Nicolás Suárez Eyzaguirre and his Monólogos del Desierto:

A Brief Biography and a Performance Guide for Singers

by

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to: (1) record and describe a brief history of the life and career of Bolivian composer Dr. Nicolás Suárez Eyzaguirre, and (2) write an analysis from a vocal performer's perspective of Suárez's song cycle for soprano and piano, *Monólogos del Desierto*, with texts by Dr. Guillermo Mariaca Iturri.

In August of 2013, I traveled to La Paz, Cochabamba, and Coroico, Bolivia, with translator Dr. Marie Cooper Hoffman for thirteen days in order to conduct interviews with Suárez, his family, his colleagues, his composition professors, and other professional musicians. In addition to both in-person and e-mail interviews, I reviewed television productions, videos, and newspaper/magazine articles that featured interviews with Suárez and/or reviews of his works. Also, I familiarized myself with Suárez's compositional style by performing a leading role in the 2011 world premiere of his opera *El Compadre*; collecting and listening to as many recordings of his works as I could find; and reading the transcript of Suárez's Doctor of Musical Arts Lecture Recital. For this study, I focused specifically on the compositional style of his three-song cycle *Monólogos del Desierto*. A performance of the work will be part of my defense of this paper.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to thank my parents, Travis and Janet Stanford, and my sister Meredith Hildreth, for their unwavering support through the years. Thanks also to my patient and encouraging committee: Carole FitzPatrick, Kay Norton, Dale Dreyfoos, and Russell Ryan, and to past committee members Robert Barefield and William Reber. In addition, I would like to thank Dr. Marie Cooper Hoffman, my dear friend who traveled to Bolivia with me as my translator, without whom this project would not have been possible. Thanks are also in order to my paper’s subject, composer Nicolás Suárez, whose music inspires me and whose friendship enriches my life. Finally, thank you to Dr. Kay Kraeft of Songs Unlimited, Inc., and Ricardo Estrada of Sociedad Filarmonica de La Paz, who introduced and welcomed me to Bolivia in 2007, and who provided housing during my research trip to La Paz in 2013.
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CHAPTER 1

THE LIFE OF NICOLÁS SUÁREZ EYZAGUIRRE

A discussion and performance guide of the song cycle Monólogos del Desierto by Nicolás Suárez Eyzaguirre raises the question of his compositional style and its origins. To answer that question, a look at his formative influences is necessary. The information found in this chapter is sourced primarily from in-person interviews conducted in August 2013 with Suárez, his brother and sister, fellow Bolivian composers and music educators, and Bolivian cultural leaders.

Early Life (1953 – 1966)

Ricardo Damian Nicolás “Nico” Suárez Eyzaguirre was born in La Paz, Bolivia on December 6, 1953.¹ He is the third child of Ricardo Amado Suárez Leaño and Gloria Eyzaguirre Armaza. Ricardo and Gloria were already the parents of Javier (born 1948) and Juan Carlos (born 1951). In 1959 came the couple’s fourth and final child, a girl they named Gloria. Gloria was nicknamed “Chiqui” because she would often welcome guests to the home by happily introducing herself as “la chiquitita de la casa,” (“the littlest girl of the house”). The family of six resided in a small apartment in Miraflores, a residential zone just northeast of the center of the city.² Ricardo was an economist who owned a successful tax auditing/preparation business. Gloria was both a homemaker and active

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²Gloria Suárez Eyzaguirre, interview by Allison Stanford, August 11, 2013, 00:00:38 – 00:01:55, for recordings and transcripts of any interview, contact author.
member of and volunteer for several women’s organizations, including the Pan-American Round Table, The Association of Bolivian Women (AMUBA), and the Girl Scouts.3

The younger Gloria, now the Chief Secretary for Finance and Contracts at the European Union in La Paz,4 says of her mother:

She was a very strong and self-secure person…very avant-garde for her time. She would do absolutely everything she wanted; my father wouldn’t say a word about it. She would travel to her conferences, and my father would be happy, sometimes going to pick her up5...he showed everyone that she was the queen of his life.6

Juan Carlos, now both a psychotherapist and a music psychology teacher at the Bolivian Multinational (formerly National) Conservatory of Music,7 says of Ricardo, “my father had an extraordinary social sensitivity. He was not a musician, but he bought us, starting when we were little, extraordinary records of all types of music.”8 For example, they had records by Los Jairas, an exemplary Bolivian folk music group, as well as a collection of light classical favorites, various records from the US, and some popular Latin American music records.9

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3Gloria Suárez Eyzaguirre, interview, 00:18:00 – 00:19:00.
4Ibid., 00:30:20.
5Ibid., 00:19:00.
6Ibid., 00:14:05.
7Nicolás Suárez Eyzaguirre, telephone conversation with author, August 4, 2015.
8Juan Carlos Suárez Eyzaguirre, interview by Allison Stanford, translated by Marie Cooper Hoffman, August 20, 2013, 00:00:45.
9Ibid.
Nicolás also remembers the importance of music in the Suárez home. He says, “I remember my mother singing for me when I was three years old, and I loved that voice!”\(^\text{10}\) She sang primarily traditional Bolivian waltzes for him. His father bought musical instruments for the family, including a trumpet, piano, a Farfisa brand organ, two guitars, and a drum set. Nicolás and his brothers and cousins would play them together, making what he called “small orchestras.”\(^\text{11}\) Juan Carlos played piano, Nicolás was on the organ, Javier played trumpet, cousin Julio played guitar, and cousin Rosemary played the drums.\(^\text{12}\) In addition, Ricardo bought the family a reel-to-reel tape recorder, which the children used to record their music and produce homemade radio telenovelas (soap operas).\(^\text{13}\) Nicolás remembers going next door to listen to the rehearsals of Javier Saldías’s Beatles-inspired rock group which is now famous, the Black Birds. He believes that his interest in rock-n-roll began around that time.\(^\text{14}\)

In addition to these various musical styles, Bolivian folk culture played an important role in Suárez family life. Ricardo loved his home country intensely and fostered that love in his children. When each child was a baby, Ricardo and Gloria hired a chollita nanny for them (chollita refers to a woman of the native Aymara working class). Juan Carlos attributes much of his and his siblings’ familiarity with Bolivian culture, especially of folk songs, to these women. The children sang folk songs regularly with their nannies and their mother.\(^\text{15}\) On Saturdays, Ricardo would board his sons,

\(^{10}\) Nicolás Suárez Eyzaguirre, interview by Allison Stanford, translated by Marie Cooper Hoffman, August 17, 2013, track one, 00:12:00.

\(^{11}\) Ibid., track one, 00:00:50 – 00:01:15.

\(^{12}\) Nicolás Suárez Eyzaguirre, telephone conversation with author.

\(^{13}\) Nicolás Suárez Eyzaguirre, interview, track one, 00:00:50.

\(^{14}\) Nicolás Suárez Eyzaguirre, telephone conversation with author.

\(^{15}\) Juan Carlos Suárez Eyzaguirre, interview, 00:34:40 – 00:36:00.
nephews, and Chiqui on the colectivo (the “collective,” an inexpensive public transportation bus in La Paz) and get off at the end of the line. They would bring a modest picnic lunch and walk into the country towns of the high terrain that surrounds the city of La Paz. On holidays the family regularly traveled to the city of Cochabamba, about 230 miles southeast of La Paz, to visit Ricardo’s cousin Carmela de Rocha and her family, enjoy home-cooked meals, and swim in Carmela’s swimming pool. Nicolás recalls that on one of these trips, Carmela’s son Ramon Rocha (now a well-known writer) told him to listen to 1960s vocal group, the Mamas and the Papas, whose vocal harmonies had a profound influence on his musical life.

According to Nicolás, his brothers Juan Carlos and Javier first influenced and inspired his interest in music. As children, both Javier and Juan Carlos took beginning piano lessons and Nicolás learned the basics of playing piano from them. Javier played the trumpet and also played the piano in an original way, sometimes accompanying a song by playing just one note – the high C. Juan Carlos played drums, and composed for and played the piano. One of Juan Carlos’s compositions, “Inca,” lasted at least thirty minutes and used only the black keys of the piano. He never notated the compositions, instead always performing from memory; now, he feels betrayed by his memory because he has forgotten all of his works.

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16 Gloria Suárez Eyzaguirre, interview, 00:07:45 – 00:09:50.
17 Ibid., 00:06:08 – 00:06:45.
18 Nicolás Suárez Eyzaguirre, telephone conversation with author.
19 Nicolás Suárez Eyzaguirre, interview, track one, 00:14:20.
20 Nicolás Suárez Eyzaguirre, telephone conversation with author.
The Bolivian Rotary Club featured Juan Carlos as a young musician at one of their conventions in Cochabamba. Nicolás admired Juan Carlos’s compositions, and thought, “I can do that!” He composed his first piece at age 8 or 9, a song for melodica (a portable two to three octave keyboard played by depressing keys while blowing into a mouthpiece attached to a hole in the side of the instrument). He recalls that one of his primary motivations was to impress the girls in his neighborhood. From a young age, Nicolás participated in both choir and band at the schools he attended. In marching band, he played French horn and was obligated to make up his own parts by ear, because the director did not have any parts for his instrument.


When Nicolás was thirteen or fourteen, something happened to the Suárez-Eyzaguirre family that changed their lives forever. Ricardo won the Peruvian lottery, a prize equivalent to $500,000 US dollars. This money enabled the family to move from their small apartment in Miraflores to a home in the older, more exclusive neighborhood of Sopocachi (about ten minutes west of the center of the city) between the Japanese and United States Embassies. Nicolás’s loud organ playing in this house attracted the attention of one of his neighbors, a young guitarist named Luis Cariaga. Together with drummer friend Jose Mihotek, these young men started a band called the Dreams. They wrote original material and played tunes by the Doors; their instrumentation was similar.

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21 Juan Carlos Suárez Eyzaguirre, interview, 00:04:10 – 00:08:10.
22 Nicolás Suárez Eyzaguirre, interview, track one, 00:18:00 – 00:19:05.
23 Ibid., track one, 00:04:30 – 00:05:50.
24 Ibid., track one, 00:07:30 – 00:08:35 and 00:09:15.
25 Nicolás Suárez Eyzaguirre, telephone conversation with author.
to that of the North American band. Suárez and Mihotek sang for the trio. They did not have a bassist; instead, Suárez took on the bass part in the same manner as the Doors’s keyboardist Ray Manzarek, with his left hand acting as the bass while his right hand was used for harmony and melody. The band became so successful that Suárez was able to pay for his private high school tuition himself.\footnote{Nicolás Suárez Eyzaguirre, interview, track one, 00:05:50 – 00:07:05.} Due to the success of the Dreams, Bolivia’s most popular progressive rock band at the time, Climax, called Suárez and asked him to play with them on keyboard. Though he had grown up having Climax bassist Javier Saldías as a neighbor in Miraflores, the band was considered the Rolling Stones of Bolivia, so young Suárez could not believe they wanted to work with him.\footnote{Ibid., track one, 00:21:00 – 00:22:00.} Dante Usquiano, lead singer of the iconic Bolivian folk-rock band Wara, which was active at the time, says that the addition of Suárez to Climax changed the band’s sound dramatically when he played with them for several months in the early 1970s.\footnote{Ministerio de Culturas y Turismo de Bolivia, \textit{Nico Suárez}, television program, 00:03:25, directed by Gabriel Castrillo, Daniela Mendizábal, Claudia Mollinedo, and Viviana Vargas, aired March 2013 (La Paz, Bolivia: Canal 110 de Culturas and Videografía), DVD.}
In 1968, during Nicolás’s high school years, tragedy struck the Suárez family. As a result of Ricardo’s lottery win, the family had been able to send Javier to Italy to study economics. While in Italy, twenty-year-old Javier died suddenly and unexpectedly. It is a loss that the siblings feel profoundly to this day. A couple of years after Javier’s death, when Nicolás was seventeen or eighteen, he and Juan Carlos briefly studied piano with a well-known piano teacher in La Paz named Sarah Ismael. These represent Nicolás’s formal piano lessons. She strongly disapproved of the young musician’s long hair and multi-colored hippie fashion choices, and was not interested in Juan Carlos’ compositional aspirations, teaching instead a more straight-laced, classical technique. Nicolás studied with her very briefly, and Juan Carlos became discouraged and gave up on piano and composition altogether after working with Ismael. After high school, Nicolás, like all Bolivian young men of his age, served one year in the military, which was a weekend-only commitment. In 1972 he enrolled at Universidad Major de San Andrés (Higher University of San Andrés or UMSA, the major public university in La Paz) to study economics. He loved music, but at that time in Bolivia, music was not generally regarded as a viable profession.

29 Nicolás Suárez Eyzaguirre, interview, track one, 00:02:10 and 00:08:40.
30 Ibid., track one, 00:14:55 – 00:16:40.
31 Juan Carlos Suárez Eyzaguirre, interview, 00:08:05 – 00:10:15.
32 Nicolás Suárez Eyzaguirre, telephone conversation with author.
Nicolás’s father told him he had to study something in a university setting, so Nicolás settled on economics because of his love and gift for mathematics, for which he had won a prize in high school.\textsuperscript{33}

The \textit{Taller de Música} at the Catholic University of Bolivia (1974 – 1978)

After two years of study in economics, one at UMSA and one at Universidad Católica Boliviana (the Catholic University of Bolivia) in La Paz, Suárez heard about the \textit{Taller de Música} (Music Workshop) starting up at Universidad Católica in 1974, to be led by leading Bolivian composers Alberto Villalpando and Carlos Rosso. The \textit{Taller} would focus on music composition. Suárez was immediately interested, and he decided to apply. Unfortunately, since Suárez had yet to have any formal musical training other than some piano lessons, he failed the entrance exam, which included questions about composers he had never heard of such as Brahms and Vivaldi. He says of this experience, “I had just played with the most important rock group in Bolivia, so I [felt] like a rock star,” and it was humbling to fail this exam.\textsuperscript{35} Juan Carlos encouraged him to ask if he could audit the courses. Villalpando allowed it, and after auditing for a short while, Suárez was fully admitted to the program.\textsuperscript{36}

The \textit{Taller de Música} began in 1974\textsuperscript{37} with about twenty-eight students, nineteen young men and nine young women. It survived four years, including summers, and by

\textsuperscript{33}Nicolás Suárez Eyzaguirre, interview, track one, 00:22:00 – 00:22:35.
\textsuperscript{34}Ibid., track one, 00:42:30.
\textsuperscript{35}Ibid., track one, 00:22:30 – 00:23:20.
\textsuperscript{36}Ibid., track one, 00:23:20 – 00:23:45.
\textsuperscript{37}Alberto Villalpando, interview by Allison Stanford, translated by Marie Cooper Hoffman, August 14, 2013, 00:06:10 – 00:07:00.
graduation the enrollment had shrunk to eleven men. The students and professors were so dedicated to the program that they would have class even when the rest of the city was shut down due to all-too-common strikes or protests. Suárez remembers the Taller as a “once in a lifetime” experience. Today, all eleven graduates continue to have music-related careers: Nicolás Suárez, Franz Terceros, Cergio and José Luis and Jaime Prudencio, Agustín Fernández, Ruben Silva, Willy Pozadas, Jorge Aguilar, Juan Antonio Maldonado, and Freddy Terrazas. Suárez was profoundly influenced by his professors Villalpando and Rosso. He remembers Villalpando as “a magician, but a good magician,” and recalled, “once I asked him, ‘Maestro, do you know everything?’ and he said, in all seriousness, ‘Yes, Nico.’” Villalpando studied music composition for a total of seven years in Buenos Aires from 1958 to 1965, first at the National Conservatory of Argentina and then at the Latin American Center for Advanced Musical Studies (part of the Torcuato di Tella Institute) with Ginastera, Malipiero, Dallapiccola, Azuar, and Messiaen. He went on to make a name for himself in contemporary classical music, creating music that featured orchestral instruments mimicking the sound of the native Andean instruments of his home country. He says that his goal was always to return to Bolivia after graduation in order to share his knowledge with other young Bolivian musicians. Carlos Rosso graduated from the National Conservatory of Music in La Paz; then went on to study conducting at both the Higher State School of Music of Warsaw in Poland (under Stanislaw Wislocki) and at the Fourteenth International Music Course in

38 Nicolás Suárez Eyzaguirre, interview, track one, 00:23:50 – 00:25:30.
39 Ibid., track one, 00:37:00 – 00:38:00.
40 Nicolás Suárez Eyzaguirre, telephone conversation with author.
41 Nicolás Suárez Eyzaguirre, interview, track one, 00:27:35.
42 Alberto Villalpando, interview, 00:00:45 – 00:05:40.
Santiago de Compostela, Spain. He has worked in La Paz as conductor of the National Symphony of Bolivia, cultural minister at both the local and national level, as well as professor at Universidad Católica, where he continues to teach and administrate today. Suárez says of Rosso, “I wanted to be like him; later on I realized I had to be me.” He recalls that besides the basics of composition like counterpoint, orchestration, and harmony, Villalpando and Rosso taught him how to be a professional musician and an artist. He and his fellow students came to know Villalpando and Rosso not only as professors who went above and beyond the call of duty, but also as friends.

While studying in the Taller, the young composer began playing double bass in the National Symphony under both Russian Ruben Vartanyan and Bolivian Rosso’s batons. The performance of Verdi’s Rigoletto with Rosso was a formative experience in Suárez’s musical life. He studied conducting briefly with Vartanyan, and Juan Carlos says that while studying with the Russian music director, Nico would conduct in his sleep. Under the direction of Villalpando and Rosso, Suárez and his compatriots immersed themselves in the study of music composition. They studied the compositional styles of all the great composers and learned to write in the style of each. They studied theory and harmony; Schoenberg’s writings on harmony and text-setting resonated especially profoundly with him. The students regularly went out drinking and continued

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44 Nicolás Suárez Eyzaguirre, interview, track one, 00:35:15
45 Ibid., track one, 00:29:20 – 00:30:25.
46 Ibid., track one, 00:31:10 – 00:33:05 and 00:34:40 – 00:35:15.
47 Ibid., track one, 33:50.
48 Ibid., track two, 00:00:20 – 00:01:50.
class discussions on these occasions, arguing and debating topics they were working on in class. Occasionally, they would call their professors up in the wee hours of the morning and invite them to join the party. Often Villalpando or Rosso would oblige.\(^\text{49}\) Villalpando says that in the \textit{Taller}, he encouraged each student to find his own voice and help each student “bloom where he grew,” while at the same time encouraging them to incorporate the sounds of their regions and cultures into their respective compositional styles.\(^\text{50}\) Composer and conductor Willy Pozadas recalls that when he felt uncomfortable with the highly contemporary twentieth-century style that most of the other students were using, Villalpando reassured him, saying, “‘write the way you write.’”\(^\text{51}\) Villalpando remembers Suárez as the young rocker who would “respond very frankly to the teachers.”\(^\text{52}\) He continues,

\begin{quote}
[Suárez] acclimatized well to the academic world but he didn’t abandon his popular music. He was always navigating in two bodies of water, and continues to…Few people can do what Nico does. He has popular and classical music in his soul, not many people do.\(^\text{53}\)
\end{quote}

Villalpando says that because of this capacity, Suárez’s musical language has many “expressive possibilities [that] fluctuate richly.”\(^\text{54}\)

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{49} Nicolás Suárez Eyzaguirre, interview, track one, 00:30:15 – 00:30:50. \\
\textsuperscript{50} Alberto Villalpando, interview, 00:14:15 and 00:20:45. \\
\textsuperscript{51} Willy Pozadas Cordero, interview by Allison Stanford, translated by Marie Cooper Hoffman, August 13, 2013, 00:08:40. \\
\textsuperscript{52} Alberto Villalpando, interview, 00:08:50. \\
\textsuperscript{53} Ibid., 00:09:10 – 00:09:45 and 00:13:45. \\
\textsuperscript{54} Ibid., 00:09:45 – 00:10:25.
\end{flushright}
Rosso concurs, stating that the ease with which Suárez moves from one musical genre to another is both striking and unique.\textsuperscript{55}

Though Suárez came to the Taller firmly rooted in the popular music tradition, he expanded his horizons during these four years. Composers that especially resonated with him were French masters Debussy (especially his String Quartet in G minor and \textit{Preludes} for piano), Ravel (namely, the opera \textit{L’enfant et les sortileges}, his Piano Concerto for the Left Hand in D major, \textit{Bolero}, and his String Quartet in F major), and Franck (specifically, his Symphony in D minor). Debussy’s and Ravel’s freedom of expression inspired him, as did their use of pentatonic melodies, symmetrical chord construction, and avoidance of Germanic-style counterpoint. Young Suárez recognized himself in Franck’s Symphony in D, especially enjoying the way Franck progressed into the orchestral tutti sections, and using the same types of motives as Franck in his own \textit{Overture} for orchestra, his first classical work. He loved Ravel’s \textit{Bolero} because of the ostinato percussion part, which was so similar to rock and roll.\textsuperscript{56} Besides tonal and popular music idioms, he experimented with 12-tone, serialism, atonality, polytonality, and aleatoric music,\textsuperscript{57} sometimes featuring the pentatonic melodies that were often used in Bolivian folk music.\textsuperscript{58} The most important works composed during his Taller period (1974-1978) include: \textit{Monólogos del desierto} (1978), a three-song cycle for voice and piano, an Aymara-language titled work \textit{Jinakanki} (translates to \textit{Porque eres así?}, or \textit{Why are you so?}) for piano and orchestra, and \textit{Overture} for orchestra.\textsuperscript{59}

\textsuperscript{55}Carlos Rosso Orozco, e-mail message to author, August 13, 2013.
\textsuperscript{56}Nicolás Suárez Eyzaguirre, interview, track two, 00:11:00 – 00:22:00.
\textsuperscript{57}Alberto Villalpando, interview, 00:17:40 – 00:18:45.
\textsuperscript{58}Nicolás Suárez Eyzaguirre, interview, track two, 00:10:00.
\textsuperscript{59}Nicolás Suárez Eyzaguirre, telephone conversation with author.
Early Composition Career and Master’s Degree (1978 – 1987)

Suárez remembers that he and his colleagues all thought that they would graduate the Taller and have huge careers in classical music. He remembers jokingly that he imagined he would have the Berlin Philharmonic in the palm of his hand upon graduation. Instead, the graduates had to use their newly augmented skill sets to create and find work for themselves. Suárez continued playing double bass with the National Orchestra as well as the Chamber Orchestra of La Paz, but also returned to popular music, playing with a disco group called Circus. In addition, he was involved in a contemporary classical music group he and his fellow graduates formed in the late 1970s called Aleatorio, for which he composed a three-movement guitar quartet entitled “Sketches on the Theme of the Guitar” which paid homage to Pablo Picasso.

After graduation, Suárez fell in love with a beautiful girl. He says, “I was in love with her and she was in love with me, [but] I didn’t think of marrying her because I didn’t have the economic possibilities. So I decided, in the middle of this great love, to go to Chile to study sound engineering.” In 1980, he went with both his sister Gloria and a good friend to the University of Chile in Santiago. His degree plan required him to focus on mathematics and physics, all day, everyday. He had always loved math, but

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60 Nicolás Suárez Eyzaguirre, interview, track one, 00:39:20.  
61 Ibid., track one, 00:40:00 – 00:41:00.  
62 Franz Terceros, e-mail message to author, May 3, 2014.  
64 Nicolás Suárez Eyzaguirre, interview, track one, 00:40:55.  
65 Gloria Suárez Eyzaguirre, interview, 00:28:30.  
66 Nicolás Suárez Eyzaguirre, telephone conversation with author.
after a grueling year of such focus on the subject, he says, “I began to hate mathematics...[and] I decided that I was going to be a musician, and not anything else.”  

He and his younger sister returned to La Paz after one academic year. Nicolás rejoined the National Orchestra and the band, Circus; and he and his girlfriend parted ways. Around this time, the National Conservatory of Music had a crisis. The students did not agree with the teachers about how the school was run, and the argument came to a head when the students “put a big padlock and chains on the door of the Conservatory,” locking out the faculty and staff. When the administration could not arrange a solution, Vice-Minister of Culture Fernando Cajías hired him to come in and analyze what was happening at the Conservatory of Music. He obliged, observing the school for about eight months and identifying academic and administrative problems. He says of the job, “It was ok, but I [made] many important enemies.” Not long after auditing the conservatory, he applied for and won a job there teaching harmony, working under director Robert Borda. In 1981, he won both first and second prize in a contest presented by the La Paz City Hall, for two original folk music pieces – one for orchestra, and one for chorus and piano. In 1984, Suárez wrote and presented a thesis about the native Andean instrument the tarka, a type of wooden flute that is used primarily in folk music. He wrote about the tarka not from an ethnomusicological perspective, but from

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67 Nicolás Suárez Eyzaguirre, interview, track one, 00:41:30 – 00:43:00.
68 Gloria Suárez Eyzaguirre, interview, 00:28:30.
69 Nicolás Suárez Eyzaguirre, interview, track one, 00:42:45.
70 Nicolás Suárez Eyzaguirre, telephone conversation with author.
71 Ibid.
72 Nicolás Suárez Eyzaguirre, interview, track one, 00:43:30 – 00:44:30.
73 Ibid., 00:44:30 – 00:45:00.
74 Nicolás Suárez Eyzaguirre, telephone conversation with author.
75 Nicolás Suárez Eyzaguirre, Facebook message to author, August 9, 2015.
that of a musician and composer, analyzing not only the instrumental timbre, but also the folk music and often pentatonic\textsuperscript{76} melodies for which it was used.\textsuperscript{77}

Also in 1984, Suárez applied for and won a two-year full scholarship from the Organization of American States to pursue his Master of Music in Music Composition at the Catholic University of America in Washington D.C., where he studied with composer and music theorist John Paul Jones.\textsuperscript{78} He lived in the dormitories for the first year of the degree, and after that lived in a house near the university with eleven other students. He says that the most difficult part of the degree was writing papers because of the language barrier. He appreciated academia in the U.S., saying, “I love the way [the education system] in the States helps you; they don’t make things difficult for you. If you are lacking in something, they will teach you.” He had to take a few remedial courses at the beginning of the degree so that he could be on the same level as the other students who had presumably received their bachelor degrees stateside. Suárez remembers, “I was very happy because many beautiful things happened for me while I was in the States.”\textsuperscript{79}

During this degree, he wrote a work of which he is particularly fond: \textit{Three pieces for chorus}.\textsuperscript{80} It was premiered in La Paz by \textit{Coral Nova} (New Chorale), a choir led by respected conductor Ramiro Soriano. Soriano admires \textit{Three pieces} for their beauty, and also respects Suárez’s “deeply intuitive approach” to writing choral music that is “at the

\textsuperscript{76}Nicolás Suárez Eyzaguirre, interview, track two, 00:09:50.

\textsuperscript{77}Ibid., track one, 00:58:00 – 01:01:15.

\textsuperscript{78}Ibid., track one, 01:09:30.

\textsuperscript{79}Ibid., track one, 00:45:00 – 00:46:55

\textsuperscript{80}Nicolás Suárez Eyzaguirre, “Lecture Recital Script,” page 4; Nicolás Suárez Eyzaguirre, telephone conversation with author.
same time innovative and very vocal.” He said that the music had its difficulties, but was approachable and enjoyable for his semi-professional choir.  

At the end of his first academic year in 1985, Suárez’s father passed away, and he was able to travel back to La Paz to attend the funeral. Near the end of his life, Ricardo had become increasingly proud and supportive of Nicolás’s musical achievements and ambitions. The thirty-two-year-old composer completed his Master’s coursework in two years, but had not yet completed his two thesis pieces, Audina, an aleatoric, eight- to ten-minute work for orchestra that went on to be performed by National Symphonies in both Bolivia and Honduras, and Neuquén, a unique palindromic piece for solo piano that is still popular with classical pianists in La Paz. As his scholarship had expired, Suárez had to work to support himself, as there was an economic crisis in Bolivia and his mother could not send money. The lottery money had run out, due to his late father’s bad investments. Suárez worked as a pizza delivery driver (though he did not have a driver’s license) and also as a house painter. He had enough money to live modestly and also to begin saving up for two new keyboards with samplers. Near the end of that third year, he had to quit working in order to finish writing, and having money for food became a struggle.

81 Ramiro Soriano Arce, Ramiro, interview by Allison Stanford, August 16, 2013, 00:12:00 – 00:16:00.
82 Nicolás Suárez Eyzaguirre, telephone conversation with author.
83 Ibid.
84 Patricia Bedregal Velasco, interview by Allison Stanford, translated by Marie Cooper Hoffman, August 10, 2013, track two, 00:10:00.
Despite these challenges, he completed his two works, writing out the aleatoric scores by hand, and graduated.\textsuperscript{85}

\textbf{Suárez as Educator and Commercial Composer (1987 – 1995)}

Returning to La Paz in 1987, with two new keyboards in tow, Suárez searched for but could not yet find a job composing. Therefore, he returned to the National Conservatory, taking a job teaching harmony, counterpoint, acoustics, and electronic music.\textsuperscript{86} He was beloved by his students at the conservatory. Javier Parrado, now a prominent composer of contemporary music in Bolivia and a teacher at the Multinational Conservatory, remembers his time studying with Suárez fondly. Once, during an especially tedious acoustics class, Suárez spontaneously decided to take Javier and the other students in the class to lunch at Lake Titicaca (about an hour outside the city) at his own expense. Parrado was moved by Suárez’s generosity and humanity. In Parrado’s last year at the National Conservatory, there was no orchestration class, so Suárez offered to teach him orchestration and harmony lessons privately. Parrado says that the professor provided him with “quality instruction and counsel; and very practical pieces of advice… He taught me I must do what I want to do musically, and that I must be able to do what I teach and teach what I do.”\textsuperscript{87} In addition to his work in the classroom, Suárez’s thesis on the tarka impacted Parrado profoundly. When Parrado attended the professor’s tarka thesis defense, he thought excitedly, “Yes, this is a person who is thinking theoretically.

\textsuperscript{85}Nicolás Suárez Eyzaguirre, interview, track one, 00:46:55 – 00:52:00.
\textsuperscript{86}Ibid., track one, 00:52:15.
\textsuperscript{87}Javier Parrado, interview by Allison Stanford, translated by Marie Cooper Hoffman, August 13, 2013, track one, 00:01:30 – 00:3:00 and track two, 00:07:15.
about the native music of Bolivia! The work also influenced Oscar García, another well-known and primarily self-taught composer of contemporary music in La Paz who now teaches at the Conservatory and owns a recording studio. García remembers learning in Suárez’s UMSA workshop to compare, contrast, and combine rhythms of traditional Bolivian and Western occidental music, concepts that he also explored reading the composer’s thesis on the tarka.

In addition to his teaching job, Suárez and his well-connected friend, Cergio Claros, joined forces to write music and jingles for commercials. They eventually began writing for all the political parties, especially during campaign season, and they made sure that the parties did not know that their songs were all written by the same people. This commercial music partnership went on for nine years. Ramiro Soriano, conductor of the Bolivian National Symphony at the time, says that Suárez’s jingles were “very nice [and] very musical,” while at the same time being accessible and good for the public.

88 Javier Parrado, interview, track two, 00:05:30.
89 Oscar García Guzmán, interview by Allison Stanford, translated by Marie Cooper Hoffman, August 20, 2013, 00:10:30 and 00:13:30 – 00:16:30.
90 Nicolás Suárez Eyzaguirre, interview, track one, 00:52:30 – 00:55:30.
91 Ramiro Soriano, interview, 00:17:30 – 00:19:30.
In 1988, Suárez won a contest to write a hymn commemorating Pope John Paul II’s visit to La Paz. The hymn became very popular in the city, and he remembers overhearing his next-door neighbor singing it in the shower. In addition, he won a contest presented by the College of Architecture for writing the “Song of the Architect.” He recalls that “making these little songs was very easy, like an exercise.” Also notable was Nico’s appearance at the OTI (Organización de Televisión Iberoamericana or Organization of Iberoamerican Television) Festival annual song competition in 1988, for which a song he composed was selected to represent Bolivia in Buenos Aires. He both arranged the song for and conducted the orchestra at the festival.

92 Nicolás Suárez Eyzaguirre, interview, track one, 00:55:30 – 00:56:30.
93 Ibid., track one, 01:03:30 – 01:04:10.
94 Nicolás Suárez Eyzaguirre, telephone conversation with author.
Doctoral Studies and Post-Doctorate Career (1995 – Present)

Suárez says that as the years passed during this time in his life, he wasn’t truly happy. He was making a comfortable living, had married flutist Maria Eugenia Cazas in 1991, loved teaching, and felt like he made many beautiful things, but music was starting to feel like work. He missed art music. He started to feel like he was forgetting how to compose. In 1995, he applied for and won another full scholarship from the Organization of American States to pursue his Doctor of Musical Arts degree in Music Composition and Latin American Studies at the Catholic University of America. He was surprised to have won the scholarship, since he had not been composing art music that much at the time, and felt his application was lacking in volume of works.\textsuperscript{95} In this terminal degree, Suárez studied with German-American composer, violinist, and musicologist Helmut Braunlich; composer and jazz pianist Steven Strunk; and musicologist and founder/director of the Latin American Center for Graduate Studies in Music, Emma Garmendia.\textsuperscript{96} More than any specific guidance he received from Braunlich on his compositions, Suárez remembers the discussions they had about orchestration, the theories of Stockhausen, and various composers including Debussy and Ravel.\textsuperscript{97} Notable compositions during his doctorate include a saxophone quartet featuring melodies and chords in palindromic symmetry called \textit{Aire solo sería}; the one-movement \textit{Trio} for flute, clarinet, and bassoon which includes both set theory and traditional Bolivian musical elements; \textit{Salve Regina} for double chorus, soprano solo, and orchestra; and the two-movement \textit{Supay} for piano and symphonic band based on Bolivian dance structures.

\textsuperscript{95}Nicolás Suárez Eyzaguirre, interview, track one, 01:02:55 – 01:07:15 and 01:09:25.  
\textsuperscript{96}Nicolás Suárez Eyzaguirre, telephone conversation with author.  
\textsuperscript{97}Nicolás Suárez Eyzaguirre, interview, track one, 01:10:40 – 01:12:30.
At his lecture recital in 1997, Suárez presented not only the two chamber works he had composed during that degree, but also previously composed works including *Three Pieces for Chorus*, *Sketches on the Theme of a Guitar*, an electronic work entitled *Chica aruma* (an Aymara phrase meaning “at midnight”), and *Monólogos del desierto*. At the end of a previous composers’ concert that featured a few of Suárez’s pieces, Braunlich told Suárez that it seemed that his works were written by three different composers. Suárez considered his professor’s assessment a compliment, as the pieces represented different periods in his life and different compositional styles and techniques with which he had experimented.

Suárez returned to Bolivia in 1997 with DMA in hand. He continued to teach at the National Conservatory, moving into the administrative side as Academic Chief, then becoming Director from 2000-2005.

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99 Nicolás Suárez Eyzaguirre, interview, track one, 01:12:35 – 01:13:45.
101 Nicolás Suárez Eyzaguirre, telephone conversation with author.
In 2000 at the OTI Festival in Acapulco, Mexico, Suárez again represented Bolivia as arranger and conductor. Also that year, he began a five-year run playing with La Big Band La Paz, a group that played primarily big band and jazz standards. After ten years of marriage, Nicolás and Maria Eugenia divorced in 2001. Four years after this split, Suárez took a leap of faith, deciding to resign from academia and earn his living solely from composing and performing. He left La Big Band La Paz and began playing keyboards with a blues band called GoGo Blues. Also, he accepted an offer to play keyboards with iconic Bolivian folk-rock group Wara, an institution in Bolivian popular music that had been together since the seventies. In 2006, in the midst of this creative rebirth, his mother Gloria, who had been a constant source of love and support for his siblings and him, passed away. A few years later, he wrote and produced an album of children’s songs, a few of which he wrote using traditional Bolivian folk song and dance structures. This album was inspired by Suárez’s then five-year-old son Joaquín, who sang in the children’s chorus featured on the album. Javier Parrado considers this album one of his favorite works by Suárez because it warmly introduces Bolivian folk song and dance forms to children, including his own. In 2010, Suárez toured Japan and China with Wara, and in China played a tarkeada (a traditional Bolivian song using tarkas) on the Great Wall.

Around this time, he decided to bring into fruition an idea he had during his DMA studies: to write an opera based upon the life and career of nationally beloved La Paz

103Nicolás Suárez Eyzaguirre, telephone conversation with author.
104Javier Parrado, interview, track one, 00:00:10 – 00:01:00.
105Ministerio de Culturas y Turismo de Bolivia, Nico Suárez, television program, 00:12:10 – 00:14:00.
musician turned political figure Carlos “El Compadre” (“The Godfather”) Palenque. Palenque’s life was one of public intrigue, romance, scandal, and tragedy; the perfect fodder for a libretto and opera score. He pitched the idea to David Handel, the music director of the Bolivian National Symphony Orchestra at the time, and Handel agreed to produce the opera. Suárez was paid in advance, and he in turn gave a portion to librettist Verónica Córdova. He told Handel and the investors that the opera would be completed within eight months. Unfortunately, he had underestimated the length of time it would take to complete the project. He missed the deadline, and had to pay back his then disgruntled investors. Even though he had not finished the entire work, he had written the first act, and decided to complete the opera without the promise of a production. Within a year, the opera was complete, and Suárez had to speak with each member of the orchestra’s board of directors in order to convince them to produce the show. His lobbying was successful, and in November 2011, the National Symphony Orchestra presented El Compadre with a cast of mostly Bolivian talent, but also two North-American opera singers in the lead roles: soprano Allison Stanford as “Flor” (“Flower”), and Bolivian-born Washington D.C.-based tenor Pablo Henrichs as “El Compadre”. The opera was well received, delivering an even-handed rendition of the controversial true story, and featuring beloved traditional folk music blended with Suárez’s uniquely accessible contemporary compositional style. It is one of the only operas by a Bolivian

106 Nicolás Suárez Eyzaguirre, telephone conversation with author.
107 Ministerio de Culturas y Turismo de Bolivia, Nico Suárez, television program, 00:17:40 – 00:20:30.
108 Nicolás Suárez Eyzaguirre, interview, track two, 00:23:40 – 00:26:30.
109 Ministerio de Culturas y Turismo de Bolivia, Nico Suárez, television program, 00:19:00 – 00:20:30.
110 Alberto Villalpando, interview, 00:10:20 – 00:12:30.
composer, and the first on a contemporary subject, as opposed to a historical or mythological subject.111

Before it was finished, Suárez thought that he would consider the opera the most important work he had ever written, but after the production closed, he realized that was not true. Completing and producing his opera simply gave him more energy to continue writing and working on new projects.112 In fact, as soon as he finished writing the opera, he began arranging the hits of Wara for orchestra, and in October 2011 the Bolivian National Symphony Orchestra presented Wara Sinfónico, which featured members of Wara performing their greatest hits with the orchestra. The concert was a resounding success, and Suárez later released a DVD recording of the performance.113 After Wara Sinfónico and El Compadre, the composer continued to play with Wara and also wrote an album for his own blues band, which he named Nikopol.114 The name, which Suárez considers his blues alter ego, comes from a science-fiction graphic novel trilogy written by Enki Bilal in the 1980s and early 1990s, in which Nikopol is a man who allows a god to control his body in order to fight corruption on Earth. He named the band’s 2013 release Blues en las Rockas (Blues on the Rocks) as a reference to his rock-n-roll roots. Two of the songs on this album incorporate the Bolivian folk aerophones (wind instruments), the quena, tarka, and zampoña, which had not yet been done with the blues

112Nicolás Suárez Eyzaguirre, interview, track two, 00:22:25 – 00:23:40.
114Nicolás Suárez Eyzaguirre, telephone conversation with author.
in his country.\textsuperscript{115} One of these songs, “Italaque Blues,” won Blues song of the year in Bolivia.\textsuperscript{116}

Also in 2013, Suárez was one of the arrangers for \textit{Pink Floyd Sinfónico}, a production with the National Symphony featuring the popular tribute band \textit{Oh! Menaje Pink Floyd} (a creative spelling of \textit{Homenaje} Pink Floyd, or Tribute Pink Floyd), a tribute band with whom he had played keyboards since 2007.\textsuperscript{117} Later that year, the composer won the prestigious Adrian Patiño Prize for Composition from the city of La Paz for his newly composed programmatic string quartet \textit{Sirinus (Mermaids, or Sirens)}. In 2015, Universidad Católica in La Paz commissioned Suárez to compose a piece for adult and children’s choirs in honor of Pope Francis’s visit to La Paz in July of that year, entitled “Prayer for Francisco.” In the fall of 2015, he will tour Europe with Wara, and return in November to lead his new work \textit{Wara Sinfónico II} with the Bolivian National Symphony Orchestra. Suarez’s other current projects include a large oratorio-like work he is composing with his brother Juan Carlos, the music and text of which will present the Bible from an Andean cultural perspective; a rock musical titled \textit{Ayacucho} for which \textit{El Compadre} librettist Verónica Córdova will write the book and lyrics, set in the present-day at historically and politically significant Ayacucho High School in La Paz; and a CD of all his works for piano, half of which will be new compositions. \textsuperscript{118}

\textsuperscript{115}Nikopol, \textit{Blues en las Rockas}, Nicolás Suárez Eyzaguirre, 2013, compact disc, liner notes; Gloria Suárez Eyzaguirre, interview, 00:41:00 – 00:43:00.

\textsuperscript{116}Nicolás Suárez Eyzaguirre, telephone conversation with author.

\textsuperscript{117}Nicolás Suárez Eyzaguirre, telephone conversation with author.

\textsuperscript{118}Nicolás Suárez Eyzaguirre, telephone conversation with author.
Suárez’s Cultural Significance

The cultural leaders of both La Paz and Bolivia realize Nicolás Suárez’s importance in Bolivian musical history. Bolivia’s Minister of Culture Pablo Groux considers Suárez “a true professional…a great Bolivian musician, a great reference point for the art and music of Bolivia.” He admires and respects Suárez’s professionalism, and that “he works with seriousness of purpose [whether] he is working with young or experienced, seasoned musicians.” Walter Gomez, Chief of Culture for the city of La Paz and an active musician himself, admires not only Suárez’s professionalism but also his unique musical identity that has fusion of different musical cultures at its core. Augusto Guzman, Music Director of the Cochabamba Philharmonic Orchestra, says that Suárez is important because he is one of the only composers from the Taller who is still composing.

119 Pablo Groux Canedo, interview by Allison Stanford, translated by Marie Cooper Hoffman, August 12, 2013, 00:06:45 – 00:08:45.
120 Ibid., 00:12:00 – 00:13:15.
121 Walter Gómez Méndez, interview by Allison Stanford, translated by Marie Cooper Hoffman, August 12, 2013, 00:07:35 – 00:09:20.
While others are still searching, Guzman observes that Suárez has found his own compositional voice that features a distinctively Bolivian sonority, expressive melodies, and harmonies that are influenced by a broad spectrum of musical styles.122

Certain circles in the contemporary classical music scene of Bolivia do not regard Suárez’s art music compositions in the most favorable light, primarily because of the heavy influence of popular music. Composer, arranger, pianist, and Academic Chief of the Multinational Conservatory Patricia Bedregal says, “Composers here are very critical of Nico, they don’t agree with him. But his music is appreciated and people like it…[and] musicians love to play it.” She guesses that if the young composers of this generation are not influenced by Suárez’s unique blend of the popular and the academic, the next generation will be.123 Pedagogue Robert Borda says Suárez’s influence lies more with young popular musicians, and that currently most young classical composers study with Cergio Prudencio, who graduated from the Taller with Nicolás.124 Prudencio writes for his Experimental Orchestra of Native Instruments125 in what Oscar García calls a systematic compositional style similar to that of Ligeti, which features block sounds with hidden melodies inside a bigger sonority.126 Garcia, who likens Suárez’s compositions to “a festival celebrating life,”127 observes, “sometimes the [academic and popular music]  

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122 Augusto Guzman, interview, p. 1-2.
123 Patricia Bedregal Velasco, interview, track two, 00:07:10 – 00:10:40.
124 Roberto Borda Montero, interview by Allison Stanford, translated by Marie Cooper Hoffman, August 19, 2013, 00:41:05 – 00:42:40.
125 Ibid., 00:23:20.
126 Oscar García Guzmán, interview, 00:16:45 – 00:18:30.
127 Ibid., 00:19:20.
worlds are too separate and have issues with each other. Nico says we can live together.\textsuperscript{128}

Suárez himself hopes that he can influence his fellow Bolivians to believe in and be themselves, work hard to reach their goals, and find solutions to problems that may arise instead of complain about them.\textsuperscript{129} His sister Gloria sees this influence taking hold already, saying that other aspiring musicians “see him making a living from music, working hard, creating, and also producing…they see that he can do it, so they think they can try too.”\textsuperscript{130} Brother Juan Carlos, whom Nicolás counts as his most trusted counselor and advisor, holds that Nicolás has sought to “elevate the dignity” of the Bolivian people by cultivating a thorough knowledge of the Bolivian sonority, and then articulating and blending this distinctive sound into a unique and accessible musical language all his own.\textsuperscript{131} Personally, Nicolás Suárez is in the midst of a renaissance period in his life. He says:

\begin{quote}
I’m coming back to the very happy time of my childhood. When [my brothers and I] played music, it was like a game…I was playing the organ, watching my brother playing the trumpet, creating melodies, and I just \textit{had} to play with him [in] this language…I am coming back and starting to feel like a child again, very free to say whatever he wants to say.\textsuperscript{132}
\end{quote}

Suárez’s unique life story, full of a wide variety of musical influences, has informed a one-of-a-kind compositional style. Through his versatility and creativity, he has established for himself a long and stable career as a professional musician and composer in Bolivia, a feat that had not often been accomplished in his country by previous

\textsuperscript{128}Oscar García Guzmán, interview, 00:25:25 – 00:26:30.
\textsuperscript{129}Nicolás Suárez Eyzaguirre, interview, track two, 00:26:55 – 00:28:55.
\textsuperscript{130}Gloria Suárez Eyzaguirre, interview, 00:43:05 – 00:43:50.
\textsuperscript{131}Juan Carlos Suárez Eyzaguirre, interview, 00:27:30 – 00:28:50.
\textsuperscript{132}Nicolás Suárez Eyzaguirre, interview, track two, 00:30:40 – 00:33:30.
generations. By knowing Suárez’s background and musical experiences, performers can more fully appreciate and understand his compositions, one of which I will discuss in the remainder of this paper: the beautiful song cycle for soprano and piano, *Monólogos del Desierto* (*Monologues from the Desert*).
CHAPTER 2

MONÓLOGOS DEL DESIERTO: A BRIEF HISTORY

Nicolás “Nico” Suárez Eyzaguirre (b. 1953) composed Monólogos del Desierto (Monologues from the Desert), a three-song cycle for soprano and piano, in 1978 during the final year of the Taller de Música at Universidad Católica Boliviana (Music Workshop at the Catholic University of Bolivia) in La Paz. Suárez recalls that in writing this song cycle, he had his “first experience putting real music to a real text.” He received this ‘real text’ from Guillermo Mariaca Iturri (b. 1954), who at the time was studying literature in La Paz at Universidad Mayor de San Andrés (Higher University of San Andrés, or UMSA) while simultaneously building his political career as a socialist and activist. Suárez became acquainted with Mariaca’s writing when he attended his cousin Jose Luis Eyzaguirre’s art show. Jose Luis had made a series of drawings in Chinese ink and had enlisted Mariaca to write titles for each piece. Instead of titles, Mariaca says, “I wrote, I wouldn’t say poems, but lines – two to three lines for every drawing.” Suárez liked these ‘lines’ enough that he asked Mariaca if he would write poems for some songs he had in progress. The young writer agreed, and their collaboration on Monólogos commenced. The poetry that Mariaca produced for these songs is the only poetry that he has ever written.

133 Nicolás Suárez Eyzaguirre, interview, track one, 01:21:30.
134 Ibid., 01:15:25.
135 Guillermo Mariaca Iturri, interview by Allison Stanford, August 16, 2013, track one, 00:01:45 – 00:03:15 and 00:22:45 – 00:23:30.
136 Ibid., track one, 01:23:30 – 01:26:00.
137 Ibid., track one, 01:41:25.
Guillermo Mariaca says that from his high school years until about 1993, “my main activity was politics.”\textsuperscript{138} During his time studying literature at UMSA (1974-1979), his true focus was political activism; and he admits, “I got the degree but it was marginal in my life.” Mariaca’s allegiance was to the Socialist party, and after graduation, he lived half of his time with miners at the mines or with indigenous people in rural areas.\textsuperscript{139} He says, “from the miners I learned, if you don’t fight for your rights then you don’t deserve them,” and, “from the [indigenous people] I learned oral culture, and that other way of life.” He also learned from the indigenous people that even though their way of life did not include modern living standards like electricity, sewer systems, running water, and public schools, they were not poor, because they lived with everything they needed and lacked nothing.\textsuperscript{140} In 1985, Mariaca was elected to a four-year term in the Chamber of Deputies (the lower house of the bicameral Bolivian National Congress) as a socialist representing the Department of Potosi, home of the country’s famed silver mines.

\textsuperscript{138}Guillermo Mariaca Iturri, interview, track one, 00:23:20.
\textsuperscript{139}Ibid., track one, 00:23:20 – 00:25:10.
\textsuperscript{140}Ibid., track one, 00:28:50 – 00:31:35.
He was thirty-one, making him the youngest representative in Congress at the time.\textsuperscript{141}

As the years passed, defeats for him and his party began to mount, and Mariaca came to understand that “politics was not the answer.” He had become disillusioned with the Socialist and other left-leaning parties, taking issue with their paternalistic tendencies as well as their dogmatic “deep lack of flexibility and deep lack of comprehension of alternative ways of life.” According to Mariaca, the Left acted as though the indigenous people and miners deserved their rights without fighting for them, saying, “They thought, ‘We have to help [them].’ It was very paternalistic.” He took the contrasting stance: “The [indigenous people] and the miners don’t need help. They need fellow travelers: people who live with them, like them, people who share their fight, their way.”\textsuperscript{142}

Mariaca found that the best way for him to become a ‘fellow traveler’ instead of a paternalist was to leave politics and enter academia. He explains:

> I thought my only way to live with them, with [indigenous people] and miners, and that part of the world, was from academic activity. [I would] try to understand through literature, through fiction, an alternative world; because only fiction can produce or design alternative worlds. So, because art can design alternative worlds, maybe art can understand alternative worlds. So that’s why I became an academic.\textsuperscript{143}

After exiting the political sphere, Mariaca earned his PhD in Cultural Studies from the University of Pittsburgh in 1991;\textsuperscript{144} and in 1993 his dissertation, \textit{El poder de la palabra: Ensayos sobre la modernidad de la crítica literaria hispanoamericana} (\textit{The Power of the Word: Essays on the Modernity of Latin American Literary Criticism}) won

\textsuperscript{141}Guillermo Mariaca Iturri, interview, track one, 00:23:45 – 00:24:30.
\textsuperscript{142}Ibid., track one, 00:33:20 – 00:39:15.
\textsuperscript{143}Ibid., track one, 00:39:50 – 00:40:50.
\textsuperscript{144}Ibid., track one, 00:47:20 – 00:51:00.
the prestigious *Casa de las Américas* (House of the Americas) Essay Prize. Since then, Dr. Mariaca has taught Literature Theory and Bolivian Literature at UMSA. He helped found and continues to participate in the *Jornadas Andinas de Literatura Latinoamericana* (Andean Conference of Latin American Literature, or JALLA); and from 2004 to 2005 he served as Bolivia’s General Director of Education Strategy under President Carlos Mesa. Throughout his academic career, he has worked to prove that there are tools of literary criticism produced in Latin America that are better for analyzing Latin American literature than standard Western/European methods. According to Mariaca, colonization is still a problem in Bolivian culture, and he states,

> Only the moment we, but not only we, understand that there are alternative ways of life and that those other ways of life have the same rights to existence that occidental ways of life have, this way of life, then we will be able to not colonize, and not be colonized, and not be colonizers.¹⁴⁷

Through his work as an educator, in which he helps his students to accept alternative ways of life by guiding their study of art and literature, he continues to “work toward this better understanding.”¹⁴⁸

Long before his illustrious career in the political and academic arenas had taken shape, the young Guillermo Mariaca Iturri wrote a handful of beautiful poems for Nicolás Suárez.

¹⁴⁵Guillermo Mariaca Iturri, interview, track one, 00:59:00 – 00:60:00; and “Seminario Claves para Estudios Culturales con el profesor boliviano Guillermo Mariaca,” Published August 2, 1999, http://www.uash.edu.ec/contenido?seminario-claves-para-estudios-culturales-con-el-profesor-boliviano-guillermo-mariaca.


¹⁴⁷Guillermo Mariaca Iturri, interview, track one, 01:04:00 – 01:05:00.

¹⁴⁸Ibid., track one, 01:12:45 – 01:15:00.
After agreeing to collaborate, the young composer played for Mariaca what he had written for the songs thus far, and gave him the scores. The excerpts reminded Mariaca of a genre of music he had recently discovered: fado, a type of traditional music from Portugal, which features a singer accompanied by stringed instruments. The texts of fado songs tend to evoke strong emotions, especially saudade, the Portuguese word which Mariaca defines as “a mixture of nostalgia and oblivion.” After finding fado, the young politician came upon German art song, or lieder, specifically a song by Gustav Mahler (whose title he cannot recall) which led him to the cycle Die schöne Müllerin by Franz Schubert with texts by Wilhelm Müller. Mariaca credits not only Suárez’s music, but also fado, Mahler, and Schubert with inspiration for his Monólogos del Desierto poetry. For the poet, the common thread in these different styles of music was the sensation of saudade, or that mixture of nostalgia and oblivion, that the music evoked in him.

As he began his writing process, Mariaca says, “I had the impression at the time that [the] desert is the only world that conveys the sensation of this type of music.” In addition, as he reviewed the music Suárez had written so far, he settled on a female voice as his speaker because it was clear to him that “this music could only be sung by a woman in the desert.”

She is singing to the desert that cannot be loved. To the desert that denies to be loved. [The desert is not a metaphor for a man.] The desert is a metaphor for love. It’s a contradiction. Love needs two things: one is two persons, or a

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149 Guillermo Mariaca Iturri, interview, track one, 01:25:45 – 01:26:30
151 Guillermo Mariaca Iturri, interview, track one, 01:29:25 – 01:35:15.
152 Ibid., track one, 01:34:20.
153 Ibid., track one, 01:35:55 – 01:36:25.
relationship, or a bridge between two people. Love is able to, not to bridge, but to relate two things that are distant, by making those two things one. But the other thing that love needs is future, in some sense. But in this world, the future is a big uncertainty...You don’t know if you are going to live tomorrow. So love is impossible. You need love, but you know it’s impossible. Love is a permanent uncertainty. So I think the best metaphor for that is to love the desert, to love the infertility of the desert. Because with the desert, although you can love the desert, you don’t have a future, because you won’t be able to produce a child with the desert. The desert also needs to love, but the desert knows that it’s an impossible feeling, although it’s a real feeling. It’s a feeling that has no future, but it’s a feeling.154

Mariaca admits that the tone of the Monólogos poems tends toward bleak,155 and this tendency is especially apparent in the last lines of the final poem, “La Brisa” (“The Breeze”): “Todo se ha perdido. Todo ha cesado.” (“Everything is lost. Everything has ended.”). There are glimpses of a more hopeful feeling, or at least a yearning for it. For example, in the second poem, “La Visión” (“The Vision”), the woman says, “En el dolor que llevo en mi nostalgia, amo a pesar de todo” (“In the pain that is carried in my nostalgia, I love in spite of everything”). The poet describes this kind of love as a challenge to the uncertainty, saying that to love in this way is “to have faith that you’re going to live tomorrow in spite of everything that tells you, ‘maybe not!’”156 Mariaca, who now expresses bemusement and a small amount of disbelief that he wrote this poetry,157 says, “When I wrote these, I was solely a politician. That was my life. And being a politician is being a person with faith.”158

154Guillermo Mariaca Iturri, interview, track one, 01:42:20 – 01:45:45.
155Ibid., track one, 01:46:10.
156Ibid., track one, 01:45:45.
157Ibid., track one, 01:40:30.
158Ibid., track one, 01:46:30.
Mariaca remembers submitting five poems to Suárez, but the two that the composer did not set to music are now lost. The composer recalls that he was “not really too conscious” as he wrote these songs. He says that he allowed himself to be driven by the emotions of the words, and used harmony and melodic motives to express the emotions of the text in lieu of obvious word painting or intricate counterpoint.

Suárez also notes that at this point in his compositional life, he had been immersed in learning traditional harmony, but was ready to try something outside of those boundaries. Without knowing the theoretical term for the technique at the time, Suárez included the chromatic-third relationship in *Monólogos*, a progression he says he drew from rock music. The chromatic-third relationship is a relationship between two chords that are a major or minor third apart and share either a common tone or a chord quality (major or minor).

In addition, Suárez felt the responsibility as a Bolivian composer to pay homage to his country in the creation of these songs, and opted to do so by using pentatonic melodies at certain points in the cycle, especially in the third song. According to Suárez, most of the native music in Bolivia is pentatonic, or based on a specific five-note scale.

In his doctoral lecture-recital, the composer discussed the song cycle, saying:

> My compositions can be divided into two groups: one mainly related to intuition and spontaneity, and another borne of a rigorous intellectual planning. I believe the Monologues belong to the first group. It follows instinctive impulses: it is the flow of the words, and not the meaning of the words, it is a singing of the emotions and not of the concepts. It is for this reason that these songs occupy an important place in my heart. Over time I have come to understand the importance of the emotional tie between the composer and his work. The Monologues are...
tonal songs, but not in a strict sense. I have based the work on a continuous modulation that makes use of chromatic third relationships and chords of colouristic effect. The text of the songs rests over an ever-changing melody and harmony sometimes simple, sometimes complex, but of a basic diatonic nature. The piano plays an important role in these songs, commenting, supporting, and sometimes throwing itself with independence, as if to contribute its own comment of the poems.\footnote{Nicolás Suárez Eyzaguirre, “Lecture Recital Script,” page 3.}

Though the composer completed the cycle in 1978, \textit{Monólogos} did not receive a premiere until the mid-nineteen-nineties in Washington DC, when Suárez was pursuing his doctorate of musical arts at the Catholic University of America. He waited such a long time to present the cycle because Alberto Villalpando, his primary composition professor during the \textit{Taller de Música}, “displayed a great indifference toward [the songs]” at the time of their completion. Suárez continues, “Finally though, my curiosity toward their sounds was stronger than my apprehension and I found a way of premiering them.”\footnote{Ibid., page 2.} The composer enlisted the now well-established Argentine soprano Fabiana Bravo and pianist Nicolas Catravas to premiere \textit{Monólogos del Desierto} at a composers’ concert at the Catholic University of America in 1995.\footnote{Nicolás Suárez Eyzaguirre, Facebook message to author.} Suárez recalls that the audience enjoyed the songs so much that the cycle received a five-minute standing ovation.\footnote{Nicolás Suárez Eyzaguirre, interview, track one, 01:23:30.}

Since their premiere in 1995, the cycle received two encore performances by Bravo and Catravas in Washington DC in 1997, and it continues to be performed occasionally in Bolivia, specifically in La Paz and Cochabamba. Pianist, composer, and music educator Patricia Bedregal, who performed and recorded \textit{Monólogos} with Bolivian soprano Alejandra Gonzáles in 2010, says that the music of the cycle “carries the poetry”
through the use of a variety of colors and timbres in the piano part, and that working on the cycle was both challenging and interesting. She observes that the style of *Monólogos* is a precursor to the music found in Suárez’s 2011 opera *El Compadre* (*The Godfather*). Pedagogue and former head of the Bolivian Multinational Conservatory of Music Roberto Borda calls the cycle “very beautiful,” and says that the music has a subtle Bolivian spirit that is apparent primarily in a few melodic turns that are “not really folk but sound like they are trying to be.” Composer Franz Terceros, who was a classmate of Suárez’s in the Taller and is based in Santa Cruz, Bolivia, hears some Impressionist influence in what he deems a “lyrical” and “pretty” song cycle, and believes the songs deserve more performances than they are currently receiving.

Villalpando is still ambivalent toward the *Monólogos*. He says that as a listener, he enjoys the songs, especially the second one, but as the ex-professor of Suárez, he believes that “the songs could be a little more complete.” He continues, “In these songs the piano is secondary to the voice. I want to see a more complete union of the two instruments.” Suárez disagrees, holding that he worked hard to make the piano part idiomatic, and now understanding that the songs simply are not Villalpando’s style.

Having performed *Monólogos del Desierto* myself, I find the piano-voice relationship balanced, and the cycle as a whole contemporary enough to be intellectually stimulating, yet pop-influenced enough to be refreshingly sing-able and accessible to any modern concert-going audience.

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167 Patricia Bedregal Velasco, interview, track two, 00:00:00 – 00:06:30.
168 Roberto Borda Montero, interview, 00:18:45 – 00:21:55.
169 Franz Terceros, email message to author.
170 Alberto Villalpando, interview, 00:41:55 – 00:45:30.
CHAPTER 3

MONÓLOGOS DEL DESIERTO BY NICOLÁS SUÁREZ EYZAGUIRRE:
A PERFORMANCE GUIDE FOR SINGERS

INTRODUCTION

In this performance guide for singers of the song cycle Monólogos del Desierto by Bolivian composer Nicolás Suárez Eyzaguirre, I will present the original poem for each song by Guillermo Mariaca in its original format, then offer a brief overview of each song, a discussion of each song’s most important motives, and a description of possible performance challenges for the singer in each song. This performance guide can give singers a road map for successful study and presentation of this well-crafted song cycle.
Original Poem by Guillermo Mariaca:

La Arena

Recordar
el aire de tu voz
como el sol
como el mar
para la penumbra de mis ojos
y tu piel cantando el horizonte
- que más querer de tí
de tu huella en la arena de mi cuerpo.

Sentirte caminando
- tu silueta
- tu presencia -
en mi asombro
en todo mi instante
con tu agua y con mi sed.

Sola
sueño tu huella agotada por el viento
y olvidar todo el silencio
de mi piel y de mi voz
mientras el dolor vacío de mis ojos
anochece su horizonte entre mis pasos.

The Sand

Remembering
the breeze of your voice
like the sun
like the sea
for the gloom of my eyes
and your skin singing the horizon
- what else can I want from you
of your trace in the sand of my body.

To feel your walking
- your silhouette
- your presence -
in my wonder
in all my moments
with your water and with my thirst.

Alone
I dream your trace swept by the wind
and forget all the silence
of my skin and of my voice
while the empty pain of my eyes
darkens its horizon among my steps.
Overview:

“La Arena,” or “The Sand,” the first song of Monólogos del Desierto (Monologues from the Desert), is a starkly beautiful through-composed piece that can be divided into two large sections, mm. 1-39 and mm. 40-76. The first two stanzas of the poem are in section one, and the last stanza of the poem is in section two. Each section begins with a piano introduction (section one: mm. 1-12, section two: mm:40-50), and unifying elements include the three-note “recordar,” or “remembering” melodic motive, and a rhythmic gesture, the “walking” motive that features a repeated dotted-eighth/sixteenth note pattern and calls to mind the feeling of walking slowly through a sandy desert. In addition, Suárez uses ritardandos and fermatas, often simultaneously, to close both musical and textual phrases (mm. 21, 31, 39, 50, and 59). The song is tonal, but not in a traditional sense. The composer uses identifiable chords throughout, a mix of major, minor, and diminished triads and seventh chords, but the chords do not necessarily move in traditional progressions, and the tonal center of the song is constantly shifting, much like the sands of the desert mentioned in the text. Often consecutive chords share a chromatic-third relationship, meaning that the roots of the chords are a third apart. One of the most notable instances of this compositional choice occurs at the end of the song in mm. 69-76, where the composer oscillates between D major and F-sharp major. Suárez says that he borrowed this chord progression from rock music.172

The text of “La Arena” paints a picture of the speaker (a woman, according to poet Mariaca) walking through the desert, remembering her beloved, who is presumably no longer with her. Mariaca said that the woman’s beloved is the desert. It is up to the

172 Nicolás Suárez Eyzaguirre, interview, track one, 01:20:30.
singer to decide whether or not she wants to personify the desert in human form in her imagination, or if she would rather actually envision the literal sandy, hot desert as her lover.

**Important Motives**

The song opens with a piano introduction (see Figure One) that includes a walking bass line and a rhythmic motive in the right hand that recurs later, either in its entirety or in pieces. I call this rhythmic motive the “walking” motive, and it consists of a dotted quarter note followed by eighths and then its aforementioned rhythmic diminution, a dotted-eighth/sixteenth pattern. It is first found in the right hand of the piano in both mm. 1-2 and mm. 4-5 (see Figure One). Due to the slow tempo, the pairing of the walking bass line with the right hand “walking” motive calls to mind laborious progress through a desert, with toes dragging through the sandy dunes. Out of this slow walk emerges the “recordar” motive of two quarter notes followed by a half note, ascending by whole steps, in mm. 8-9, which, according to Suárez, is the primary unifying motive of the song. Seemingly, the woman has paused in her journey, because the memory of her beloved has crossed her mind. The “recordar” motive is most often found in the song as three quarter notes.
In response to the piano’s iteration of the “recordar” motive, the soprano sings the motive on the first word of “recordar el aire de tu voz” (“remembering the breeze of your voice”), in m. 13-14 (see Figure Two).

Rather than this text setting being obvious word painting, the three notes seem to absorb the word, so that each time the motive sounds in the piano or in the voice, the observant listener hears “recordar.”
Suárez points out that the most obvious instance of this motive repetition is during the interlude between the second and third stanzas, in the right hand of the piano in mm. 40-50, a few measures of which are shown below in Figure Three.

Figure Three:

The song’s other unifying theme, the “walking” rhythmic motive that first appears in the right hand of the piano in mm. 1-2 and 4-5 (see Figure One), this motive is transformed throughout the piece and repeated not literally but in fragmentation and variation. Initially, the voice picks up the “walking” motive in mm. 14-15, not only rhythmically but also in the contour of the vocal melody, starting on the last syllable of “recordar” and extending through “el aire de tu” (see Figure Two, comparing with right hand of piano in mm. 1-2 of Figure One). In mm. 19-20, the “walking” motive is transformed into a related motive that features the voice on either a repeated eighth note or a repeated dotted-eighth/sixteenth-note pattern over a major second interval, and sometimes includes notes of longer value that precede the eighth or dotted-eighth/sixteenth notes. As this transformation centers on a repeated major second, the source “walking” motive loses its sense of forward motion, and instead sounds like the singer is walking in place.
This compositional choice for the vocal line is fitting, because in this poem, the woman moves physically but is mentally fixated on memories of her beloved, reliving memories of her beloved’s voice, skin, silhouette, and presence. This new motive will be called the “fixation” motive. A few iterations of the “fixation” motive are found in Figures Four, Five, and Six, all located in the vocal line.

Figure Four: mm. 19-20, “para la penumbra de mis…” (“for the gloom of my…”)

Figure Five: “Sentirte caminando, tu silueta, tu presencia…” (“I feel your walking, your silhouette, your presence…”)
Twice in “La Arena,” the “fixation” motive spins into a beautiful climax, once in the first section of the song (mm.35-36) as the words “en mi asombro” (“in my wonder”) ascend to an A-5, and once in the second section of the song (mm.55-56) as the words “y olvidar” (“and forget”) reach an F-5 in the same manner. In both instances, the climaxes wind down into descending scales that lead to dotted-eighth/sixteenth notes followed by fermatas over the final words of the phrases. In this way, the composer brings unity to the two main sections of the song. It is important to note that the beginning and end of each climax phrase uses the “fixation” motive. The emotions implied by the text match the contour of these melodies ideally. As the “fixation” motive repeats in the vocal line, the feeling of longing and hope in the text builds to a climax, and as that feeling fades in
the text toward a sense of futility and melancholy, the melody returns to the monotony of the “fixation” motive. See Figures Seven and Eight to get a sense for how the text and melody line up in this way.

Figure Seven: mm.31 – 40
(for text translation see stanza two of poem on first page of this chapter.)
(for text translation see stanza three of poem on first page of this chapter.)

After the second (and less dramatic) climax (mm. 55-56), Suárez sets the final lines of text, “mientras el dolor vacío de mis ojos anochecer su horizonte entre mis pasos” (“while the empty pain of my eyes darkens its horizon among my steps”) at a slower tempo in the closing phrases of the song. The vocal line uses the “recordar” theme twice in mm. 60-63, over the words “mientras el dolor vacío” (“while the empty pain”) implying that the act of remembering the beloved creates a vacuum of sorts for the woman.
The “walking” rhythmic motive appears in the vocal line and in the left hand of the piano on the words “anochece su horizonte” (darkens its horizon), symbolizing the woman’s continuing dark journey. As she closes the song with “entre mis pasos” (“among my steps”), the “recordar” motive returns in the right hand of the piano, repeating in an ascending sequence, and through this ascent, the motive brings a sense of hope to the end of this song. The composer’s choice of major chords to end the song: D major and F-sharp major, whereas the song began with an F-sharp minor chord, adds a sense of hope to the song.

Performance Challenges

One of the reasons that “La Arena” is a challenging song is the lack of the sense of a true home key. Despite this fact, the melodies of the vocal line are supported quite well and often doubled by the piano part, so the singer can usually find the correct pitch in the accompaniment. In addition, phrasing and pacing can be challenging in this piece. Slur markings tell the singer where to breathe, but the slow tempo can make getting through the phrases difficult, especially when the phrases end with a ritardando combined with a fermata (mm. 21, 39, and 59); however, with proper practice and planning, a singer with established technique can overcome this obstacle.

Another challenge for sopranos performing this song is that much of the song is in the middle and lower middle range of the average soprano voice. One phrase in particular, “Y tu piel cantando el horizonte” (“and your skin singing the horizon”), mm.22-25, begins on an A-flat-4 and descends first to C-4, then ends on a lengthy D-4.
This phrase requires the singer to have a focused and comfortable lower-middle range, so that the text and the voice are not lost in this lower range. Even the higher-range phrases have their challenges. For example, in the most climactic phrase of the song, “sentirte caminando, tu silueta, tu presencia en mi asombro” (“I feel your walking, your silhouette, your presence in my wonder”), the soprano must take a quick breath between “caminando” and “tu silueta,” then sing nearly a full two measures of D-5 and E-5 before ascending to her high A-5, which is marked as the dynamic high point of the phrase. Again, with proper practice and planning, an experienced singer can handle this challenge.

The final vocal challenge comes at the very end of the piece, where the soprano has to sustain a C-sharp-5 on the word “pasos” (“steps”) at a piano dynamic level during both mm. 70-71 and mm.74-76. This pitch, being in the upper-end of the soprano’s middle range, can tend to be unfocused if the singer is not careful. The trick to success is that although the note is marked piano, the singer should not sing so softly that the note loses its clarity and stability. As for ensemble between the pianist and the singer, this song does not pose any serious challenges. During rehearsal, the tempo changes should be discussed and practiced, and during performance, the singer needs to be the strong leader, especially during ritardando and “a tempo” markings. Finally, even though the harmony is constantly shifting and accidentals are abundant in “La Arena,” the more smooth and natural the pianist can make the harmony shifts in the piano part, the more beautiful the final performance will be. In general, both the vocal and piano phrases should feel legato throughout, even lush and cinematic.
CHAPTER 4

MONÓLOGOS DEL DESIERTO PERFORMANCE GUIDE FOR SINGERS:

SONG TWO, “LA VISIÓN”

Original Poem by Guillermo Mariaca:

La Visión

En el dolor que llevo en mi nostalgia
amo
a pesar de todo
lo inexplicable del recuerdo:
la silueta
el horizonte de tu cuerpo

Peregrina de tu imagen
monótona habitante del contorno de las sombras
olvido tu figura contemplo tu distancia
recuerdo tu silueta nacida de la niebla

The Vision

In the pain that is carried in my nostalgia
I love
in spite of everything
the inexplicable in the memory:
the silhouette
the horizon of your body

Peregrine of your image
monotonous inhabitant of the contour of the shades
I forget your figure I contemplate your distance
I remember your silhouette born out of the fog
Overview

“La Visión,” or “The Vision,” is the darkest and most passionate song of the cycle. It is Bolivian composer Alberto Villalpando’s favorite of the set, and it features what Suárez says is a Chopin-inspired piano part. Despite its technical challenges, it is my favorite to sing, primarily because of the drama found in the vocal line. Like “La Arena,” this second song is through-composed and can be divided into two sections (mm. 1-53 and mm. 54-81). Like the first song, “La Visión” features the piano at the beginning of each section: a lengthy introduction in section one (mm. 1-35) and a shorter interlude at the beginning of section two (mm. 54-65). Suárez sets the first stanza of the poem in section one, and the second stanza in section two. The primary unifying motive in this song is an ascending or descending scale on sixteenth notes that leads to two notes of longer value, usually two quarter notes, that typically span an octave, a half-step, or repeat the same note. Suárez points out in his interview that the textual theme of this song are the visions that one may have while dehydrated in the desert, this unifying motive will be called the “mirage” motive. The ascension or descendancy of the scale gives the illusion of distance between the woman and what she is seeing; or as the text implies, the distance between her and her foggy memories of her beloved.

The tonal transition from “La Arena” to “La Visión” is smooth, because the D-major chord that is prominent in the closing phrases of “La Arena” is the first chord of this second song. The key signature of this second song has two sharps, and even though both the first and last measures of the song feature a D major chord with a hint at a B minor chord at the last moment, neither D major nor B minor are true tonal centers of the

173 Alberto Villalpando, interview, ca. 00:43:00.
174 Nicolás Suárez Eyzaguirre, interview, track two, ca. 00:03:00.
piece. As in “La Arena,” the composer writes chords that progress in a non-functional manner, often via the chromatic third relationship. A notable instance of this compositional choice may be found in mm.8-16 in which Suárez moves from G minor7 to E diminished7 to C-sharp diminished to A major7, each chord’s root a third away from the next. Another occurrence of this type of progression is in mm. 66-69, in which the progression is: G minor7, D minor, B-flat minor7, G half-diminished7, E major, then C-sharp half-diminished7. The harmonic colors in “La Visión” are darker than those in “La Arena,” due to the frequent use of diminished and diminished seventh chords.

Though the poem of “La Visión” is briefest of the set, the emotional content of the text is heightened, a shift that is set in the first line of the poem: “En el dolor que guarda mi nostalgia, amo pesar de todo” (“In the pain that is carried in my nostalgia, I love in spite of everything.”) Images of the beloved from the first poem appear again: “la silueta” (“the silhouette”) and “el horizonte de mi/tu cuerpo” (“the horizon of my/your body”). While in the first poem, the memories of the beloved appear clearly to the woman, in this second poem, the memories are merely reflected in the “contour of the shades” (“contorno de las sombras”) and are “born out of the fog” (“nacida de la niebla”). The woman says to her beloved, “I forget your figure, I contemplate your distance” (“olvido tu figura contemplo tu distancia”), giving the further impression that memories of her beloved are fading away.
Important Motives

The “mirage” motive first appears in augmentation in mm. 4-9 in the right hand of the piano, with an ascending scale occurring on eighth notes instead of sixteenth notes, and the longer notes that typically follow the scale taking up four measures instead of the typical one measure (see Figure Nine).

Figure Nine:

The composer hints at the “mirage” motive in mm. 20-21 in the right hand of the piano, speeding up the eighth notes into triplets for the ascending scale, but the scale leads into just one quarter note instead of the two that are typical for the motive in the rest of the song (see Figure Ten).
In mm. 23-25, the “mirage” motive finally makes an appearance in its most frequently utilized form: an ascending scale on sixteenth notes that leads to two quarter notes separated by an octave leap (see Figure Eleven).

Afterward, the composer develops the “mirage” motive in the piano part for a few measures before abandoning in favor of churning arpeggiations, out of which arise the dramatic first vocal line, which features an octave leap from A-4 to A-5 in m. 38. The “mirage” motive appears briefly in the vocal line of mm. 42-43 with a short ascending scale that leads to two quarter notes a fifth apart, but the motive reveals itself more dramatically in mm. 44-46, as shown below in Figure Twelve.
Throughout the song, the “mirage” motive reflects the poetry. In most cases, the ascending or descending scale of the motive guides the listener’s attention to the word on the longer goal notes of the phrase, in the same manner that the woman’s sight line (or train of thought) periodically fixes on memories or visions of her beloved. Examples of this occurrence include (with goal notes underlined): “lo inexplicable del recuerdo” (“the inexplicable in the memory”) in mm. 44-46 (see above Figure Twelve), “el horizonte de tu cuerpo” (“the horizon of your body”) in mm. 50-53, and “Peregrina de tu imagen” (“Peregrine of your image”) in mm. 66-67.¹⁷⁵

All of the occurrences of the “mirage” motive in the first section of the song feature an ascending scale, and when the voice enters in the second section, the “mirage” motive reverses in a way, with the initial scale taking a descent, and the longer goal notes descending by a half step. This change reflects a shift in the tone of the text that occurs in the second stanza. The memory of the beloved is now an “inhabitant of the contour of the shades,” and is “born of the fog,” and in a way, the reversal of the “mirage” motive reflects the memory of the beloved disappearing into the “shades,” “distance,” and “fog.” See Figure Thirteen for an image of mm. 66-67.

¹⁷⁵ According to Merriam-Webster, the feminine version of “peregrinus,” peregrina, means “woman pilgrim.”
Figure Thirteen:

The measures that follow the above Figure develop the “mirage” motive in the vocal line, which reverts back to its original ascending scale but often keeps the half step descent between the final longer notes of the motive. The final iteration of the “mirage” motive in the vocal line closely resembles the iteration at the end of section one of the song, but at the end of section two, the long notes at the end of the motive descend by a half-step, further underlining the descent of the memories of the beloved into the “fog.” See Figure Fourteen for a side-by-side comparison of these two motive iterations.

Figure Fourteen:

mm. 50-53
Though the “mirage” motive is the only unifying motive of the cycle, it provides plenty of material to inspire both the vocal line and the piano part, while at the same time setting the text meaningfully and completely.

Performance Challenges

As mentioned in the overview, “La Visión” is the most vocally challenging of the set due to the octave leaps and the ever-changing scale patterns. The first octave leap for the soprano is the most difficult (m. 37), because of the speed at which it must be executed, and the text which must be simultaneously articulated. See Figure Fifteen.

Figure Fifteen: mm. 36-37
The other octave leap in the song is found in mm. 45-46 from A-flat 5 to A-flat 4 on the last two syllables of the word “recuerdo” (“memory”), which can be viewed in Figure Twelve. One rapid near-octave leap in mm.74-75 also presents a challenge, going from D 5 to E 4 in the space of a sixteenth note. Due to these leaps alone in this song, only a singer with an established technique and confidence in all registers should attempt this cycle.

In addition to the challenging octave and near-octave leaps in the vocal line, the scales in this song are quite difficult, primarily because each one is different. A couple of the scales are relatively straightforward major scales (mm. 42, 50, and 77), but in mm. 44, 66, and 68, the scales are more unpredictable. With proper practice, the scales flow well and are pleasant to sing. The meticulous singer will eventually soar through them and enjoy their expressive possibilities.

As for ensemble considerations, much as in “La Arena,” tempi must be carefully established in rehearsal, and the singer must lead the ritardandos and “a tempo” markings on some occasions. In addition, just as the singer must accustom herself to the ever-shifting dark harmonies, so must the pianist. The more passion the pianist and singer can conjure up in this song, sometimes quietly building, sometimes exploding like fireworks, the more the audience will benefit. A performance of this piece is successful if it can inspire all the drama and emotion of a well-executed telenovela.
CHAPTER 5

MONÓLOGOS DEL DESIERTO PERFORMANCE GUIDE FOR SINGERS:

SONG THREE, “LA BRISA”

Original Poem by Guillermo Mariaca:

La Brisa

No puedo sentir para olvidar
tu nostalgia transparente

Es el aire de tu aliento
penetrando por las grietas de mi cuerpo
olvidado
muerto.

Con el viento se acerca la ausencia de tu voz
tanto necesitar mi felicidad
vacía
olvidada.

Vamos a jugar recuerdo mío
Ven, Vamos a reír a sonreír
Todo se ha perdido
Todo ha cesado.

The Breeze

I cannot feel to forget
your transparent nostalgia

It is the air of your breath
penetrating the ridges of my body
forgotten
death.

With the wind the absence of
your voice gets closer
as I need my happiness
empty
forgotten.

Come and play, my memory
Come, let’s laugh, let’s smile
Everything is lost.
Everything has ended.
Overview

In “La Brisa,” Suárez concludes the song cycle in the same compositional style of the first two songs, with two notable exceptions. First, the chromatic third relationship is used, but not as frequently as in the first two songs. Second, in the first two sections of “La Brisa,” the composer includes oscillations to and from duple meter 2/4, and triple meters 3/8, 6/8, and 9/8. The time signatures 3/8, 6/8, and 9/8 did not appear in the first two songs of Monólogos. Even though the chromatic third relationship is not prominent within the body of “La Brisa,” the opening chord, F-sharp major, is in chromatic third relationship with the end of the previous song (“La Visión”), which begins and ends on D major; and these two chords were instrumental in the final measures of the first song, “La Arena.” This third song is through-composed, and can be divided into three sections: mm. 1-27, mm. 28-38, and mm. 39-64. Stanzas one and two of the poem are set in section one, stanza three in section two, and stanza four in section three. Piano solos introduce the song and provide interludes of varying lengths both between and during sections of the song.

Three unifying motives appear throughout the piece which shall be called: “olvidar” (“forget”), “zephyr,” and “gust.” These will be discussed in the “Important Motives” section of this chapter. Harmonically, “La Brisa” lacks a true tonal center, the composer instead opting for a sense of constant harmonic transformation expressed primarily through fluid arpeggiations of various seventh chords in the piano part. This choice results in a piano part full of accidentals, which, just as in the first two songs, the pianist must play smoothly in order to achieve the ideal momentum for the song. The
poetry of “La Brisa” has a theme of forgetting, the perfect contrast to the theme of remembering in the opening song “La Arena.” The words “olvidado” (“forgotten”), “muerto” (“dead”), and “vacía” (“empty”) are set apart and highlighted, both in the formatting of the original poetry and in the way Suárez sets the words musically, emphasizing the absence of the loved one. In this last song, the woman feels the breeze in the desert, and it seems to be both carrying away memories of her beloved and reminding her of the absence of her beloved.

**Important Motives**

The most important motivic component of “La Brisa” is the “olvidar” motive. The piano part foreshadows the motive in the right hand of mm. 4-5 (see Figure Sixteen), and appears fully for the first time on the words “olvidado” (“forgotten”) and “muerto” (“dead”) in the vocal line of mm. 22-25 (see Figure Seventeen). Unlike the other motives of the cycle, which repeat at various pitch levels, the “olvidar” motive appears exclusively on A and C in both the piano and the voice. In addition, the motive is consistent in that it is always found in triple meter, with C on a quarter note and A on an eighth note that sometimes precedes but always follows the C (mm. 22-23, 25, 27, 33-36, and 38).
In the lilting “olvidar” motive, which is always expressed at a piano or pianissimo dynamic level, one can almost hear the memory of the beloved drifting away on the desert breeze. The “olvidar motive” only appears centrally in the song, not at the beginning or the end.

Two motives in “La Brisa” symbolize the breeze – a gentle “zephyr,” and a more forceful “gust.” The two breeze motives are freer in form than the “olvidar” motive, but still bring unity to the song. The “zephyr” motive appears at the beginning of the vocal line in sections one and three (mm. 8-9 and 39-40, see Figures Eighteen and Nineteen),
and this symmetrical compositional choice hints at but does not confirm a traditional ABA form for the song. This “zephyr” motive has a melodic contour and rhythm that suggests a gentle breeze, perhaps like the “aire de tu aliento” (“air of your breath”) mentioned in the second stanza of the poem. The “zephyr” appears twice in the song, once at the beginning of the song in the first vocal line (mm. 8-9, see Figure Eighteen), and once at the beginning of the vocal line in section three (mm. 39-40, see Figure Nineteen). It consists of two eighth notes tied to a triplet figure that leads to a dotted quarter note, in a descending melodic contour. The placement of this motive brings a sense of symmetry to the song.

Figure Eighteen: mm. 8-9

![Figure Eighteen](image)

In contrast to the gentle “zephyr,” a second breeze motive appears that is stronger and faster moving. The “gust” motive consists primarily of a rapidly ascending scale on sixteenth notes, and harkens back to the “mirage” motive of “La Visión.” It is found in the vocal line in mm. 19, 28, and 31 (see Figures Twenty and Twenty-One); and in the piano not only during those measures doubling the voice, but also in reverse in mm. 33 and 46-47.
This motive calls to mind “el viento” (“the wind”) mentioned in stanza three of the poem. The “gust” appears first in 2/4 in the vocal line and piano of m. 19 (see Figure Twenty), and reappears clearly yet in 6/8 in section two of the song, mm.28 and 31 (see Figure Twenty One). Finally, it appears in reverse as a descending scale in the piano part during section three of the song (mm.46-47).

Figure Twenty

The “zephyr” and “gust” motives in combination with the “olvidar” motive provide source material for the entire song in both the vocal line and the piano part.
The “zephyr” motive (inverted with rhythm altered) seems to inspire the right hand in a beautiful piano interlude in the middle of the last section of the song, in mm. 48-50 and mm. 52-54. The motive is augmented and slightly altered in the last vocal line (mm. 56-59, see Figure Twenty-Two), giving the illusion of the breeze drifting away and leaving the woman alone and despondent.

Figure Twenty-Two

Though it is not featured as a motive, the piano accompaniment’s opening six measures is quite similar to that of the final several measures, adding yet another layer of symmetry to the song. Finally important to note is the fact that though the poetry ends on a despondent note (“Everything is lost, Everything has ended”), the music remains quite beautiful. The music seems to say that even though the beloved is gone, the beauty of having loved remains in the woman’s life.

Performance Challenges

The primary challenges for the singer in this song are the ascending scales in the “gust” motive appearances and the shifting meters. In rehearsal both singer and pianist
must be careful to keep the eighth note steady when transitioning in and out of 2/4 and 6/8, 3/8, or 9/8 meters. As in the rest of the cycle, the soprano must possess a strong middle and low range, as much of “La Brisa” requires use of these ranges, and the vocal line goes no higher than G-5. Finally, as is the case in the other two songs as well, the singer must bring clarity and meaning to the text which is often opaque and hard to understand clearly. Allowing Suárez’s compositional choices to inform the singer’s interpretation of the poetry is a great help. The sometimes lengthy piano solos must be audible representations of the singer’s thoughts and inner monologue, in order to ensure that neither the performers nor the audience lose emotional engagement during the piece. “La Brisa” is a gently passionate conclusion of a beautiful cycle, full of the sense of love that the woman has for the beloved, but also the deep sense of loss and emptiness that the same beloved is absent, both in memory and in actuality.
CONCLUSION

Nicolás Suárez Eyzaguirre composed a unique and beautiful song cycle in *Monólogos del Desierto*. In the current classical vocal world, there seems to be a tendency to perform only a select number of Spanish-language songs, and I believe that this cycle could be a welcome addition to the repertory. The songs are accessible yet interesting, and they open a window into the rich world of Bolivian composers. Suárez uses appealing and non-traditional harmonic structures, subtle as well as overt text-painting, highly sing-able soaring vocal lines, and well-placed musical accents that reflect the rich Spanish text. The *Monólogos* are sung in standard Spanish, making them approachable to singers and audiences alike. Though the score lists the cycle as specifically for soprano, a high mezzo-soprano could also sing the cycle successfully, and possibly even classically trained musical theater singers.

It was an honor and privilege for my translator Marie Cooper Hoffman and me to conduct interviews with and collect oral histories from Suárez, his family, his former professors, his colleagues, and the cultural leaders of both the city and the country. We are indebted to Suárez for organizing these interviews and helping us recruit interview subjects during our stay in Bolivia in August 2013.
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APPENDIX A

COPYRIGHT PERMISSIONS
Copyright Permission for Monólogos del Desierto

Allison Stanford  <allison.stanford.soprano@gmail.com>  Aug 26

to Nico

Dear Nicolás,

I am writing to ask your permission to reproduce short sections of your musical score of your song cycle *Monólogos del Desierto* in my capstone doctoral research paper. The short sections I will use will showcase the text/music relationship, performance challenges for the singer, and certain compositional techniques. If there is a certain limit to the number of measures you would like me to adhere to, or if there are certain sections you would not like to have reproduced, please let me know.

A simple reply to this email will suffice for copyright permission and this correspondence will be included with the paper in an appendix. I am hoping to complete the paper within the next few weeks. I look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience.

Thank you as always for your generosity!

Sincerely,

Allison Stanford

Allison Stanford  <allison.stanford.soprano@gmail.com>  Aug 26

to Nico

I forgot to mention one detail! A copy of my paper will be housed at Arizona State University in the library, and it will also be published in an online library through UMI/ProQuest Dissertations and Theses.

Nico Suarez  Sep 6

to me

English
Spanish

Translate message

Through this short message I, Nicolás Suárez Eyzaguirre, composer of Monólogos del Desierto, three pieces for piano and soprano, authorize Allison Stanford to use the reproduction of the score of this composition in the way she may think it necessary.

Nicolas Suarez E.
Composer
9/13, 1:15pm

Allison Stanford

Hello, Dr. Mariaca! Congratulations on your fellowship! I wish you a very productive journey. I wonder if you might have a moment, simply right here on Facebook messenger, to let me know if I may have permission to use both your interview in my dissertation and print your poetry? Just a quick reply to this message will suffice, no need to answer the lengthy emails I sent you! Thank you so much for your consideration, and again, congratulations!

Un abrazo,
Allison Stanford

9/25, 1:51am

Guillermo Mariaca Iturri

Of course yo have my permission to do both.

9/25, 11:36am

Allison Stanford

Thank you, Dr. Mariaca!
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Allison Stanford hails from Conway, Arkansas, and is currently based in Fort Worth, Texas. She earned her Bachelor of Music in Vocal Performance degree at the University of Mississippi and her Master of Music in Opera Performance degree at Arizona State University. During her DMA studies in voice at ASU, she served as a teaching assistant in the Voice Area. A soprano, Stanford has sung a variety of roles in opera, operetta, and musical theater, including “Lauretta” in Puccini’s Gianni Schicchi, “Cleopatra” in Handel’s Giulio Cesare, “The Governess” in Britten’s The Turn of the Screw, “Mabel” in Gilbert & Sullivan’s Pirates of Penzance, and “Lucy” in You’re a Good Man, Charlie Brown!. She has performed as a soloist with the Phoenix Symphony, the Bolivian National Symphony, the Bear Valley Music Festival Orchestra, ProMusica Arizona, the Symphony of the Southwest, the Atlantic Music Festival, and Aspen Opera Theater Center. She is a past winner of the National Opera Association Competition and was a national finalist in the Music Teachers National Association Young Artist Competition. She can be contacted via email at allisonstanford.soprano@gmail.com.

In 2011, Stanford was selected by Nicolás Suárez to sing the leading role of “Flor” in his opera El Compadre, which was produced by the Bolivian National Symphony. It was during this production that Stanford became acquainted with Suárez, his career, and his musical output. At the end of the production, the composer gave Stanford a signed score of his Monólogos del Desierto, and granted her permission to research and write about his life and career.