrow, oh remembrance, oh hope!  
The perfume of yesterday, it poisons...  
Does not pain kill?  
The tree with dead leaves is sobbing

Vida desesperada porque si nada esperas  
Atisbas por la noche en la ventana?  
¿Quién es el que golpea?  
Majando está el martillo de la aldaba  
En la noche siniestra  
Voces de ayer la pena que se agranda  
Insomnio vigilante de la espera.  
Tres rosas en el ánfora  
De diverso matiz de igual belleza.

Life, doomed to despair, if your wait is hopeless  
Why linger through the night beside the window?  
Who may be rapping?  
the hammer on my latch I hear it knocking  
In the sinister night  
Yesterday's night and the increasing sorrow  
The weary sleepless watching here and waiting.  
Three roses in this amphora  
Of varied hues, alike in beauty.

“Onda” (Wave)

Este arroyo tenaz  
que desenvuelve su cinta azul  
Desde la roca viva,  
Era ayer nada más agua furtiva,  
Hoy esperanza en fuga que no vuelve  
Su trino de cristal era una extraña  
voz sin sentido  
Vacuidad sonora  
Hoy sabe lo que canta y lo que llora  
Y comenta el dolor de la montaña.

This tenacious brook  
unwinds its azure ribbon  
from yonder bare rock,  
yesterday it was only furtive water,  
Become fleeting hope, fast disappearing  
Its crystal trill  
once seemed a curious voice  
in mystery shrouded, meaningless and hollow  
now it knows what it sings, what it weeps  
And can tell us about the mountain's sorrow.

A ciegas de su rumbo y de su suerte  
Ayer cruzaba el arrenal vacío  
Hoy siente miedo de llegar al río  
Y presagia los mares de la muerte.

Lost and blind to its fate  
crossed yesterday the sandy soil  
today it is afraid to reach the river  
And foretells the seas of death awaiting.

“La Despedida” (The Farewell)

No ha de besarme en la  
Angustiada hora de mi trance mortal  
Y será en vano  
Que busque la caricia de tu mano  
Con el afán con que la busco ahora  
Será el morir como distante aurora  
Perdida en sus sueños  
Sentiré cercano  
el leve soplo  
De un suspiro hermano

Shall not kiss me in  
My last hour of anguish of pain  
and it will be worthless  
to seek the caress of her hand  
with the desire that I seek it now  
and death will be like the distant dawn  
lost in her dreams.  
Closely I will feel  
the faint breath  
in a brotherly sigh near me,

O la filial desolación que lloro.

That filial grief and mournful cries.

Su beso, no... la trágica amargura  
De su último mirar  
En mi perdura  
Cada vez más tenaz y más adentro.

But not her kiss... the tragic bitterness  
from that last look in her eyes  
remains forever  
Each time more persistent and deeper within me.

Aquellos ojos de paloma herida  
Sellaron la suprema despedida  
Por si no hay otro viaje  
Ni otro encuentro.

Her eyes like those of a wounded dove  
sealed the supreme farewell  
should there be no other voyage  
No other meeting.

**“Insomnio”** (Insomnia) Words and music by Ponce Trans. by Charbel Yubaile

Silencio nocturnal, guiños de estrellas.  
Mueca de luna llena de ironía.  
El espíritu alerta con las huellas,  
que le dejara sor melancolía.  
Serenata de amor en lontananza.  
Alba precoz, ruborizada y fría  
Y el insomnio tenaz como una lanza,  
que martiriza la existencia mía.

Nocturnal silence, winks of stars.  
Grin of the moon full of irony  
The spirit is alert with the footprints  
Left by Lady Melancholy  
Serenade of love in the offing  
Precocious dawn, blushing and cold  
And the insomnia, tenacious as a spear,  
which tortures my existence.

Y surge la canción de lo profundo,  
del alma desolada y sin consuelo,  
que anhela libertarse de este mundo  
y remontarse en el azul del cielo.  
Y surge la canción de lo profundo,  
del alma desolada y sin consuelo,  
que anhela libertarse de este mundo  
y remontarse en el azul del cielo.

And the song from the depth emerges,  
from the desolated soul without consolation,  
which craves to be freed from this world,  
And soar into the blue of the sky.  
And the song from the depth emerges,  
from the desolated soul without consolation,  
which craves to be freed from this world,  
And soar into the blue of the sky.

**Clema's poem from 1951, three years after Manuel Ponce's death:<sup>75</sup>**

"Para el amor de mi vida" (To the love of my life) Trans. by Charbel Yubaile

Memito, Memito mio  
Memito de mis amores!  
Por quien lloro noche y día  
Y a quien con mi alma ofrezco flores.

Little Manuel, Little Manuel  
My beloved little Manuel!  
For whom I cry day and night  
And whom I offer flowers from my soul.

¡Cómo extraño tu presencia!  
Oigo tu voz y tus pasos  
Y mi vida se desliza  
Con el alma hecha pedazos.

How much I miss your presence!  
I hear your voice and your footsteps  
And my life vanishes  
With my heartbroken soul.

Beso tus manuscritos  
Que copio con tanto amor  
Ya soñando ver tus obras  
En la cumbre del fulgor!

I kiss your manuscripts  
Which I copy with so much love.  
Dreaming of seeing your works  
In the summit of brightness!

Recibo tus bendiciones  
En mi tan ardua labor  
Y con fe ciega te veo  
En el seno del Señor.

I receive your blessings  
throughout this arduous labor  
and with blind faith I see you  
In the presence of the Lord.

Por un tiempo espero sea  
Nuestra cruel separación  
Pues tu y yo fuimos unidos  
Desde el día de la Creación.

I hope only temporarily lasts  
our cruel separation  
Because you and I were united  
Since the day of creation.

A mi Memito adorado!

To my beloved little Manuel!

Your Clema. Aguascalientes, Mexico; January of 1951.

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<sup>75</sup> Jorge Barrón, *Escritos en torno a la Música Mexicana*. Zacatecas, México: Universidad Autónoma de Zacatecas, 2014, 70.