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# **The Paraguayan *Polca*: Adoption, Adaption and Reimagination**

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of  
Bath Spa University for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

School of Music and Performing Arts, Bath Spa University

December 2025

### **Ethics Statement**

This study was approved by the Bath Spa University Ethics Panel on 29/10/2019. Should you have any concerns regarding ethical matters relating to this study, please contact the Research Support Office at Bath Spa University  
(researchsupportoffice@bathspa.ac.uk)

### **Dataset Statement**

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## Abstract

The polka arrived in Paraguay from Europe in the mid-nineteenth century following the first Paraguayan state visit to Great Britain and France, and approximately fifteen years before the beginning of the Triple Alliance war (1864-1870). This research project examines the adoption and reimagining of the polka in Paraguay, which transformed it into an emblem of national musical identity during the twentieth century. Archival research methods chart the arrival of the European polka and map the growth of the Paraguayan *polca*, exploring its alignment with socio-cultural values and national identity. The second phase of the research presents an ethnographic study of contemporary music artists in Paraguay (2018-2023), exploring how the Paraguayan *polca*, a folk music form, is being reimagined in the twenty-first century. Communicating with musicians working in both traditional music groups and contemporary urban environments develops a stronger understanding of how feelings of *paraguayidad* (the sense of Paraguayan-ness) are expressed in their creative practice. The research addresses the existential question of how contemporary, creative visions of musical tradition can be accepted as the next stage of evolution, while still maintaining an alignment with fundamental, identity-defining cultural roots.

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## Introduction

Reimagining tradition as a process, is an underdeveloped concept in social science research. In a musical context, this is a way of “doing” that can liberate cultural identity, re-invent, challenge issues of relevancy, polarise opinion, and heighten feelings of risk and pressure. By contrast, the musical product that emerges from a process of re-imagination can help to contribute to broader issues of cultural sustainability (Grant, 2014). Jace Clayton (2016) uses the global migration of music from physical to digital transmission as a metaphor for tradition more generally:

*To Save.* It's a slippery verb. In digital domains, to save means to destroy information and replace the data with altered information bearing the same name. The only time one needs to save a digital file is when it has changed, and the only way to save a file in the sense of to *rescue* or to *keep* is to copy it, which replicates it in a new place, sacrificing any uniqueness in favor of ubiquity. (Clayton, 2016: 220; emphasis in original)

If we are to map the term ‘reimagine’ as a verb into Clayton’s theory, then a starting point is to think of it as a vehicle to help the process of ‘saving’. In musical terms, the following applies: in order to save the traditional music with a process of re-imagination, then the original music will be replaced or, in Clayton’s words, destroyed and replaced with an altered expression of the tradition bearing the same name. However, if we are to perceive the terms “keep” or “rescue” in alignment with the notion of preservation, then the traditional music must be copied (directly) as a faithful replica of the original music, sacrificing any uniqueness in favour of ubiquity. In reality both of the processes outlined reside on a spectrum of varying intensity: one person’s ‘destroyed’ is another person’s ‘replaced’.

## Overview

The polka arrived in Paraguay from Europe in the mid-nineteenth century following the first Paraguayan state visit to Great Britain and France, and approximately fifteen years before the beginning of the Triple Alliance War (1864-1870). This research investigates the adoption of the European polka in nineteenth century Paraguay and its influence on the development of the Paraguayan *polca* in the twentieth century. Music played an important role in the formation and development of a new idealised national identity in Alfredo Stroessner's government (1954-1989). The political advocacy of invented musical traditions leaves a lasting cultural legacy in Paraguay, shaping the way that people engage with traditional music in the twenty-first century.

Understanding how musicians in Paraguay engage with and reimagine traditional music is central to this research. How feelings of *paraguayidad* (the sense of Paraguayan-ness) are expressed in their creative practice. If essentialist visions of national music as a static and frozen whole can restrict the development of a new musical voice, then musicians must navigate a pathway between cultural and historical contexts. The question of how this complex cultural navigation takes place can be conceptualised in a process of re-imagination in which musicians construct their own expression of Paraguayan musical identity.

## Contribution to the Field

There are currently no theses on the Ethos database relating to Paraguayan music, and internationally Pro-quest lists only one. Alfredo Colman completed his PhD research in 2005 to produce the first doctoral thesis on Paraguayan music. Romy Martinez completed her doctoral research in 2023 to become the first Paraguayan

woman to produce a PhD thesis on Paraguayan music (the second- ever PhD thesis). Academic texts on Paraguayan music in the English language are lacking. Alfredo Colman's (2015) monograph, *The Paraguayan Harp: From Colonial Transplant to National Emblem*, is the sole academic resource of this type. In terms of academic journal articles Simone Krüger Bridge (2022) has addressed the issue of 'Music and Identity in Paraguay: Expressing National, Racial and Class Identity in Guitar Music Culture' and Alfredo Colman's (2021) paper 'Florentín Giménez's *Misa folclórica paraguaya*: A Liturgical Celebration through the Lens of Musical Nationalism' completes a total of two papers. Timothy D. Watkins has authored the chapter 'Paraguay' in the *Garland Encyclopedia of World Music: South America, Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean*. Simone Krüger Bridge has helped to address this issue with her recent article (2022) 'Music and Identity in Paraguay: Expressing National, Racial and Class Identity in Guitar Music Culture'. In 2010 Robert Munro commissioned the edited reference book *Paraguay 200 Years of Independence in the Heart of South America* in which Luis Szarán authors the chapter 'Music in Paraguay' and Nicolas Regan contributes a short biographical piece titled 'Agustín Barrios Mangoré: Paraguay's Pre-eminent Guitarist-Composer'. Finally, the guitarist and writer Richard D. Stover produced the first comprehensive biographical work on Agustín Barrios in 1992, titled *Six Silver Moonbeams: The Life & Times of Agustín Barrios Mangoré*. Several historical reference books and biographies that have been published in Spanish and in Asunción (see Chapter 1). However, the short list of texts in both English and Spanish language shows that Paraguayan music is grossly underrepresented in both academic research and commissioned print on an international level. Alfredo Colman comments that: 'Although researchers of Paraguayan musical traditions have published works discussing general aspects of

certain musical expressions typical of the region, no comprehensive or systematic study of Paraguayan traditional music from the perspective of the cultural analysis of music has been conducted or published' (Colman, 2005: 158).

This doctoral thesis is the first to be written by a non-Paraguayan author and only the third in total. While the work does not break new ground to the same extent as Colman (2005) and Martinez (2023), the research makes a significant contribution to the academic study of Paraguayan music.

### **Objectives and Research Questions**

The central purpose of this research is to interact with musicians in Paraguay to gain insight into their creative practice. The exploration of their work is fundamentally rooted in a desire not only to analyse the finished product but also to understand how each musician feels about the music they create. An ethnographic study of contemporary music artists in Paraguay will be conducted as a method to research how the *polca* as a folk music form is being used as a musical influence and as a means of defining Paraguayan identity within modern genres of music. To connect the thoughts of each individual to a broader context, a primary objective in the initial stages of the research was to develop a deeper personal understanding of the historical issues that have shaped Paraguayan identity since the beginning of the nineteenth century. Musical issues are placed at the centre of this enquiry in order to learn how political and socio-political factors over a two-hundred-year period have contributed to the concept of *paraguayidad* (Paraguayan-ness). The research addresses the existential question of how contemporary, creative visions on musical tradition can be accepted as the next stage of evolution while still maintaining an alignment with fundamental identity defining cultural roots.



In particular, this research aims to:

- Examine the historical contexts of music in Paraguay to establish a critical view of the constructed notion of an ideal historical past.
- Develop a systematic cultural study of a broad cross-section of creative musical practice.
- Devise a model for reimagining tradition that can be applied to range of musical contexts.

Particular research questions emerge from the aims outlined above: To what extent do Paraguayan musicians draw on the Paraguayan *polca* as an influence in the creation of new music? How are feelings of *paraguayidad* expressed in their creative practice? To address these questions, a focus has been placed on the creative process through the lens of reimagined tradition. I will develop a theory that explores fixed ideas on the product of reimagined music in relation to the wide, subjective parameters that form perceptions of authenticity.

## **Personal Interest**

I first became interested in Paraguayan music whilst studying for my undergraduate degree, in what was a chance encounter. Thirteen years before this, I had unceremoniously departed from secondary education to begin ten years of intermittent touring with my band, SKANKt. As I arrived in my late twenties, the past complexities that had corrupted my relationship with education had begun to fade. At the age of 29, I decided to return to study. I enrolled as a mature student at Bath Spa University in 2012, just three months after the birth of my first child, with the intention

of training to become a secondary school teacher. As a reformed, now classical guitarist, I was detoxing on the pleasantries of tranquil twentieth-century repertoire, occasionally percolated by J.S Bach. The therapist I had employed for this adventure was Andrés Segovia; hindsight is a wonderful thing! During one of my many train journeys between Bath and Bristol, I found myself conducting an email conversation with the Uruguayan writer Alfredo Escande, author of *Don Andrés and Paquita: The life of Segovia in Montevideo* (2009). I was in the initial stages of research for my dissertation (working title: The Segovia Legacy) and Alfredo had very generously offered to help with some questions I had on Segovia's interactions with Agustín Barrios Mangoré in 1921. Until this point, Barrios has only appeared on the periphery of my musical radar, once performing 'Julia Florida' at a corporate event for Martin Roberts (*Homes Under the Hammer*, an English daytime TV program) in rural Somerset. However, moments after I arrived home in Bristol, I purchased Richard Stover's biography *The Life & Times of Agustín Barrios Mangoré* (2012). The book was first published in 1992 with a (greatly enhanced) second edition released in 2012 to coincide with the 200-year celebration of Paraguayan independence. Stover places himself at the centre of the birth of a global awakening to the music of Barrios. The autobiographical notes which open the book support his credentials, discussing the first 'complete' edition of Barrios' works and his collaboration with John Williams on his 1977 recording 'John Williams Plays Barrios'. Both are moments widely acknowledged (certainly outside of Paraguay) to have greatly increased the awareness and appetite for Paraguayan guitar music. However, it is noticeable that there is a lack of widely sourced referencing in the book, giving a sense that one should take major factual information as a given, especially outside of Stover's musical analysis. This is not necessarily a criticism of Stover. There can be little disputing the lack of academic

texts and published work available to him in 1992, and this is perhaps evident in the bibliography, which contains a majority of magazine and newspaper entries.

The initial appeal of Stover's text was the fact that, as a resource, it featured in excess of forty photographs and one hundred concert programs alongside concise listings of works and repertoire. However, while reading the book, I was struck by how little I knew about a country that was on a continent that I had spent much of my twenties travelling. The closest I had come to Paraguay at that time was to once fish in the Paraguay River in the Brazilian state of Mato Grosso. My guide on this trip was a local fisherman who mid-cast off, would regale me with politically barbed stories about Paraguay's policy (ca.2005) on the conservation of black caiman. Nevertheless, back in 2015, Stover's book had become the catalyst for a re-think of my career plan. In a local Bristol bookshop, I found a third edition copy of Eduardo Galeano's (1971) *The Open Veins of Latin America*, and within what seemed like moments after finishing it, I had applied to study for a Masters degree. I pursued the study of Latin American music throughout my postgraduate study at MA level. I began playing several Paraguayan *polcas* and dances that Barrios had arranged for solo guitar ('London *Karapé*' and '*Danza Paraguayo*'). As my field of enquiry developed, I was struck at the fact that Gerard Behagué's (1977) *An Introduction to Latin American Music* (of which the university had two copies) contained no reference to Paraguayan music. Moreover, the country of Paraguay was not even listed in the index! This fact resonated uncomfortably with me, amplified by Eduardo Galeano's text, published in the same decade, contained fierce criticism of the geopolitical ideologies that had negatively impacted Paraguay.

As my year of taught postgraduate study came to an end, I made a decision that felt somewhat activist in my mind. I would not enter the labour market. Instead, I

wanted to see what I could do to contribute to the lack (in relative terms) of research that was being conducted relating to Paraguayan music in the present day. However, I was an outsider to the culture that I felt compelled to research. In early 2017, I was elected to the role of Student Liaison Officer in the British Forum for Ethnomusicology (BFE), and from this moment a clear direction of thought became apparent. I would not fall into the imperial trap of producing a pompous outsider reconstruction of Paraguayan musical history, arrogantly imagining that I could see things in the past that those far more qualified than I could not.

Moving between the boundaries of musical genre has always been a preoccupation of mine; aged 20, I was (to put it politely) glanced at quizzically by audiences across the UK when opening up for The Selector on their 2001 SKA revival tour. This was because samba, be-bop, and drum 'n' bass were percolating the traditional off-beat formula that two-tone ska music demands. It always seemed to be a paradoxical notion that rules applied so strictly to music that was, at its core, born in the UK, at least from a sub-cultural ethos. I could never claim that my 20-year-old songwriting style was rooted in anything profoundly linked to the cultural struggles of the 1970s, so was I reimagining the traditions of Two-Tone ska without even realising it? An array of questions continually plagued me: What musical elements can be changed, and what can be kept? The answer to this question seldom aligned (in my personal experience, at least) with the simple deployment of a walking bass line, off-beat guitar rhythm and socially conscious lyrics as singular musical elements. Instead, the authenticity of my performance was often questioned on a surface level due to age; however, on a deeper level, it was the sense of self that I fused into my work. Whether I could articulate my frustration in such terms at the time is debateable,

however, in summary, I would dwell on the following: who or what decides this? What degree of change can be accepted in order to form a degree of perceived authenticity?

### **Positionality Statement**

My position as an outsider was a crucial component of the methodological approach employed in this research project. I reflect on the complexity involved in navigating this position, from the intrinsic nature of the hyper-outsider interactions with Paraguayan music that first engaged my interest in this field of research, to feeling at times, far closer to the space of an insider. This sense was particularly evident when working as part of a collective of academics (mostly Paraguayan) on the Jeporeka 21 project (see Chapter 4).

### **Defining Terms**

In Chapter 2, there are references to the polka and *polca*. The polka denotes the migrated European polka in the nineteenth century in its original 2/4 form. The use of the spelling *polca* is used when referring to the Paraguayan *polca* as known in the twentieth century. A large number of the sources used in this research are in the Spanish language, encompassing both secondary and primary source materials. Citations for this material will contain the additional acknowledgment 'translated from Spanish' in all instances that this applies. In Chapters 3 and 4 first names of participants will be used after the first iteration in each section. This is a deliberate choice, one that enables the personal interactions made during fieldwork to be articulated with a greater sense of realism. This approach has only been taken in discursive areas of the chapter that are designed to build context only.

## **Chapter Overview**

I will summarise the discussion on methodology by presenting a brief synopsis of the chapters that are to follow. In all cases, text from published source material, notes from fieldwork interactions and transcriptions taken from audio/visual files have been translated from Spanish to English by the researcher. Specific areas where translation has been applied have been noted at relevant points in the thesis.

Chapter 1 is divided into two distinct sections: literature review and methodology. The literature review has been structured thematically. Discursive sections on issues of reimagining tradition, folklore, inventing and preserving tradition, and identity inform a larger-scale analysis of Romero (2001) a key text in the research methodology. Leading from this central point, thematic areas of discussion emerge that focus on modernist, radical, hybridity and authenticity. The final thematic area focuses on Paraguayan literature, concluding with a review of connected sources of Latin American musical scholarship. The methodology introduces the ethnographic approach that was taken in the research, referring to a hybrid model of physical and virtual locations. The methods of analysis are explained and situated within the overall theoretical framework. In addition, all participants are introduced alongside an outline of the research timeframe and geographical locations covered during fieldwork.

Chapter 2 takes a critical look at the historical contexts of Paraguay in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The narrative is structured chronologically and provides an essential grounding of knowledge from which to build present-day ethnographic study. The issue of the 'ideal historical past' is a key concern in the analysis of historical perspectives. The first part of the chapter analyses the work of key twentieth-century Paraguayan scholars, which has been synthesised with archival findings from the nineteenth century in order to reflect on the complexity of the term

ideal historical past in relation to the building of a consensus on historical events throughout the twentieth century. The second part of the chapter focuses on the musical development of the Paraguayan *polca* in the twentieth century, exploring the alignment of music with the national identity. Critically, the historical perspectives gathered in this chapter form the basis of the enquiry going forward, notably when questioning how creative musical practice in Paraguay is shaped by issues of the past in the present day.

Chapter 3 focuses on traditional approaches to reimagining the Paraguayan *polca*, beginning with an analysis of the *polca* in a traditional form. The second phase of the chapter looks at the role regional festivals play in traditional reimagining of folk music in Paraguay; the Festival del Takuare'ê 2019 is presented as a micro case study. Analysis of the festival has been constructed using a method of triangulation that draws on contextual material (journalistic, promotional), personal observation of the event, and interviews with festival organiser.

Chapter 4 moves the discussion into a space of personal musical identity. The content of this chapter has been drawn from fieldwork conducted between 2019 and 2023 in Paraguay and in online spaces. A spotlight is placed on the compositional work of two well-known musical figures in Paraguay; the late Remigio Pereira and the harpist Sixto Corbalán. Interview data forms the basis of the analysis in both cases, with observations taken from face-to face interactions with both musicians. Unfortunately, due to the sad passing of Remigio Pereira in 2022, my observations and conversations are confined to one very fortunate meeting in 2019 at Remigio's house. However, I was able to interact with Sixto Corbalán over a period of four years, and the analysis of his work in this chapter is informed by interview data and score-based enquiry conducted over an extended period. Chapter three concludes with an

evaluative account of my personal involvement with the Jeporeka project in 2021. Jeporeka is a cultural enrichment project and the conception of the internationally renowned guitarist Berta Rojas. Musicians in Paraguay were selected to participate in a series of workshops and events that produce new expressions of Paraguayan musical tradition. The event also incorporated a series of virtual conference presentations from musicologists and ethnomusicologists from around the world conducting research on Paraguayan music.

Chapter 5 expands the study of creative practice in Paraguay to focus on radical approaches to reimagining the Paraguayan *polca*. The chapter begins with a critical discussion of the definition of radical in musical contexts. The focal point of the chapter is the analysis of the work of two electronic music makers in the city of Asunción: Derlis Ibarra and Ana Laura Cárdenas. The triangulation method referred to in Figure 1.5 outlines the approach taken to both Ibarra's and Cárdenas's work, participant observation, interview, and score-based transcription.

The five central chapters of this thesis construct an ethnography of creative music practice in Paraguay in the twenty-first century that draws on the lived experiences of a cross-section of musicians from a diverse range of musical backgrounds. In all cases, primary research has been triangulated with historical context and theoretical perspectives to build an ethnographic approach that is as objective as it can be, and representative of the outsider positionality of the writer.



## Chapter 1: Literature Review and Methodology

### Reimagining tradition

The processes that govern the evolution of musical traditions over time, within and beyond their social context, dictate and challenge perceptions of relevance in younger generations of musicians. One such process is to reimagine. As a term, reimagining does not figure with equal prominence to other such definitions of process. In fact, the term is conspicuous in its absence from Catherine Grant's (2014) analysis of the problematic terminology deployed by UNESCO in relation to endangered music: 'Without consensus, a host of other terms [to sustainability] were proposed, including *revitalisation*, *transformation*, *creative regeneration*, *cultivation*, and-delightfully playfully- *safe-guarding*.' (Grant, 2014: 11). Grant critiques the terms, and indeed the term used in the title of her book (*endangerment*), as either shifting in relevance and meaning between cultural contexts, or as (potentially) implying a false dichotomy. The rationale for the use of the term reimagining will be established throughout this literature review. The term, as a thematic area, will act as a set of bookends to the review, firm in the notion that we do' reimagining and thus it is important to feed content and context into this process in order to analyse it:



**Figure 1.1 Reimagining**

The sparsely adorned diagram in Figure 1.1 represents the format this literature review will take. Firstly, it will address possible thematic areas of study that inform the process of reimagining. Secondly, the focus will shift to examine the issues or outputs that emerge from the process, connecting them to the thematic areas of the literature. The final stage of the literature review will depart from this model to examine the specific cultural context of Paraguay and, more broadly, the musicological discourse that focuses on Latin American music. Conclusions will be drawn at this initial stage regarding any gaps in knowledge and how this model of reimagining might be applied to the Paraguayan *polca* in the twenty-first century.

Defining the verb to 'reimagine' as an isolated statement of intent, points towards a process of the re-conceptualisation and or re-creation of an existing entity. The status of this entity, prior to a process of reimagining, might often be referred to as 'original' or 'traditional'. That said, in musical terms, one might encounter a fine line between semantics on the one hand and the crucial definition of traditional or folk music on the other in order to unpack, answer or indeed further complicate questions that emerge around the intersection between folklore and tradition. To begin with, this review will attempt to distinguish between the two terms.

## **Folklore**

Kenneth Untiedt (2006) challenges the view that traditions may be seen as 'history', instead reflecting on the unhelpful conflation of the term 'folklore' and 'history': 'The study of folklore is often historical in its focus. Folklore is the traditional knowledge of a culture, and the word "traditional" carries with it the idea of things that are established, time-honoured' (Untiedt, 2006: 2). John Storey (2003) offers the perspective that folk culture might be viewed as a construct rooted in denial and

distortion, 'it was a fantasy intended to heal the wounds of the present and safeguard the future by promoting a memory of a past' (Storey, 2003: 13). This sentiment chimes heavily with notions of an 'ideal historical past', opening up critical questions on the power held by social groups (either political or non-political) when safeguarding traditional music as a memory of the past. Simon J Bronner's (2019) essay 'Towards a Definition of Folklore in Practice' acknowledges Dan Ben-Amos's (1971) view that folklore could be defined as 'artistic communication in small groups' (Bronner, 2019). However, the focus in Bronner's essay is to use this definition as a starting point when moving the discussion into the digital age. Bronner draws comparisons in terms of the desire to re-examine folkloric definitions in the 1960s, while questioning the relevance of Ben-Amos's 'small groups' theory in the context of the internet. Jay Mechling (2006) furthers the sentiment put forward in his 1989 paper 'Banana Cannon', that 'the reality of the folklore event and its meaning is entirely relative to the observer' (Mechling, 2006: 444), arguing for the existence of 'solo folklore'. Mechling's position in 1989 was, that if the observer of folkloric activity is the 'locus of reality of folklore', then this assumption cannot be made unless the study of folklore is predicated on its own 'theory of the mind' (Mechling, 2006: 444). This epistemological statement questions heavily the role of, and the credence paid to, the views of folklorists. Mechling (2006) critiques this position in relation to Wallace (1970), who regards culture as a 'system for "the organisation of diversity" as opposed to a system for "the replication of uniformity"' (Mechling, 2006: 449). Thus, Mechling's (2006) position highlights the importance of giving agency to the individual 'the people' and not to the tradition itself, evaluating 'the importance of solo folklore from an oddity to a central role in the coevolution of the mind, the body, and culture' (Mechling, 2006: 450).

There is a synergy between the words of Wallace (1970) and Helio Vera's (2017) views on culture in the Paraguayan context. Vera is a writer and social commentator, known by many in Paraguay for his humorous and intellectual critiques of the country's political constructs. He offers a contrasting view on the connection between culture and national identity concepts:

Culture is, therefore, a process. It does not have much to do with the well-known concept of National Being, which proposes the idea of static and frozen whole, oblivious to the currents of time and the pressure of social realities. (Vera, 2017: 35)

Vera's words are progressive within the cultural narrative in Paraguay and will be addressed further in relation to socio-cultural constructs of the twentieth century. Slobin (2011) acknowledges folk music as a tool for the purposeful defining of national identity, 'smaller nations, often subordinated to stronger states, leveraged their identity through folklore, including music' (Slobin, 2011: 53). Slobin also highlights the examples of nation building that has centred on oral traditions. This point bears direct relevance to cultural policies worldwide and will be explored in the Paraguayan context in Chapter One.

## **Preserving Tradition**

The academic landscape is well-equipped with research that focuses on the preservation of tradition, the need for it, and how this might be achieved. The question of longevity tends to be accompanied by the inference that a particular tradition will remain in stasis, much conflict with Vera's position that culture is not a 'frozen static whole' (Vera, 2017: 35). Jeff Todd Titon (2009) frames the process of preserving

tradition or culture as 'defensive' arguing that, 'if we think of a music culture as something here, living, a renewable daily resource among us, we move into a discourse of sustainability, people in partnership' (Titon, 2009: 135).

Joseph Bruchac (2010) argues that, if folklore can be preserved at all, then at best this is a nuanced concept:

The presence of teller and audience, and the immediacy of the moment are not fully captured by any form of technology. Unlike the insect frozen in amber, a told story is alive. It always changes from one telling to the next depending on the voice and mood of the storyteller, the place of its telling, the response of the audience. The story breathes with the teller's breath. (Bruchac, 2010)

There is much to take from the language used by Bruchac in this quotation, which seems to span time and organism. However, the term to preserve (as represented by the insect) must be aligned with the question of whether society finds higher levels of authenticity in traditions that are deemed to have been preserved, rather than reimagined.

## **Inventing Tradition**

A failure to adequately preserve tradition may inadvertently result in the creation of a new or invented tradition. That said, the sentiment that the story changes from one telling to another, perhaps maps most closely to notions of invention or re-invention. Eric Hobsbawn and Terence Ranger first introduced the concept of an invented tradition to an academic audience in 1983, offering this initial definition:

'Invented tradition' is taken to mean a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek

to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past. (Hobsbawn and Ranger, 2010: 1)

Of direct interest to this thesis is the sentiment put forward by Eric Hobsbawn, highlighting the notion of invented tradition. This is to say that points of debate arise from 'the contrast between the constant change and innovation of the modern world and the attempt to structure at least some parts of social life within it as unchanged and invariant' (Hobsbawn and Ranger, 2010: 2). The term 'invented tradition' has proven to be problematic as a discursive topic in this research project. Taken out of context, and certainly beyond the ivory towers of academia, the branding (also a loaded term) of traditions as 'invented' perhaps carries connotations of sub-ordination, and thus a perception of hierarchical judgment. With this in mind, Rice (2013) prompts us to consider the question of who is inventing the tradition? And with what motive?

## **The Discourse on Identity in Ethnomusicology**

A fundamental element that the research questions in this thesis seek to address is how *Paraguayidad* (Paraguayan-ness) is expressed in the reimagining of the Paraguayan *polca*. This term is embedded within Paraguayan society as a means of defining a sense of personal and national identity. Martin Stokes (1997) argues for the value of music to be recognised as 'socially meaningful', enabling individuals to 'recognise identities and places, and the boundaries which separate them' (1997: 5). Ayhan Erol (2010) suggests that 'Identity is a name given to the escape sought from uncertainty' grounding, and giving certainty to our being, thus enabling a sense of belonging: 'Identities are, therefore, the names given to different ways we are

positioned by, and position ourselves within the narratives of the past' (Erol, 2010: 377).

Identity has been and continues to be a central area of interest in the discourses that percolate ethnomusicology. That said, Rice (2007) notes that the theme of identity was absent in the key, discipline-establishing work of the 1970s and 1980s, even as late as the edited handbook *Ethnomusicology: An Introduction*, published in 1992. Despite this, Rice states that identity was the 'best represented theme' (Rice, 2010) at the 2005 Society for Ethnomusicology conference. Volume 54 of *Ethnomusicology* (2010) features Rice's call for a new approach to the discipline: he calls for the theme of music and identity to be foregrounded, stating that within the pages of the journal, authors, 'take for granted identity as a category of social life and of social analysis' (Rice, 2010: 1). Rice critiques the prevalent use of 'identity' as a buzz word on several fronts. He suggests a need to create generalised and comparative theories on music and identity, reflecting that 'almost no theoretical discussion in our article-length musical ethnographies on the theme of music and identity' (Rice, 2010) between 1982 and 2006. Rice notes the lack of 'intertextual reference' in the surveyed articles as 'disappointing', calling for reform of the discipline, catalysed by his analysis of the theme of music and identity. In response, Martin Stokes points out that:

Identity is a diverse and complex topic, constantly on the move. In this particular instance, I'm not sure that we have much to gain, and suspect that we might actually have something to lose, by attempting to pin it down (Stokes, 2010: 339).

Suzel Ana Reily supports Stokes' view, suggesting the discourse on identity and music in ethnomusicology to be a 'discursive construction rather than a fixed structure' (Reily,

2010: 332). Her position is formed from the view that a 'general paradigm shift within the humanities and social sciences' has emerged that has seen a constructivist orientation supplant 'structures and essentialised notions of "culture"'.

When discussing identity, questions arise about who drives the social positioning of a group of people. Notably, one of themes that emerges in contexts of music, is the discourse relating to nation building, 'Music is intensely involved in the propagation of dominant classifications and has been a tool in the hands of new states' (Stokes, 1997: 10). Peter Wade (1998) similarly reflects on the hegemonic principles that bring hierarchical structures imposed by a dominant class. Thus, in relation to music: 'a tendency to see a 'national music' as the homogenising imposition of a nation-building (musical/intellectual) elite and to see other groups as trying to redefine that music and/or contesting the terrain with other music' (Wade, 1998: 4). Rice (2017) aligns the classification of identity in this mode to that of the essentialist position. In the context of group identity, this position aligns expressions of identity to the politics of nationalism. The acceptance that we might process multiple musical identities stemming from influences from different cultures leans heavily on aligning with a constructivist position.

### **Reflection (pause)**

How is a musical tradition reimagined so that it connects with new audiences, enters new social spaces and survives the omnipresent tests of time?



## Building a Theoretical Approach

Huib Schippers (2009) highlights a 'tension between static and dynamic perception of tradition' (Schippers, 2009: 45). He notes that particular attention in scholarly discourse has been given to tradition as a relatively static phenomenon.

Raúl Romero's research in *Debating the Past: music, memory, and Identity in the Andes* (2001) focuses on the representations of music tradition in the Peruvian city of Huancayo in the Mantaro Valley. Romero cites the introduction of new regional cultural policies in the early 2000s as a trigger for his thinking, and more specifically, how the musical traditions of the Wanka people were being portrayed in the move to preserve cultural histories. Pertaining strongly to the process of reimagining is the 'balance between the modern and the traditional' (Romero, 2001). Romero talks of: 'the "stylisations" and "deformations" of folklore made by some Andean artists in their quest to gain more commercial acceptance' (Romero, 2001: 97).

Romero presents Arguedas as an archetype of the traditionalist approach to preserving folklore. Arguedas (1911-1969) was a renowned folklorist and professor at Peru's most prestigious academic institution, San Marcos University. A defining factor in this positioning is Arguedas' upbringing among Indians and mestizos in Andean Ayacucho. His unique insider perspective was seen by Peruvians as a vital bridge between the regional traditions and Lima in the mid-twentieth century, 'in a time in which most of Lima was hostile to the presence of Andean peoples' (2001: 97). I will return to explore the role of 'the Capital city' at a later stage in this research. However, Arguedas is important to include here because he represents a conservative or purist approach to preserving traditional musical practice; Romero invites a discussion around the intersection between this perspective and the potential need for a modern approach to sustain and communicate with new generations.

Romero asks the question: 'Did Arguedas overstate the value of "authenticity" over the dynamics of change in folklore?' (Romero, 2001: 101). However, Arguedas sees an indelible link between the traditionalist and a 'deep nostalgia': 'Arguedas longs for a "pure" authenticity and regrets the recent innovations that are "distorting" the genuine Wanka folklore' (Romero, 2001: 137). The distortion is coming from outside genres and the race to adapt traditional practices to fit modern modes of transmission. To expand the point on outside genres: 'The cosmopolitan may embrace the alien culture, but he does not become submitted to it. All the time he knows where the exit is' (Hannerz, 1996: 104). Should this notion of 'alien culture' be aligned firmly with, and be considered the key ingredient in the modernising or reimagining of tradition? Romero, in part, alludes to a sliding scale, or at least a need to differentiate between a 'modernist' and 'radical' approach: 'modernising tradition, but within controlled parameters' (Romero, 2001: 138). The instrumentation used in a traditional ensemble is suggested as a parameter, and a musical element that can be manipulated. In the traditionalist approach that Romero sets out, the clarinet could replace the role of a *queña* in an *orquesta típica*. The concern of the traditionalist is that of pragmatism: what is more functional but minimises divergence from the sound of the traditional instrument. However, a modernist would push this and ask whether a saxophone can perform the role, not instead of, but in addition to the clarinet, 'tradition and modernity may coexist, mingle, and blend in a variety of forms and meanings' (Romero, 2001, 138).

Romero acknowledges the transition to a radical approach as inducing: 'a different level of debate between cultural conservatism and liberalism' (139). This is concerning the 'radical' sensibility of youth conveyed by new musical styles. In the *orquesta típica*, synthesisers replace violins, and the electric bass is favoured over the

colonial harp: volume is also a preoccupation of the radical. The modernists and traditionalists are allied in a state of concern that the radical will deform the traditional aspects of the music. However, the radical holds the belief that: 'nothing is típico [...] all instruments came from abroad' (Romero, 2001: 139). The radical approach to reimagining tradition is through innovation (as with the modernist); however, the radical differs from the modernist, presenting their perspective as the next stage in musical evolution. Romero's discussion of 'traditionalist', 'modernist', and 'radical' is not a central governing principle in the book, although it is highlighted by Tim Rice in *Ethnomusicology: A very short introduction* (2014) under the subheading of 'Individuals and theories of culture' (Rice, 2014: 85). The model is effective in outlining potential motives and parameters in the process of reimagining traditional music. A fleeting reference is made to the intersection between each approach, suggesting that an individual's position may not be fixed to a singular perspective or approach, an idea that requires further consideration, as does the model itself. Romero's thoughts on this issue are not at the centre of his work; they are useful to regard as a digression from the main subject matter or as a pause for thought. Rice (2014) has arguably elevated Romero's words to something resembling a theory, but the terms traditionalist, modernist and radical might be more appropriately valued for the way they connect to wider perspectives.

## **Modernist**

Antonio Rappa (2002) reflects that 'The banality of modernity is often defined as such factors as global capitalism, the commodification of tradition...and most recently, the power of technological terrorism' (Rappa, 2002: 6). Yvetta Kajanová (2020) talks about crossing borders between traditions and a global culture. Kajanová

focuses on former socialist nations in Eastern Europe and a need to modernise folk and ethnic traditional music by embracing both local and global cultures in pursuit of new 'ethnoscapes', as put forward by Arjun Appadurai (1996) who declares that 'Modernity belongs to that small family of theories that both declares and desires universal applicability for itself. What is new about modernity (or the idea that its newness is a new kind of newness) follows from this duality (Appadurai, 1996: 1). Chakravorty (2006) discusses the development of Habermas's theory of the public sphere in the context of India, pointing to the concept that 'the idea of public modernity is derived from a new understanding of the public sphere' (Chakravorty, 2006: 115).

## **Radical**

Giulia Cancellieri et al. (2022) take a diachronic look at radical interpretations of the operatic tradition between 1989 and 2011, foregrounding the notion that tradition is a resource. The study of the Italian opera industry aims to assess audience perceptions of value when comparing different interpretations of staged opera performances. Understanding what might define a core or peripheral element in the original work is central to the judgement made by the audience: 'When the interpretation is more radical, causing alterations to the tradition's core elements, customers are more likely to experience incongruity with their schemas resulting in a negative perception of value (Cancellieri et al, 2022: 3).

Hiroyuki Hashimoto (1998) discusses the reimagining of folk performing in Japan and talks about the 'co-existence or intermingling of two social contexts' (Hashimoto, 1998: 35) as a means of enabling new cultural forms to be linked to the original expression of folklore. However, Hashimoto reflects that in traditionalist circles, 'such cultural phenomena have long been ignored or rejected as "fakelore"

‘(Hashimoto, 1998: 36). This notion resonates with Romero’s (2001) concern that radical approaches to reimagining traditional music can be seen as ‘deforming’ folklore. William Fox (1980) presents a comparative analysis of sociological considerations on fakelore and folklore in North America. Fox asserts that: ‘Arguments that folklore is being eroded by fakelore can be subject to tests of internal consistency and consistency with generally accepted understandings of folklore and related phenomena’ (Fox, 1980: 256). Fox is critical in his characterisation of ‘folklorists’, ‘blurring of the distinction between folk and popular culture’ (Fox, 1980: 257). However, the blurring of lines in a creative sense is a central matter of concern to this research, questioning the value of fixed categorisation.

## **Hybridity**

Benjamin Brinner (2006) highlights the fact that hybridity is a problematic term for the musicians he has studied. This is due to ‘its biological connotations [...] particularly due to links to racialised discourses that assume certain “essences” to be mixed through interbreeding’ (Brinner, 2006: 215). Bhabha’s concept of the ‘third space’ is a cornerstone in the theoretical discussion of hybridity:

It is significant that the productive capacities of this ‘Third Space’ have a colonial or postcolonial provenance [place of origin]. For a willingness to descend into that alien territory...may open the way to conceptualising an international culture, based not on the exoticism of multiculturalism or the diversity of cultures, but on the inscription and articulation of culture’s hybridity (Bhabha 1994: 38)

There is a significance in determining an individual’s motive for descending into a [musical] ‘alien territory’. Carrying with them what is on the one hand perceived to be

‘traditional’ or ‘folk’ music, and on the other hand, a contemporary (global) music. This motive may or may not be perceived as radical by the individual; however, the judgment of the creative product on a societal level may be thus. Martin Baumann (2000) talks of postmodernism as a ‘radical affirmation of cultural plurality’. However, R. Anderson Sutton (2011) takes the somewhat conclusive view that ‘the notion of cultural purity is demonstrably a myth’ (Sutton, 2011: 5) while acknowledging that in South Korea ‘some forms of cultural expression have come to be recognised as “pure” or “authentic” indigenous forms’ (Sutton, 2011: 5). However, Sutton is relating to both terms in the context of a discourse of criticism against fusion music in Korea, as opposed to carving out clear examples of music that is ‘pure’ or ‘authentic’: ‘Those who subscribe to notions of cultural purity denigrate fusion as impure, as inauthentic’ (Sutton, 2011: 20). Whilst the cultural context of this perspective is formed outside the musical traditions of Paraguay, the key terms used by Sutton present some interesting universals from which to derive an analysis, not least in the examination of the term ‘cultural plurality’ as a false binary. This issue will be explored in direct reference to the creative work of musicians encountered during field work in Chapters 3 and 4.

## **Authenticity**

It is only possible to understand hybridity in music through how authenticity is perceived. In order to address the complexities of the authenticity of an object of study, Allan S. Taylor (2022) refers to two contrasting perspectives given by Varga’s (2012) on the alignment of inner sense and productionism to perceptions of authenticity.

Inner sense suggests that authenticity is something that can only be known to an individual, tacit and subjective nature – what feels true to us. Productionism

takes the opposite position – you are what you do, authenticity arises through what you present to the world through actions and ideas (Taylor, 2022: 2)

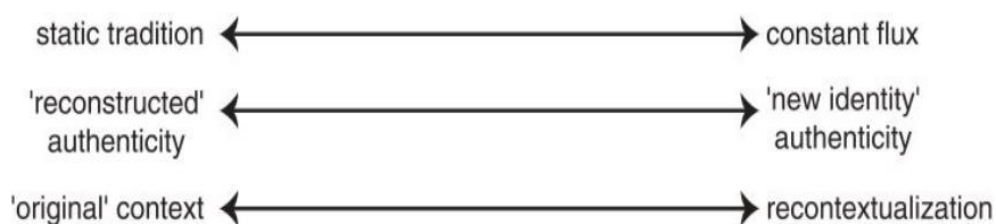
Peter Kivy (1995) relates the use of the term to the critique of musical performance: 'Authentic, then, has become or is close to becoming a synonym for "good" while seeming to confer upon a performance some magical property what it did not have before. It is the musical version of the doctrine of the real presence' (Kivy, 1995: 1)

Contrasting the process of reimagination with a desire for the authentic, has invited criticism in relation to an unrealistic vision of what governs authentic folk performance in music: 'Today, more than ever, there is a need to reduce the centrality of the perspective that comprehends folk performing arts as an authentic cultural phenomenon' (Hashimoto, 1998:37). Keith Howard (2006) questions how 'Koreans take from the past to create a meaningful present' (Howard, 2006) by looking at the desire for individuals to conceptualise authenticity in their lives. A general theory, proposed by Philip Vannini and Patrick Williams (2009), suggests that motivation stems from both positive and negative experiences of authenticity and inauthenticity, respectively. Their perspective is put forward in respect of the broader title of the publication, *Authenticity in Culture, Self and Society*.

Sarah Weiss (2004) suggests that external forces are a factor in 'exploiting' an individual's perception of what is to be considered authentic. The example of marketing in the 'world music' industry is given, proposing that too often the concept of authenticity is presented as a fixed entity. However, 'The construction of authenticity is not rigid. Authenticity is a malleable concept, within and between individuals as well as over time' (Weiss, 2004: 521). Michelle Bigenho (2002) presents three perspectives that seem illustrative of Weiss' malleability concept. Bigenho terms experiential authenticity as that of an individual's felt experience.

Unique authenticity is perhaps an extension of the felt experience into something made or created: ‘something is authentic because it is singular, new, innovative, and usually perceived to emerge from the creative depths of a composing musician's soul’ (Bigenho, 2002). She goes on to state that ‘Unique authenticity opens the debate about the presumed division between art created by individuals and culture created by collectives’ (Bigenho, 2002: 20). This position is rooted in the logic that authenticity may be perceived as the romanticised notion of a third party, or as the ideas of the creator. Bigenho uses the principle of unique authenticity as a means of challenging the connections between a cultural/historical authenticity that highlights representational practices in music and experiential authenticity that focuses on the felt experience of music.

Huib Schippers (2009) proposes that perceptions of tradition (musical) could be viewed as a series of sliding scale observations. He states that: ‘virtually no music tradition would qualify as *all* static or *all* flexible. A continuum from static tradition to tradition in “constant flux” is more appropriate to represent the diversity and nuances of contemporary musical realities’ (Schippers, 2009: 47). This perspective is illustrated in Figure 1.2 below.



**Figure 1.2 Schippers (2009) 'Issue of Context Cluster'**

Schippers uses an additional line of continuum to show how authenticity might be perceived in relation to non-fixed expressions of music tradition.



## Latin America

In 1952, Norman Demuth criticised the extent of academic writing on South American music:

In South America, the situation appears quite hopeless, and the approach is hindered by the uncertainty expressed by those few writers who have discovered it. For our authority we turn to *Music in Latin-America*, by Nicolas Slominsky, which fills the reader with doubts, not as to its authenticity, but as to the real value of what it propagates (Demuth, 1952: 249)

Gerard Béhague was a prominent writer in Latin American music. His book *Music In Latin America: An Introduction* was published in 1979 and provides one of the few detailed guides to Latin American music, following on from Nicolas Slominsky's earlier publication *Music of Latin America* (1945). In his 1980 review of Béhague's book, Aurelio de la Vega refers to the lack of research on Latin American music 'one wonders how such a vast and intriguing subject had remained untapped until now from a didactic angle' (1980: 731). De la Vega supports the claim that Béhague had produced a landmark book that would go a long way to addressing Demuth's concerns in 1952, although without a dedicated section on Paraguay. De la Vega expresses a degree of surprise at the extent to which Béhague has been able to glean cultural information: 'particularly in areas where political isolation and lack of communication, as in the case of Cuba, make it very difficult for the researcher to penetrate beyond propaganda tirades or mere availability of material' (1980: 732). In the 1970s, Paraguay was considered one of the most politically isolated countries in the region (Lambert, 2010). Béhague may not have been able to gather sufficient and credible information that he

required. The blank space this leaves in an otherwise comprehensive resource may reflect the beginning of a period of expanded academic work in Latin America, in which Paraguay remains almost entirely unrepresented.

Amongst the scant research, Eduardo Galeano's emotively titled *Open Veins of Latin America* was first published in 1971 and delivers an ideologically charged analysis of the socio-economic exploitation of Latin America. The work adopts a chronological approach, allowing Galeano to construct a narrative that connects colonial to post-colonial issues in a region-wide historical analysis. There is a sense that Galeano sympathises with the plight of Paraguay, a sentiment primarily driven by his views on the effects of the Triple Alliance War on the country (more on this in Chapter 1). Galeano is unflinching in his condemnation of Britain's role in supporting the Brazilian (in particular) war effort, a view not widely acknowledged in the 1970s. There is undoubtedly no low-hanging fruit when it comes to the discovery of a critical perspective that implicates Britain in the conflict as a remote member of the allied forces.

## **Paraguay**

In 2005, Béhague supervised the completion of Alfredo Colman's thesis, *The Diatonic Harp in the Performance of Paraguayan Identity*. In terms of a global reach, Alfredo Colman stands at the centre of the research conducted on Paraguayan music in the twenty-first century. His 2015 publication is derived from his 2005 doctoral thesis titled *The Diatonic Harp in the Performance of Paraguayan Identity*, supervised by Gerard Béhague. As one might expect, many of Colman's written justifications for conducting his PhD research are omitted from the published book. However, it seems appropriate to refer to both the thesis and book in this review, as many of Colman's

observations and highlighted gaps in knowledge still exist and have therefore informed my research questions.

Although researchers of Paraguayan musical traditions have published works discussing general aspects of certain musical expressions typical of the region, no comprehensive or systematic study of Paraguayan traditional music from the perspective of the cultural analysis of music has been conducted or published (Colman, 2005: 158)

Colman begins the book by acknowledging that in 2010, the harp received official proclamation from the Paraguayan Congress of its status as *Instrumento símbolo de la cultura musical nacional* (instrument symbolic of the national musical culture). Of significance, *The Paraguayan Harp: From Colonial Transplant to National* is the only English language publication dedicated solely to Paraguayan music.

Colman's fifth chapter, *The Music of the Paraguayan Harp*, gives a brief insight into the origins of the harp's repertoire. Although the Paraguayan *polca* is not central to his research, this short section raises several interesting points of contention regarding the roots of the *polca* as it is known in Paraguay today. It is widely regarded that the polka gained its foothold in nineteenth-century Paraguayan society through Eliza Lynch and Francisco Solano López. However, this may simply be due to the rather obvious example of European migration into Paraguay's establishment at the point of the polka's high fashion in Europe.

Colman describes a *polca* dedicated to President Francisco Solano López (1827-1870) titled Gran polka militar "El 10 de Noviembre". The piece was written in the mid-nineteenth century by the Uruguayan composer Dalmiro Costa and does: 'exhibit the musical characteristics of a European polka calling into question the notion that the Paraguayan *polca* did not derive its musical attributes from the European

polka' (Colman, 2015: 65). However: 'there is no conclusive evidence to determine if the *polcas* played at the Lopéz' residence correspond to the 6/8 Paraguayan *polcas* known today' (Colman, 2015: 65). He continues to state, that whilst some *polcas* have survived from the nineteenth century, they are anonymous, in ternary rhythm and featuring characteristic Paraguayan syncopations. Colman goes on to quote Max Boettner's view that the Paraguayan *polca*'s origins should be linked to the *Gato*: 'the Spanish *Gato* Mis-Mis dance, later referred simply as the *gato* in Argentina, was already known in Peru in 1780' (Colman, 2015: 65). Colman is clear in his assessment that some gaps exist in the knowledge regarding the Paraguayan *polca*'s inception, and which forms of music influenced its current music characteristics. Indeed, Colman's emphasis in this book is on the organology of the harp and the role of the instrument more than the repertoire in shaping cultural identity.

Colman (2005) acknowledges the limited yet important body of literature to emerge from Paraguay in the 1980s and 1990s. Referring to Spanish language publications relating to Paraguayan musical traditions, Mauricio Cardozo Ocampo's *Mundo folklórico Paraguayo* (1981) is an anthology of both music and literature. Luis Szarán's (1997) introductory guide to the music of Paraguay is defined by the author as a resource. *Diccionario de la Música en el Paraguay* sets out to provide the reader with a wide range of information on Paraguayan music in the 'smallest number of pages possible' (Szarán, 1997: 7). Szarán achieves this aim with an encyclopaedic work that offers surface level introduction to a comprehensive list of the key figures in Paraguayan music during the twentieth century. In contrast, Florentín Giménez's (1997) textbook on Paraguayan musical forms extends and expands the work previously discussed by Ocampo (1981). Arturo Pereira's *Origen Social de la Música Popular Paraguaya* was first published seventeen years after he died in 2011, with the

support of his son Remigio Pereira (1961-2022). The short biographical entry in Szarán (1997) notes that 'Pereira wrote various books' (Szarán, 1997: 381); however, the posthumous publication of *Origen Social de la Música Popular Paraguaya* excluded it from direct mention in Szarán's directory. As the title of Pereira's text suggests, the author places an emphasis on the social origins of music in Paraguay and structures the book accordingly. This approach contrasts with the format of both Szarán (1997) and Ocampo (1981), who opt to isolate individual people or specific hyper-musical elements that define dances or pieces of music. Instead, Pereira (2011) could be aligned with that of Boettner (1956) in terms of its focus on chronological happenings. However, Pereira noticeably excludes all the classical historical musicology traits of Boettner: organology and score-based analysis. Thus, one might define *Origen Social de la Música Popular Paraguaya* (2011) as the first ethnomusicological text by a Paraguayan author. This view could, however, be challenged, as the exact dates of writing cannot be verified (see Chapter 4 for a discussion with Remigio Pereira). An educated guess would place the date of inception close to the time of the key European texts, Merriam (1963) and Blacking (1973). Jose Talavera's 1983 biography of *Herminio Giménez* considers traditions within their social and historical contexts.

To some extent, the work from this point in the twentieth century stands on the shoulders of the first edition of Juan Max Boettner's *Música y Musicos del Paraguay*. First published in 1956, the importance of this text cannot be overstated when discussing the impact it has had on the musicological study of Paraguayan music; three further editions of the text have subsequently been published (1987, 2000, 2008). Boettner draws on first-hand accounts and newspaper reports gleaned from archival sources to build a socio-cultural picture of Paraguay in the nineteenth century.

Of particular interest to this thesis (see Chapter 2) in terms of historical context are Boettner's depictions of the intersections between musical culture and politics in the decades that connect Paraguay's independence from Spanish rule to the start of the Triple Alliance war. Findings include a much-cited quotation from the state-controlled newspaper *El Semanario* on 27 November 1858: 'It is the first time we find the word POLKA in our musical history' (Boettner, 2008: 98).

Peter Lambert (2010) discusses identity as a trend which runs through much of the writing on Paraguayan history. Lambert notes: 'The absence of major objective works on the history of Paraguay is striking' (Lambert, 2010: 15). He attributes this to a lack of consensus in defining key historical events, and thus the contested fields of study that emerge. Colman (2015) explains the notion of *paraguayidad* to be: 'synonymously in reference to a relationship between an ideal set of beliefs and values and an ideal historical past' (Colman, 2015: 12). The 'ideal historical past' constructed at the end of the nineteenth century as Paraguay was rebuilt following the Triple Alliance war. Hobsbawm (not in reference to Paraguay) presents a general point on invented tradition: 'insofar as there is such reference to a historical past, the peculiarity of 'invented' traditions is that the continuity with it is largely factitious' (1983: 2). Lambert defines five factors that have influenced Paraguay's historical development and identity as: isolation, war, immigration, language and land. Since music is not one of these factors, I am drawn to Rice's (2010) argument that a fundamental question within ethnomusicological study should be asked: 'What does music contribute to identity formation?' In Peter Manuel's article, 'Puerto Rican Music and Cultural Identity: Creative Appropriation of Cuban Sources from Danza to Salsa' (1994) parallels can be drawn between Manuel's conclusions regarding the role salsa plays in defining Puerto Rico's cultural identity and the *polca* as a symbol of Paraguayan identity when

the roots of the salsa are so widely attributed to another nation. To attempt to understand this complex and varied discussion of *paraguayidad* and perhaps explore Vera's thinking on a 'static and frozen whole' and 'the pressure of social reality' in relation to music. I ask the question: what musical elements must remain when a more radical approach is taken to reimagining the *polca* (see Chapter 5)?

### **Reimagining Tradition**

This review highlights a clear opportunity to expand the canon of academic literature that pertains directly to music in Paraguay, responding in part to Colman's (2005) call for more systematic research on Paraguayan music that takes a cultural analysis perspective. In addition, there is scope to build on Colman's work in terms of a direct focus on the lived experience of musicians in the twenty-first century. The breadth of sources (in the Paraguayan context) that depict musical phenomena is relatively comprehensive (Boettner, 1956., Ocampo, 1981., Talavera, 1983., Szarán, 1987., Giménez, 1997). The knowledge drawn from this body of literature underpins the areas of traditional music analysis in my work; it is not the focus of this thesis to seek to redefine the musical elements that comprise Paraguayan music in its traditional form.

As an overarching theme, the term 'reimagine' appears with a fleeting reference to a process, and there is little detail provided in defining a flow for reimagining as a process. Examining the drivers and motives of the 'reimagining' process will provide a critique of the societal and personal judgements made of the re-imaged product. In order to move towards a more comprehensive definition of the process of re-imagination, existing critiques on the binary nature of the terminology that frames the preserving or sustaining of culture/tradition will be analysed. Therefore, an argument

can be made for terms such as *imagine* as a vehicle to break away from false binaries in the discourse on the process of doing culture in a 'new way'.

## **Methodology**

In order to examine the emergence of an 'invented' musical identity and the influence on twenty-first-century music makers. This research aims to provide a systematic cultural study that balances ethnographic fieldwork in both physical and virtual settings, engaging with traditional music practices and with contemporary electronic music artists. Additional questions emerge on how the proliferation of the Paraguayan *polca* throughout the twentieth century may be culturally embraced yet also avoided in the formation of a new (twentieth-first century) musical voice. This notion informs the question: How are individual feelings of national identity expressed through the creation of music? Communicating directly with musicians working in both traditional music groups and contemporary urban environments will develop a stronger understanding of how feelings of *paraguayidad* are expressed or contested in the production of the *polca*, shedding light on the 'essentialist' or 'constructivist' approach to the transplanting of this musical identity. Does a constructivist approach to the polka in Paraguayan musical identity conflict with *paraguayidad* as an essentialist approach?

## **Constructing an Ethnographic Approach**

Fundamentally, the type of research conducted in this project was qualitative, seeking to generate thinking from a bottom-up approach that focuses heavily on the lived experiences of individuals and the subjective decisions they take in the pursuit of musical creativity. The purpose of the ethnography was to experience how different



musicians in Paraguay naturally gravitate towards creative stimuli for their work, observe their musical encounters and the negotiations they make with music as a form of national identity. There was no pre-determined assumption that participants would view their work as 'reimagined' or the process of doing work as 'reimagining'. My core objective as a researcher was to objectively capture snapshots of the work musicians conducted through situational interactions. The latter phases of my analysis place an emphasis on the central point (reimagining) in the theoretical model and as a means of addressing current gaps in knowledge on how this 'imagined' process of 'doing' might be articulated.

In order to expand on this point, I will introduce the principal areas of my fieldwork. I was interested in collecting data that related strongly, but not exclusively, to the creative processes musicians develop in the composition of new musical works and or performance scenarios. A variety of approaches were taken to enable observational and participatory settings that suited the participant and their natural way of working. This was primarily in the participants' working space, often a studio, home or commercial space, in or close to the city of Asunción. Additionally, some ethnographic activity took place at public events, noted as either a music festival or a music venue. Online spaces also figured in the inhabited ethnographic environment, again, both observationally and in a participatory capacity. Fundamentally, the use of ethnography as the overarching methodology involved spending time with musicians, experiencing their work on their terms, and in some cases, making music as a method to communicate and understand. 'Ethnography is to a cultural or social anthropologist [ethnomusicologist] what lab research is to the biologist' (Monaghan & Just, 2000: 13). To this end, it was important to extend research interactions with my participants across as long a timeframe as possible, so that (where possible) my interactions with

participants (data collection) was not confined to a snapshot. In some cases, this enabled creative work that was in a conceptual phase at the time of my fieldwork in Paraguay (2019) to be completed and performed at a later date. In other instances, I conducted interviews over a 4-year period with the same participant, allowing for a diachronic impression of the individual's creative evolution.

Performance contexts played an important role in the data collection process. Where possible, I took the opportunity to physically play music with participants. This method was grounded in the theories proposed by John Baily (2001) on the use of performance as a research method. Baily frames his work against the backdrop of Mantle Hood's 1960 article 'The Challenge of Bi-musicality'. Baily argues against Hood's chosen terminology of *bi-musicality*, focusing on Hood's deduction that *bi-musicality* can suppose equal competency in two contrasting musical cultures and runs into further problems when used to describe those skilled in multiple 'musics'. Baily presents an argument for *learning to perform* as a credible alternative methodology and also places Hood's article within a chronological framework of developmental thinking regarding this method of practical fieldwork. Baily concludes by offering five points for further consideration: 1. The acquisition of performance skills by the researcher; 2. The study of musicality, learning, and musical cognition; 3. Role, status, and identity; 4. Participant observation; and 5. The post-fieldwork period. Perhaps two categories can be produced from these five points. Firstly, points 1, 2, and 5 are associated with the learning processes, and in the case of point 5, the lifespan of this process. Each of the main chapters in this thesis will reflect on the process of research in specific relation to any area in which findings were made as a result of my performance activity. This is particularly relevant in Chapter 5 when discussing the work of Derlis Ibarra (see Table 1.2). During my fieldwork interactions

with Derlis, I frequently engaged in short performative exercises in his studio in order to establish a clearer picture of the 'it' (Kisliuk & Gross, 2004: 249) in the music that related to insider thoughts on Paraguayan music (*sincopado Paraguayo* in particular). In addition, over the course of the research, I have engaged in the performance of traditional Paraguayan music with singer Romy Martinez (introduced later in this chapter). An example of the transcriptions created as part of our collaborative work can be found in this folder, Appendix item 18. Whilst I do not focus on my performance work in direct connection to the research questions in this thesis, I have been able to develop a deeper understanding of key musical issues that have enabled lines of enquiry to form. The second category, involving points 3 and 4, centre around the identity and experience of the field researcher. It is this point that perhaps leads to the discussion of 'insider', 'outsider' (see Nettl, 1983). It could be assumed that Baily aims his points of consideration primarily towards the outside, with performance as research as an enhancement to participant observation, in order to define an identity for the researcher more clearly. Expanding the researcher's role within the social structure in which they work shows a greater level of commitment to cultural understanding, which can help to enhance the researcher's status. Utilising online spaces from the outset of the research allowed opportunities to network with the musicians prior to arriving in Paraguay and to view their activities through the lens of a performer. This was principally achieved through social media (see Figure 1.10). It was my intention to be perceived by participants and interlocutors in Paraguay as a dedicated performer of Paraguayan music first, and as a researcher of Paraguayan music second. Deborah Wong acknowledges the place of auto-ethnography when findings have been drawn for the performative aspects of the ethnographic process. However, she states that, 'performative ethnography isn't a disintegration of ethnography into question upon

open-ended question' (Wong, 2008: 87). This is a crucial point to address in the overall methodology of this research, as the integration of auto-ethnographic methods do not directly seek to answer the research questions or add (as Wong describes) additional open-ended questions. Instead, all performance activities that could be classified as auto-ethnographic have been used to build contextual understanding on one level. On another level, they have assisted in (as Baily outlines) the building of a working relationship with participants.

### Selecting Participants

In 2016, the British Forum for Ethnomusicology's annual conference, held at the University of Sheffield, hosted the first panel dedicated to Paraguayan music, featuring Alfredo Colman, Timothy Watkins, and Simone Krüger Bridge. Krüger Bridge also connected me to Romy Martinez, a Paraguayan PhD student at the Royal Holloway University. In order to experience creative practice in Paraguay from a cross-section of the musical landscape, the approach to seeking out participants and interlocutors was developed from a hypothesis drawn from a curiosity of Romero's surface-level attributes of instrumentation to define a traditionalist, modern or radical approach to reimagining a musical tradition. Put simply, no discernible changes to instrumentation would be initially categorised as traditional, changes to some instruments but maintaining similar acoustic properties would be modernist, and a complete departure from traditional instruments would be categorised as radical. An example of this in context is shown in Table 1.1.

Traditionalist	Modernist	Radical
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Harp and Acoustic guitar	Harp, Acoustic guitar, electric guitar, bass guitar	Synthesised electronic instruments
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**Table 1.1 Instrument categorisation example**

My PhD proposal grew out of the online connections with electronic music artists in Asunción via the *Electronic Music Lovers from Paraguay* Facebook page in 2016, exchanging questions and shared interests. From this process of online networking, professional relationships emerged with two distinctly different young electronic music makers, to be introduced below. My rationale for connecting with participants in this way and from a grassroots musical standing (in Paraguay) was philosophically informed by John Blacking's discussions with John Baily on the benefits of studying the 'average musician' (Baily, 2001: 88). Blacking presents his view that, 'This would tell me much more about the cultural realities and deep structures of the music than the sophisticated teaching of the academies' (Baily, 2001: 88). Relating this theory to my own methodology has helped to inform choices around participants selection.

### **Introducing Participants**

In Paraguay, I had the opportunity to experience public performances of work at a rural music festival and in urban music venues. Observational activities at performance venues in Paraguay were enhanced by the personal contact I was able to make with key organisational figures prior to my arrival. For example, the observations I gained at the Festival del Takuare'ê in the town of Guarambaré in November 2019 were contextualised by the interview I conducted with festival organiser Fidel Zarza in October of the same year, before my visit to the festival the following month. Interviewing played a key role in the acquisition of qualitative data.

Interviews took place in various settings, and questions were presented to participants in multiple formats. Table 1.2 summarises the type of interview conducted, and the name of the participant (participants will be introduced in full later in the methodology).

<b>Participant Name</b>	<b>Interview Type</b>	<b>Collection method</b>	<b>Date</b>
Fidel Zarza	Text	Email transcript	10.2019
Sixto Corbalán	In-person, Paraguay	Text	11.2019
	In-person, online	Google Meet Recording	15.11.2023
Ana Laura Cardenas	Text	Email transcript	27.11.2019
	In-person, Paraguay	Audio recording	05.11.2019
Derlis Ibarra	In-person, Paraguay	Video recording	07.11.2019
Remigio Periera	In-person, Paraguay	Video recording	08.11.2019
Manuel Martinez Domínguez	Text	Email transcript	20.09.2023
María Eugenia Ayala	Text	Email transcript	04.09.2023
Tania Ramos	In-person, Paraguay	Text	04.11.2019
	Text	Email transcript	12.11.2019
Valeriano Amarillo	In-person, Paraguay	Audio recording	07.11.2019
	Text	Social Media	10.2018
Romy Martinez	Online	Video recording	
	Text	Email transcript	
Alejandra Almada	Text	Email transcript	09.05.2024
Carmen Monges	Text	Email transcript	07.06.2024

Jeporeka 2021	In person, online	Text and Video	08.2021
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**Table 1.2 Interview method summary**

## **Ethical Considerations**

In all ethnographic research, ethics play an important role in placing the researcher and participant on equal terms. It was essential to this project to build trusting relationships with my participants and generate a respect for my work that I had to earn. The approach taken to achieve this position has been detailed in the previous sections of this methodology; however, I will expand on some specific ethical considerations here.

Full ethical approval was granted to this research project prior to the undertaking of fieldwork in 2019 ([Ethics Approval](#)). The Bath Spa University Ethics Approval document presents a detailed and systematic approach to outlining the ethical concerns and mitigation strategies associated with this research project. To summarise the ethical factors aligned to participant selection. All participants in this research were over the age of 18 and thus able to give informed consent to their participation. Full and honest information relating to the purpose and aims of my research was provided to all participants in text format prior to any data collection; in a physical location or an online location (see Appendix item 1) The consent of all participants was required in order to request permission to use the contributions of participants ethically. Participants were all given the opportunity to request anonymity and separately consent to the use of direct quotations. The consent form was issued separately from the information sheet (see Appendix, item 2); this was a deliberate act designed to help participants distinguish between streams of information.

## Theoretical Framework

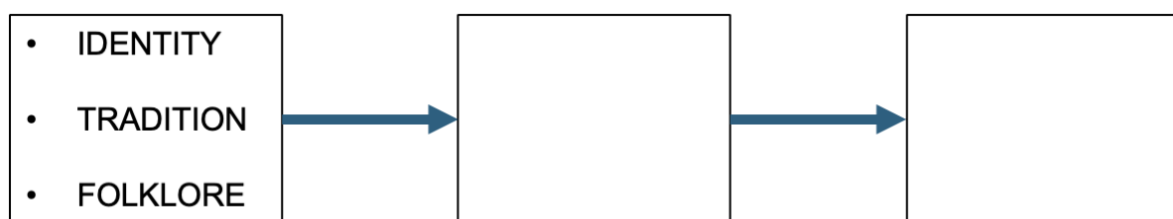
The theoretical framework that underpins the methodological approach was constructed around reimagining as a central fixed point of ‘doing’. The following diagrams outline a surface-level approach, taking the macro issues (variables) discussed in the literature review and filtering them through the process of reimagining. The second level of the framework unpacks nuance in the macro issues, and the third level applies context.

### Level One



**Figure 1.3 Reimagining flow 1**

A set of musical variables flow into the model:



**Figure 1.4 Reimagining flow 2**

A set of cultural or musical judgments flow out of the model; however, these are not predetermined. The use of the terms ‘variable’ and ‘judgement’ was important at this stage in the process to act as a qualitative vehicle to unpack how the information



flowing in and out of the diagram might be perceived by the musician. For example, identity might be personal, national or multiple, tradition might be historical or invented, and folklore might be fakelore.

Flowing out of the diagram, the term judgement relates to how the musician evaluates the process of re-imagination. The term is loaded to a degree, igniting a sentiment of critique, both in a micro sense by the individual (composer/performer) and in a macro sense by the cultural gatekeepers. The terminology used in the output phase of the analysis was inspired by the language proposed by Romero (2001) in terms of traditionalist, modernist, and radical, which can form one possible analysis. However, in this research, the terms acted as a trigger word to explore markers along the continuum theories put forward by Bigenho (2002) and Schippers (2009). This rationale enabled an approach that could both offer an interpretative response to the central research questions and also allow for a critical reflection on the suitability of the three terms as social descriptors of reimagined musical tradition. The chapters function as individual case studies that share a common purpose: to deepen understanding of the music produced by creatives in Paraguay and 'Investigate the diversity and nuances of contemporary musical realities' (Schippers, 2009: 47).

## **Outsider Perspective**

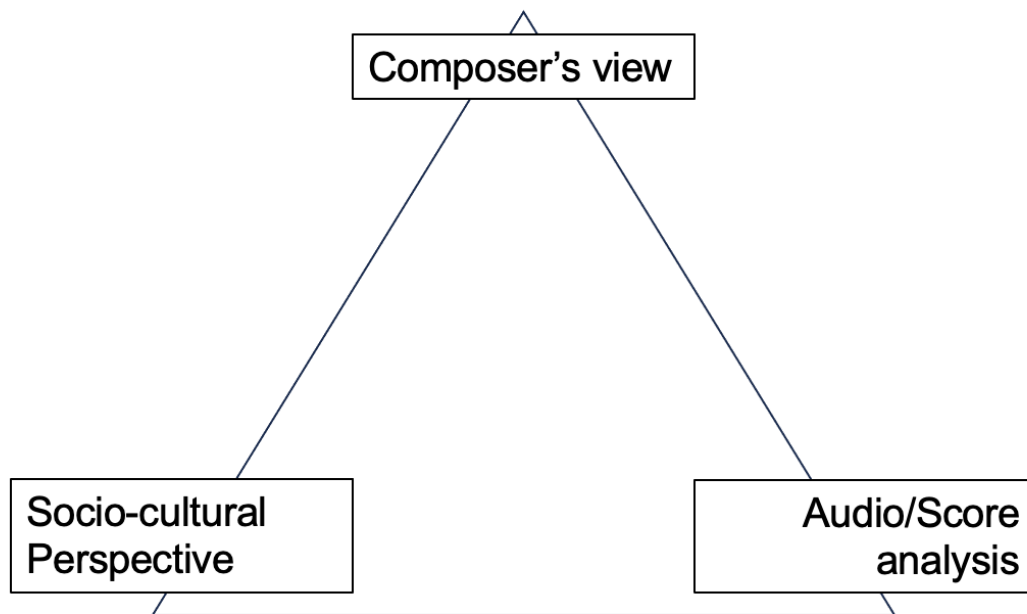
Rice (2008) recognises that since the 1970s ethnomusicologists have been engaged in the somewhat paradoxical situation of understanding the difference between the insider and the outsider perspective, whilst also wrestling with it as a 'fundamental epistemological problem' (Rice, 2008: 53). This situation has been characterised by Bruno Nettl (1983) as the 'ugly ethnomusicologist' (Nettl, 1983: 259). Indeed, Nettl's submission of the common objections held by ethnomusicological

outsiders might not be seen as dated, rather more of a warning: 'They represent a kind of musical colonialism, manipulating the societies they visit, keeping them from controlling their own musical destiny' (Nettl, 1983: 261). In this sense, ethnomusicological outsiders mirror the hierarchical, ego-centric academic centres from which they emanate. Nettl's criticism arises in part from the fear that ethnomusicologists will pose a threat to both the music and musicians they are researching and to their own credibility if constantly seeking to make comparatives with their own culture. However, 'Fieldwork is the most personal task required by the ethnomusicologist' (Myers, 1992: 21), a statement that carries such transferrable resonance. The 'task' acknowledges both the permission granted to the researcher in order to gain personal insight into an individual's life and the acknowledged positionality of the researcher. This is required of the researcher and not an optional extra. The epistemological problem is therefore the necessary anxiety of checks and balances; by viewing the insider/outsider issue as a false binary.

## **Analysis**

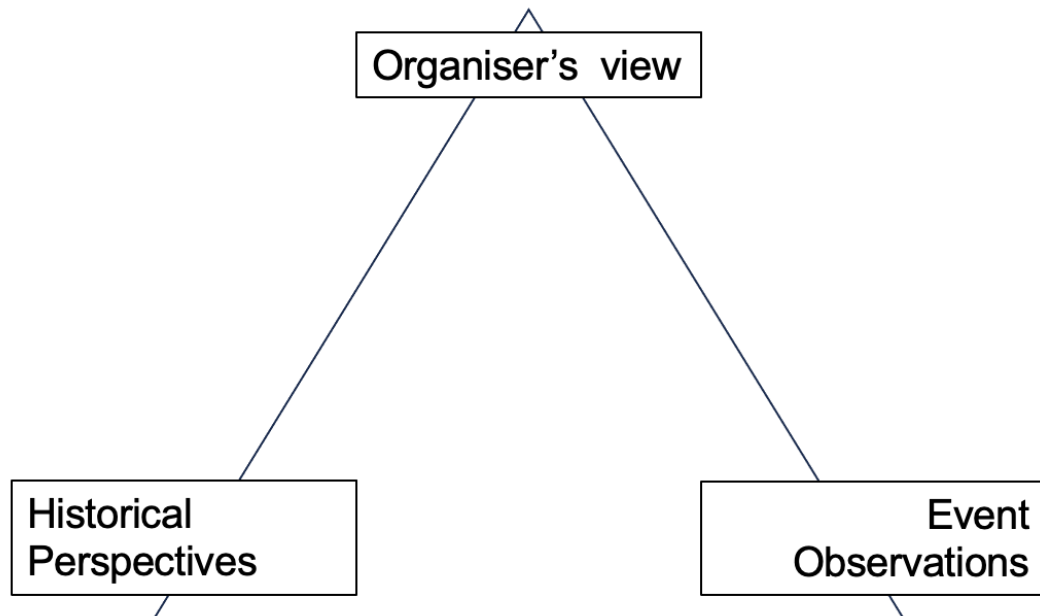
Data from the interviews has been analysed in multiple ways depending on the subject matter to which the content pertained. The specifics are analysed in the relevant chapter; in all cases, the interview served as a means of grounding my own analysis of each societal and musical context discussed, drawing on the views and lived experiences of those directly involved. This approach was particularly effective when embedding traditional methods of score-based music analysis into the ethnography. It was my aim to avoid precedents in historical musicology that arguably rely too heavily on a score to provide all the answers. The intention of this research was to create a score where appropriate, by transcribing audio examples of the

musician's work, principally as an additional aid in the explanatory process. Observations drawn from the combined audio/score examples were then triangulated with the composers' perspectives (derived from interview data) and theory gleaned from Paraguayan historical/socio-cultural perspectives.



**Figure 1.5 Music analysis triangulation model**

The terms used in this triangulation model were adapted in order to map the analytical approach to each fieldwork scenario. Figure 1.6 provides an example of the analysis model used in relation to the Festival del Takuare'ê.

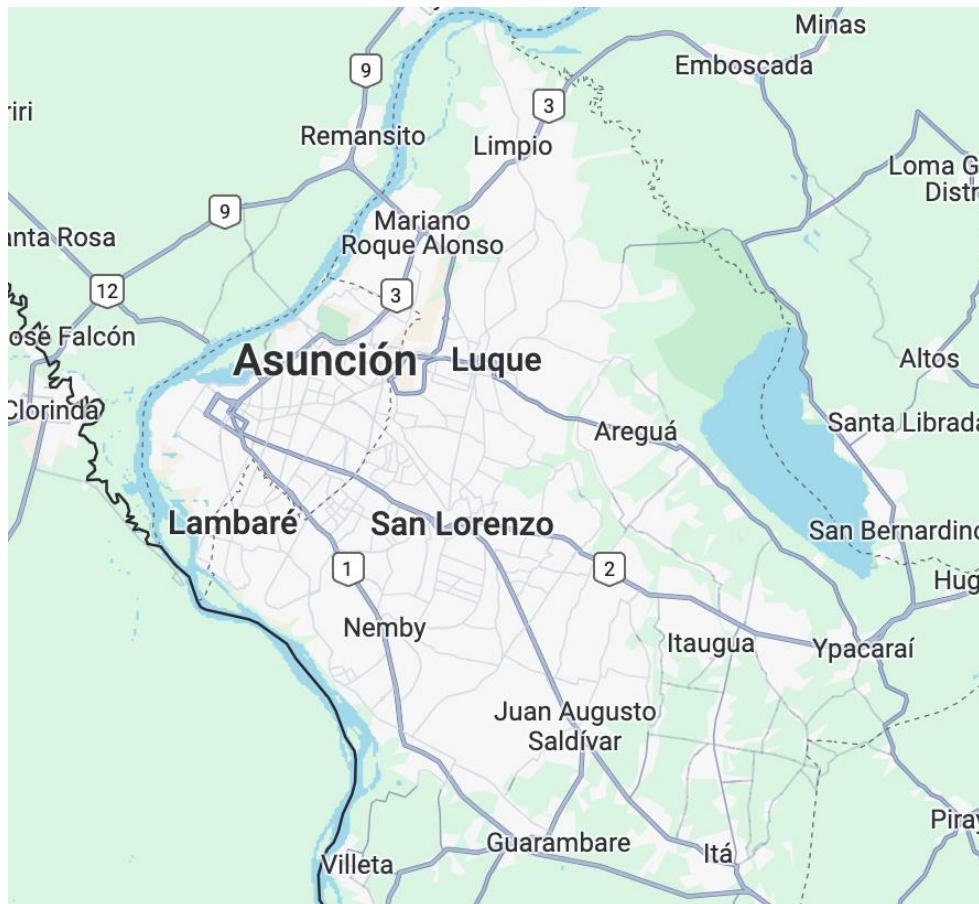


**Figure 1.6 Festival del Takuare'ê analysis triangulation model**

This approach to analysing musical activity is adopted throughout the research project and serves as a control to mitigate the risks associated with an outsider perspective. Sherry Ortner's (1998) provocative statement that 'ethnography is not enough' for anthropological study to solely rely on provides the basis for the rationale that ethnography findings will be best served when triangulated with, 'theory that allows us to map the world in such a way that we can understand the relationship between various [...] ethnographic claims' (Ortner, 1998: 434). The challenge, in direct reference to this research project, was to address which corner of the triangle processed the deepest roots. Therefore, an emphasis in the methodology was placed on a phenomenological approach to fieldwork, attempting to 'ground knowledge in the world of lived experience' (Todd, 2008: 28). There was thus, no intention to form outcomes to the research that were derived from comparative analysis with my own cultural experiences in the UK.

## Fieldwork Locations

All field locations in Paraguay were in the capital city of Asunción and the surrounding area. Figure 1.7 shows a map of the region; fieldwork activity took place directly in the city, Limpio in the North, Luque to the East and Guarambaré to the south.



**Figure 1.7 Map of Asunción and region (Imagery ©2025, Map data © 2025 Google).**

An overview of the city centre locations I most frequently engaged with can be seen on the map in Figure 1.8. I was based on Colon on the outer edge of downtown Asunción, which enabled me to access many areas of the old city on foot.



researcher and a guitarist. While I have not sought to draw direct findings from the performative aspect, meeting participants as a musician first has enabled a stronger level of connection with individuals.

In the Summer of 2019, Romy and I began to meet and create arrangements of some *polcas* and *guaranias* with the aim of performing this repertoire. Romy's innate understanding of Paraguayan syncopation enabled me to practically understand the nuance of the rhythmic patterns in traditional music, and I was then able to develop arrangements of pieces for voice and guitar. Example 1.1 shows an excerpt from my arrangement of 'Renacer'.

**Renacer**

Arr. Matt Dicken  
Romy Martínez

Oscar Cardozo Ocampo

$\text{♩} = 80$

Voice

Guitar

*p*

*mp*

*p*

*mp*

**Example 1.1 'Renacer' Oscar Cardozo Ocampo, arr. Matt Dicken and Romy Martínez**

The video link ([Renacer.mp4](#)) shows an online rehearsal that took place in late 2020: I am in Bristol and Romy is in Ciudad del Este, we are both under COVID-19 lockdown.

## **Virtual Ethnography**

Due to the feasibility of frequent travel to Paraguay, there was a degree of necessity to diversify the overall ethnographic approach to this research. In 2017, I began to build online connections with musicians in Paraguay. This was primarily through social media, specifically Facebook. However, in March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted international travel, and for a period of approximately 2 years (with fluctuating travel policies), music venues, studios and education centres were either closed or had limited access. As a result, I needed to reconfigure my approach to fieldwork. A second planned fieldwork trip to Paraguay in Autumn 2020 had to be cancelled, and work moved entirely to the online space. I was drawn to the work of Fogarty-Valenzuela at the Mansueto Institute for Urban Innovation and a lecture he gave at the time of the pandemic. Fogarty-Valenzuela argues that as we are required to move our lives into online social and workspaces, ethnographers are adapting their methods:

While at first remote ethnography seemed to be an oxymoron given the methodological emphasis on “being there” (...), the virtual is increasingly embedded into our everyday life. In-person social life is deeply inflected by what goes on online, and inversely – today’s social movements are a case-in-point. Today, vast domains of social life now take place online, mediated by for-profit platforms, cultural norms, and government policy. Ethnographers are stepping up to the challenge to retool qualitative methodologies for this physical/virtual nexus (Fogarty-Valenzuela, 2020)



However, whilst COVID-19 may have removed our agency from the decision-making process and increased the velocity of migration to online worlds, ethnomusicologists have long been required to mitigate against the issues of voyeurism originally levelled at the so called, “armchair ethnomusicologist” who sits in the laboratory and analyses the music that others have recorded’ (Merriam, 1960: 113). Nettl (2015) draws attention to the problematic nature of seeking comparisons: ‘So the suspicion has foundation: comparativists, not so neutral as all that, are impressed by similarity and seek it out’ (Nettl, 2015: 132). Whilst both of these perspectives originate from a time without the internet (the 2015 date for Nettl relates to publication rather than perspective), the temptations of online anonymity necessitate a renewed approach to prevent voyeuristic practices. However, there is a justification for the use of social media and the online space in the construction of ethnography, perhaps exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic; we live our lives (to varying degrees) online.

In the first phase of my fieldwork, I used video sharing as a key tool to make contacts and develop my profile as a musician conducting research on Paraguayan music. Baily (2001) offers insights into the social advantages open to the researcher who learns to perform. He focuses on the issues that face field researchers in early orientation and suggests that one can more easily gain status within musical communities when presenting oneself as both performer and researcher. This ideology is extended to a comparison with alternative methodology: ‘There can be no doubt that music making provides opportunities for participation that is generally denied to anthropologists using the methodology of participant observation’ (Baily, 2001: 96). In face-to-face field working encounters this has been a guiding principle in my methodology; however, can networking videos of performances generate the same benefits to the research as outlined by Baily? Patricia Lange (2019) asks the question,

‘What constitutes appropriate material to share publicly, is the posted video communal property or is it the sole possession of the creator?’ (Lange, 2019). Lange argues that in the ‘past’ it is the entity of the video itself that occupied scholarly attention on video-sharing sites: ‘yet, certain media ideologies challenge the boundaries of a video artefact as it is collectively created and shared’ (Lange, 2019:151) Lange specifically refers to comments added to a YouTube video after its release; should the video and comments combined be considered as the artefact? In order to gain a deeper cultural understanding, it would seem so. However, I argue that the element of risk and social unpredictability that Lange alludes to is actually mirroring the social risk-taking one might encounter most commonly in physical interactions.

Addressing the questions put forward in the previous paragraph informed my approach to sharing content online as part of the virtual ethnographic process, fundamentally using the content as a means of communication, either through direct conversation created in the comments or acting as a springboard to further correspondence with an individual. Taking this proactive approach helped to mitigate concerns of online voyeurism through the deployment of the type of ‘common’ social risk-taking often associated with face-to-face interaction. Initially, there was a risk associated with acquiring feedback and comments due to the unpredictable nature of the content in each response.

This issue notwithstanding, the transition of the video to a cultural artefact via a process of interaction was viewed as positive in terms of generating a significant research outcome. The concept that an ‘ongoing, historical document’ is being created from the moment the video is shared online prompted multiple considerations, enabling me to cross-reference this sentiment with my video-sharing methods. Figures 1.10 and 1.11 are examples of this early stage in the methodology:



**Figure 1.9 Facebook performance video image, 3 November 2019.**



**Valeriano Amarilla**  
 November 2 · 🌐

...

Atraído por la música paraguaya: la polca y la guarania; [Matt Dicken](#) es un joven músico que vino desde Bristol, Inglaterra para enriquecer más sus conocimientos sobre los géneros musicales mencionados, que según él, son su pasión. Hace 3 años Matt me escribía en mi página de noticias musicales en Facebook y me pedía que difundiera uno de sus vídeos - ejecutando con la guitarra- "La catedral" de Agustín Pío Barrios "Mangore". Realmente me quedé sorprendido -aquella vez- cuando me dijo que era de Inglaterra y que le gustaba nuestra música! Es un artista que promociona lo nuestro en su país y gran parte de Europa....¡Admirable!!, él sueña lanzar futuramente un libro musical. Uno de sus deseos ya se ha cumplido: pisar tierra guaraní. ¡¡Que disfrutes tu estadía en Paraguay amigo!! ¡¡Bienvenido!! 🇵🇷 🇧🇷 🇦🇷 ¡¡Éxitos en todo!!

Attracted to paraguayan music: the polka and the guarania; [Matt Dicken](#) is a young musician who came from Bristol, England to enrich more his knowledge about the musical genres mentioned, which according to him, are his passion. 3 years ago Matt wrote me on my musical news page on Facebook and asked me to spread one of his videos-running with the guitar-" the cathedral " of Agustín Pío Barrios " mangoré ". I really was surprised-that Time-when he told me he was from England and he liked our music! He is an artist who promotes ours in his country and much of Europe.... admirable!!, he dreams of releasing a musical book. One of your wishes has already been fulfilled: step on guarani land. Enjoy your stay in Paraguay friend!! Welcome!! Success in everything!!



 You, Roberto Rsm and 61 others

9 Comments

**Figure 1.10 Valeriano Amarillo Facebook Post, 3 November 2019.**



**Figure 1.11 Valerianno Amarillo Facebook post - comments, 3 November 2019.**

Valerianno Amarillo posted this Facebook comment in November 2019, just before I arrived in Paraguay. The text indicates that he and I have maintained correspondence online for a 3-year period and in-line with the sentiments put forward by Lange (2019), the comments added value to the post that led to interactions with an increased number of people, and in some cases setting the basis for longer-term collaborations and fieldwork participation.

John Postill (2017) tackles the subject of studying culture from afar, building a discussion on research conducted by Patty Gray in 2017 that picks up on the notion that: ‘ethnographers experience and remember online social media encounters just as they do offline encounters, that is, “in the body”’ (Postill, 2017). Postill points towards Gray’s argument that ‘there is nothing new about remote anthropology itself. The novelty lies in the fact that anthropologists can now access remote sites *in real-time* (2017: 65). However, Postill is keen to address the fact that replacing what may be seen as an antiquated mantra of anthropology, ‘being there’ with a more current

alternative concept, 'being then', may not solve methodological problems. Postill summarises this concern as 'twin anxieties' of: '(a) the ethnographic fear of missing out, and (b) the anthropological aversion to thin descriptions' (2017: 66). However, it is the question of 'real-time' encounter that can be extracted from the debate and connected to the methodological rationale for my work. One might argue that the real feeling of missing out was significantly addressed from March 2020 onwards. The accelerated dissemination of online conference calling software tangibly addressed the question of 'real-time' encounter.

When applying this broad philosophical stance on the validity of virtual ethnographic methods directly to this research project (given the years between which it resided 2017-2024), a further question needed to be addressed: how did the mandated changes to international travel and human-to-human contact caused by the COVID-19 pandemic alter planning and strategy? A pre-pandemic view is that 'logistically it is often not possible for the researcher to return physically to the field in order to answer a fresh question raised by the analysis or writing of the materials, which leaves remote fieldwork as an equally valid alternative.' (Postill, 2017: 67)

In relation to performative materiality in digital ethnography, Wendy Hsu interprets Johanna Drucker's (2013) view:

Drucker wants us to reconceptualize the digital as events in which digital processes occur. An event-based approach to digital ethnography suggests a time-based, in- flux engagement with field materials, one that embraces liveness, spontaneity, and openness to uncertainties in execution. (Hsu, 2017: 42)

The notion and acceptance of 'event-based' online interactions underwent considerable changes from pre- to post-pandemic society. This was certainly reflected

in the online engagements associated with this research. Between 2017 and 2019, much of the ‘liveness’ in my interactions with participants came through serendipitous, both online and offline moments that allowed us to share text-based communication. In the years that followed 2020, live video calls, live online music making, and virtual conferences superseded the calculated medium of email. This enabled interactions with participants to occur in online spaces that came far closer to representing the sense of spontaneity found in face-to-face in-person engagement.

## **Limitations**

For every well-cherished and argued rationale for seeking out ‘the average musician’ as Blacking would call it, or perhaps the term ‘real-world musicians’ is more appropriately used, there can be the counterargument for seeking out the upper 5% in terms of national profile. This must be acknowledged as a limitation of sorts, and this thesis cannot speak to all corners of present-day music creation in Paraguay; however, that is not the direct purpose of the study. The aim was to speak with a cross-section of musicians from as diverse a sample as my sphere of influence would allow. Therefore, it seems honest to acknowledge my outsider positionality as a limiting factor. As highlighted in this chapter, I was in all cases forming connections with participants during the live timeframe of the research project. In no situation was a participant derived from a type of longstanding association possible from an insider position.

The research methodology outlines the approaches and rationale for mitigating the limitations of positionality and location. The previous discussion on the value of virtual ethnography helps address negative perceptions of using this method in conjunction with traditional on-location fieldwork methods.

## Chapter 2: The Rise of the Paraguayan *Polca*

### Introduction

This chapter will set a foundation for the primary research conducted in this thesis. To investigate the extent to which Paraguayan musicians in the twenty-first century engage with tradition and the *polca* as an influence on their creative practice, it is essential to first identify the factors that have contributed to the development of tradition. Drawing on views held in the collection of Paraguayan literature previously introduced, the chapter will take a chronological approach to exploring the key factors in Paraguay's history that have shaped the music embraced in the twenty-first century. At the forefront of this exploration is the concept of the 'ideal historical past,' as proposed by Lambert (2010) and Colman (2015). The concept of an 'ideal historical past' is employed by both authors in conjunction with the discussion of socio-political constructs by the State in the mid-twentieth century. The term relates to a political agenda to galvanise nationalist sentiment in Paraguay by immortalising the past. This agenda also gave birth to the concept of *paraguayidad* (Colman, 2015). To understand how musicians engage with tradition and folklore in their contemporary creative work, it is essential to examine the factors that have shaped the past. However, the historical past is not idealised in the same way by all. It is also questionable whether a relatively modest canon of Paraguayan musical literature reveals a consensus on the socio-political and musical issues that have underpinned the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

## **A Brief History of Paraguay During Colonial Rule**

Paraguay belonged to the Viceroyalty of Peru from 1542 to 1776; the administrative centre of the Viceroyalty was Lima. The current capital city of Paraguay, Asunción, was originally designated as a fort by Captain Juan de Salazar y Espinoza (1508-1560) on 15 August 1537. The fort was turned into a city in 1541 and 'Asunción became the centre for operations and explorations in the continuing conquest of the region' (Colman 2015: 33). Paraguay lacked the resources of gold and silver that were prevalent in Potosí (now Bolivia), and as a result the region of the Viceroyalty did not garner the same levels of appeal. Robert Munro (2010) highlights the residual effects of the disparity: 'This isolation meant few European women would venture as far as Asunción, and Spanish men freely intermarried with native Guaraní women. Thus, the Paraguayans became, uniquely in Latin America, a new race: the result of a mixture of the Spanish and Guaraní peoples' (Munro 2010: 13). Certainly, the particular elements that comprise intangible culture in Paraguay today have been uniquely blended from pre-colonial and colonial legacies (Boettner, 2008., Colman, 2015., Pereira, 1987). However, Munro's claim that intermarriage in Paraguay was 'unique in Latin America' could be challenged. Cathleen Deagan points to Arranz Martinez's (1991) view that, 'alliances between European and non-European partners accounted for between one-quarter and one-half of all marriages in some parts of the Spanish colonies during the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries' (Deagan, 2003: 8). Mörner (1967) states that the Catholic church saw no barrier to marriage if both partners shared the same religion. In 1503, Queen Isabella even mandated the governor of San Domingo to actively encourage marriage between indigenous and non-indigenous individuals as a learning exercise.



Music in colonial Paraguay and the wider Río de la Plata region was closely tied to liturgical settings and the work of the Jesuits. Alfredo Colman highlights the influence of the Jesuits as holding 'paramount significance to the development of music in the entire Río de la Plata region, including Paraguay' (Colman, 2015: 35). In Paraguay today, it is the harp and the guitar that endure as the colonial transplants (Colman, 2015) and particularly in the case of the harp, becoming a symbol of national identity. During the period of the Jesuit Missions, music played a distinct role in sacred music; however, skill on the transplanted instruments was largely acknowledged in the indigenous population as an ability to imitate rather than create. Max Boettner (2008) quotes the words of El Padre Lafitau from 1724 in relation to the coloniser's observations of local performance:

In music they ran into the same problem as in the other arts: the shortness or lack of initiative of the Indian. All the perfection that they could make them acquire consisted of accurately reading the staff and perform the pieces chosen from among the best European composers from Spain, Italy and Germany. But there was never a musician who on his own invented or added the slightest embellishment, a pause, a trill, a fugue to what he performed. (Boettner, 2008: 62)

Piotr Nawrot (2004) notes the 'fame of the Jesuit province of Paraguay' amidst the 'uncommon richness of musical culture in the reductions' (Nawrot, 2004: 73). Nawrot also recognises the role that recently discovered manuscripts from the time have played in building evidence to support these claims. Luis Szarán (1997) places the date of 1974 on the first discovery of music manuscripts in the region, with some 10,000 found by the Austrian architect Hans Roth during the restorative work on the Chiquitos Churches.

Notably, the most enduring colonial legacy in musical terms is the instruments transplanted into the continent by the Spanish and the Portuguese. Colman's use of the word transplant is purposeful and gives a poignant indication that the adoption of musical instruments by colonised nations was a process of replacement, rather than an alliance with pre-colonial instrumentation. Szarán (1997) notes that in Paraguay, the violin, organ, harpsichord, harp, and guitar were widespread in the region. Colman is at the forefront of research into how the harp in Paraguay has evolved from its colonial roots. He notes that both the harp and guitar became more embedded in the lives of local people during the early part of the nineteenth century. The transition of the harp away from the music associated with the missionaries occurred largely as the harp joined the guitar in a popular sphere and its role in liturgical settings decreased. However, as the colonial period came to an end, it would be the role that popular music played in Paraguayan society that would be questioned.

### **Independence (no light undertaking)**

Gerard Béhague (1979) identifies the two decades of 1810-1830 as a pivotal transitional period in Latin American music, as nations began to emerge from colonial rule and embark on new futures of national independence. However, 'a definable national musical style appeared only in the last decades of the century, under the influence of similar trends in Europe and the emergence of musical genres with folk and popular characteristics which could constitute an obvious source of national identity' (Béhague, 1979: 96). There is much to unpack in this wide-ranging statement on Latin American music. However, to summarise the first half of the nineteenth century into a brief overview. The contexts of mainstream performance in the larger nations of Latin America would essentially mirror those of Europe, with an emphasis

on opera and light musical theatre, as well as the salon performance of solo piano. In Argentina, interest in opera had moved from sporadic early appearances in the late eighteenth century to an emergent force in popular culture, 'The popularity of Italian and French opera and lighter genres was such that no fewer than ten theatres opened during the century' (Béhague, 1979: 106). Arguably, the most significant of the new theatres in terms of the ability to attract international touring musicians was the original Teatro Colón in Buenos Aires. The theatre opened in 1857: 'with a performance of *La Traviata*, featuring the famous tenor, Enrico Tamberlik' (Hodge, 1979: 236). Prior to 1857, Argentina saw the arrival of opera singers from Italy as early as the 1810s, some forty years before mass labour market-driven immigration in the 1850s. John Rosselli (1990) discusses the curious channel of migration: 'To call them pioneers may seem absurd; but going to the River Plate in the 1810s or 1820s was no light undertaking' (Rosselli, 1990: 161). This short vignette can perhaps act as a metaphor of sorts to approach a cultural analysis of post-independence in South America – no light undertaking.

To place the focus back on Paraguay's cultural and musical development during this time requires a departure from the continent-wide context outlined in Béhague's landmark twentieth-century publication, *Music in Latin America: An Introduction* (1979). In this book, Paraguay is not discussed in relation to this important era of cultural change; in fact, the music of Paraguay does not feature at any point. However, a picture of cultural expansion in Paraguay can be pieced together from the relatively small number of Paraguayan publications in the twentieth century.

José Gaspar Rodríguez de Francia's near 30-year governance of Paraguay began in 1814, three years after the signing of the decree of independence from Spanish colonial rule. Paraguay, along with Colombia (1810), Chile (1810), Venezuela

(1811) and Argentina (1816) were amongst the first Latin American nations to gain independence, with Peru, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Mexico, Panama, Ecuador, Brazil, Bolivia and Uruguay following in the years 1821 – 1825.



**Figure 2.1 A picture depicting the signing of the decree of independence – Casa de la Independencia, Asunción.**

<https://www.casadelaindependencia.org.py/galeria/Escritorio/Escritorio.>

Francia would impose laws to restrict the flow of information in and out of the country, shutting the borders to control the movement of people into Paraguay tightly: ‘The danger of disappearing was real for Paraguay. Therefore, he took drastic measures [...] In the international order, it isolated Paraguay with a hermetic closure of borders’ (Boettner, 1987: 77). The scale and depth to which Francia implemented such policy differentiated the nation’s political direction of travel from its neighbours and to some extent, would go on to influence domestic and foreign policy in Paraguay in the twentieth-century. Closing the country to outside influence meant that Paraguay as a nation did not look to the cultural fashions and trends of Europe in the years that followed independence with the same intrigue as Argentina or Brazil.

There are many perspectives on the role that music played in the formation of Francia's new vision for the country. Szarán, in Munro (2010), presents an image of progressive cultural initiatives:

During the Francia dictatorship, popular music (at least in a state-sponsored sense) experienced considerable development and dissemination: military bands were organized in all districts of the capital and the interior. The government stores sold harp and guitar strings at low prices and documents found in the National Archives in Asunción reveal evidence of the importation of great numbers of musical instruments, sheet music and accessories that were acquired by the state. Also of fundamental importance was the foundation of the School of Military Music in 1817 (Munro, 2010: 63)

There is perhaps much to question in a critique of the above quotation, given its homogeneous simplicity in portraying the cultural landscape. It may be that the content of the quotation pertains more directly to the bracketed caveat of state sponsorship. Boettner quotes from Moreno (1928) that from 1816, 'the houses were like voluntary prisons...Almost no one appeared on the streets [of Asunción], nor left their home' (Boettner, 1987: 79). Boettner goes on to quote the words of Rengger and Longchamps from *Histórico sobre la Revolución Paraguaya y el Gobierno Dictatorio del Dr. Francia* published in 1828: 'The guitar, inseparable companion of the Paraguayan, fell silent forever' (Boettner, 1987: 79). The author qualifies this statement by saying that music and the guitar would likely have been more prevalent in the interior and rural communities, away from the direct gaze of the administration. To add a further perspective to this contested historical past, Arturo Pereira (1987) states that: 'Official documents from the time testify to Francia's almost obsessive concern for music and musicians. This fact was hidden by his detractors for a long

time and is still echoed by many men and circles in our society' (Pereira, 1987, 35). Pereira is visceral in his condemnation of what he terms 'lying' and 'subjective' accounts in Paraguay that play to an agenda that excludes the required depth of context for why Francia prohibited certain music. Pereira offers a quotation from the historian C. Oxidar Capdeville in evidence of this point:

At no time did he [Dr. Francia] prohibit the playing of musical instruments. If he ever had some musicians arrested, such as the case of those who praised Artigas in his verses, who at that time caused so much damage to the country. It was precisely due to the need to defend order, national independence. (Pereira, 1987: 37)

Despite the conflicting accounts of Francia's engagement with music, it is the band, or more precisely, the military band, that can be lifted from all sources as a constant. As would be the case in the twentieth century, Francia was able to recognise the political role music played as a means to advance his ideology. From his perspective, it was a tool to galvanise a new sense of Paraguayan identity that would carry the country into a period of history in the mid-nineteenth century that would later be referred to as the golden era.

A consensus seems hard to find on whether the music that can be attributed to this time in Paraguay's history connects to the *polca Paraguayo* as it is now known. Pereira questions the fact that Francia's regime and Paraguayan's more generally viewed music as an art form: 'Music for a long time, became more an instrument of affirmation of "the indigenous self" and then of "Paraguayan self" rather than an aesthetic fact... even in the time of the Lopez family in which it was constituted in an affirmation of "the indigenous self" (Pereira, 1987; 45). However, in a post-colonial Paraguay, the importance of an 'indigenous self' underpinned the political narrative,

creating a cultural landscape for a new national music to grow. This narrative would be continued by Francia's successor, Carlos Antonio López, who became the first constitutional president of Paraguay following the death of Francia in 1841.

### **The Paraguayan State Visit to London and Paris**

The condensed and overarching sentiment often found in the historical textbooks that relates to C. A. López's rule, is that of a prosperous and more outward facing Paraguay: 'the dictators recruited foreign specialists, improved communications and infrastructure and sponsored some industrialization, and the very small initial population grew rapidly' (Esposito, 2015: 6). Indeed, the accounts and memoirs of non-Paraguayan service personnel stationed in the country during the mid-part of the century that emerged, and which will be referred to in more detail later in this chapter, bear evidence of this shift in policy. In the 1850s, Paraguay stood as South America's most advanced nation. Paraguay, under the rule of Francia (1814-1840), had avoided a reliance on foreign capital investments and enjoyed a period of sustained development. Eduardo Galeano (2009) points to a report made by the US agent Hopkins in 1845 to his government that: 'in Paraguay there was no child who could not read and write...It was also a country that did not have its eyes riveted on the other side of the ocean' (Galeano, 2009: 189). The 'other side of the ocean' refers mainly to Great Britain and its neo-colonial financing in Brazil. However, Paraguay sought an alternative, more equitable relationship with Europe, and in 1853, C. A. López appointed his son, Francisco Solano López, to represent the country in both England and France as the head of a state delegation to establish new trade links.

F. López had been appointed by his father to perform diplomatic duties on his behalf. Foreign and domestic policy in Paraguay was rapidly evolving in the early

1850s. Whilst Paraguayan citizens still lived under restrictions that prohibited their movement beyond the country's borders, foreigners were beginning to be welcomed with a previously unseen vigour: 'An early indication of the emergence from Francia's isolation was the arrival in Asunción of diplomats from Britain, France, Sardinia, and the United States in 1853' (Saeger, 2007: 60). There was significance to this thawing of historically rigid policy in the fact that Paraguay's independence was now being internationally recognised, the result of which led to the F.S. López signing important documents securing friendship and commerce (although ultimately signed off by his father). Despite the ultimate control that C.A. López held over the decisions, James Schofield Saeger (2007) paints an impression of his son's objectives: 'Francisco longed for favourable notice by European nations. He hoped, impractically, to lead Paraguay into their company. To begin, he had to raise his profile and his nation's image in southern South America' (Saeger, 2007: 61). F. López departed Paraguay with a multifaceted delegation in the latter part of 1853 to secure both national and personal goals.

The timing of the 1853 state visit to Great Britain and France can be seen as a means of harnessing the strong national feeling of strength in Paraguay following independence. The purpose of the visit was indeed to ratify a treaty of trade aimed at securing the purchase of naval vessels and military equipment. However, as C. A. López began to look up from the isolationism of his predecessor (Francia) and reach out to Europe in the sense of perceived equality, this announcement of Paraguay's strength would, in turn, raise questions over the purpose of their military acquisitions. The irony of this was that Britain was bankrolling much of the enterprise in the areas bordering Paraguay. Sugar and rubber plantations in western Brazil, and also the ports



of Uruguay and Argentina. Galeano states in reference to the Triple Alliance war (1864-1870) that:

Although Britain took no direct part in the ghastly deed, it was in the pockets of British merchants, bankers, and industrialists that the loot ended up. The invasion was financed from start to finish by the Bank of London, Baring Brothers, and the Rothschild bank, in loans at exorbitant interest rates which mortgaged the fate of the victorious countries (Galeano, 2009: 188)

The Treaty of Friendship, commerce, and navigation between Great Britain and Paraguay, that was ratified on 2 November 1853, would, by the 1860s, stand in juxtaposition with Britain's wider interests in the region. Yet, in the years following F. S. López's return (1855) and the beginning of the Triple Alliance War (1864) provide evidence of the fruits of this treaty in both the movement of people and cultural exchange.

It is in this area of cultural exchange that music can be reintroduced to a historical context. It is perhaps in López's secondary motive to raise his profile that a parallel narrative can be seen to emerge that would captivate imaginations away from the broader geological agenda. An article taken from the 9 December 1854 edition of *The Lady's Newspaper* gives an indication of how the delegation was received in London as it passed through the city in the early part of the year:

General Lopez came here accompanied by a numerous suite of military officers and civilians, together with a younger brother, a gentleman of great promise. He manifests much ability and a large faculty for observation, evincing a keen desire to obtain information on all subjects likely to be of benefit to his country. He made a very favourable impression in England, and still more in France (*The Lady's Newspaper*, 9 December 1854, see Appendix 3)

F. López was received both in public and privately by Napoleon III during his stay in Paris and described in this newspaper article as: ‘amidst the most imposing ceremonial of imperial state’ (*The Lady’s Newspaper*, 9 December 1854, see Appendix 3). However, this same meeting was not afforded to him in London by Queen Victoria. It is evident from the article that a degree of surprise was felt in Europe that Lopez and his delegation superseded expectations. Short articles in both *The Times* and *The London Gazette* from late 1853 show that the principal goal of the state visit was to establish and ratify a treaty between the two countries of ‘friendship, commerce, and navigation’ (*The Times*, 3 April 1853, see Appendix 4). However, the favourable response to the character of the Paraguayans indicates that many more opportunities to absorb cultural and societal functions may have been offered to them.

### **Eliza Lynch: The Unlikely First Lady of Paraguay**

The narrative that places Eliza Lynch at the centre of the European polka’s migration to Paraguay begins in Paris. Many brief writings on the Paraguayan *polca* make largely un-evidenced statements that the polka in its original form migrated to Paraguay with Eliza Lynch as she returned with F. S. López aboard the returning boats. The counterargument, put bluntly, is that in the nineteenth century, many musical forms migrated to South American nations from Europe, including the polka. Thus, attributing its arrival in Paraguay to a single individual could seem highly unlikely. However, as even a somewhat conflicted historical narrative reveals, the opening up of Paraguay to the world under C. A. López was a targeted affair. Pharmacists, physicians, military personnel and educators (as an example) were the primary focus of the regime in terms of immigration. George Frederick Masterman was a medic in Her Majesty’s 82<sup>nd</sup>

Regiment and dispatched to Paraguay in 1861 to work as Chief Military Apothecary in the Asunción general hospital. Masterman published the first edition of *Seven Eventful Years in Paraguay: A Narrative of Personal Experience amongst the Paraguayans* in 1885 and introduces the reader immediately to a political landscape in Paraguay under C. A. López that: ‘there seemed little fear that the peace which Paraguay had enjoyed for many years would be interrupted’ (Masterman. 1885: ix). 1861 would become the final year of C. A. López’s rule, and Masterman notes many instances of his son’s influence on the country in the final years of his rule. Masterman offers the view that F. S. López bought back two novelties from England and France, one of which was Lynch, credited as the most fatal step in his life. Masterman describes Lynch:

She had received a showy education, spoke English, French and Spanish with equal facility, gave capital dinner parties, and could drink more champagne without being affected by it than anyone I have ever met with. A clever, selfish, and most unscrupulous woman, it will be readily understood that the influence she exercised over a man so imperious, yet so weak, so vain, and sensual as Lopez, was immense (Masterman, 1885: 58-59)

It is perhaps to be expected that Masterman makes few references to the entertainment and cultural components of the capital dinner parties and events he attributes to Lynch; her political impact, understandably, has a more significant influence on his story. Yet, these writings in English, from this point in history, offer a platform for the possibility that Lynch heavily shaped the cultural fashions at the highest level of Paraguayan society. It was primarily attributed to Lynch that the polka took a place as the music of choice within the Paraguayan establishment. Evidence directly linking Lynch and Lopez to specific social engagements in London and Paris, in which polkas would have been performed, appears non-existent. However, the

evidence that supports the polka's dominance in all areas of societal fashion in both London and Paris in 1854 suggests that a similar extra-musical narrative and buzz around the polka also migrated to Paraguay, along with the dance steps. Even in the 1850s, the question remained as to whether López, like his predecessor, viewed music as an aesthetic object purely to entertain.

The delegation, accompanied by Lynch, returned to Paraguay in 1855. In order to investigate the music that is most likely to have had an impact on their social engagements in London and Paris, it is important to consider the polka's fashionable status in 1853. This can help to contextualise and perhaps validate the narrative of Lynch's involvement in the subsequent development of Paraguayan national music. The polka is widely known to have risen to prominence in both Paris and London in 1844. A search of the Gale group archive of nineteenth-century periodicals, published between 1817 and 1855, therefore, helps to present a rationale for why the polka may have captured the attention of the Paraguayan delegation through Lynch. The data in Table 2.1 shows that in the eleven years 1844-1855, the polka appears noticeably more frequently than both the quadrille and the waltz combined. Of additional significance is the fact that the polka was not mentioned at all in the years 1817-1843.

Search	1817-1843	1844-1855
The Waltz	241	170
The Quadrille	289	584
The Polka	0	906

**Table 2.1 A search of the Gale group archive of nineteenth-century periodicals**

The data shows the level of growth and exposure the three dances were able to command in the print media as the nineteenth century progressed. What is striking, though, is the scale at which the polka dominates the pages of the newspapers and magazines in the eleven years 1844-1855. Table 2.2 shows the number of times the name of each dance appeared in the news in its first year of popularity.

	Number of articles	Number of different publications
The Waltz (1809-1810)	3	2
The Quadrille (1817-1818)	5	2
The Polka (1844-1845)	411	11

**Table 2.2 A further search of the Gale group archive of nineteenth-century periodicals**

The polka benefited from the increased circulation and affordability of print media in 1844. The greater breadth of publication type is also important to acknowledge, allowing for increased scope in creative writing, satire and poetry, in addition to fashion and a 'what's on' style media. Curt Sachs presents a short quote from *La Polka Enseignée Sans Maître* (1845) by Jules-Joseph Perrot & Adrien Robert: 'To dance the polka men and women must have hearts that beat high and strong. Tell me how you do the polka, and I will tell you how you love' (Sachs, 1963). An easy to learn dance that re-energised dance fashion, captivating through its thrill and emotion. However, perhaps the polka could be viewed as a musical craze that found a time and place in

which a form of exploitation was possible, exploitation in the sense that popular culture was also evolving rapidly around it. The polka saturated the cultural discourse in the first few years to such an extent that the infamy endured into the 1850s. It is perhaps the saturation of popular culture that had the most profound effect on changing the polka from the dance that left Bohemia. It had become a powerful force, as the music and dance would begin to migrate to other parts of the world.

The popularity of the European polka is not disputed. However, Boettner asserts that the first time the word ‘polka’ can be found in the discourse of Paraguayan musical history is in an article in the then state-controlled newspaper *El Semanario* from 27 November 1858:

During a popular dance on the street. In fact, beyond the current Colón street, there had been the inauguration of Venancio López’s house...”In the middle of a field known as the Hospital, there was a military music band, destined exclusively for the entertainment of the people who also danced their quadrilles, their polkas and their mazurkas”...It is the first time we find the word POLKA in our musical history (Boettner, 2008: 98).

The three-year gap between the arrival of Lynch and the first recorded mention of the polka could suggest that there is insufficient evidence that the polka could be elevated above the other fashionable dances that had migrated from Europe at the time of 1855. However, *El Semanario* was the only newspaper in circulation at that time and was far more focused on reporting on matters away from entertainment.

### **The ‘London Carapé’**

Historical accounts since the 1980s span a variety of literary sources that have largely been derived from a handful of published observations from the time (George

Fredrick Masterman, 1869, Colonel George Thompson, 1869, etc). These suggest a simplistic narrative can be constructed that portrays the people of Paraguay in the mid-nineteenth-century as a musical Petri dish of sorts: 'Next to smoking and sipping yerba, the greatest amusement, one may almost say business of the Paraguayans, is dancing – I never met with people who devote themselves so thoroughly to its enjoyment' (Masterman, 1886). Statements such as this catalyse the sentiment that Lynch would have been greeted with a captive audience eager for cultural enrichment, yet one must accept this quote to be little more than an anecdote. It is perhaps surprising how texts such as this have grounded the theories that have built up this strand of an "ideal historical past". However, they are first-hand accounts of a moment in Paraguayan history from which little of the official documentation has survived. Siân Rees' (2003) biography of Lynch builds upon Masterman's, notion that Lynch introduced dances through her presence at the establishment: 'It was from her attendance at these popular entertainments that a new dance emerged, called the London *carapé*' (Rees, 2003: 86). Rees's reference to the dance is supported by Boettner: 'It comes from the time of Don Carlos. He is credited with popularizing a ballroom dance brought by Madame Lynch that was called London' (Boettner, 2008: 229). Boettner credits his acquired knowledge to a description of the dance located in the library of the musicologist and band leader Manuel Mosqueira (1872-1949). The description outlines the dance steps (much as the London periodicals did):

You can dance between several couples, the women back then with crinolines. Couples holding hands form a circle with a polka rhythm. At the 5th beat the couples squat down without touching the ground and without throwing off your hands. A whirligig follows, with chattering of the free hand. Then they "roll", holding hands, at the fifth measure, they crouch down again, etc (Boettner, 2008: 229)

From this walk-through of the dance, Boettner surmises two plausible interpretations of the name ‘London *Carapé*’. The first is derived from the Guaraní term to describe bending at the knee, *eñembo carapé* (making oneself short), thereby producing a possible title ‘London of the short ones’. The second option Boettner puts forward resonates with themes already encountered: ‘popular London’.

The example of the London *Carapé* indicates, to some degree, that the polka may have arrived in Asunción a decade earlier, much as it did in Paris and London. For comparison in her paper ‘Minds Mad for Dancing: Polkamanía on the London Stage’ Libby Smigel offers a personal reflection: ‘few Western dance forms that I have studied or tried – not even the romantic waltz – dominated the dance floors of all levels of society as the polka in London in the mid-1840s’ (Smigel, 1996). This in itself is not sufficient evidence to show how the polka infiltrated all sectors of London society. As sources in the introduction of this thesis show, there is much to debate as to whether the unique popularity of the polka in London had any direct bearing on the influence it had in Paraguay. Indeed, much friction exists in the musicological discourse of the twentieth century when looking to align the migrated polkas of the nineteenth century to vastly different (in a musical sense) Paraguayan *polca* that would emerge in the century to follow.

In a music rather than dance context, the ‘London *Carapé*’ first appears in the form of a printed score in 1877 and was within the *Album de los toques más populares del Paraguay*, published in Buenos Aires by Ediciones Arturo Demarchi. The publication contained fifteen popular Paraguayan dances, all of which carry the subtitle ‘*Danza Paraguaya*’. A complete list of dances can be seen in Appendix 5. The works were discovered and compiled by Boettner in collaboration with the Ateneo Paraguayo



in Asunción. The director general of the Ateneo Paraguayo, Manuel Domínguez, notes that:

As far as is known, the first written (and disseminated) compilation of Paraguayan music [...] They belonged to Juan Max Boettner (Asunción, 1899-1958) and were classified in his archive as material related to the national anthem (Boettner, 2018).



**Example 2.1 ‘London Carapé’, (Boettner, 2018)**

The score reveals the ‘London *Carapé*’ (and all other pieces in the book) to be written in 2/4 and bears much rhythmic resemblance to the European polka (see Example 2.1). This is also the case for other pieces marked as a *Danza Paraguaya* in the book. Example 2.2 shows a screenshot of an original polka manuscript taken from the British

Library archives. The 'Alice Polka', composed by R. Linter was written ca. 1850. This date can be approximated because the publisher Wessel & Co. only operated under that name between 1845 and 1860.



**Example 2.2 'Alice Polka', R. Linter.**

The 'Alice Polka' bears many similarities to the 'London Carapé', indicating that the 'Danza Paraguaya' (as named by Luis Cavdagni) in the mid-nineteenth century closely resembled the European polka (see Appendix 6) Interestingly, the 'London Carapé' appears in the twentieth century in an entirely new form.

## London Carapé (Danza Paraguaya No. 3)

AGUSTIN BARRIOS MANGORE  
Edited by RICHARD D. STOVER



### Example 2.3 London Carapé', Agustín Barrios (1930) bars 1-11

Example 2.3 shows the opening eleven bars of Agustín Barrios's version of the 'London Carapé', and although it is scored in 3/4 rather than the more common 6/8, the piece is now a Paraguayan *polca*.

From an outsider's perspective, the lack of consensus that surrounds the evolution of the Paraguayan *polca* is striking. The role that Lynch played in the portrayal of the decade 1854-1864 as a golden moment in the nation's history seems to justify her as a key actor in the historical narratives woven into twentieth-century discourse. For example, Rees (2003) prefaces her biography with an account of the repatriation of Lynch's ashes to Paraguay from Paris in 1961. The words spoken by Dr Juan Emiliano O'Leary at the event were a watershed moment to gauge the strength of public affection for the first lady:

La señora Elisa Alicia Lynch [he declared] is the greatest heroine of America. Surpassed by none in her courage, her selflessness and her loyalty, through pain and through sacrifice, in her contempt for danger and death and in her

supreme pride in the face of tragedy. Sublime mother of children forged in the flames of her pain, she resisted five years through war, as an Extension of the Hero [el Mariscal López], and never wavered in her loyalty. She was there in the days of victory and in the days of bitterness and desolation. Her name was slandered but she rose above death and disaster and was transformed by her supreme virtue to share the fate of the Paraguayan nation... She never forgot; she lived, died and, in her dark Parisian grave, awaited her return to the country in which justice would greet her...to live again, today, in the admiration and gratitude of her country...Heroic companion, example of motherhood, widow of a great love, magnified by a life consecrated to supreme and infinite love...fill our hearts with your infinite tenderness as we raise ourselves to offer you, in this supreme hour of our history, our respect, our love and our admiration. (Rees, 2003: 3)

The ceremony was conducted by General Alfredo Stroessner, who clearly outlined a twentieth-century political agenda that sought to harness the power of the historical past to galvanize nationalist sentiment. Whilst O'Leary's statement is predominantly focused on Lynch's bravery and loyalty to Paraguay during difficult times, the subtext indicates a profound love for a woman, a foreigner.

### **The Triple Alliance War**

On 13 December 1864, Paraguay declared war on Brazil, thus beginning the most horrific and destabilising period in the country's history. The events that preceded this moment are contested, although Diego Abente (1987) points towards political tensions between Brazil and Uruguay in August 1864 that led to Uruguay seeking the support of Paraguay. Brazil had played a part in supporting the coup led by General Venancio Flores to topple the ruling Blanco party in Uruguay, and 'the attempts of the Paraguayan president, Marshall Francisco López, to mediate the dispute were

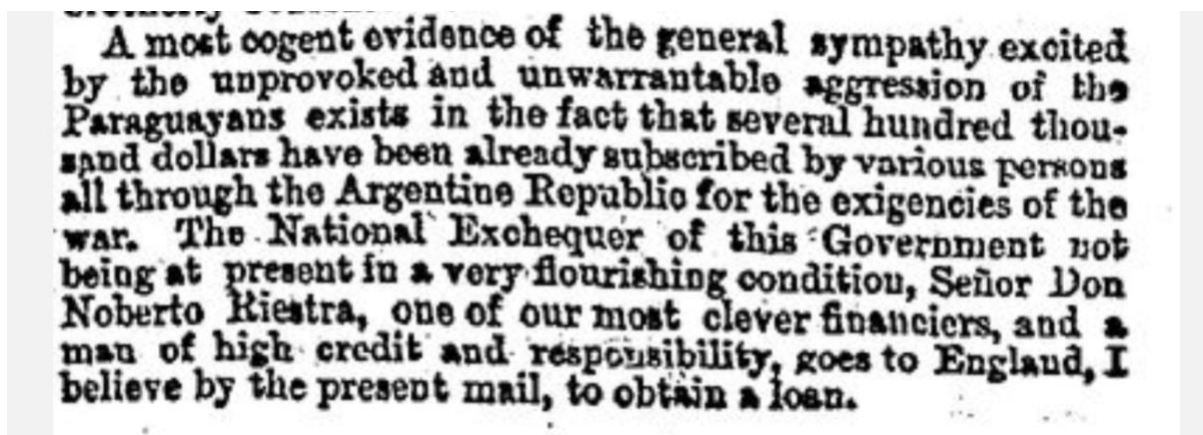
rebuffed by the Brazilians, which led López to issue the ultimatum of 30 August 1864' (Abente, 1987: 2). Paraguay issued a document stating that any further escalation and any occupation by Brazilian troops would be seen to destabilise the peace and stability in the region: a 'casus belli' for Paraguay. However, in October 1864, Brazil began to deploy troops following an advance on the port of Montevideo, and President López declared war on Brazil following the seizure of a Brazilian ship (November 1864) on the Paraná River that separates Paraguay from the Mato Grosso region of Brazil. Argentina initially maintained a state of neutrality, although it facilitated the movement of Brazilian forces into Paraguay via the country's territorial rivers. On 18 March 1865, Paraguay declared war on Argentina, and in early May of the same year, an alliance of Brazil, Argentina, and Uruguay was formed: the Triple Alliance War.

The primary catalyst for the start of the war is widely pinned on the rationale behind López's decision to seize the Brazilian vessel. To many, this was seen as an inevitability, given the ideological stance he had taken as a ruler, seeking to establish a place for his nation at the top table of the Rio de la Plata region's politics. However, the overarching ideology that underpinned the Triple Alliance War has since formed the basis of a contested historical narrative:

Unlike other Latin American conflicts, the War of the Triple Alliance has stirred a passionate controversy involving heavy ideological connotations, with some analysts viewing it as a struggle between civilization (the Alliance) and barbarism (Paraguay) and others depicting it as a confrontation between British imperialism (the Alliance) and Latin American nationalism (Paraguay). (Abente, 1987: 1)

The view from within Paraguay can be encapsulated to a large extent by the words of Roberto A. Romero, author of *El Himno Nacional Paraguayo* (1986) and a professor

of Guaraní language and culture: 'The purpose of the invasion was the annihilation of the sovereignty of [the] free Paraguay by Dr. Francia and the López, to open its doors to the penetration of foreign imperialism' (Romero, 1986: 92). An additional perspective on the factors that catalysed the start of the Triple Alliance War, is given by Eduardo Galeano who points with some clarity to Britain's involvement. He notes the British minister in Argentina, Edward Thornton, as having 'played a substantial role in preparing for the war' (Galeano, 2009: 191). Galeano's provocative language drills home a dark sense of betrayal, given the reported success of Solano López's visits to Britain just ten years earlier: 'a Brazilian-Argentine agreement that sealed Paraguay's fate, was woven under Thornton's fatherly gaze' (2009: 191). The report in *The Times* newspaper that Galeano references is shown in Figure 2.2 below.



A most cogent evidence of the general sympathy excited by the unprovoked and unwarrantable aggression of the Paraguayans exists in the fact that several hundred thousand dollars have been already subscribed by various persons all through the Argentine Republic for the exigencies of the war. The National Exchequer of this Government not being at present in a very flourishing condition, Señor Don Norberto Riestra, one of our most clever financiers, and a man of high credit and responsibility, goes to England, I believe by the present mail, to obtain a loan.

**Figure 2.2 'War in South America' *The Times*, 21 June 1865.**

A full copy of the original article, taken from *The Times* online digital archive, can be seen in the Appendix. This short article appears to support Galeano's claim that the financial benefits of the war had been brokered through Thornton's involvement. However, Leslie Bethell (2018) disputes the views of Galeano, framing the notion of

British involvement (to this extent) as 'myth', 'there is little empirical evidence to support a thesis which demonstrates a fundamental misunderstanding both of the nature of Britain's relationship with Brazil (and Argentina) and British interests in Paraguay' (Bethell, 2018: 103). Eduardo Galeano is one of the most respected writers on Latin American history, and whilst Bethell's observations on his socialist position are well-founded, he appears to do little to disprove Galeano's stance on the Triple Alliance War.

In the years that immediately followed the end of the Triple Alliance war, Paraguayan leadership was fractious, underscored by a series of very short-lived tenures:

The resounding defeat of the Paraguayan forces in the Triple Alliance War (1865-70) brought the Nationalist Period (1814-70) of strong independent and stable development to an end (Lambert and Nickson, 1997: 4)

The Constituent Assembly met in 1870 to draft a new constitution, and while the interests of Brazil and Argentina prevailed in the macro post-war issues (Figure 2.3 shows how Paraguay's territory was divided between the two countries). In local terms, it was the newly formed Partido Liberal (Liberal Party) that took control.



**Figure 2.3 Territorial changes during the Paraguayan war (RANE, 2014)**

Harris Gaylord Warren (1980) depicts the frenetic jostle for position that characterised the political landscape in Paraguay:

The Liberals executed the first post-war coup in Paraguay when they succeeded in substituting Facundo in place of Rivarola for a few hours until Bareiro directed a conservative coup that restored Rivarola as President of Paraguay. Bareiro expected to be elected president in the 1870 elections, but Rivarola's position as provisional president gave him the advantage and he won (Warren, 1980: 365)

The chaos of the precarious political system in no way mirrored the extreme hardship faced by the surviving Paraguayan population. Taken from the 1877 journal of Marion Mulhall, in which she documents her journey by river to Asuncion: 'It is impossible for us to form an idea of the hardships they must have gone through, penetrating to the very centre of the continent, to establish a city amid these woods and wilds' (Mulhall 1877: 65).



An article in *The Economist* from 2012 states that: 'Post-war governments distributed brochures offering immigrants a free trip to Paraguay and land' (*The Economist*, 2012). It was the very same offer that had encouraged Agustín Barrios' parents to relocate to Paraguay from Argentina, to take up farmland in the southern Misiones region of the country.

### **The Origins of the *Polca Paraguayo***

Tracking the progress of the polka in the late nineteenth century leads, as with many Latin American dances, to a migrated European musical art form. It is perhaps striking, then, that the Paraguayan *polca* that emerged in the early twentieth century appears to share so few characteristics with the European polka, or indeed early iterations of the composed Paraguayan *Danza* (shown in Example 2.1). As shown from the fragments of historical evidence that still exist, it is clear to discern that the migrated polka was *in situ* and popular in Paraguay both before and after the Triple Alliance War.

There is a lack of clarity when attempting to isolate the precise moment or reason for the *polca*'s conversion from the 2/4 dance that migrated from Europe to the 6/8 metre that characterised the Paraguayan *polca* throughout the twentieth century. Following the end of the Triple Alliance War, Helio Vera (2019) identifies mass immigration to Paraguay as a catalyst in the development of cultural activity at the turn of the century:

It is difficult to determine how much Italian is in Guaranía, the creation of José Asunción Flores. But it is known that he learned almost everything he knew about music in the Police Band. He was also directed by teachers from the

peninsula [of Italy], such as the famous Nicolino Pellegrini, to name only the best known. (Vera, 2019: 84)

An element of satire is detected in Vera's approach to historical depiction, blaming England for "afternoon tea" and 'terrifying clothes' (Vera, 2019: 84). In *Origen Social de la Música en el Paraguay*, Arturo Pereira attributes the *polca*'s evolution to a 6/8 metre to José Asunción Flores (1904-1972):

Flores was an architect and had the genius of giving musical form to the *Guaranía*. Flores also had the merit of having defined the rhythm of Paraguayan Music, which should be in 6/8...which until then was written down in 2/4 staff (Pereira, 2011: 87)

The published date of Pereira's book (2011) will be discussed in Chapter 3; it was initially written in the mid to late twentieth century, yet, owing to multiple pressures, it was not published until well into the twenty-first century, fourteen years after his passing!

At this stage, it is worth noting that the term 'Paraguayan Music' is used somewhat homogeneously, encompassing both the *polca* and *guaranía*. Szarán (1997) states that until Flores: 'It is thought that Paraguayans appropriated the name *polca*, simply to define their music [...] by the fact that the European polka was a very popular dance' (Szarán, 1997: 391). As this chapter has outlined, there is limited evidence of specific documented or scored polkas from this period in Paraguay's history (1858) and the time following the Triple Alliance war (1864-1870), until the turn of the century.

Florentín Giménez (1997) presents a critical examination of the views of mid-twentieth-century commentators regarding the origin of the Paraguayan *polca*,

particularly in terms of its polyrhythmic elements. For the purpose of analysis, large sections of Giménez's writing are examined to enable his use of language to resonate, adding a greater sense of depth to the context he presents:

If we go into detail about the errors made by many theorists after José Asunción Flores, we will find in them many unfounded explanations. Since they have not participated experientially in the musical events of our place, without daily contact with popular musicians, they mention how generators of the intrinsic elements of our rhythm. Elements brought from the archaic Greek modes, speak of "yambo", "coriambo", exotic rhythms transplanted into Latin American airs (Giménez, 1997: 31. Translated from Spanish)

Giménez does not identify specific commentators in his critique, which affects its robustness; this might equally apply to the large volume of unevidenced claims on the *polca*'s origin to which he refers. Claims that relate almost entirely to rhythm form the bedrock of his argument. Giménez does not make direct reference to the specific individuals to whom his criticism applies. However, there is a sense that he is speaking to a particular Paraguayan audience that will be able to read between the lines:

Obsessed with justifying their theses, they unfairly separate 6/8 from a non-existent 3/4; they jokingly speak of the Spanish represented manfully by the three by four, in contrast to the aesthetic connubial of India that dreams through the 6/8. They generally took as indicators of their proposals some documents left by the conquerors, such as those by Azara, Rengger, Washburn, and many others. They also took the Spanish airs rooted in our national environment as a parameter for their observations, when those musical genres, since the time of the Reductions, were assimilated by the natives as 'exotic airs' that sought to transform guaranítica [Guaraní] spirituality (Giménez, 1997: 31. Translated from Spanish).

Giménez reflects that as time passed (following independence), the influence of ‘airs’ left by the colonisers faded across Latin America. He uses the phrase ‘adopted and then adapted’ to describe how rhythmic elements have cross-pollinated the music across the region. He provides tangible examples of this point, finally arriving at the *polca*:

An example of this is the ‘Santa Fe’ or ‘El Chopi’, initially framed in 3/4 and later adapted to 6/8. The ‘Habanera’ is an air for which some countries have lorded it as being eminently universal. In our field, it has been transculturated to be the ‘Rasguido doble’. The polka, mentioned as Bohemian, in 2/4, was transformed to 6/8 and also adapted to the natural feeling of the Paraguayan. This was a natural and perennial process, without changing the name. It was elaborated to become ‘Paraguayan *Polca*’ and to imprint in the vernacular expression a genre that is authentically ours’ (Giménez, 1997: 31. Translated from Spanish.)

In the final segment of this rich commentary taken from *La Música Paraguaya*, Giménez focuses on the post-war context of Paraguay in the twentieth century. In the extract below, the misinformed and prejudiced views of outsiders, or those without direct contact with Paraguayan music, are brought into the spotlight.

Those who, without having direct contact with the musical expressions of our people, sought a complicated etymology for our music. Due to: common pettiness; trends of urban ideologies of leaders; and misgivings of a professional nature [...] with their innate prejudices, those without adequate training in musicology [...] preferred to turn their backs on the adjacent reality. They believed more in the failure of the new proposal, so laudable and precise by the musician José Asunción Flores. They did not realize that a plethora of dreamers like him were imitating him, following the successes demonstrated

through his new works for a new experience (Giménez, 1997: 32. Translated from Spanish).

These words convey a strong sense of political dissatisfaction, presenting a view from within Paraguay where political ideologies dominate the narrative, ignoring the views of musicians.

### **The Colorado Party**

The Colorado Party has dominated Paraguayan politics for more than a century, with opposition from the Liberal Party. 'The two political parties which still today dominate the political life of Paraguay trace their origins back to two rival clubs, of limited membership and influence, that were formed shortly after the war [Triple Alliance]' (Hicks, 1971: 92). The Liberal Party ruled between 1904 and 1940. However, 'Colorado ascendancy in Paraguay really dates from 1878 when Dido Bareiro was elected' (Warren, 1980: 365). The period from the 1870s until the 1920s (under the rule of both the Colorado and the Liberal party) saw a rapid growth in foreign control over the domestic economy. Extensive state-owned lands and the railway inherited from the nationalist period (1814-1865) were sold off to European buyers at a pittance, and the desire to regain national control began to drive a renaissance of the Colorado party.

Opposition to the de-nationalisation of the economy began to surface during the early part of this century when revisionist historians identified with the opposition Colorado party began to resurrect the image of nationalist leaders of the nineteenth century (José Gaspar de Francia, Carlos Antonio Lopez and

Francisco Solano López) who had been vilified by Liberals' (Nickson, 1989: 186).

The resurrection to which Nickson refers aligns with Giménez's depictions of the early twentieth century. The policy was to galvanise a renewal of national pride with the memory of a golden era. Vera (2019)

Our Golden Age is located in the 19th century. In that I agree with a good part of the writers of the generation of 1900. However, it is obvious that those who lived in the Golden Age were not aware of it. They did not know that they were wandering on sacred ground. (Vera, 2019: 132)

Without labouring on the fool's errand of applying a modern-day terminology to a historical context, it seems that it is not a modern-day concept to think 'Let's make [insert country] great again'. However, the notion of a 'golden era' is an essential part of defining how an ideal historical past was constructed in the mid-twentieth century.

### **Alfredo Stroessner**

Alfredo Stroessner, the longest-serving dictator in Latin American history, who ruled Paraguay from 1954 to 1989, defined Paraguayan life in a political sense during the twentieth century. Paul Sondrol's (1991) comparative discussion on Fidel Castro and Stroessner positions the latter as an authoritarian ruler, contrasting with his characterisation of Castro as a totalitarian. The differentiation is formed from a baseline theory that 'Totalitarians, unlike authoritarians, envision not only a transformed domestic society, but also an expanded national influence on the world's stage' (Sondrol, 1991: 602). Sondrol also claims that 'Authoritarians are less concerned about those disaffected, as long as they do not challenge the regime'

(Sondrol, 1996: 604). Sondrol supports a wider consensus that Stroessner did not represent an ordinary authoritarian dictator. This belief is rooted in the analysis of his longevity as a ruler in this mould: 'Few twentieth-century dictators last a third of a century relying on ham-fisted repression alone' (Sondrol, 1996: 612). Stroessner was central to defining Paraguay as the archetype of Latin American authoritarian politics, yet he was also a popular figure, at least for a proportion of his tenure. To truncate the complexity of this paradox into a small section of this contextual chapter is not possible. However, certain galvanising factors can be summarised. For example, Andrew Nickson (in the unfortunately titled *Third World Quarterly* 1988) observes that 'between 1975 and 1980 Paraguay experienced the fastest rate of economic growth in Latin America with an average annual growth rate of 10 per cent' (Nickson, 1988: 243). This growth in the economy was largely attributed to the construction of the Itaipú hydroelectric project and the jobs it created, as well as broader initiatives. There are claims that 'Stroessner managed, to a certain extent, to hide, at least from foreign official observers so inclined, the essentially discretionary and authoritarian nature of his regime' (Riquelme, 1994: 41). Returning to the thoughts of Sondrol, Stroessner was not looking to influence the world, instead to control the narrative in all areas of Paraguayan society.

### **Music Controlled by the State Versus Invented Traditions.**

The issue of political control over music has been discussed within the context of the nineteenth century, particularly in relation to the rule of Francia (1814-1840). To understand this issue in the context of the twentieth century, it is helpful to return to the late 1930s and the rise of nationalist sentiment. Colman states that 'Since the 1930s, official resolutions, proclamations, and policies related to music have been

used to promote a nationalistic agenda' (Colman, 2015: 84). A central figure in this era of musical expansion was the harpist Félix Pérez Cardozo (1908-1952).



**Figure 2.4 Félix Pérez Cardozo (1908-1952).** ([www.portalguarani.com](http://www.portalguarani.com), 2024)

Pérez Cardozo was credited with greatly expanding the technical aspects of harp performance, notably introducing 'a greater number of strings, independence of the hands [and] accompaniment with broken chords for the Paraguayan polca' (Szarán, 1997: 384). He was able to showcase these developments in his compositional output. The Minicipalidad de Yaguarón uses Pérez Cardozo's piece, '*Che valle mi Yaguarón*' (ca. 1938) (Minicipalidad de Yaguarón, 2017). However, crucially in terms of the wider narrative that was developing at the time, it was Pérez Cardozo's performance work outside Paraguay (primarily Argentina) that was harnessed for socio-political purposes, defining what Colman (2015) terms 'cultural significance' in relation to the development of the harp as a symbol of national identity.

Pereira cites Paraguay's victory over Bolivia in the Chaco War (1932-1935) as a pivotal moment and a 'trigger for an almost explosive boom in Paraguayan music' (Pereira, 2011: 93). This view is largely drawn from his analysis that music bands



played an important role in galvanising the war effort and were even ‘considered as a combat weapon’ (Pereira, 2011: 93). The Stroessner regime harnessed the power of music and used it as a critical tool in the grounding of a new nationalist ideology, ‘targeting various musical and events, among them traditional music repertoire and performances’ (Colman, 2015). Colman highlights the introduction of folk music festivals as a key public-facing factor in this ideological approach, and part of a cultural platform from which to construct a vision of Paraguayan-ness:

Irrespective of the explanations that most *arpistas* and the general public may offer in regard to *paraguayidad*, it is crucial to recognise that this socially constructed idea, first inculcated by the state, has served as one of the main means of propagating invented traditions such as folk music festivals (Colman, 2015: 13).

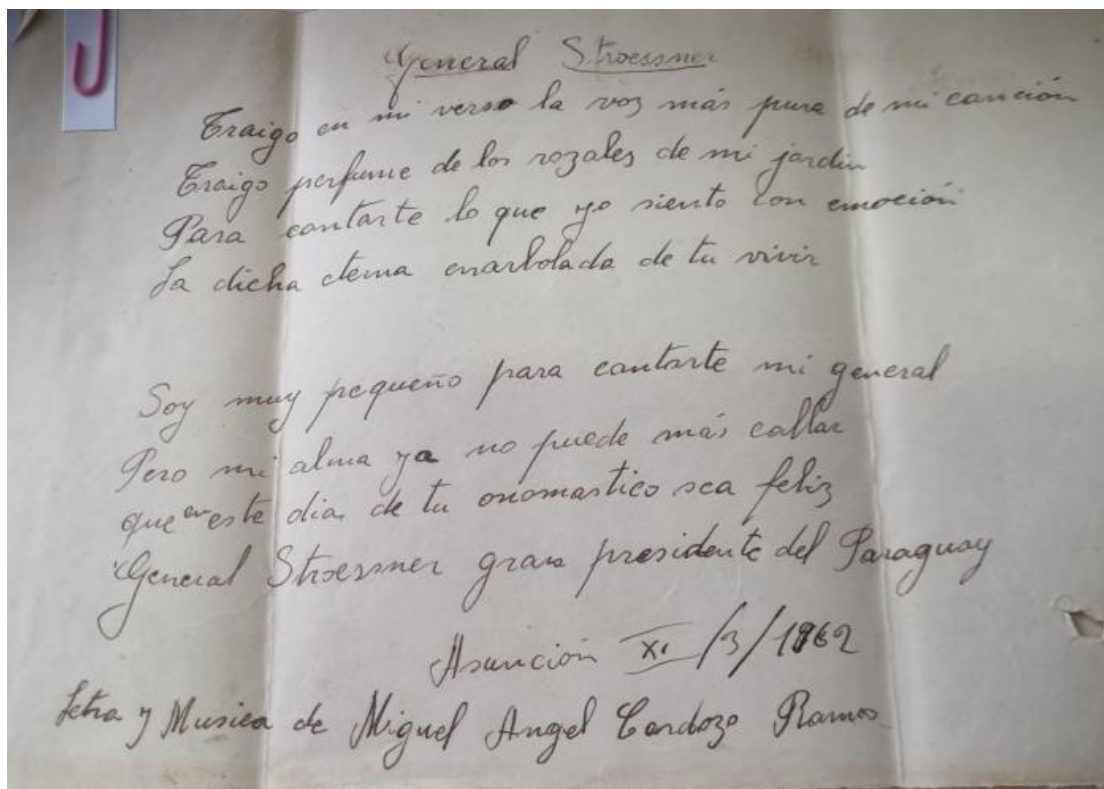
The extent to which a socially (politically) constructed concept of identity resonates with young musicians in the twenty-first century forms a significant part of the research presented in this thesis. The absence of critical perspectives on the extent to which music is controlled by the state or invents its own traditions highlights a significant gap in the literature on Paraguayan music. As Chapter 3 will show, Pereira (2011) and Colman (2015) lead the way in terms of an objective, socially constructed analysis of music.

### **Composing for the State**

What does it mean to idealise the past, or indeed the present? Perhaps the answer to some resides in a constructed filtration system of one kind or another, a reductive activity that seeks out binary visions in place of messy realities. One might

take a position that the production of art (in all forms) is in of itself a social critique born from freedom. However, as Esteban Buch, Igor Contreras Zubillaga and Manuel Deniz Silva (2016) point out, ‘the notion art can only be nourished by freedom needs to be frequently vindicated in the contemporary world’ (Buch, Zubillaga and Silva, 2016: 6). This statement informs the following analysis of song lyrics.

The most vivid examples of a direct entanglement between the State and music can perhaps be found in music dedicated to Stroessner. The ‘*General Stroessner Polca*’ was written by Miguel Angel Cardozo Ramos in 1962, and Figure 2.5 shows the handwritten lyrics from the Biblioteca y Archivo del Congreso de la Nación. The song is associated with the *fecha feliz* (happy date), which was the name given to the annual day of celebration to commemorate the rule of Stroessner.



**Figure 2.5 ‘General Stroessner Polca’, Ramos, 1962. ([www.bacn.gov.py](http://www.bacn.gov.py))**

An analysis of present-day reactions to this song is presented below in Figures 2.6 and 2.7. However, this was not the only song written to commemorate Stroessner's rule. The song 'General Stroessner' was composed by Samuel Aguayo, and the lyrics and music convey a similar theme to Ramo's *polca*. The lyrics below have been translated from Spanish.

En la tierra Paraguaya, vibra el nombre de sus heroes,  
de sus hijos valerosos, en la Guerra y en la paz  
De los hombres prominentes, como el General Stroessner,  
conductor esclarecido de este nuevo Paraguay

In the Paraguayan land, the name of its heroes vibrates,  
of his brave sons, in war and in peace  
Of prominent men, such as General Stroessner,  
enlightened driver of this new Paraguay

Es patriota y estadista, caballero y noble jefe,  
del ejército que es pueblo de la tierra Guaraní  
De la patria redimida, es el General Stroessner,  
creador de su grandeza, es también su paladín

He is a patriot and a statesman, a gentleman and a noble leader,  
to the army that is the people of the Guaraní land.  
From the redeemed homeland, is General Stroessner,  
creator of his greatness, he is also his champion.

Valiente guerrero, de temple de acero,  
mi canto den el viento es canto de paz!  
Cantar de Victoria que lleva el mensaje,  
en este homenaje al gran general!

Brave warrior, of steel temper,  
my song in the wind is a song of peace!  
Song of Victory that carries the message,  
in this tribute to the great general!

Con permiso, noble jefe, yo le rindo a su prestigio,  
lo mejor de mi mensaje, al custodio de la paz  
En mi voz emocionada, y en la flor de mi cordaje,  
yo le canto a nuestro líder, y al glorioso Paraguay

With permission, noble chief, I surrender to your prestige,  
the best of my message, to the custodian of peace  
In my excited voice, and in the flower of my cordage,  
I sing to our leader, and to the glorious Paraguay.

Soy soldado de la patria, que recorre los caminos,  
como usted llevo en el alma la sagrada tricolor  
Siendo ejemplo de la causa, lo respeto y lo venero,  
bravo General Stroessner! Paladín de la nación

I am a soldier of the country, who travels the roads,  
Like you, I carry the sacred tricolor in my soul.  
an example of the cause, I respect and venerate it,  
Bravo General Stroessner! Paladin of the nation

**'General Stroessner' (Aguayo, S. ca. 1980)**

The song delivers an unambiguous message that is unabating in its support for Stroessner. However, a qualitative analysis of the lyrics, which focuses on word prevalence, reveals some nuance in the elements that define loyalty. For example, the ambiguity that Aguayo places on the word “brave” so that it could be interpreted as either in a war context, or, and perhaps more convincingly, in reference to Stroessner’s stance against the outside political pressures of communism. The word “peace” is used more frequently than any other single word in the song and carries the denotation of the Chaco War (1932-1935) in which Stroessner fought. However, the word might also be seen as serving a dual purpose and acting as a connotation for the peaceful golden era of the mid-nineteenth century. The regime also used the memory of the conflicts that followed to galvanise the sense of national pride. However, Eduardo Galeano offers an interesting critique of this policy:

The Colorado party, which now rules Paraguay, makes breezy mileage with the heroes’ memory, but exhibits at the foot of its founding charter the signatures of twenty-two traitors to Solano López (Galeano, 1997:194).

Galeano enhances his observation to state that the Brazilian military trained Stroessner himself. Therefore, in the song ‘General Stroessner’, we can see a reinforcement of the Ideal historical past that the State used to construct a fundamental part of the narrative. However, the contradiction that the song represents could be seen more widely in society as the twentieth century entered its final years.

### **The Rise of a Democracy**

Stroessner’s power began to wane in the 1980s, largely due to a marked drop in the country’s economic situation. This was attributed to a perceived rise in corruption

following the years of prosperity and a growing discontent within factions of the Colorado party. Beyond the internal issues, Paraguay was also beginning to feel the pressure of a US foreign policy of democratisation that had strongly influenced much of Latin America. Peter Lambert (1997) states that, 'growing political instability and the intransigence of Stroessner led the US to favour more drastic measures to restore stability and create a democratic opening in the country' (Lambert & Nickson, 1997: 17). Lambert also notes the lack of plausibility in the fact that Stroessner's successor General Andrés Rodríguez, has not already been made aware of this shift in policy by the US. Alfredo Stroessner was finally removed from power in 1989 by the same alliance of the Colorado party and the armed forces that had underpinned his rule for thirty-five years.

Rodríguez's interim government ruled until 1993, and on 9 May of that year, Juan Carlos Wasmosy became the first civilian leader of Paraguay in thirty-nine years. Wasmosy was the candidate for the Colorado party. The transition to democracy in the 1990s has been widely cited as a turbulent time in Paraguay's recent history. As Wasmosy's government sought to establish Paraguay on the world stage as a new democracy, the gaps in domestic policy left the nation vulnerable to corruption and social discontent. According to Nickson, Paraguay became a conduit for narcotics-related money laundering as 'the Wasmosy government was unable to curb the involvement of the armed forces in the international narcotics trade' (Lambert & Nickson, 2010: 194). In the August 2000 elections, the Colorado party finally lost control of power. The liberal party candidate Julio Cesar Franco won the vice presidency election by 0.8 of a percentage point: 'Franco's victory broke the ruling party's 53-year grip on top elective offices in what is one of South America's weakest and most corrupt democracies' (Reuters, 2000). The coalition ran for only three years

until Nicanor Duarte regained power in 2003 for the Colorado party. It was not until 2008 that Paraguay saw a complete change in the ruling party as Fernando Lugo and the Liberal Party finally tipped the balance of power after more than half a century.

As this chapter comes to a close, the discussion of the twenty-first century will revisit the notion of an ideal historical past from a musical perspective. In an article written for *The Guardian* newspaper in 2019, author William Costa quotes the words of the Paraguayan lawyer Fernando Robles: 'Today, a 15-year-old or an 18-year-old doesn't even know that Stroessner existed. The education system doesn't mention the dictatorship. There is no intention of teaching the past so that it doesn't repeat itself.' (Costa, 2019). Robles's words imply that those born shortly after Stroessner's removal from power will likely have had to rely on their parents' or grandparents' political inclinations for knowledge. However, Colman's comments on the lack of a systematic cultural study relating to music suggest a significant lack of robust evidence to enable statements such as this to be relied upon. Instead, capturing the opinions of the Paraguayan people, that might themselves be a malleable entity, may be the only way to gain insight into the ways a single song, the 'General Stroessner Polca', has the potential both to represent a significant aspect of the 'ideal historical past', and to resonate with twenty-first century Paraguay.

The YouTube page for @GralStroessner has 5.64K subscribers, and immediately indicates a sense of how the 'General Stroessner Polca' has the power to stir up strong opinions ignited by nostalgia. The video 'Polca General Stroessner' (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PqByJtTYCK8>. Accessed: 29.05.24), where the audio of the *polca*, set against a slow-moving visual montage, has garnered 1.4 million views since its upload on 12 November 2008. Perhaps of greater importance than the content of the video itself are the 2,152 comments that span the whole sixteen-year

life of the video. In a broader context, Patricia Lange's (2019) view that the comments, shares, likes, and dislikes added to video content post-release enhance the value of the shared material and play a role in elevating the video as a social and historical artefact. However, observations of this kind, from a researcher's perspective, do little to avoid the issue of voyeurism. Thus, from an analytical point of view, the comments alone offer only a limited window into viewers' initial responses, lacking context and depth. Nevertheless, for better or for worse, observing opinions on such a forum, unique to the twenty-first century, contributes to understanding the cultural fabric of society.

The quotation below is an example of a comment written in 2021:

This was a time when there was respect, prosperity, patriotism and work, young people today do not respect the authorities or people like me who spent 44 years in the army defending this country from communism, that polka reminds us of that golden era, long live my General!!! (@GralStroessner, 2024)

There is a clear nostalgic sentiment in this comment that speaks to the song's power to evoke memories. The term 'golden era' is again of interest, but now in a twenty-first-century context. Vera's comments in *En Busca del Hueso Perdido* (2019) articulate the notion that people in general are predisposed to view moments in the past as a 'golden era', despite not having felt this way at the time. In addition, the observation of young people's attitudes made by the commenter is explained by Robles's view about education.

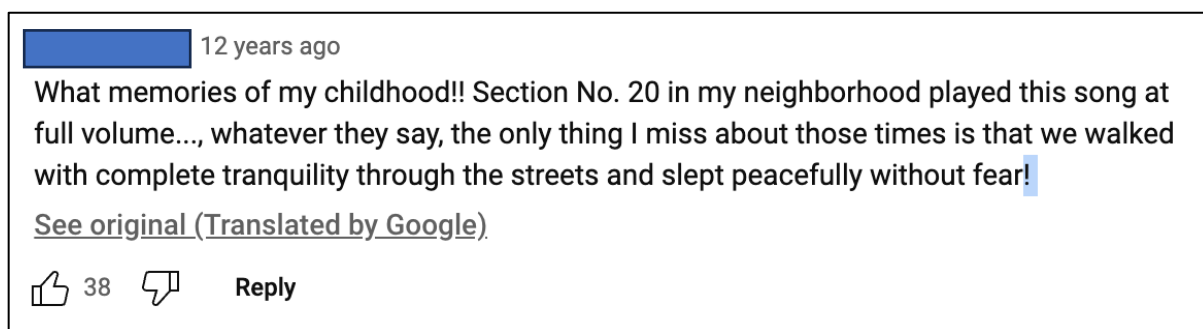
Figure 2.6 shows the most recent (2023) comment attached to the online content.



**Figure 2.6 YouTube comments 1, @GralStroessner, 2024.**

This comment could be interpreted as an implied weaponisation of the song, a musical provocation even in 2023 to those who support the Liberal Party. Another example taken from the YouTube comments appears to engage with the song with a rather more placid expression of nostalgia:





**Figure 2.7 YouTube comments 2, @GralStroessner, 2024.**

The fact that commenters can choose to remain anonymous on platforms such as YouTube conceals valuable information that would help to contextualise this material further. Issues of age and geographical location are missing from the observation, and this must be acknowledged as a significant limitation to any finding. However, this comment is no less emotively charged than those above and invites the question of whether this potent sense of yearning for a time once lived can be triggered by traditional or folk music more generally. History books and archives can only provide partial answers.

### **The Ideal Historical Past**

Folkloric or traditional music in Paraguay is seen as tightly woven into the political and socio-political fabric of both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Pereira illustrates with profound clarity that the lack of consensus surrounding the genesis of the Paraguayan *polca* is partly due to a lack of sociologically driven research and seeks to present an alternative, refreshing, and nuanced history.

In my opinion, this means that to determine the character and physiognomy of Paraguayan Popular Music, we cannot start from simple aesthetic and formal subjectivities or absurd comparisons but must delve into the historical factors

that were determining of that physiognomy and its formalization. These factors were the long process of formation of the Paraguayan nation; the fight for national independence, the two tragic wars and their aftermath, a titanic and contradictory effort to overcome that tragic destiny; attachment to the land: nostalgia for the abandoned home; love for lost family and deep loneliness in strange lands. All these facts and events were what created Paraguayan Popular Music and determined its appearance. Our music expresses in itself all the characteristics of the native soul. It is heroic, fiery, nostalgic, evocative and onomatopoeic. It has nothing to envy of any Popular Music from any other country. (Pereira, 2011, 17)

Written in 1994, this perspective was arguably before its time, but the work conducted by Colman more recently carries forward Pereira's sociological agenda. This chapter has shown that when musical issues have been funnelled into macro discussions on Paraguayan identity, the notion of an 'ideal historical past' emerges, although not necessarily with equal meaning for all.

The next phase of the discussion will develop these concerns and take them forward from this contextual platform upon which to build. The person to benefit most from this contextual platform might indeed be the 'outsider'. An outsider's observations of the historical context of music and identity might, arguably, be more objective than an 'insider'. As examples have shown in this chapter, intense emotions that connect to nostalgia and other sources of emotive matter are seen to influence views. Subjective attachment that leads to such generic comments as: 'Our music expresses in itself all the characteristics of the native soul', invite the thought, that it may not be easy for an insider to articulate their thoughts on music and identity.

## Chapter 3: A Traditionalist Approach

### Introduction

As the previous chapter made clear, Paraguay as a nation has been subject to extreme pressure as the country rebuilt itself in the twentieth century. This had a profound impact on cultural development and the reimagining of musical traditions as the country moved forward. The notion of an ideal historical past continues to underpin the discussion as the focus moves towards fieldwork interactions: the extent to which musicians engage with tradition in the twenty-first century is a central concern.

A logical place to begin expanding a theoretical framework is through an exploration of a traditionalist approach to reimagining Paraguayan music. The term reimagine will continue to be negotiated through a wide-angle lens. As the previous chapter alluded to, both musical and extra-musical elements factor into the perception of traditional music in Paraguay. As the extra-musical narrative has been influenced and shaped by the politics of the twentieth century, it is important to understand how this fact resonates with younger generations of Paraguayans in the present day. Therefore, an awareness of how this issue influences popular culture was critical in analysing all musical scenarios with which I have personally interacted in Paraguay. A broad aesthetic of the situation, and considered alongside the cultural and political contexts, helps to build an extra-musical narrative that figures prominently in developing Romero's (2001) thoughts on the reimagining of tradition.

The first area of investigation is to define the musical qualities of the *polca* in its traditional form and explore how the Paraguayans engage with this in the twenty-first century. The chapter will conclude with an ethnographic account of fieldwork conducted at the Festival del Takuare'ê in November 2019. This study will focus on

the relationship between urban and rural communities in Paraguay through the lens of a music festival and competition specifically designed for young people.

## **Defining the Paraguayan *Polca***

### **Rhythm**

The lively nature of the *polca* comes from the bi-rhythmicity of the music. The two driving forces in the rhythmic interplay found in the *polca* are the bass line and the strummed rhythm played on the guitar or harp. Florentín Giménez discussed the fact that some debate has taken place within musicological discussion of his ‘colleagues, Paraguayan and foreign’ (Giménez, 1997: 134) to argue for the bass rhythm to be considered as staccato crochets in a binary 3/4 system, and thus giving rise to the notion that the *polca* is a polyrhythmic structure when set against the syncopated middle voice (usually the harmony) played in 6/8 compound time. Juan Max Boettner’s *Música y Músicos del Paraguay*, first published in 1956, serves as an example for Giménez’s comments: ‘The polyrhythm of our *polca* is extremely characteristic and its essence’ (Boettner, 2008: 205). Boettner further characterised the notated form of the *polca* as ‘a well-marked accompaniment in 3 beats and the melody in two or four’ (Boettner, 2008:205). However, Giménez suggests that if the bass is also presented in 6/8, then it is ‘constituting only two opposing rhythms [and] nothing more than a simple birhythmic execution’ (Giménez, 1997: 134). Phrase (1) in Example 3.1 shows the most common rhythmic pattern for a bass line when scored in 6/8.



**Example 3.1 *Bajo solo*, Giménez (1997)**

Giménez offers a basis for rhythmic variations (shown in phrases 2-9) to the typical bass line pattern, and in Example 3.2, these variations have been placed alongside the contrasting rhythmic pattern in the middle voice:

*Bajo y contraste* **(Polca)**

(1) (2)

(3) (4)

(5) (6)

(7) (8) etc.

**Example 3.2 *Bajo y contraste*, Giménez (1997)**

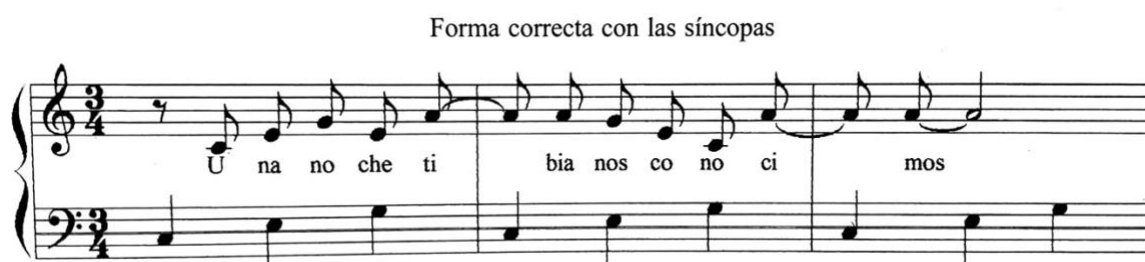
Giménez states that:

When analysed, it [a rhythm written in 6/8] leads us to seriously reflect so that this long-debated skill in writing, when eradicated, may lead us to a greater understanding of the graphic expression of our music (Giménez, 1997: 141).

It is from this fundamental rhythmic grouping of both voices that Giménez justifies his argument that the *polca* should not be considered in 3/4.

### ***Síncopado Paraguayo***

Notating the rhythmic structure of the *polca* only reveals part of the overall picture, and a complete understanding of the rhythmic characteristics arrives from the binary knowledge of what is being played and how it is being played. The latter point is commonly described in a single term, *Síncopado Paraguayo*. Luis Szarán credits Boettner as the first to conceive of the term to represent: 'when the melody has an eighth note in advance or delay of the rhythm' (Szarán, 1997: 441). Szarán's notated representation of this is shown in Example 3.3.



### **Example 3.3 *Síncopado Paraguayo* (Szarán, 1997:441)**

The description given of this syncopated rhythm, when presented in purely musical terms, fits well with the notated example. However, it is perhaps the extra musical language that is most suited to the task of defining the sound: 'There is a delightful

sense of laziness, of carelessness, of tropical negligence' (Boettner, 2008: 205). Boettner suggests that this sensibility is nurtured from childhood in Paraguayan musicians, and cannot be truly replicated without this innate understanding: 'Paraguayan musicians consider this syncopated rhythm so essential that they classify foreign imitations without this requirement as "abolerado"' (Boettner, 2008: 205). The term *abolerado* does not have a direct English translation; however, a composite of terms can be used, ranging from 'reckless' to 'damaged by being stuck'.

## Harmony

The *polca* is traditionally a strict diatonic music that typically follows a I-V-IV-I-V-I harmonic progression that is predominantly in the major key. Juan Max Boettner describes the harmonisation of diatonic melodic lines as: 'the universal type, generally very simple' (Boettner, 2008: 206). Example 3.4 shows a harmonic analysis of the melodic line of the '*Galopera*' (*polca*):

**Galopera**

The musical score for 'Galopera' is presented in three staves. The first staff begins with a C major chord. The second staff features a G7 chord at measure 7 and an F major chord at measure 10. The third staff starts with a G7 chord at measure 14, followed by a sequence of chords: C, G7, (F), (C), G7, and C.

### Example 3.4 'Galopera' - harmonic analysis

Variations of a I, IV, V progression introduce a wider harmonic palette by adding minor chords II and VI (see Example 3.5). Databases such as those found on the Portal

Guaraní website (<https://www.portalguarani.com>) provide evidence of the variation that exists to the I, IV, V progression. Example 3.5 shows the introduction of a wider harmonic palette in the *polca* ‘Pájaro Choguy’:



**Example 3.5 ‘Pájaro Choguy’, Oscar Cardozo Ocampo arr. Berta Rojas**

The tonal centre is in the major key, and whilst moving away from the basic I, IV, V, the harmony is still diatonic. The *polca* and the *guaranía* share many rhythmic characteristics; however, tend to differ far more in terms of harmony. The slower *guaranía* are frequently written in the minor key, reflecting a stronger sense of melancholy. This is evident in the example of ‘*Renacer*’ arranged for solo guitar by Berta Rojas, shown in Example 3.6:



⑥ = D

*p*  
Sul tasto, lento y doloroso

*mp*

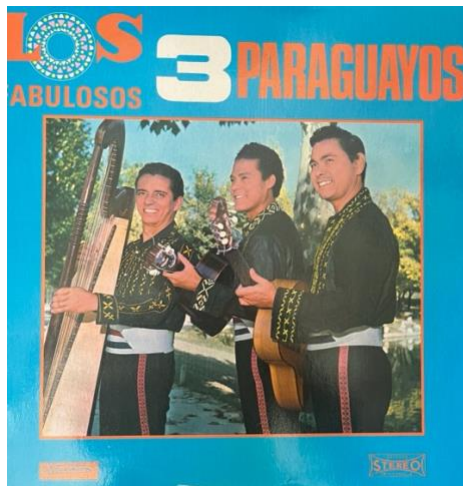
### **Example 3.6 'Renacer' - harmonic analysis**

This example illustrates the tonal shift from the common *polca* (archetypal of the *guaranía*) to the minor key of D and using chromatic movement between the chord changes. It should be noted that creating a binary distinction between the *polca* and the *guaranía* based on harmony and key is not always helpful, because not all *guaranías* are written in minor keys or use compositional devices to suggest movement away from the key. However, neither Boettner (2008) nor Giménez (1997) place a distinct focus on harmony in their detailed work on the defining features of the *polca* or the *guaranía*. The absence of such discussion from these authoritative sources might indicate that pinning down harmony as a defining universal of either national music style is problematic.

### **Instrumentation**

To a global audience, the archetype of a Paraguayan ensemble (*conjunto*) comprises two guitars and one harp. The success of Félix Pérez Cardozo, in the 1930s and 1940s, enabled many more Paraguayan folk musicians to tour throughout Europe,

North America, Asia and North Africa in the latter part of the twentieth century. The exported image of traditional Paraguayan music can be seen on the record sleeves in Figures 3.1 and 3.2.



**Figure 3.1 Los Fabulosos 3 Paraguayos (1969), Los 3 Paraguayos**



**Figure 3.2 Volume 2 - Bell Bird (1960), Luis Alberto Del Parana Y Los Paraguayos**

Luis Alberto del Parana was keen to build on the momentum gained from the Official Cultural Mission that ended in 1956. His group, Los Trio Paraguayos, had been assembled in 1953 as part of the initiative set out by President Chaves to promote Paraguayan music in Europe. Luis Alberto del Parana y Los Paraguayos were formed

as the government-backed project came to an end, and the band continued to work in Europe, going on to record over 500 songs. The album cover shown in Figure 3.2 depicts a common variation of the two-guitar and one harp lineup with the inclusion of a bandoneon and a vocalist.

### **Variations of the Paraguayan *Polca***

The *polca* has many variations that diversify the musical form and indicate a particular function for each variation within its cultural context. Mauricio Cardozo Ocampo in *Mundo Folklorico Paraguayo* (1988) presents four categories of the *polca* (translated from Spanish):

**Polca Syryry** – can be sung or instrumental

**Polca Cantada** – within its movement, most of the songs are sung

**Polca Kyre'ÿ or popo** – can be sung or instrumental

**Polca Saraki** – very fast moving, generally instrumental

(Ocampo, 1988: 83)

Luis Szarán (1997) adds further description to the categories, noting a difference between the *polca Kyre'ÿ* as 'happy and spirited' and the *polca popo* as 'light and graceful (...) when dancing, the dancers produce jumps called: *jeroky popo*' (Szarán, 1997: 392). Szarán also makes brief reference to the fact that: 'throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, several musicians tried to replace the name *polca* with: *Kyre'ÿ*, *Techagau* and others such as: *Danza Paraguaya*' (Szarán, 1997: 392). Whilst Szarán does not name particular individuals in relation to this statement, this would strongly align with the socio-political issues that surrounded Paraguayan national music in the twentieth century (as discussed in Chapter 2). The name *polca* defines (in part) a golden era in

Paraguay's (nineteenth-century) history; however, it is a name that carries distinct European influence.

## **The *Polca* in Context**

### **'Is Paraguayan music still relevant?' (Pereira, 2011)**

The canon of Paraguayan cultural literature, especially that pertaining directly to music, is far from evenly distributed across the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. With the notable exceptions of Mauricio Cardozo Ocampo's *Mundo folklórico Paraguayo* (1981), Moreno Gonzalez's *Datos para la Historia de la Música en el Paraguay* (1981) and the first edition of Boettner's *Música y Músicos del Paraguay* (1956), key texts on Paraguayan musical culture did not emerge until the years that followed the transition to democracy from 1992 onwards. Arturo Pereira recounts his personal experience of a moment in 1994 that encouraged a new approach and invited the question: Is Paraguayan music still relevant?

1994 - an altercation occurred between the composer Oscar Nelson Safuany and Associated Paraguayan Authors (APA), an altercation that was echoed by the oral, written and television press. The problem referred to whether Paraguayan Music is still valid and other divergent opinions on both sides. Presumably, due to this fact, APA convened several promoters of Paraguayan Popular Music with the objective of forming a working group that could be in charge of the research and study, evolution, creation and dissemination of Paraguayan Music.' (sic) For my first meeting, I was honoured with an invitation. I participated with great pleasure due to the fact that it addressed a problem that has been, and is, a cause of concern for me for a long time. (Pereira, 2011: 14. Translated from Spanish)

Pereira states that he began writing *Origen Social de la Música Popular Paraguaya* in 1963, but lacked the stimulation required to complete the work. The moment in time (1994) that he portrays in the text coincides with several published books in the immediate years that followed. As discussed in Chapter 1, the years 1997 and 1998 produced several key pieces of literature from important figures in Paraguayan music, notably those by Szarán (1997) and Giménez (1997). In addition, the second edition of Boettner (1956) arrived some forty-one years after the first edition. Colman views this literature as textbook sources of information rather than a deep cultural studies. However, they paved the way for further publications that arrived on or around the time of the bicentennial celebration of independence. In July 2011, Pereira's *Origen Social de la Música Popular Paraguaya* was published in Asunción by Fondec.<sup>1</sup> The book carries a story that can act as a vehicle to explore the wider complexities that surround the publication of music-related literature in Paraguay. This issue is relevant to the wider discussion, in that it shows a sense of duty, held by the author, to pursue deeper, social lines of enquiry.

### **Día del Folklore**

The nationally celebrated Día del Folklore (Folklore Day) is held annually on 22 August, to coincide with the World Folklore Day launched by UNESCO in 1960. However, the Día del Folklore in Paraguay was only legally established in 2021. The following quote comes from a government postal service website: 'This special date was declared by law 6864 of 2021 to commemorate popular traditions and beliefs, and whose collective manifestations can maintain the identity of the Paraguayan people'

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<sup>1</sup> The book was given to me as a gift by Arturo Pereira's son the late Remigio Pereira (1961-2022) during fieldwork in 2019.

(Correoparaguay.gov.py). The text on the Correo de Paraguay (national postal service) website is amongst a range of government and media outlets that advertise and commemorate the event each year.



**Figure 3.3 Día del Folklore Paraguayo (Ultima Hora, 2018)**

An analysis of the language used in relation to the musical aspects of the celebration in a cross-section of the advertising material for Día del Folklore provides insight into the target audience for the main press release. The following quote can be found in the exact form on a range of websites aimed at the public: ‘The Paraguayan harp and guitars give the typical music just the right touch to listen to and dance to at the numerous festivals’ (RCC, 2022., Correoparaguay.gov.py, 2023., ABC, 2024). The exact text has been used as the mainstream media press release in all three years. In each case, the initial comment is expanded upon:

Guaranía, a soft and romantic native music, is performed by a trio consisting of a harpist and two guitarists. The typical Paraguayan orchestra is composed, in

addition to the basic trio, of some violinists, a double bass and an accordionist. (Correoparaguay.gov.py, 2023)

The fact that well-known national music is being described in this detail would imply a lay readership, perhaps unaware of the makeup of a traditional ensemble. In 2018, the newspaper *Ultima Hora* conducted an interview with David Galeano Oliveira, folklorist and director of the Ateneo de Lengua y Cultura Guaraní (Institute of Guaraní Language and Culture). The focus of the interview was to discuss the upcoming Día del Folklore:

Despite the natural changes or modifications, the activist recognized that there are also issues that transcend and remain rooted. Fortunately, he sees that there is a tendency among the youth to revalue Paraguayan culture through educational initiatives. (*Ultima Hora*, 2018)

From this interview, Oliveira seems to suggest that young people in Paraguay need to be educated about cultural activities, implying that they have become less integrated into everyday life. One can assume that Oliveira may be referring to the Día del Folklore as such an educational activity. In his institutional role, he also seems to be advocating for responsibility to be taken in the education system to support and enable folk traditions to be remembered:

Today, there is a trend that we did not have 30 years ago, which is the remembrance of folklore. In schools, there is a great responsibility to carry this out. From music, poetry in Guaraní, and popular stories (*Ultima Hora*, 2018).

The incremental dilution Oliveira observes laments the demise of a 'golden era'. His nostalgic expression appears to align chronologically with the point of crisis in 1994

that Pereira identifies. Perhaps, the question (in a macro sense) for all traditional folk activities is that of relevance to a younger generation.

Despite globalization, there is a strong tendency to strive to maintain identity. At this moment we live in two worlds, the concrete and the virtual; and culture is the weapon that is used to penetrate the various countries (Ultima Hora, 2018)

Oliveira cites the weaponising of culture in a similar fashion to the discourse that dominated the twentieth century. However, the context of the virtual world co-existing with the physical introduces a new barrier in the fight to preserve tradition. Pereira traces the displacement of traditional Paraguayan music due to globalisation back to 1945, when:

the political, social, and cultural hegemony of the United States began. Music began to be produced through commercial and deformed jazz, and tropicalism. This was the incentive for the formation of orchestras of this nature [jazz] in the country and little by little [traditional dances] were marginalized and greater promotion [for jazz] than for Paraguayan Music – and the Typical Orchestras in charge of performing the *polcas*. Electronic orchestras also added to this anti-*polca* pressure (Pereira, 2011: 120, translated from Spanish).

Pereira's words tell an alternative story to much of the literature generated in the 1980s and 1990s in Paraguay, a narrative that addresses the rise of globalisation with greater directness and heightened concern. Yet, considering this issue in the context of the twenty-first century, the two short quotes from Oliveira's interview (above) highlight the challenges of maintaining engagement with traditional music in younger generations, a fundamental concern of this thesis. There are further issues to explore regarding



how this engagement is conducted. Oliveira foregrounds the importance of education in supporting levels of engagement, but if educational institutions contribute to the marginalisation of traditional music by teaching globalised styles of music, then events such as the Día del Folklore Paraguayo play a more significant role.

## **Urban vs Rural**

The focus in the first half of this chapter has been on urban settings. The area of discussion will now expand to look at music in a rural setting. Away from the centres of formal education in Paraguay, a rich tradition of rural music festivals and competitions exists, fostering a strong sense of grassroots music in rural communities. Many of the top harpists and guitarists in the country have found early success in these competitions that have acted as a springboard to careers in the national music industry.

## **The Festival del Takuare'ê**

Music festivals have been highlighted as a significant tool in the nationalist agenda of the twentieth century (see Chapter 2). Colman (2015) discusses the concept of *paraguayidad* as a social construct that was reinforced in value by the State through music festivals and events. This section of the chapter will focus on gaining insight into the societal value placed on music festivals in present-day Paraguay. An understanding of this point will contribute directly to the research question of how musicians engage with the *polca* in a traditional setting.

The Festival del Takuare'ê is one of a significant number of music festivals and competitions that take place in Paraguay each year. The festival is held annually in the small town of Guarambaré, situated 34 kilometres south-east of the centre of Asunción. The town has hosted the Festival del Takuare'ê for forty-three years (1978-

2021). The festival is unique within the context of music festivals in the country due to the overall reach it has.

My visit took place in the evening of 2 November 2019, to coincide with the Noche Final (Final Night). Performers at the final event in the festival programme compete in a number of regional and discipline-specific events, the finalists selected from each category then compete in the final (2 November 2019). In 2019, the festival invited competitors in the following overarching categories:

Category
Music
Theatre and Song
Poem
Solo Dance
Group Dance

**Table 3.1 Festival del Takuare'ê performance categories**

The categories are broken down into levels of competence, with 25 subcategories spread across music, song, and poem, and seven subcategories in the area of dance. The festival presents this mission statement on their current (2021) Facebook page: '43 years of competitive festival at national and international level promotion of young values for art. We defend indigenous Paraguayan folklore. The statement is expanded on to provide an initial overview of the ethos:

In order to spread culture through artistic manifestations and the integration of cities through art, the organizing commission of the 'Paraguay and the world sing in Guarambaré' festivals, organizes competitive festivals for Fans (Festival del Takuare'ê Official Facebook Page)

In an interview I conducted with one of the festival organisers in 2019, Fidel Chamorro Zarza tells me the story of how the festival came into being:

The Festival Del Takuare'ê was the idea of a group of young people who in 1977 sat on the wall of the food market that until now is in front of the Luis Alberto de Herrera Club, where the event takes place' (Personal Interview with Fidel Zarza, 12 November 2019. See Appendix 10)

The discussion that developed in this first meeting led to the idea of a music festival; Zarza also alludes to the importance of the name Takuare'ê:

What activity could they carry out for the community of Guarambaré, among some suggestions someone says, let's do a Festival, the question among them if what is it going to be called, many names gave but chose Takuare'ê, first because it is the agricultural item [Guaraní term for sugar cane] that most characterizes the Guarambareños, apart the city has two sugar mills (Personal interview with Zarza, 12 November 2019, Appendix 10)

The idea gathered momentum, and the early organising committee began to bring in notable contributors to the project: 'They looked for some people as advisers and Serafín Francia Campo accepted the position, a communicator and researcher of folklore, also the writer Rudi Torga' (Fidel Chamorro Zarza, 2019).

An article from *Crónica* in 2016 characterises Serafín Francia Campos (at that time) as 'a man considered the most connoisseur of Paraguayan music and its protagonists' ([www.cronica.com.py](http://www.cronica.com.py) Accessed. 27.05.24). He was born on 3 May 1936, and although born in Asunción, he moved to the southern city of Encarnación at the age of two. He lived there until the 1970s, at which time he moved back to the capital city to begin work for the radio station Ñandutí. Rudi Torga (1938-2002) was a widely published writer in the twentieth century, and perhaps crucially for his early involvement in the festival, worked in the 1970s as coordinator of the Community Cultural Action Program ([www.mec.gov.py](http://www.mec.gov.py) Accessed: 03.04.2022). The involvement of Torga and Francia Campos enabled a strong advisory grounding for the early years of the festival. Campos' great friends (as the 2016 article states) were Herminio Giménez, José Asuncion Flores and Luis Alberto del Paraná. Zarza informed me that from 1982, the festival entered a new space as a competition. The primary rationale for this adjustment to the format was to provide a springboard for young musicians to enter the professional circuit. He notes that many of the festival's category winners (more on this later) have gained international recognition for their work.

As one of the winners of the festival in 1996, the performing career of my interlocutor and harpist, Sixto Corbalán, was launched. In a conversation with Corbalán, the question of past winners of the Festival del Takuare'ê was approached: MD: What percentage of the finalists [of the festival competition] do you think stay in music? SC: I don't know, but I think in the year that I won (1996) from twenty-six I think maybe ten I know have become great performers and composers' (Conversation with S. Corbalán, 2 November 2019) I am keen to ask him about any barriers to participation that young musicians face. SC: It has a lot to do with the parents. You know, it costs a lot of money. It is not just the lessons, though of course, it is also, when

you win a festival like Takuare'ê, the next stage is to travel to other festivals (Conversation with S. Corbalán, 2 November 2019).

A section of the (previously introduced) Festival del Takuare'ê mission statement states that it aims: 'to spread culture through artistic manifestations and the integration of cities through art'. In response to my question on how young people engage with the event, Zarza highlights the national reach that the festival currently has:

The participants, including children, adolescents, young people and people of all ages, all fans, without having a recording, come from different locations in Paraguay. The most distant are Vallemi Department, Alto Paraguay 600 km, Pilar, Laureles, Cerrito Department Ñeembucu 400 km, Encarnación, Itapua 380 km, Ciudad del Este, Hernandarias, Pte Franco 350km. I quote these places only as examples. It stands out [among] the 40 competitive festivals approximately throughout the country and one in Buenos Aires, Argentina. This year, the pre-festival classifieds featured 350 artistic numbers, with 2,400 artists on stage, spanning approximately 50 hours of the festival. (Personal Interview with Fidel Zarza, 12 November 2019. See Appendix 10)

Fidel Zarza co-manages the company Mundo del Folklore Producciones with his wife, Myrian Solis. He impresses on me the significance of Takuare'ê by contextualising the position of the festival amongst the hundred more that take place annually throughout the country, beyond the festivals that they directly organise (40). However, supported by the figures presented in the above quotation, Takuare'ê garners significant attention from those looking to compete and perform. Colman states that in 2002, 'Festival del Takuare'ê has recently gained a reputation as one of the foremost popular events associated with traditional music in the country' (Colman, 2015: 110).



**Figure 3.4 Mondo del Folklore**

### **The Journey to Guarambaré: Reflections on an Evening of Conversation**

All content in this section of the chapter is based on fieldwork notes from conversational interactions. The purpose of this is to show a real-time encounter as clearly as possible, enabling the flow of the discourse to be examined as a resource. To allow for the organic nature of this situational aspect of the fieldwork to flow, the use of language will be more informal in tone.

Sixto arrives at the Asunción Palace hotel at 7 pm on 2 November 2019. The state of flux surrounding my departure from the hotel amuses the hotel staff! However, plans are changing rapidly! Twenty minutes earlier, I was briskly walking up Colón to find an ATM to pay 400,000 Grs for a taxi for the 70km round trip, with no plans for a return journey back to Asunción at 1 am after the festival. Sixto had apologised earlier at lunch, but family responsibilities meant he did not think he could go with me. Fortunately, only a short time later, Sixto sends a WhatsApp message to say he has changed his plans. A further ten minutes pass, and we begin the journey to

Guarambaré. However, we made it only as far as the edge of Asunción before Sixto reminds me that it is essential to carry ID, as it is common for the police to stop vehicles travelling at night on the main route south from Asunción. Thus, it was decided that we should head back to the hotel for a driving licence.

As we drive down Calle 25 de Mayo (leaving downtown Asunción), we see a bright red building, SC: this is the Colorado Party headquarters, you remember we talked about this at lunch?' The Colorado party (as discussed in Chapter 2) ruled throughout the twentieth century and was also the party of Alfredo Stroessner, the longest-serving dictator in South American history. The party is currently in power in Paraguay, although in a democracy (since 1991), but Sixto is keen to point out the striking colour of the Colorado building in relation to the brilliant blue building of the rival Liberal Party.

The conversation picks up from where we left off at lunch. Sixto's views about the instant nature of success expected in some sections of mainstream youth culture are connected with my own. I recount my experiences of how young people in the UK engage with traditional music. Sixto discusses his own experience of music education, saying, 'Music wasn't offered in the University as a Bachelors degree for me.' Sixto further explains that he studied instrumental lessons at the Conservatorio Nacional de Música. A retrospective analysis of these comments aligns closely with the research I have conducted on higher education in Asunción, further reinforced by the period Sixto relates to. Sixto finished studying at the institution in the year 2000. He did not complete the course as the harp (at that time) did not align well with other further study course options.

Sixto is interested in knowing if improvisation played a part in my musical education and professional career. I reply that improvisation is a large part of my music

making in the UK; however, this is not necessarily reflective of the formal music education system (ABRSM, etc). SC: 'I think musicians improvise life', I laugh in agreement. We make a brief stop at Sixto's parents' house in the town of Ñemby. It is a beautiful rural location, and he invites me upstairs to his studio and rehearsal space.



**Figure 3.5 The view from Sixto Corbalán's studio**

'This is where I rehearse with my brother', he says. It's a great space, two rooms separated by a cut-out 'studio-esque' window, but with no glass. Sixto takes a shower, and wait with the dog, watching a video of Guaraní Soul (a music collective, in this video showing Sixto playing with jazz musicians Pedro Martinez and Seba Ramirez) When Sixto returns, he finds a copy of Luis Szarán's book to recommend to me (luckily, I had already purchased it).





**Figure 3.6 Sixto's studio, 2019**

We continue the journey, and as the destination of Guarambaré appears on the horizon, the conversation shifts directly to the festival. SC: You know, I told you earlier, the pure tradition is in the countryside. I am drawn to his use of the word 'pure', which appears loaded with the connotation that there are two types of traditional expression. This is a word that he has used on multiple occasions since our first meeting, raising questions about how perceived authenticity is qualified in relation to traditional performance. Having asked Sixto about the importance of location, this is his definition:

It's like, when you are in Buenos Aires, you can feel the tango, it's just there in the soul. It's like that in Guarambaré, you can feel the traditional music, you can feel the polca (Conversation with S. Corbalán, 2 November 2019).

SC: 'This is the thing; you can feel it, it's played with feel' (Conversation with Corbalán, 2 November 2019). Is the meaning of 'it' explained in a similar manner to how a drummer might (or at least all the drummers I have worked with)? Sixto is not referring to the general subjectivity of musical performance, but to a higher abstract level - feeling music in the air! This is a constant; it shares the oxygen. 'The festival isn't the

same as it was though', Sixto continues, 'the festival went downhill and then had a two-year break. But now it's getting stronger again' (Conversation with Corbalán, 2 November 2019). This issue will be explored later in this chapter in relation to funding and the future direction of the event.

### **The Aesthetics of the Performance**

Perhaps, the most striking element of the festival is one that moves away from the sonic world that engulfs the space. A distinct factor in the traditional presentation of the Festival Takaure'ê is the promotion of traditional dress for performers, as well as the accompanying stage backdrop (see Figure 3.7). The historical scene depicted in the stage set is that of the Igreja Natividade de Maria, a church located in the main square of Guarambaré that was built in the nineteenth century:



**Figure 3.7 Festival del Takuare'ê (2019) main stage**

The wearing of traditional clothing seems to be deeply ingrained in the sense of occasion. Figure 3.8 shows a group of dancers and musicians celebrating after their performance:



**Figure 3.8 Festival del Takuare'ê (2019), celebrating performers**

It is important not to reach for overt levels of significance in places where perhaps the activity is relatively benign. Of course, to many the world over, the aesthetics of a good performance can be judged on the synergy between how something both looks and sounds. In the context of the Festival del Takuare'ê, this combination of performance qualities might be derived not only from the historical issues that contributed to a national drive to promote music festivals, but also local considerations that pertain to the location of the festival. How important is a sense of local community to the question of young people's engagement with tradition? Veit Erlmann (1998) discusses the aesthetics of the local:

The fact that there are significant differences in the forms and constructions of locality around the world does not mean that these are unrelated. Quite to the

contrary, such localities and the various practices and ideologies associated with them often emerge only in critical response to forces posing a threat to communities, spaces, territories, and identities that do not easily yield to the pressures of the nation-state or global market flows. (Erlmann, 1998: 13)

The local aesthetic of the Festival del Takuare'ê could be seen as a critical response to forces that pose a threat, particularly from urban centres that might seek to draw a non-local audience. Marie Mahon and Torsti Hyyryläinen discuss this issue concerning rural arts festivals in Western Ireland:

Festivals have the capacity to be inclusive or exclusive of aspects of local culture and identity depending on who becomes involved in organising such events and can lead to more or less authentic commodification of local culture depending on whether they are targeted at the local or the tourist market. (Mahon & Hyyryläinen, 2019: 612)

There would seem to be little doubt that the Festival del Takuare'ê are inclusive of local culture, creating an event that enables young people from either a rural or urban place of origin to engage in musical performance in a local community setting that preserves traditions. The extent to which the festival organisers feel threatened by outside pressures in maintaining this environment will be discussed later in this chapter.

The notion of a holistic audience experience expands the debate around what is perceived as authentically traditional and what enhances this perception, beyond purely musical elements. The performances observed at the festival appear to be (in most cases) strictly aligned with the use of traditional instrument combinations, predominantly harp and acoustic guitar. In some cases, an electric bass or keyboard is used, although it is rarely used to replace one of the traditionally expected instruments. However, from observing the location of the performance, it seems

plausible that the staging of the event and the costume dress of the performers both contribute to the perception that a traditional approach is being taken to performance at the festival. The young people who perform at the festival engage in the complete experience. However, within the space, there is a sense that a singular stamp of traditionalism on the festival would be inaccurate. There are degrees to which individuals embrace all elements of the tradition. An observation can be made about this graduated approach from performances that begin to move away from the traditional use of instrumentation. The video observations shown in Figures 3.9 and 3.10 appear to show a sense of what Max Peter Baumann presents as a dialogue between modernists and traditionalists:

Festival organisers must ask themselves several questions: Is there something like a 'conflict of cultures' in the field of traditional music, or is it more, using the words of Dieter Senghaas (1998), a 'conflict of a single culture with itself'? How can a dialogue develop between modernists and traditionalists, between 'western music' and 'non-western music', between folk music (both traditional and in the modern sense) and global pop? (Baumann, 2001: 10)

The video clip (Figure 3.9 QR code and link) shows the musicians playing an electric keyboard and a guitar. In this instance, musicians are also performing in non-traditional dress. On the one hand, this might seem to be the somewhat benign observation noted above. On the other hand, it could be viewed that in order to avoid 'a conflict of a single culture with itself', a difference of approach is taken to the aesthetic of each performance, moving towards an intersection with a traditionalist and a modernist approach. In this case, the extra-musical facets of the performance are making a distinct contribution to this negotiated dialogue.



**Figure 3.9 Festival del Takuare'ê 2019, live performance one**

**[Festival del Takuare'ê 1](#)**

By contrast, the performance shown in Figure 3.10 includes a harp, an electric bass guitar and an acoustic guitar. In this example, the dress code appears to reflect the 'traditional' nature of each specific instrument:



**Figure 3.1 Festival del Takuare'ê 2019, live performance two**

**[Festival del Takuare'ê 2](#)**

In a third example, dance is added to music as a performance element. In what might be described as a visceral performance (at least to an observer), the instrumentation used in the music and image (dress code) of the performers align to create what could be seen as the local aesthetic:



**Figure 3.11 Festival del Takuare'ê 2019, live performance three**

**[Festival del Takuare'ê 3](#)**

The issue of location and the optics of the individual performances that comprise the festival as a whole can form a more complete picture of what defines a traditionalist approach. Baumann refers to the fact that 'even in folklore festivals, the presence of the past comes into conflict with an irrevocably changing and short-lived modernity' (Baumann, 2001: 16). He continues to observe that:

Almost every kind of folklore attracts outsiders with an imagology of their folk costumes, traditional musical instruments and forms of expression, referring to a past existence as hunter or peasant or life in the countryside in general, as a reflex to the global loss of time and space (Baumann, 2001: 16).

This notion suggests that the festival organisers should be viewed as making important decisions to align the musical and extra-musical aspects of each performance. The aesthetic of the festival invites young people to engage with the past in a location that reinforces a perception of authenticity, aligning with Corbalán's comments on the importance of the rural environment in creating a sense of feeling. In broader terms, the discussion on the consideration of optics in relation to the aesthetic value of the event seems relevant in the context of the festival. The overall experience is central to the traditionalist approach in this situation. P. G. Whitehouse points to Dewey's *Art as*

*Experience* (1934): 'Emotion is the directing force of aesthetic experience' (Whitehouse, 1978: 156). Critics of Dewey's perspective note his lack of expansion of the term 'emotion' in direct relation to performance; however, they attribute it to a personal or inner self-reflection that our emotional response shapes the overall aesthetic value of a performance. Simon McKerrell notes that, 'Dewey's key point was that art's most significant benefits are experienced in the doing or the perceiving of art, and that their value lies in the process of taking part, not the artistic object' (McKerrell, 2014. <https://simonmckerrell.com/2014/12/08/valuing-the-traditional-arts>). Therefore, one might conclude that in this notion, the Festival del Takuare'ê shows that the complete experience of a traditionalist approach should be valued over the component (musical instrument) parts.

## **Beyond the Event**

Beyond a snapshot analysis of a single year in the life span of the Festival del Takuare'ê. Two key considerations emerge that impact the research questions. The first is around longevity and the challenges the festival faces in the present day. The second focuses on the participants themselves and how they view the broader benefits of their involvement in this type of cultural event. When asked about these issues, Zarza (festival organiser) was keen to link the future musical successes of the finalists to wider political considerations:

The biggest concern we have is the lack of a state cultural policy. Takuare'ê is a non-profit association and does not have the resources to provide support to these children and young artists. Hopefully, very soon, the National Government will be able to provide support to the winners. It would be the best



investment that can be made for the country. (Personal Interview with Fidel Zarza, 12 November 2019, see Appendix 10)

According to the report submitted to UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage on 15 December 2016, The National Endowment for Culture and the Arts (FONDEC) is in charge of dissemination, promotion and support of artistic performances and festivals' (UNESCO.org, 2016), yet Zarza does not directly mention FONDEC in his answer. A more complete picture can be observed in the areas of cultural development in Paraguay, where FONDEC's remit connects. FONDEC's mission and vision can be gleaned from their website, and when viewed in alignment with the UNESCO statement:

**Mission:** Finance and promote private cultural activities throughout the national territory through scholarship, subsidy and sponsorship projects for creators, performers, artistic groups and institutions.

**Vision:** to be an institution that generates equal opportunities for different cultural manifestations for the implementation of artistic proposals with the award of financial support that promotes the development of a democratic model of cultural management with artists and other cultural agents.

To explore FONDEC's approach further, the [Link](#) shows a complete list of all the music-related projects selected for support by FONDEC in 2023. Of the forty-eight projects included in the document, four are specified as aimed at children (*niños*) or young people (*jóvenes*). However, of the four noted, two projects are directly aimed at young children in an introductory sense. Project 41 is titled Arpa de Papel (paper harp) and:

Consists of a method that is totally new to the Paraguayan harp; children from three years old can go and learn. Contains tools and information about techniques, fingering and initial knowledge about the instrument. (FONDEC Projects 2023, [Link](#))

Project 1 Juventud y Folklore 5 Edición Guaranía (Youth and Folklore 5 Guaranía Edition) is a concert that aims to promote Paraguayan folklore among young people. In addition, project 19 titled Estación Guaranía (Guaranía Station) is aimed at searching for youth composers and promoting their new [musical] creations ([Link](#)) (FONDEC Projects 2023). The work highlighted in Project 1 of FONDEC's plan for 2023 would seem to be the most closely aligned to the aims of the Festival del Takuare'ê and indeed Mundo del Folklore more generally. Appendix item 19 displays the promotional flyers for The Festival del Takuare'ê, dating back to 2012. From this, we can see that in all years, sponsorship and investment have come from the private sector, telecommunication companies and the financial sector. However, the 37<sup>th</sup> and 38<sup>th</sup> editions of the Festival (in 2015 and 2016, respectively) did receive support from FONDEC. That said, considering a timeline running from 2012 until 2023, the evidence appears to support Zarza's sense of frustration in terms of a 'lack of cultural policy' or perhaps an inconsistency in support that fluctuates year on year. Zarza cites this issue when addressing the future challenges facing the festival:

The biggest challenge of the Takuare'ê Festival is to get the State to declare it of National cultural interest and therefore include it in the State budget, thereby further facilitating support for the participating artists. (Personal interview with Zarza, 12 November 2019)

In response to the question of how young people in Paraguay engage with traditional music, Zarza states:

Let's say that 50% are already students of conservatories [...], but clarifying that the majority do it on their own, very few in public institutions of the state. (Personal Interview with Zarza, 12 November 2019. See Appendix 10)

The guideline percentage that Zarza gives correlates with the location examples of participants in the music festivals discussed earlier in this chapter, in terms of a weighting of those applying from urban to rural places. The previous summary of folk music as part of the curriculum of educational institutions in Asunción appears to support the fact that the opportunity to study traditional music varies from the city to the countryside. The sense that young musicians are 'doing it on their own' speaks powerfully to the role that festivals such as Takuare'ê play in the independent journey of young musicians from outside of the urban spaces.

I am curious to ask Zarza's views on what the fundamental driver might be in maintaining a desire to continue providing such a comprehensive programme of events for young people. Re-visiting thoughts on the broad expression of Paraguayan cultural identity, I ask the question 'How do you feel *paraguayidad* is expressed through the festival?' to which he responds:

The participants express patriotism and *paraguayidad* through art in general. I highlight that the cultural artistic event covers the entire artistic field. According to the regulations, dance has seven categories. Theatre, music in its various expressions, poetry in Guaraní and Spanish, Caso ñemombe'u (storytelling)

total 26 categories. Total 33 categories (Personal interview with Zarza, 12 November 2019. See Appendix 10).

Zarza expands on this answer to focus more specifically on how *paraguayidad* as a socio-cultural expression resonates with young people today: 'It is felt in a feeling of *paraguayidad*, and I reiterate, it is spontaneous, from my point of view, a feeling expressed through art' (Personal interview with Zarza, December 2019). This response resonates with some of the perspectives on the cultural elements that comprise Paraguayan identity and how they might be encapsulated in the notion of *paraguayidad*. Firstly, Zarza is not drawn to isolate a particular musical quality (knowing that my questions are primarily related to musical lines of enquiry) as representing an individual's expression of Paraguayan-ness. This sentiment chimes with that of Lambert (2010), in which music is not given an element that defines Paraguayan identity. However, Lambert is crucially excluding all intangible culture (except for language), and this is perhaps where his outsider perspective is most exposed. It is the focus Zarza places on the spontaneity of feeling that elevates his perspective beyond the expressions of identity that Lambert proposes: 'isolation, war, immigration, language and land' (Lambert, 2010). Zarza implies that we might consider such expressions of identity (through music or art more generally) as non-prescribed. The evidence from Zarza supports the position that Helio Vera (2017) takes on culture as a process, not to be regarded in terms that constitute a 'static or frozen whole' (Vera, 2017: 35). The expression of *paraguayidad* as an unquantifiable and personal expression of identity appears juxtapose with a preoccupation to quantify perceptions of authenticity.

## Performance Spaces - Documenting Tradition

The sense of experience shown in this chapter reflects a traditionalist performance aesthetic derived from historical contexts, with a real-time documentation of tradition that draws on both extra-musical and musical factors. The question as to whether folk music needs to both sound and look authentic in order to be perceived as traditional, is perhaps for the gatekeepers of a culture to answer, whoever they may be. That said, if perceptions of authenticity are to be deemed an intensely personal issue, then any judgement on this should be left to the individual's emotional response: a notion that Jay Mechling terms 'solo folklore': 'the locus of reality of solo folklore is in the mind [...] the ways our bodies and felt emotions interact in folklore events' (Mechling, 2006: 450). The interactions that musicians have with traditional music are, in part, musical, but also reliant on institutions or events to guide the process and create an environment that complements the experience. Some comparative scenarios are required in order to summarise this issue in relation to the material discussed in this chapter.

Beyond the aesthetic components of a traditionalist approach that pertain directly to the individual and their role, an important consideration is that of place and location. Matthew Machin-Authenrieth (2016) raises this issue concerning *flamenco* culture in Andalusia. He discusses the role that *peñas* fulfil as a meeting place, 'where performances are normally dominated by traditional aesthetics such as a song, emotional content, traditional performance practices and so on' (Machin-Authenrieth, 2016: 45). He then goes on to highlight a key pressure point in the cultural space:

Part of the reason for concerns regarding the survival of the *peñas* is because the Andalusian Government primarily concentrates on large-scale projects and

events. While the *peñas* are important for localising a regional identity, Andalusian institutions appear to place more importance on and invest more money in the development of a thick identity through larger more publicly accessible means. (Machin-Authenrieth, 2016: 45)

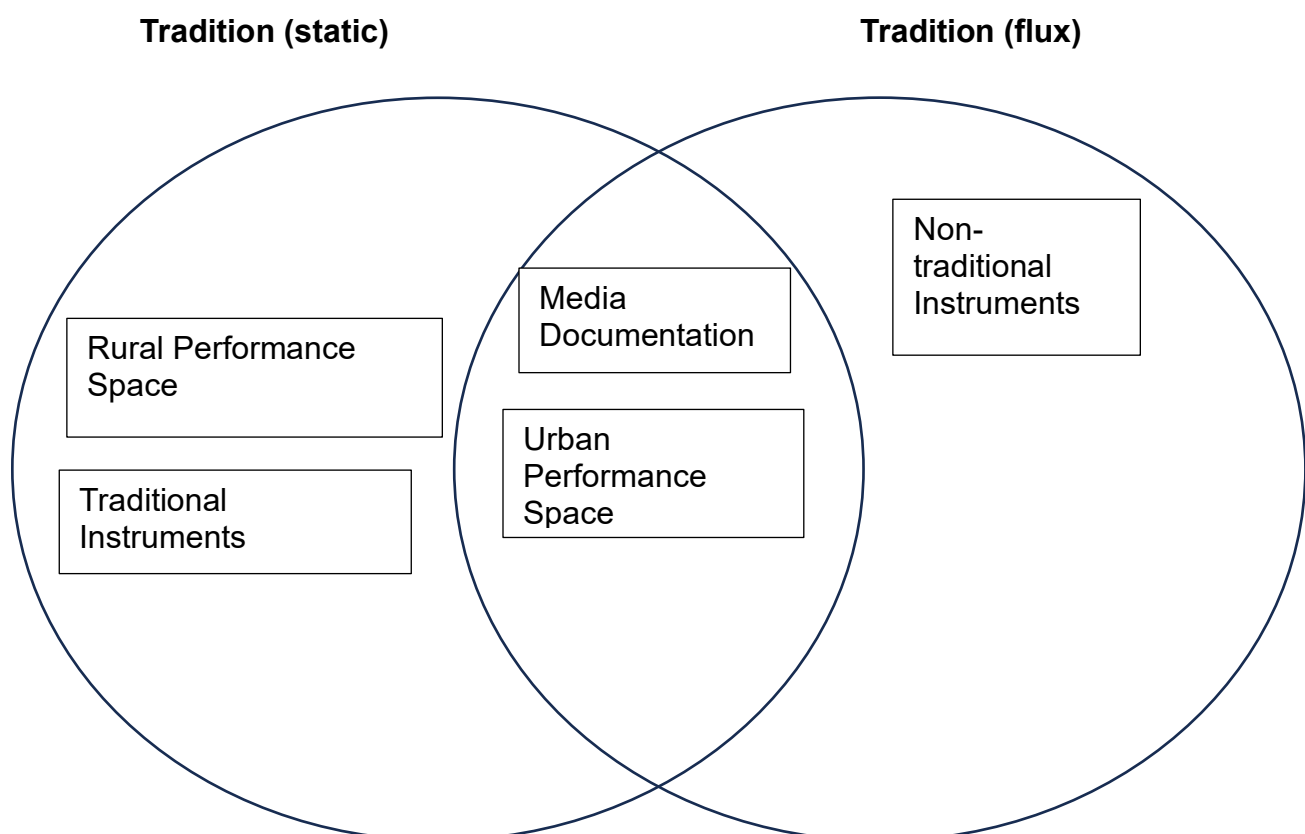
The issues that Zarza highlights in relation to the long-term security of the Festival del Takuare'ê appear to resonate with those of the *peña* in Andalusia. There is a clear and similar gatekeeper in both scenarios, not perhaps in terms of the art itself, but in the enabling of the art. One interpretation of this comparison is that, in both cases, government cultural policy appears to overlook the importance of location in maintaining musical tradition. The reference Machin-Authenrieth makes to a 'thick identity through larger, more publicly accessible means' seems to align with the projects granted funding by FONDEC ([Link](#)) in Paraguay.

The question, therefore, arises as to whether the issue of location might play a significant role in determining an individual's perception of authenticity, less of a reimagining of tradition, and rather more of a historical reconstruction. If perceptions of authenticity are derived from essentialised factors, then the location and overall aesthetics of a traditional approach may be restricted to a standard expectation. If these factors are disrupted, then there is the potential for subdivisions in the traditionalist approach, created not by the use of traditional instruments, but by the many other aesthetic factors that comprise what may be perceived as an authentic representation of traditional music.

## Chapter 4: A Modernist Approach or Tradition in Flux?

### Introduction

This chapter focuses on the creative decisions musicians take when they combine unique expressions of personal music identity with static perceptions of tradition. Schippers (2010) proposes that static perceptions sit on a spectral line with the notion that tradition is in a constant state of flux. This fluid idea of tradition contributes to the perception of authenticity that fuses aspects of a musician's practice that might be considered 're-constructed' with elements that represent a 'new identity'. However, embracing a fluidity of creative ideas may be problematic for those seeking to define authentic traditional practice with static boundaries. To explore this approach as part of a process of reimagining the Paraguayan *polca*, some attention must be given to the perceived points of intersection with the traditional context outlined in the previous chapter.



#### **Figure 4.1 Venn Diagram – Tradition (static) and tradition (in flux).**

At this stage, the points and parameters shown in the Venn diagram are somewhat macro. The differentiation between and a combination of traditional and non-traditional instruments is fluid. As shall be discovered, fusion plays a significant role in the modernist approach to reimagining musical tradition; musicians borrow influence from a wide sphere of influence.

The term fusion should be examined for its suitability. Benjamin Brinner acknowledges criticism of the term fusion in the context of the ethnic music scene in Israel, in which ‘insufficient knowledge of the musical elements that are being combined’ (Brinner, 2006: 150). He states that, ‘The root competences of the musicians involved – their musical “first language” – matters a great deal’ (Brinner, 2006: 259). Thus, any third-party analysis of this should take into account the specific views of the individual musician being studied. This notion is further addressed:

Fusion denotes the combination of disparate elements into a whole, but for some musicians it connotes shallowness due to the popularity of the term in world music circles and the perceived superficiality of much of the music advertised as fusion’ (Brinner, 2006: 15)

To avoid a superficial usage of the term fusion, it is important to nuance the discussion and explore the potential emergence of a new musical voice. Amanda Bayley’s collaborative chapter with Zimbabwean mbira player, Chartwell Dutiro, highlights a key perspective on this issue in alignment with Dutiro’s views on his practice:

People need to understand the history of where the music is coming from and what has happened to the development of that music. Let people find their voices.



That's what we're aiming for [...] We can't separate the history and say, oh let's forget about that. Let's just take these notes and do something; that's fusion to me' (Bayley & Dutiro, 2016: 395)

The point Dutiro raises highlights the continued importance of the historical contexts outlined in Chapter 2, concerning the creative work that musicians produce. This is an important issue in relation to modern interpretations of tradition. As elements of the music are changed and begin to challenge an essentialist perception of authenticity, it is useful to explore the newly constructed musical voice that emerges.

## **Variables**

Adam Harper (2011) describes the process of exchanging or manipulating musical variables as a pathway of change, the parameters of which can be viewed in isolation, either as a compositional decision or choice predicated solely on sonic value. Harper states that, 'Any change whatsoever in music, however big or small, can theoretically be described by the variation of a single, notational variable, a single locus or path of change, "as the crow flies"' (Harper, 2011: 20). To that end, if this theory is placed on instrumentation alone then one might conclude that the traditionalist takes careful steps to avoid disrupting the traditional ensemble configurations in order to resist the so-called pathway of change. In contrast, the pathway of change in the conceptual mind of the modernist might present feelings of precarity and/or opportunity; one single, notational variable in instrument selection takes their compositional work instantly outside the purity of the traditional space. In this regard, the question must be raised, how far can the composer or musician go along the pathway of change to modernise tradition, without going too far? The cultural gatekeepers (introduced in Chapters 2 and 3) will decide the answer to this subjective

question. However, an analysis of the modernist approach might begin by reflecting on the process of creative negotiation that occurs in the reimagining of musical tradition. One might hypothesise that the modernist seeks a sense of equality in this negotiation; the inclusion of modern musical elements or variables that are sympathetic to the tradition they are destined to connect with, creating, as Homi Bhabha suggests, a third space for the traditional and modern influences to coexist:

Significantly, the productive capacities of this Third Space have a colonial or postcolonial provenance [place of origin]. For a willingness to descend into that alien territory [...] may open the way to conceptualizing an international culture, based not on the exoticism of multiculturalism or the diversity of cultures, but on the inscription and articulation of culture's hybridity (Bhabha 2004: 38)

In an introductory sense, the broad terms of ambivalence created by the careful construction of musical hybridity can be applied to the purely musical choices I seek to outline in this chapter. However, if further connections are to be drawn, then a framing or extraction of the postcolonial context is needed. To define the terms in relation to the material in this chapter, I will restate the fundamentals of the discussion in Chapter 2. For example, to examine a twenty-first-century reimagining of tradition in alignment with Bhabha's postcolonial theory, the musical building blocks of the Paraguayan *polca* in the twentieth century can already be viewed as a product of ambivalence in a postcolonial sense, incorporating colonial instruments, adapted postcolonial rhythms, and pre-colonial linguistic elements. Colman (2015) encapsulates this in his observation that, 'when Paraguayans celebrate their *paraguayidad* and their cultural identity through music festivals, they indeed "rediscover" past beliefs, traditions and values in the present. In doing so, they

recapture the Guaraní idea of searching for the *tekorã'* [Guaraní term for a “way of being”] (Colman, 2015: 25).

### **Intersections with the Extra-Musical**

Returning to the Venn diagram, some introductory words must be given to the centre ground created between the extreme points of perceived static tradition and tradition in flux. To further develop this narrative angle in this chapter, I will build on the two fundamental areas of discussion highlighted in the previous chapter: documentation and performance space. To clarify, the term space (as before) signifies both educational settings and public performance arenas. The term documentation refers to the process of archiving performance as a method of enhanced preservation, beyond the musical artefact alone (Nettl, 2005).

Whilst the area of documentation could be viewed as somewhat tangential to the core concerns of musical decision making and the acceptability thereof, it is perhaps in this discussion that we find an example of an overlap between the static and the flux states of tradition. If we are to ground this debate in Bruno Nettl’s theory that the practical preservation of musical traditions cannot work in isolation, then it serves that additional forces are required in this pursuit. As a starting point, we might present the notion that in the twenty-first-century media promotion, the method of dissemination is not governed by the type of cultural artefact being promoted. More specifically, events containing the performance of traditional music are not confined to promotion by word-of-mouth and regional print media. Adaptation has naturally occurred in line with global development, and online marketing strategies effectively engage the world with local traditions. The intergenerational use of social media platforms blurs the lines of acceptability in terms of the demographic audience targeted

in the promotion of a particular music. Patricia Lange (2019) discusses user perceptions of online platforms as a community, spaces where we live our lives with a growing equality to our physical environment.

Turning to performance space as the second key area of intersection is perhaps where one might find a greater divergence from the traditional to the modernist, and therefore, to show pure territories of overlap labelled simply 'urban' is unhelpful. The previous chapter presents examples of cultural initiatives in Asunción that have connected regional performers from rural communities to urban performance spaces. However, with perceptions of tradition that are more flexible, we can see an expansion of the urban performance spaces available to traditional music in a hybrid form. This might also serve as a useful contextual tool for observing points of potential conflict in how modern or globalised musical genres coexist with traditional music in the lives of young people in the country. I would like to note and indeed restate here that this point of educational conflict is by no means a purely Paraguayan concern. Indeed, in the UK context, the questions might centre on 'if' traditional music coexists with modern, globalised music in the interests of young musicians, rather than a question of how? In direct relation to this issue, the chapter will present the views of Tania Ramos, an internationally recognised guitarist and a music educator in Paraguay.

The analysis in this chapter will focus on the compositional and performance work of two established musicians living and working in Asunción and the surrounding area. Remigio Pereira (1961-2022) was at the forefront of the Paraguayan musical establishment until his sad passing in March 2022. Pereira worked as a performer (trombone) in the Asunción Jazz Quintet, the City of Asunción Orchestra (OSCA) and the National Paraguayan Symphony Orchestra (OSN). He also worked as an arranger and held the position of vice-director and conductor of the OSN (see page 10). The

second analysis will focus on the creative practice of Sixto Corbalán. Corbalán is one of Paraguay's leading modern harpists and performs internationally as a soloist and as part of a duo with his brother Juanjo Corbalán. S. Corbalán's solo material will be analysed in this chapter. The chapter will conclude with a case study of the 2021 Jeporeka project.

### **Tania Ramos: Fieldwork and the Context of Meeting**

On the morning of Tuesday, 5 November 2019, I take a taxi to the far side of downtown, to the tallest building in eyeshot. Tania has just moved into a new apartment. Her daughter invites me in, and the panoramic view from the many windows instantly strikes me. It is beautiful, stretching out past the Rio Paraguayo. At first, we sit in her office, and the situation feels quite formal, 'How can I help you?' Tania says at first. Meeting with Tania was not part of my original fieldwork plan, but fortune led me here through a series of emails and Facebook messages with her. I begin to explain my research, and almost at once, we head to Tania's library. I am standing in a space I could only have imagined as a PhD student, walking into a library that contains all the texts directly relating to my research. Tania hands me a chair. As I read and scan my way through book after book, Tania comes in and out of the room. Each time, she seems to hand me a CD or a score 'this is for you' she says. We talk about 'the big questions' in Paraguayan music, questions I find it very good to hear responses to, from someone who has dedicated her life to traditional music here: the migration of the polka to Paraguay, Eliza Lynch, and Solano López. I am keen to explain my desire to study the *polca* in its new forms in Paraguay and the attitude to tradition that young people hold. Tania tells me this is a fascinating subject and also something that very much interests her. We discuss *Paraguayidad*; again, Tania

seems pleased that I am talking about this, and I feel greatly encouraged. However, we decided that I should email her more in-depth questions so that she can consider her answers more carefully.

The issue of engagement in traditional and folk music among younger musicians in Paraguay formed the basis of much of my discussion with Tania. I ask the specific question: What challenges do you feel traditional music faces when attracting a younger audience? Tania responds:

The greatest challenges are found in education, specifically in the academy itself, where the study of music in general, and Paraguayan music in particular, is not given the corresponding value. It is very difficult for it [tradition] to find an echo among the young public. That, added to the media where traditional [Paraguayan] music is not given valuable space either, is an enormous challenge that can hardly be reversed. (Personal Interview with Tania Ramos, 30 December 2019, see Appendix 11)

In addition to her high-profile performance work, Tania is also a music educator in Asunción. She notes from her experience that it is sometimes easy to assume that young people: ‘consider traditional music to be out of fashion, from another era, that no longer represents them’. Offering some examples of this issue, she comments:

In fact, there were rock groups that took the guaranias and polcas, which are in 6/8 time, and performed them in 4/4 time. Young performers are also exploring the reharmonization of Paraguayan music, incorporating many chords from jazz as a symbol of modernity. (Personal Interview with Tania Ramos, 30 December 2019, see Appendix 11)

The context that Tania presents in the answer to my question ignites a key discussion point in relation to the definitions around what constitutes a modernist approach to

reimagining the Paraguayan *polca*. The creative decisions that pertain to ‘chords from jazz as a synonym for modernity’ will be visited and contextualised in the analysis of Pereira and S. Corbalán’s work later in this chapter.

The question of how Paraguayan identity is expressed in music is a central concern in this thesis. Tania’s views on how, in a general sense, Paraguayans judge authentic expressions of Paraguayan-ness (*paraguayidad*) offer an interesting binary distinction:

Among those of us who today think about Paraguayan music from research and composition, we are positioned in two lines:

- There are those who consider Paraguayan music to be composed by Paraguayans, regardless of whether we find identifying musical elements in it.
- There are those of us who consider that for a composition to be considered Paraguayan, it must have some identifying element, generally it is the rhythm or the language, Guaraní in this case or sometimes situations or descriptions specific to our Paraguayan identity. (Personal Interview with Tania Ramos, 30 December 2019, see Appendix 11)

Tania’s inclusion of the word ‘us’ in the second classification would indicate her position on this issue. The position certainly aligns with the central thread of enquiry in this research project, without (at this stage) addressing questions of nuance or limits. However, the first classification presents a pertinent concern that perhaps speaks to commercial channels of globalised music – journalistic expressions of national identity contextualising complex musical issues in a condensed text form, as opposed to the type of overt musical expression depicted in Tania’s closing (interview) remark:

Currently, there are young people recording rap in Guaraní, for example, and I find it interesting from the point of view of the language and the reach it can have among the youth population. (Personal interview with Tania Ramos, 30 December 2019, see Appendix 11)

### **Remigio Pereira (1961-2022)**

At the time of Pereira's passing in 2022, the newspaper *Ultima Hora* published the words of key cultural figures in Paraguay: "The National Secretariat of Culture joins the consternation of the musicians and music lovers of our country to express its most heartfelt and grateful farewell to this great artist who leaves a rich seed in the new generations' (*Ultima Hora*, 2022).



**Figure 4.2 Remigio Pereira (1961-2022). Ultima Hora (2022)**

### **A Personal Account of an Evening with Remigio Pereira**

During the time I spent at Tania's apartment (approximately an hour), she had been trying to contact Remigio Pereira 'Would you like to go to Remigio's to listen to some music later?', Tania asks me. Without a breath, I reply 'yes'. At 18:00, Tania arrives at my hotel with a pianist friend. Tania introduces me and says, 'I think it is good for you to meet many Paraguayan musicians' of course, I agree. The journey is heavy with traffic. We converse, but in Spanish, and I do my best! As we drive past a



bus advertising 'Bristol', a domestic appliance company, I attempt a joke about being homesick! And we all laugh!



**Figure 4.3 A bus on the journey to Remigio Pereira's house**

We drive for an hour through torrential rain until we arrive at the house of Remigio Pereira. It is a rural street with a shop at the front and a parrot in the garden. Two men who I think must be Remigio's sons answer Tania's call. We then walk through a dimly lit kitchen and into the maestro's studio, and Tania informs me that Pereira is now writing the most music in this country and is regarded by her as the greatest composer in Paraguay. We sit, and Tania's friend takes some photos of Remigio, Tania and me. Tania assists in explaining my research to Remigio, and so begins one of the most extraordinary musical experiences of my life.



**Figure 4.4 An Evening with Remigio Pereira and Tania Ramos, 2019.**

Remigio searches through his computer and begins playing his piece 'Polka Blues', first as a recording. In response, I ask him about the important elements of the *polca* he retains when creating this type of cross-genre work. His answer becomes the bedrock of the next 20 or 30 minutes 'es el ritmo' (Personal interview with Remigio Pereira, 5 November 2019 [Link](#)). He tells me and begins to beat the tables on either side of him. Remigio plays his piece 'Guarani Symphony' and cross-references it to the 'Polka Blues', in each instance tapping the corresponding rhythms on the tables ([Link](#)). Pereira is consistently highlighting the 'identifying element' that Ramos raised in her response to the question of how Paraguayan identity is expressed in music. However, in the context that Pereira is presenting, the rhythmic element is embedded within a synthesis of varied musical influences. Pereira's sad passing in 2022 has meant that I have been unable to acquire the required consent to present a detailed analysis of his published or unpublished work. However, broad observations of his work, in alliance with time spent in his company, have led to an understanding of a creative process that shows, 'moments in which sounds or images or styles [...] are thrown up against each other in ways that leave their different origins discernible

(Taylor, 2007: 150). Pereira is pollinating his compositional output with a unique Paraguayan influence, although not as an effort to reimagine the *polca* directly.

### **Sixto Corbalán: fieldwork and context of meeting**

I first met with Sixto Corbalán for a coffee at Bolsí in downtown Asunción in the early afternoon of 2 November 2019. A wide-ranging discussion on Paraguayan music ensued, lasting several hours. However, central to the discourse was the focus on Corbalán's creative practice and career as a harpist. He was 8 years old when he began playing the harp, and although not from a musical family, he benefited greatly from the infrastructure of regional festivals and competitions, as discussed in Chapter 3. In 1990, Corbalán won the first prize in the Festival del Takuare'ê, before going on to study formally at the Conservatoire. His career as a professional musician has led to a wealth of international performances and creative collaborations with some of Paraguay's most recognised young musicians. The following segment of his biography outlines his career and creative output:

The most notable technique is by far the use of two 'keys' on the left hand, which were introduced by Nicolas Caballero in the history of the Paraguayan diatonic harp and so opened it to an unexpected musical range and a jump on the chromatic plane. With these skills, together with the view beyond the borders of his country, Sixto Corbalán develops his music: just as powerful and harmonious as expressive and sensitive. The musical spectrum of Sixto Corbalán's performances is just surprising. (Sixto Corbalán, SoundCloud 2013, <https://soundcloud.com/sixtocorbalan>)

When listening to the product of Corbalán's creative work (see Soundcloud link), the scope of his musical influence indeed seems broad, and the promotional statement

uses multiple adjectives that, whilst poetic, lack specific insight into his music. However, upon listening to the music, one can discern a careful decision-making process in the work that seems to govern a balance of stylistic or genre influences, with a distinct grounding in folk tradition. I posed the question to Corbalán of how he views the initial, conceptual thoughts that underpin his creative work.

I am thinking as a harpist. The way of thinking is in seven notes, which we need to preserve certain traditional elements of sound and tradition, or whether this is much more natural, or you don't even think in that way and it's what comes naturally (S. Corbalán, personal interview, 11 November 2023, see Appendix 12)

Sixto's answer feels somewhat instinctive, throwing out the inference that traditional music or the Paraguayan *polca* in its traditional form must be diatonic. However, he appears to question whether a musician's choice to stay within the confines of diatonic key is a purposeful one or subconscious. The subtext might be interpreted to incorporate implications of pressure or expectation. Corbalán expands on this by contextualising the point concerning the harp:

For the harp and the harpist here in Paraguay, the way of thinking is just with seven notes. We don't know where the other five [notes] are (at the beginning when we start playing). We have a diatonic harp. We know that at first, we must find something, but we have a limit. However, when we cross that limit, we want to find out if there are five more notes we can add to the music. That means we can have a challenge in the harmony and the melody, of course (S. Corbalán, personal interview, 11 November 2023, see Appendix 12).

It is interesting to hear Corbalán discuss the issue of choice in this way, relating to the use of chromatic notes as an active challenge and putting himself firmly in the decision-

making mindset. However, a critical question that emerges from Corbalán's answer is the potential alignment of the term 'limit' with that of perceived authenticity. This term has not been drawn as a definitive judgment by the researcher. Instead, it is a tool to explore Corbalán's implication that one or two chromatic notes that stray beyond a passing note could be perceived as a departure from traditional acceptability.

The problematic nature of the term authenticity has been introduced already in this chapter. Sarah Weiss's view that 'people's assessment of music is shaped as much by their expectations as by their experience of what they hear' (Weiss, 2014: 506) draws attention to the fact that perceived authenticity can be encapsulated in 5 notes. The questions that Corbalán raises in his creative decisions regarding the use of diatonic or chromatic harmony reflect a sense of navigating between the conflicted territory of an essentialist versus constructivist approach.

For now, the questions remain unanswered, and Corbalán leaves the issue of harmonic choice behind, focusing his attention on the rhythmic elements in Paraguayan music as variables (Harper, 2011).

Before that is the rhythm section. How can we develop the rhythm section? In that rhythm section, we don't have a lot to say because if you listen to Paraguayan music, every rhythm is not the same, but we change [the rhythm] with the melody to be different, but always there is the syncopado [syncopation] in general. (S. Corbalán, personal interview, 11 November 2023, see Appendix 12)

Corbalán emphasises the need to understand folk traditions from the perspective of the people. At this point, the comments he made to me on arrival in Guambaré (for the Festival del Takaure'ê, see Chapter 3) come into sharp focus: 'When we arrive, you will be able to feel the polka all around you' (S. Corbalán interview, see Appendix 12).

Corbalán is eager to highlight the problematic nature of applying academic analysis to musical elements, as it only reflects one side or perspective. Our discussion returns initially to harmonic structure:

When you listen to the music, the music and the melody, the rhythm and the basic harmony, because the basic harmony is more beautiful for me, [...] we're talking about I-IV-V you know! It is the most beautiful in the world. You can change this I-IV-V and make a difference with the functional harmony, but when we talk about functional harmony, it is very academic. Now that I am talking with somebody who is inside [academia] like you or something, but we are talking with these people [from the countryside], let us think that we are talking with these people. (S. Corbalán, personal interview, 11 November 2023, see Appendix 12)

The second part of Corbalán's response is not directly linked to his music; instead, he is linking it to the experience of Guambaré discussed in Chapter 3. He is aware of my understanding of this context from the fieldwork we conducted together in 2019, yet hearing him (in 2023) synthesise this unique insider perspective relating to audience perception with his creative practice offers a fascinating insight. Beyond this, Corbalán's response invites a reflection on the role and purpose of the academic perspective in relation to an analysis of harmonic function. Corbalán is directly referring to the pre-disposed position of the academic and muso (as he terms it) to yearn for categorisation. That is to question the potential for the academic to be drawn towards complexity [musical] as a worthy phenomenon for study.

Furthermore, as Mark Slobin warns against the common pitfalls of the outsider academic who seek the skeletal structure of the music: 'you lose a lot if you think of people that way, and it is the same for music systems' (Slobin, 2011: 19). Therefore, if one is to heed this warning, this outsider might avoid looking for deeper emotional

connection to define perceptions of authenticity, in fact from an outsider's perspective the term 'authentic' is problematic. It is not to assume that local people construct their perceptions based on the fact that they identify a I-IV-V chord progression. That said, a question must emerge around the subconscious power of the harmonic movement.

To explore this question further, we will analyse a selection of Corbalán's compositional output. He uses the expression 'keep the root' (S. Corbalán, personal interview, 11 November 2023, see Appendix 12) throughout our discussion on the process of reimagination, which can be a helpful tool to analyse the music. Indeed, one might take this sentiment as a profound governing principle in the concept of reimagining a tradition. As outlined in the methodology, rather than building views from my score or aural analysis, Corbalán's own words underpin the sonic analysis that is supported with examples from a score or audio link.

## **Analysis**

The focus on two of Corbalán's original compositions spans 15 years (2003 – 2018). The first piece, '*Susurros de la Noche*' ('Whispers of the Night'), was written in 2002 and released in 2003. The second piece to be analysed, '*Conversaciones*', was composed in 2022, close to a decade after the first piece. Therefore, while the focus will be placed on each piece individually, some diachronic observations can be made. Corbalán's Soundcloud can be accessed through the QR code in Figure 4.5. A link to a mobile phone recording of '*Conversaciones*' has been embedded into the corresponding part of the analysis.



<https://soundcloud.com/sixtocorbalan>

**Figure 4.5 Sixto Corbalán, Soundcloud**

### **‘Susurros de la Noche’**

‘*Susurros de la Noche*’ comes from a collection of pieces written by Corbalán in and around 2002 (see Soundcloud account in Figure 4.5). In an interview conducted in 2023, Corbalán explains his creative ideas for the piece: ‘We have the polca and the fast *polca* is the *polca kyre’y*. I wanted to make ‘*Susurros de la Noche*’ a *kyre’y*. Especially in the rhythmic section, I wanted it to sound like that’ (S. Corbalán, personal interview, 11 November 2023, see Appendix 12). Example 4.2 demonstrates that ‘*Susurros de la Noche*’ is closely aligned with the *polca kyre’y* rhythmic pattern, as depicted by Mauricio Cardozo Ocampo in *Mundo Folklórico Paraguayo* (1988). The tempo marking in Corbalán’s example is a little faster than Ocampo’s.



**Example 4.1 Rhythmic example of the Polca Kyre'y, Ocampo, (1988).**



As referred to earlier, Corbalán now addresses the variable elements in his work in a more specific context:

‘Changing the harmony that was my challenge - I wanted to put three sections, A, B and C. That was my research in that moment (2002), so I made this melody, it is easy to understand – the melody moves down step by step – 5 to 5 to go to the one’ (S. Corbalán Interview, 2023).

Example 4.2 shows the stepwise melody:

The musical notation consists of three staves in 6/8 time, with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The melody is written in a single voice, showing stepwise movement. The first staff begins with a Dm chord, followed by a series of eighth notes: D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, Bb4. The second staff continues with Dm, then D7, and Gm. The third staff continues with Dm, A7, and Dm. The melody ends with a final D4 note and a double bar line.

**Example 4.2 ‘Susurros de la Noche’, Sixto Corbalán, main melody.**

In this example, Corbalán explores the harmonic element of the music by moving outside the seven diatonic notes to which he refers, using the stepwise movements in the melody to introduce a secondary dominant chord. He explains:

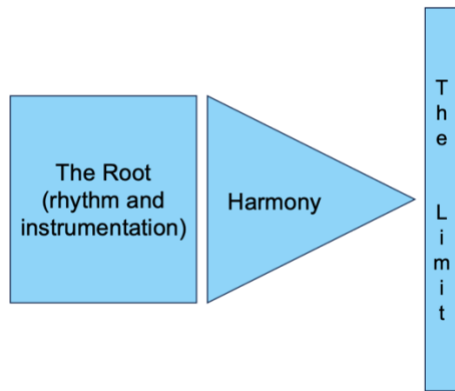
So, for me it was a challenge to understand where the secondary dominant [could fit] and be possible using the tension and if it's possible to put more extension to the chords. The harmony was the way of thinking in that moment – for me it was very interesting from the [perspective of] harp, the harp was always - but I wanted the music to be danceable, and how can I make this? Most of the music (traditional polcas) is in major [key] (S. Corbalán, personal interview, 11 November 2023, see Appendix 12).

The final remark about the major key contains an interesting backwards step in terms of music theory, shifting the focal point away from the use of secondary dominant chords and chord extensions. Corbalán uses the issue of tonic key as an example of a common feature of the traditional *polca* that could represent an aspect of perceived authenticity. However, the creative decisions that Corbalán makes in search of the ‘limit’ push back against any predetermined notion of what authentic might be. Therefore, revealing authenticity in a constructivist sense. It is indeed a point that Corbalán reflects on. However, if we are drawn to the critical perspectives presented in Chapter 2 by Giménez, Boettner, and others, harmony is seldom mentioned as a defining musical element. Instead, rhythm seems to be the primary component in Giménez’s comparisons between the Paraguayan *polca* and the other 6/8 dances of Latin America (Giménez, 1997), highlighting the rhythmic considerations as the unique identifier of the *polca*.

Returning to the theme of harmony, Corbalán alludes to some external influence on his work:

In that moment in 2002, I was travelling abroad in Europe and Asia with a dance group, and the dance group always had a musician. This musician consistently created this kind of music. So, I wanted to make this in music in a minor key – how to change this? (S. Corbalán, personal interview, 11 November 2023, see Appendix 12).

It seems that ‘keeping the root’ is a phrase that needs to be placed at the heart of an analysis. The ‘root’ in this case is grounded in the traditional rhythmic characteristics of the Paraguayan *polca*, and the instrumentation provides the quintessential sonority. It is the harmony that Corbalán is pushing towards the limit:



**Figure 4.6 Pushing the root towards the limit.**

However, one crucial factor not addressed in this analysis is what, if any, influence the audience for his work has. This question is asked in relation to comments made around rural and urban perceptions of traditional music. As Figure 4.6 indicates, '*Susurros de la Noche*' contains a greater number of musical elements that represent the "root", subtle alterations to the harmony push towards the limit. Corbalán's approach grounds key aspects of his work at the static end of the spectrum, meeting the audience's perception of authenticity that he terms 'rural'. However, the new identity he brings to the work leans towards his personal (urban) response to the recontextualization of the traditional music. In short, there are multiple angles from which one can perceive the authenticity of his work.

### **'Conversaciones'**

Written for solo harp, '*Conversaciones*' (2022) conveys a more advanced harmonic language when directly compared with the chord progressions of '*Susurros de la Noche*'. Example 4.3 shows the chromaticism in the opening melody (bar 5) following the 'traditional' G major ostinato introduction:



**Example 4.3 ‘Conversaciones’ (2022), Sixto Corbalán, bars 1-10.**

The rhythmic element in the bass clef retains a strong sense of the polca, aligning closely to the typical 1+2 3 pattern widely used in the bass line of a *polca*. From bar 5, the bass clef harmony alternates between G6 and Eb6. The Bb and F# double-stopped chord in the treble clef is discordant with the harmonic pattern in the bass clef. The *polca* qualities are immediately conveyed by the expected rhythm, played on the expected instrument (harp). However, the unsettling nature of the harmony raises the question as to whether this might be an element of the ‘synonym for modernity’ to which Ramos referred.

Moving towards a triangulated answer to this question, Corbalán’s own words resonate with my score-based observation:

It’s not so much about putting the music into a box but saying, and saying well, this needs to be modern thinking, or this needs to be traditional thinking. It’s actually just moving much more fluidly or much more smoothly between worlds, but without prescribing over that’ (S. Corbalán, personal interview, 11 November 2023, see Appendix 12).

Corbalán acknowledges that the piece could be musically analysed to foreground one element or another, the use of the G melodic minor scale (see Appendix 12). However, he is keen to point out that this musical element, along with the more ‘traditional’ rhythmic bassline, are simply two voices from life, in conversation with one and other. Synthesising the historical context component of the analysis into the triangle, we might look to Ocampo (1988), *Mundo Folklórico Paraguayo* or Boettner (2008), *Música y Musicos del Paraguay*. In both texts, it is rhythm and melody that dominate the categorisations and features presented by each author in relation to the Paraguayan *polca*. Therefore, a decision over which essential ‘traditional’ features to retain might be indicated by a hierarchy of musical elements. Boettner’s fleeting description of harmony bears an interesting use of language when compared to his outlining of syncopation, ‘The harmonisation is of the universal type, generally very simple...The “Paraguayan syncopation” is an essential quality (Boettner, 1998: 206).

Corbalán creates space in the overall form of the piece to allow for improvisation, perhaps implying a structural jazz influence (see Example 4.4 – re-scored from the original version, see Appendix 13) Similar to the approach taken in the opening thematic idea, the potential encroachment of an unexpected influence is tempered with the distinct use of a traditional rhythmic motif, the very same motif Remigio Pereira had tapped out for me on his studio desk (see [Video](#)).

66 Solo C Lidio (b7) 67

Hp.

#### **Example 4.4 ‘Conversaciones’ (2022), S. Corbalán, bars 66-67**



This short excerpt (*‘Conversaciones’* 01:18 – 01:44) shows very clearly the combination of both musical influences from Paraguayan folk music and jazz. The indication of the C Lydian dominant scale for the soloist to follow might also be viewed as holding a harmonic juxtaposition where folk meets jazz. As before, Corbalán appears to gravitate towards rhythmic over harmonic elements as the reference points of musical tradition, or the musical features that might be perceived as fundamentally Paraguayan. In order to avoid a misunderstanding of Corbalán’s rationale, it is important to recall his comments on the title of the piece, ‘to make a conversation with life’ (S. Corbalán, personal interview, 11 November 2023, see Appendix 12) and the many cultural influences on it.

From these initial insights into Sixto Corbalán’s early work (2003), his approach to modernising (or inflecting with outside influence) the traditional elements of the Paraguayan *polca* might be interpreted as conveying an essentialist approach. His later work (2022) reflects a constructivist approach, however. In *‘Conversaciones’*, it feels as though Corbalán is confidently telling us where the limit is, whereas *‘Susurros de la Noche’*, written almost twenty years earlier, gives the impression that he is searching for the limit.

Bi-musicality might help to interpret the analysis, however, not in the binary sense that Mantle Hood’s (1960) theory implies. Examining these two pieces reveals a degree of cultural plurality in terms of musical influence that appears to be more

prevalent in Corbalán's later work and partially contradicts thoughts expressed earlier (see page 21). In neither piece does the balance of genre and stylistic influence appear to be equal at every point (Baumann, 2000). The variables described above, as noted by Adam Harper (2011), increased from 2003 to 2022 in terms of the traditional musical elements that Corbalán deems to be malleable. However, when Romero's (2001) perspective on instrumentation is applied to this context, the one constant is the harp. To explore this issue further, it is essential to examine the work of a broader range of musicians. The following section will explore two of the songwriting projects from Jeporeka 2021.

### **Jeporeka 2021: Overview of the Project**

The following statement comes from the Jeporeka official website and gives a concise outline of the project's aims:

Jeporeka is a space that promotes the development and encounter of Paraguayan musicians. Imagined by Berta Rojas, with the support of Itaú Bank and Foundation, this project aims to bring together and support young Paraguayan music artists, putting them in contact with masters who will stimulate and guide them in the creation of new musical works. In the first edition, carried out during 2020, 11 young composers created 'Pytũ Mimbi' (brightness in the darkness), a collective musical work inspired by reflection and feeling in these times of pandemic, finally captured in an audio-visual record of great care and quality. From Jeporeka, we invite young Paraguayan musicians to a new adventure during 2021. ([www.Jeporeka.bertrojas.com](http://www.Jeporeka.bertrojas.com))

The Jeporeka project, only in its second year in 2021, is a nationally promoted event in Paraguay. As the above quote highlights, the creative concept is the work of the The Jeporeka project, only in its second year in 2021, is a nationally promoted event in

Paraguay. As the above quote highlights, the creative concept is the work of the internationally renowned guitarist Berta Rojas. The project secured significant corporate sponsorship and support from the Itaú Bank Foundation, Toyota, BKM Berkemeyer, and the AS Americas Society.

The central aim of the project is to bring together young Paraguayan musicians to form creative partnerships. Applicants are invited to apply in one of three possible categories: ‘composer (creator of the music), author (creator of the lyrics) and singer (vocal performer)’ ([www.Jeporeka.bertrojas.com](http://www.Jeporeka.bertrojas.com)). The musical theme for 2021 was ‘The Song, our Portrait’. Candidates had the option to apply in all three categories; however, they would be allocated a position in a single category based on the assessment of the application judging panel. Table 4.1 shows the names and number of selected applicants in each category. This information is in the public domain. The row indicates the collaborative groups each participant formed.

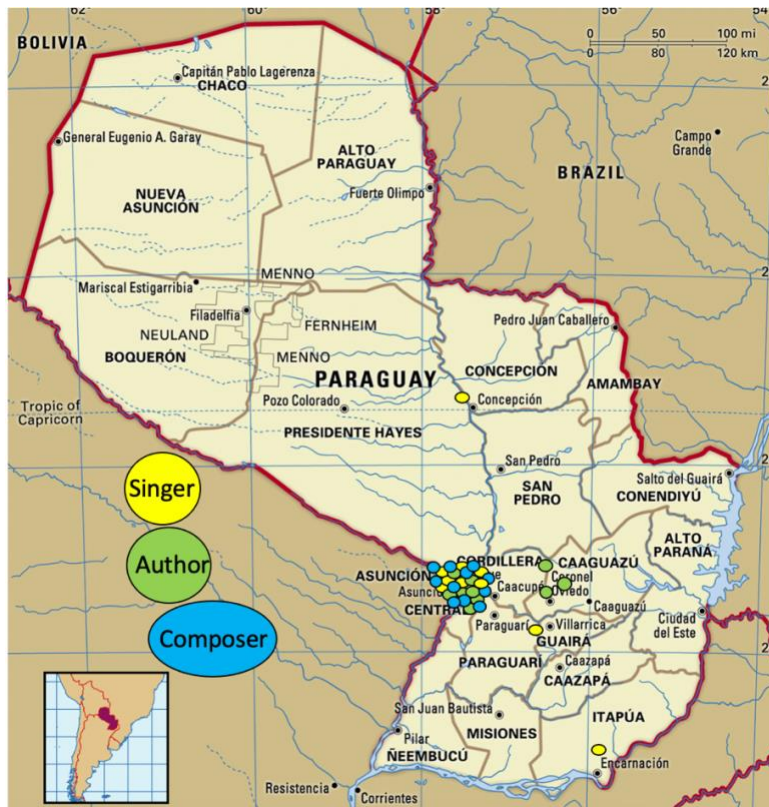
<b>Composer</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Singer</b>
Edgar Nino Rodríguez Anthony Carillo	<i>Natalia Mendoza</i>	
<i>Andrea Robadín</i>	<i>Nelson Ferreira</i>	<i>Fernando González</i>
<i>Guillermo Villalba</i>	<i>Néstor Amarilla Ojeda</i>	<i>Diana Fernández</i>
<i>Diego Guzmán</i>	<i>Lilian Aliente</i>	Darío González
<i>Victoria Díaz</i>	<i>Leticia Galeano</i>	<i>Jimmy Peralta</i> <i>Caballero</i>
	<i>Erika Estigarribia</i>	<i>Dina Celeste Portillo</i> <i>Lucero Sarambi</i>
<i>Diego Carmona</i>	<i>Belén Tamás</i>	Melissa Hicks



<i>Mijael Peralta</i>	María José Rodríguez	<i>Alejandra Almada</i>
<i>Carmen Monges</i>	Lucio Nuñez	Dania Flor Giménez
<i>Roberto Aquino</i>	<i>Alicia Gómez</i>	<i>Hugo Carlson</i>

**Table 4.1 Jeporeka 2021 participants and working groups.**

The participants were invited to form collaborative working groups comprising one member from each category, in most cases, with two exceptions. A key objective of the Jeporeka project is to attract young musicians from both rural and urban communities. Figure 4.7 illustrates the geographical distribution of the selected applicants' locations.



**Figure 4.7 Geographical Location of Jeporeka Participants. Image Source: <https://www.britannica.com/place/Paraguay>**

The map clearly shows that the vast majority of participants are based in or around the capital city of Asunción, and some applicants choose to define their location by the specific region of the city. However, the categories of singer and author have attracted successful applicants from far and wide.

### A Personal Role in the Project

I was invited to deliver an online talk as part of a series of conferences that were incorporated into the Jeporeka Project. The conference series received a degree of national promotion. Figure 4.8 shows a screenshot taken from Romy Martinez's appearance on the daytime television show '*Residentas*' in August 2021.



**Figure 4.8 Screenshot of '*Residentas*' television broadcast August 2021**

The conference series comprised five papers, delivered online by either individual speakers or as a team of two.

Presentation Title	Speakers
Paraguayan identity and Guaraní identity in the Paraguayan song	Simone Krüger Bridge and Timoteo Watkins
Looking for a Paraguayan voice	Romy Martínez and Alfredo Colman
The Paraguayan Polca: re-imagining tradition in creative music practice	Matt Dicken
Stereotypes about the figure women in works by Teodoro S. Mongelós	Elisa Lezcano Verón
The Nuevo Cancionero and the female resistance during the dictatorship of Alfredo Stroessner in Paraguay	Miguel Antar and Nicolás Ramirez Salaberry

**Table 4.2 Conference series, Jeporeka 2021.**

The academic proceedings provide a context for my involvement in the Jeporeka 2021 project. The focus for the rest of this chapter will be the analysis of the creative work produced by the musical participants.

### **Project Outcomes**

The creative working groups produced ten finished songs (see figure 4.9) that draw upon traditional musical elements. Some of the works are more closely aligned to the gentle balladic qualities of the *guarania*, and others take the up-tempo *polca* as their influence. The QR code below connects to the corresponding page of the Jeporeka 2021 website. The harp features in all ten songs, either played as a focal

point by one of the creative team members or as part of the accompanying ensemble of musicians provided for the applicants by the project organisers. The core creative teams consistently incorporate one or two guitarists and, in some cases, an accordion. Vocals take the central role in each ensemble, with one solo vocal in most cases. However, multiple vocalists often feature.



**Figure 4.9 QR code: Jeporeka 2021**

<https://jeporeka.bertarojas.com/2021/canciones.php?lang=en>

When examining the ten new works produced by the Jeporeka 2021 project as a whole, it is challenging to conclude that any of the participants modernise their reimagining of traditional Paraguayan music forms with an equal diversity of influences that matches the works by Pereira and S. Corbalán, already encountered in this chapter. However, this is not a criticism, nor is it the aim of the Jeporeka project to engineer the musical outcomes to serve anything other than the creative wishes of the participants. The complete list of song titles can be found on the Jeporeka website ([Jeporeka 2021](#)), The web page also includes a video of each recorded song, along with full instrumentation lists and songwriting credits. All videos have been shot in a contemporary studio environment. In terms of image, all the performances convey an aesthetic quality that clearly distinguishes them from the traditionalist approach (outlined in Chapter 3), which places significance on the performance location and traditional clothing. This issue will be addressed in the concluding section of this

chapter. A focus on two pieces from the collection of ten written for the Jeporeka 2021 project, '*Dime*' and '*Kuarahy pyahu*', is the most expansive in their modern approach to re-imaging traditional Paraguayan music. '*Dime*' was written by Lucio Nuñez (lyrics), Carmen Monges (harp) and Dania Flor Giménez (voice), and '*Kuarahy pyahu*' (New sun) was written by Alejandra Almada, Maria José Rodríguez and Mijael Peralta.

### **'Dime'**

<https://youtu.be/2Ac0JXlJl64?si=Ceb6gEuL6qTdpKzC>

The most striking facet of '*Dime*' is its understated vocal and the controlled tranquillity of the arrangement, which immediately sets it apart from its neighbours within the Jeporeka 2021 project. This quality may be seen as a stylistic compression, limiting the peaks of gusto and dynamic contrast typically found in traditional polca iterations. However, underneath this veneer, the song holds a strong sense of the 'root' in terms of the musical elements it deploys. Dissecting the piece based on instrumentation alone, and in line with the control of Romero's categorisation, an initial view might be that the work falls on the *intersection* with a traditionalist approach. A solo harp and guitar form the core of the melodic and harmonic musical accompaniment, supported by a fretless bass guitar. The inclusion of a drum kit pulls the instrumentation slightly away from this intersection, but in keeping with the mood of the piece, the use of the drum kit is somewhat sparse and sympathetic to the overarching sense of calm.

Harmonically, the piece conforms to the traditional diatonic norms of Paraguayan music. Fixing this element of the music in the 'root' space offers a different approach from both S. Corbalán and Remigio Pereira. That said, extensions to the

core diatonic chords of C major lean subtly towards harmony as a malleable element. Example 4.5 illustrates a section of the pre-chorus at 0:37 (see the URL link on the previous page). An arpeggiated sequence played on the harp indicates a momentary modulation to the dominant key (Example 4.5):



**Example 4.5 ‘Dime’, Nuñez, Monges and Giménez, 0:37-0:45.**

However, the piece returns to C major in the chorus at 0:50:



**Example 4.6 ‘Dime’, Nuñez, Monges and Giménez, 0:50-0:58**

The melodic line of the vocal in the chorus also aligns closely to that of a traditional *polca* or *guarania*, each phrase falling and rising between notes of the associated triad, and further defined with a characteristic tie across the bar line syncopating the second half of the line. Harpist Carmen Monges places significance on the understanding of the root before constructing new musical expressions of identity:

It is important to know the roots of traditional music to be able to approach your own search with a Paraguayan identity. The Guaraní language, an aspect that

expresses Paraguay. “Eremina”, in the Guaraní language, means “Tell me”, the title of the song. (Personal interview with Monges, 7 June 2024, see Appendix 14).

It is the manner in which musical ideas or influences have been dropped into the segments that comprise the overall form of the piece, that perhaps reveals the modernist approach to reimagining tradition most clearly. The ‘root’ elements of the music build as the piece moves from verse to pre-chorus to chorus, and then die away when the second verse returns. Table 4.3 provides an overview of how the ‘root’ elements are mapped onto each section:

Verse 1	Pre-chorus	Chorus	Verse 2	Pre-chorus	Chorus	Interlude
Harp	Harp	Harp	Harp	Harp	Harp	Percussion
Vocal	Vocal	Vocal	Vocal	Vocal	Vocal	Bass
	Guitar	Guitar	Guitar	Guitar	Guitar	(improv)
		Bass (3/4)	Bass (3/4)	Bass (3/4)	Bass (3/4)	Vocal
		Percussion	Percussion	Percussion	Percussion	(spoken)

**Table 4.3 Instrumental texture chart 'Dime', Nuñez, Monges and Giménez**

This method of textural layering can, of course, be found in many genres, making it difficult (to the outsider, perhaps) to highlight one particular genre that has been fused with the more traditional rhythmic elements of the piece (see Example 4.7). However, when ‘Dime’ is directly compared to the textural structure of traditional pieces, we can see a distinct contrast in approach. Composers Monges, Nuñez and Giménez move away from the ‘always on’ texture that characterises traditional *polcas* and *guaranias*. Monges highlights that, ‘the free or improvisational sense and the structure of the song;

they were foreign influences on the music’ (Personal interview with Monges, 7 June 2024, see Appendix 14). Of course, there is variation to be found in the texture and structure of traditional iterations of both styles. However, this variance is most often manifested through dynamic contrast or a change in tempo. Florentín Giménez, the leading twentieth and twenty-first century composers in Paraguay, states that:

The bass of our vernacular music should not be considered as a static contour on which the various designs move, but, on the contrary, for each expressive design, the most diverse components that implicitly form part of it must be added, and, in association with the multiple rhythmic and thematic segments. (Giménez, 1997: 154. Translated from Spanish)

He implies that it is the interplay between the rhythmic elements that creates the definable qualities of Paraguayan music; a dense texture becomes the ultimate goal of this approach. If this is the case, then one might interpret the subtext of the quote to play out in reverse: leaving out specific rhythmic segments would disrupt the density of the texture. The sound recordings of traditional songs perhaps offer the strongest line of comparison to the Jeporeka 2021 recordings, as this enables the situational adaptations of live performance to be removed. For example, the Los Hijos del Paraguay’s (1990) recording of ‘*Galopera*’ helps to illustrate this point further ([audio link](#)).

**‘Kuarahy Pyahu’ (New sun)**

[https://youtu.be/bb5wprDWR-E?si=VeUEePaGoV5QS\\_s9](https://youtu.be/bb5wprDWR-E?si=VeUEePaGoV5QS_s9)



*‘Kuarahy pyahu (Nuevo Sol)’* was written by Alejandra Almada (voice), María José Rodríguez (voice) and Mijael Peralta (guitar) and from the outset displays a modernist approach to blending the genre of rock with traditional musical elements. The open E minor broken-chord appears to reference ‘Nothing Else Matters’ by Metallica, yet is set to a syncopated two-bar rhythmic pattern that unmistakably guides the listener to the ‘root’ of the traditional influence.



**Example 4.7 ‘Kuarahy Pyahu (Nuevo Sol)’. Almada, Rodríguez, Peralta. bars.1-4**

The rhythmic pattern reflects the core traditional element used by both Pereira and S. Corbalán. In this instance, the second bar of the motif adopts a similar rhythmic function to the previously encountered pattern. However, the syncopation falls on beats one and four. Giménez (1997) questions the written accuracy of this rhythmic motif:



**Example 4.8 ‘Minero Sapukai’ rhythmic examples. Giménez, 1997: 69.**

His ‘corrected’, second, written example retains the syncopated first beat in the second bar, although the re-scored version now preserves the tie across the bar line from the first phrase. The critical importance of this difference might highlight a failure to notice a crucial aspect of the tradition. Perhaps an outsider is predisposed to capture the bigger picture before detecting the nuances that an insider, such as Giménez, can highlight. Nevertheless, reflecting on a lesson set out by Bruno Nettl helps to caution against an incorrect position of understanding:

I was about to leave my lesson of Persian music in the spacious old house in southern Tehran when my teacher suddenly fixed me with his forefinger: “You know, Dr Nettl, you will never understand this music. There are things that every Persian on the street understands instinctively, which you will never understand, no matter how hard you try.” Startled, but realizing that he meant “understanding” in a particular way, I blurted out, “I don’t really expect to understand it that way. I am just trying to figure out how it is put together.” “Oh, well, that is something you can probably learn, but it’s not really very important.” My teacher was telling me that a member of a society may understand a culture quite differently from even an informed outsider. End of lesson. (Nettl, 2015: 157)

In terms of instrumentation, ‘*Kuarahy pyahu* (Nuevo Sol)’ differs somewhat from other songs in the 2021 Jeporeka project: on the one hand, from omitting instruments that have represented a ‘root’ in the grounding of a Paraguayan influence principally the harp, and on the other hand, by adding electric guitar. Beyond this, the arrangement aligns quite closely with Romero’s theory; for example, the electric guitar (in some instances) replaces or joins the acoustic guitar. This might seem to mirror Romero’s (2001) example of a clarinet replacing a *quena*. However, a more realistic

explanation could be that the electric guitar's role in this composition drives the fundamental stylistic element of an amalgamation of genres. To an outsider's ear, the piece appears to strike a balance between Paraguayan *polca* and rock. This is illustrated clearly at 02:16 ([Video link](#)) as the chorus of the piece begins, each of the three vocalists sings two lines:

### **Mijael**

que con luz incandescente (with incandescent light)  
apartó esa oscuridad (pushed away that darkness)

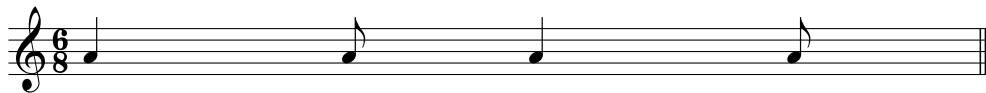
### **Ma. Jo**

enlacemos nuestra sangre (let's link our blood)  
por aquellos que se han ido (for those who are gone)

### **Alejandra**

y brindemos hoy Unidos (and let's toast today united)  
por los sueños que vendrán (for the dreams that will come)

In each case the lyrics are set to the same rhythmic motif, that is a fundamental building block in traditional Paraguayan music:



### **Example 4.9 Syncopated rhythm 'root'**

In an email interview conducted in 2024, Alejandra Almada states that, ‘the rhythmic element is the main thing in this song, perhaps what most represents that Paraguayan air’ (Personal Interview with Alejandra Almada, 9 May 2024). However, Alejandra also references practical aspects of the decision-making process: ‘The melody, there were no creative limitations in terms of the voices or melodies of certain instruments (strings and guitar), but rather we wanted to create a melody that represents what we wanted to convey, within the vocal range of the singers’ (Personal interview with Alejandra Almada, 9 May 2024, see Appendix 15). Alejandra expands on this response to focus more on the wider creative influence on the song:

The idea was always that it [the song] sounds a little traditional, but within what identifies the three composers, musically, since we consume a lot of foreign music as well...the drum solo is totally inspired by rock. Then harmonically, you could say that it is an exploration, we could even call it progressive, since structurally the song is not a standard. (Personal interview with Alejandra Almada, 9 May 2024, see Appendix 15).

The melting pot of musical influences that Alejandra portrays in her answer stands out clearly; the (now) unmistakable Paraguayan rhythmic element is offset against an ‘archetypal’ rock repeated crochet chug on the guitars, supported by a stylised, heavy rock drum kit. The 6/8-time signature functions as a binding agent that typifies Paraguayan music whilst also maintaining a compatibility with the rock idiom. This observation is supported by Almada’s views on the song influences:

As for the Paraguayan elements, it is difficult to define what is and what is not national. After all, it is a song created by three Paraguayan people; you could say that we simply made the decision to do it in 6/8, and the rest were discovering along the way. As for the instruments, it should be noted that the

sound of the guitars is also part of Paraguayan folklore since, together with the Paraguayan harp, they are the basic instruments of our music. (Personal interview with Alejandra Almada, 9 May 2024, see Appendix 15)

Her comment appears to straddle the two positions set out by Ramos, as she references specific musical elements alongside the notion that the Paraguayan nationality of the musicians in itself carries influence into the creative process. To the ears of an outsider, it seems that the song maintains a strong sense of balance in terms of the influences. '*Kuarahy pyahu* (Nuevo Sol)' appears to push the boundary of fusion genres further than other musical outcomes in the Jeporeka 2021 project. However, the issue of whether fixed definitions are appropriate to categorise each approach must be questioned. In response to the question: How did you create a fusion with traditional Paraguayan musical elements? She responds, also conveying the thoughts of her collaborators:

As for the music, let's say that everything happened very intuitively; there were no technical or academic parameters with which we evaluated the creative process. But rather a tendency to explore musically. The three members of the team came from different styles: I from classical music, as a lyrical singer; Mijael from rock; and Majo had a base in popular music, in the end, we realized that we had a very similar aesthetic, even though we came from very different styles, we decided to play and bring out everything we had inside without limiting ourselves in order to build this song. (Personal interview with Alejandra Almada, 9 May 2024, see Appendix 15).

This answer raises the question of motive, perhaps similar to the response given by S. Corbalán in terms of how he channels influences into his music. To expand, the depiction of the creative process outlined in Alejandra's answer alludes to an organic

process, governed by ideas evolving naturally rather than being prescribed. This creative process leads towards a perception that the musicians are constructing authenticity. They are not being guided by a prescribed or essentialised notion of what must be; instead, they are driving a creative vision from within themselves.

The lyrical element of this song that is yet to be discussed, and arguably the most potent force to inextricably bind the song to the roots of Paraguayan folkloric tradition:

The lyrics of the song come from a long introspection about what we experience socially in a complex period of time, in which individualism prevails. This song tells us about the encounter and how we can build peace, from the encounter with the other, a peace that also exists within each of us. Furthermore, the inspiration comes from the works of Paraguayan composer Emiliano R. Fernández, who, during his lifetime, was involved in the Chaco War and composed several songs about it. Through his lyrics, we were able to see another point of connection with the chosen artistic work, 'Paz del Chaco'. We could see two human beings, shaking hands, reflected in each other, as a sign of peace. (Personal interview with Alejandra Almada, 3 May 2024, see Appendix 15)

The profound answer that Alejandra provides in relation to the question of lyrical influence seems to instantly transcend the musical space. By contrast, many of Peter Lambert's (2010) extra-musical definitions of what constitutes Paraguayan identity have only been indirectly referenced. However, Alejandra is keen to point out that although the historical context of Fernández's work comes from a particular moment of war:

The general message of the song goes beyond a specific historical milestone or event; we wanted to transfer those experiences and what was learned from this historical experience to the current life context of each individual who listens to the song, in order to give hope and healing, through our music. (Personal interview with Alejandra Almada, 3 May 2024, see Appendix 15)

The sentiment conveyed by Alejandra seems to resonate with many of the personal views I have encountered on how *paraguayidad* is expressed through music. One view in particular is that of Fidel Zarza (see Chapter 3), ‘it is spontaneous, from my point of view a feeling expressed through art’ (Personal Interview with Fidel Zarza, December 2019). It is similarly a broad expression of feeling that Alejandra seems to address in her words. Her final comments (in our interview) perhaps reflect how this has been achieved in a musical sense as a spontaneous response:

Something that also inspired us was the image of the photograph, which is why throughout the song we reflect the idea of the ‘mirror’, seeing ourselves reflected in each other, through our voices and instruments (Personal Interview with Alejandra Almada, 2024, see Appendix 15).

### **Globalised Expressions of *Paraguayidad***

Attempting to isolate or assume a cynically informed judgement on what draws an individual towards a particular musical influence falls beyond the perimeter of this research. Certainly, musical influences from a contrasting or globalised genre impact the traditional musical form. However, collating the words of the musicians who have contributed to this chapter invites a thought-provoking observation on their placement of a personal Paraguayan identity within a world of musical influence. S. Corbalán refers to ‘natural choice’ or artistically responding to the influences that come naturally, as opposed to prescribing the component parts of the fusion with an alternative or

external motive. The musical outcomes of the Jeporeka 2021 project, whilst varied (to a degree), are all arguably validated in their authenticity under the curated umbrella of the project. However, as the analysis moves forward to reflect on how issues of musical globalisation connect with the creative work of Paraguayan musicians, one is reminded that: 'our theoretical frames are limited by a tendency to think about complex problems in the simplified terms of opposition' (White, 2011: 12). Therefore, with this criticism in mind, there is perhaps a concern that too much attention is paid to the musical phenomena that generate difference in the re-imagining – rather than looking for meaning in the traditional elements that are retained. This critique perhaps holds true in relation to S. Corbalán's reference to 'the limit'. If this sentiment is used as a term to analyse the product of his creative practice, then one might argue that there is temptation to quantify particular musical elements or fix hard boundaries such as traditional or modern. However, if the term is used to define a process of creation, then it seems possible to view it as a tool he is using to navigate personal choices. The result of this process aligns with the view held by Bigenho (2002) that work holds a 'unique authenticity' because the creator of the work believes it to be. When seeking to ascertain a level of importance in the singular traditional musical elements each musician chooses to work with Colman's (2015) concluding remarks offer much assistance: 'If I were to include the harp in a diagram of Paraguayan identity, the instrument would constitute but a single element in the subcategory of traditions or *ñanemba'é* within some of the sociocultural values linked to *paraguayidad*' (Colman, 2015: 124). Therefore, attempting to align singular musical elements (a rhythm, instrument, melody) with grandiose statements of identity or national being may be misguided. Instead, the power might reside in the combined force of global musical



influences, amplifying the significance of the traditional elements that outline feelings of *paraguayidad*: a globalised expression of Paraguayan musical identity.

## **Chapter 5: Electronic Music and the *Polca***

The thought of purely electronic, synthesised traditional music might very well draw surface-level judgements that connect to Romero's (2001) definition of radical. However, the integration of twenty-first-century music-making methods can be seen as a process of innovation, or the next stage in musical evolution. Dylan van der Schuff and Andrea Schiavio (2020) highlight the fact that defining innovation in a creative process has often been overlooked in favour of an analysis of the product. They relate this issue to the work of the pianist Glen Gould, in which, 'the creative outcomes Gould produced were guided by a range of factors including forms of exploration, combination, risk-taking, and experimentation while practicing at the instrument' (Schuff & Schiavo, 2020: 5). Seeking to gauge a level of risk-taking in a musician's creative process, requires an understanding of the individual's perception of what risk represents to them. For example, to some in Paraguay, the creative decision (whatever the driver) to recreate a traditional *polca* using software instruments might be seen as a way of cheaply and effectively disseminating traditional music to a mass market, thereby reconstructing the original music. However, the replacement of acoustic instruments with synthesised replicas might be perceived as a step too far. Sally K Sommers Smith asks this question in relation to Irish traditional music: 'how much change can traditional music absorb without compromising its ability to encapsulate a time, a place, a national identity' (Smith, 2001: 111). She goes further to explore the notion that 'traditional music in a modern world, sounds, initially, like an oxymoron'

(Smith, 2001: 111). The question of how much change traditional music can undergo and still be considered traditional is a subjective one. However, if a musician has the agency to make this decision, then there are a number of benefits that expansive creative choices bring to the sustainability of traditional music.

## **The Notion of a Radical Perspective**

In order to research what a 'radical approach' might be, it is important to move away from the direct analysis of Paraguayan music culture and seek comparative insight from elsewhere. A short examination of Giulia Cancellieri's, Gino Cattani's and Simone Ferriani's (2022) research will precede the final case study in this thesis.

Cancellieri, Cattani and Ferriani's (2022) research on robust and radical interpretations of tradition in Italian opera looks at adventurous new approaches to staging and re-working traditional opera (in Italy) between 1989 and 2011. The authors observe audience responses to modern settings of traditional opera from the perspective of an arts organisation, broadly approaching developments that have deployed either a robust interpretation strategy or a radical interpretation strategy. To outline the principles of their model:

In the opera industry, a robust design strategy is deployed through interpretations that preserve the core aspects of a particular opera (i.e., its music and dramatic content) while departing from it on features that are more peripheral (i.e. its visual staging).

When the interpretation is more radical, causing alterations to the tradition's core elements, customers are more likely to experience incongruity with their schemas resulting in a negative perception of value (Cancellieri, Cattani & Ferriani, 2022: 3)

Cancellieri, Cattani and Ferriani use the binary distinction of ‘core’ and ‘peripheral’ elements to underpin an analysis of how a re-working of a traditional opera may or may not be viewed by audience members. Understanding how disrupting the so-called ‘core elements’ of a traditional music might create negative perceptions of value, they suggest we must first isolate a consensus on what defines a core element in a given musical example.

Audience members are divided into two key groups: season ticket holders and single-ticket holders. The grouping denotes a perception of authority in the answers given by each set of respondents based on a level of experience and knowledge. The perception is that a season ticket holder is the more experienced audience member, selecting this mode of ticket purchase due to a profound understanding and appreciation of opera, enhanced further by the supporting material they are sent (by the opera house) on each opera. By contrast, ‘single-ticket holders tend to have a less-complex and sophisticated understanding of the operatic tradition’ (Cancellieri, Cattani & Ferriani, 2022: 14). As a result, a hypothesis is drawn that the single-ticket holder will be more inclined to embrace radical changes as they are less likely to hold a contextual knowledge of the opera in traditional iteration. In addition, the infrequency of their visits suggests that the primary purpose is for pure entertainment, and therefore, the single-ticket holder is likely to value novelties in the performance. By contrast, season ticket holders will not place value on radical changes; instead, they favour robust interpretations that make alterations to peripheral elements of the original staging of the work. It should also be noted that, from the period during which this study acquired its data (1998-2011), the single-ticket occupancy in each opera setting is on average 10% higher each year than that of the season ticket occupancy.

Whilst the overall number of 'radical' interpretations increased between 1989 and 2011 from 1% to 12%, the robust interpretations also increased from 10% to 35%. However, the combination of both the radical and robust approaches indicates that traditional performances of opera (within their sample) fell from an average of 87% in 1998 to 53% in 2011. The subjectivity of what constitutes a peripheral or core adaptation notwithstanding, this data certainly indicates that a desire to reimagine opera in this cultural context has increased significantly into the twenty-first century.

Taking forward some elements of this wider contextual study, one might start by using the concept of the 'season ticket vs single-ticket' holder as a metaphor for those possessing cultural capital:

Whereas the dominant fractions of the dominant class (the 'bourgeoisie') demand of art a high degree of denial of the social world and incline towards a hedonistic aesthetic of ease and facility, the dominated fractions (the 'intellectuals' and 'artists') have affinities with the ascetic aspects of aesthetics and are inclined to support all artistic revolutions conducted in the name of purity and purification (Bourdieu, 1984: 176)

As Bridget Fowler remarks, 'The dissident culture of the youthful haute bourgeoisie, rich in cultural capital, but lacking economic capital, is a recurrent subject' (Fowler, 1997: 50). One, might relate this group of individuals to the 'single-ticket holder', potentially electing a 'hedonistic aesthetic of ease and facility' as a disguise to mask the lack of economic funds needed to purchase the season ticket held by the intellectual.

In Cancellieri et al's work, the question of bias places limitations on the ability to define the identity of the gatekeeper in the debate clearly. For example, the organisations (opera houses) see season ticket holders (intellectuals) as stakeholders,

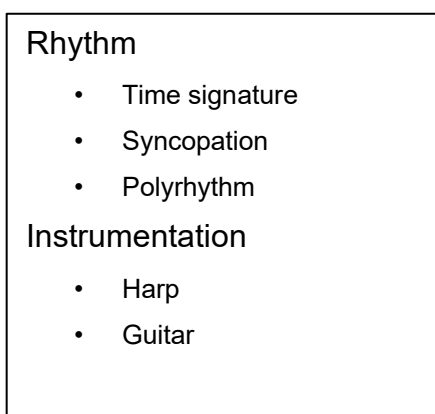
and thus, treat the responses given to reimagined performances of traditional works with greater validity. However, the number of season ticket holders is declining year on year (within the parameters of the study). By contrast, the largest group of ticket buyers (potentially) represent the youthful *haute bourgeoisie*. Nevertheless, it could be argued that it is the ordinary person (in this equation) who is the gatekeeper of approval to perceived authenticity, and the ticket holder that the institutions must please. Varied opinions on the performance aid a helpful level of subjectivity; this can be achieved by de-centring the control of the intellectual elite so that their views only form part of the overall discussion. Thus, those holding financial or academic capital are not seen to hold a narrative with subjective points of view, which have, over time, become objective or fixed ideas of acceptability.

## Hybridity

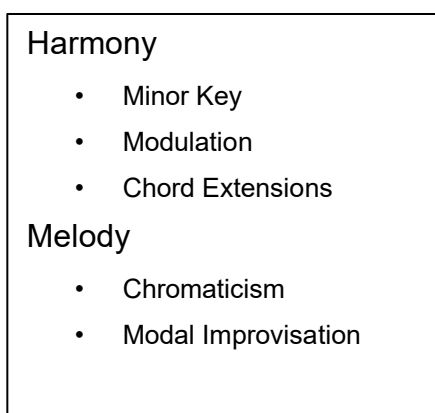
A term often encountered in this chapter as a possible descriptor of the creative work is hybrid. However, the intersection between a modern and a radical approach to reimagining tradition requires consideration of the term. As Chapter 4 established, in the creative production of new music, strong rhythmic connections to the traditional form of the Paraguayan *polca* generated a sense of ‘keeping the root’ as stated. In all the examples presented, harmony was a consistent variable that could be manipulated and linked to the fusion created by the blending of genres, predominantly jazz and classical. Nevertheless, the term fusion, like hybrid, can be a problematic term to use as a third party. Brinner connects the persistent usage of the terms hybridity and fusion to a motive of ‘gross essentialism’ (Brinner, 2006: 231), expanding this notion to note the use of the terms in the context of the music industry, ‘a shorthand for affective similarities and differences used repeatedly by those involved in this musical scene’

(Brinner, 2006: 231). Taylor states that, 'Hybridity is now joining authenticity as a marketing handle for musics by Others' (Taylor, 2007: 141). Taylor raises this issue in relation to a reductionist strategy by the music industry to condense and simplify the complexities of world music. However, one outcome of the analysis in this area might be that a 'third space' (Bhabba, 2004) was created by the musicians' work, inviting the question of fusion to be explored in direct relation to their work. Therefore, an aspect of the ongoing analysis in this chapter will focus on the creative work that inverts each musical element as a variable.

Figures 5.1 and 5.2 summarise the fixed and variable musical elements, respectively:



**Figure 5.1 Fixed musical elements**



**Figure 5.2 Variable musical elements**

The musical elements missing from the category box in Figure 5.2 are genre and instrumentation. In the creative work already discussed in this thesis, a constant has been the use of instrumentation. In the work explored by Remigio Pereira, Corbalán and a selection of the artists on the Jeporeka project, the guitar and the harp were used as traditional elements. Due to the prevalence of the guitar and harp in both jazz and classical music, the instrumentation as a fixed musical element enabled subtle genre fusions to be integrated into the process of re-imagination.

The genre of electronic music instantly disrupts the use of acoustic instrumentation. In the Paraguayan context, this might involve replacing the sound of an acoustic harp with a synthesised alternative of similar timbre. Timothy Taylor discusses the reimagining of traditional bhangra to bhangra remix in relation to hybridity discourse in academia: 'UK bhangra musicians' discussions of "getting back to their roots" are registered in the many bhangra recordings of the late 1990s [...] But the way theses roots were acquired was technological' (Taylor, 2007: 149). However, 'Signalling the "traditional" was not a concern to the musicians who followed the first wave of popularized bhangra in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The first bhangra stars began to argue that what was called bhangra by the early 1990s wasn't really bhangra at all' (Taylor, 2007: 149). Taylor calls for the use of the 'third space' concept as it recognises the 'constant flux of cultural production' and does not fix hard binaries:

Emphasising fluidity, flux, and changeability helps us to understand the nature of cultural production, at least in the realm of popular musics. Popular musical styles change fast. So, however, can discourses, practices, and social formations. Hybridities are made in a series of open-ended social moments that move as people move and can overlap with each, moments in which sounds or images or styles (or what have you) are thrown up against each other in ways that leave their different origins discernible (Taylor, 2007: 150)

There is still the potential for processes to be overlooked here if the 'third space' is thought of as a destination and not the processes of *doing* that comprise the journey. However, the notion that open-ended social moments can overlap challenges Sutton's view that cultural plurality is a myth (Sutton, 2011). As electronic re-imaginings of the *polca* bring it closer to the generation of a third space, the fixed musical elements in Figure 5.1 that keep the 'root' of the *polca* decrease in number.

### Theoretical Concepts

The sociocultural concept of *paraguayidad* is a pervasive influence in the extra-musical analysis, emphasising the individual belief held by each musician that their work represents a distinct expression of Paraguayan-ness. However, the complex and varied discussion of *paraguayidad* in relation to its politically driven evolution shows the construction of idealised tropes in music that bind it to established (historical) boundaries of tradition. Therefore, perceptions of *paraguayidad* that relate to music can be challenged when the aesthetics are distorted beyond the traditional. Vera suggests that thinking on this issue in such binary terms is problematic, and that we should not see culture as being tied to concepts of 'National Being, which proposes the idea of static and frozen whole' (Vera, 2017:35). This position implies that music (as a cultural component) will move fluidly between fixed notions of national being (*paraguayidad*), rather than particular musical elements forming a part of the feeling. Vera's view is supported in the answers given by musicians in this thesis, in which a direct alignment of *paraguayidad* with rhythms and instruments is largely avoided. This issue is identified in Zarza's response in Chapter 3 and will be explored further in this chapter.



Beyond the shift of instrumentation into an electronic domain, it is worth considering what pressures exist for musicians to consider particular rhythms and melodic phrasing as ‘static and frozen’, untouchable elements within a tradition-based paradigm. Creative decisions to innovate or take risks can help gauge the unique spectrum of thought deployed by the musician. A nuanced and deeply personal relationship with the compositional process emerges, driven by the desire for coexistence between the old and the new. However, third-party analysis of the product of this creative process may fuel binary judgements that classify the work as traditional or radical.

## **Two Electronic Music Artists in Asunción**

Rather than examining the macro-cultural industry of Paraguay, the ensuing analysis will focus on the creative practices and compositions of two electronic music artists, Derlis Ibarra and Ana Laura Cárdenas. The fieldwork was conducted in 2019 and involved conversations, interviews, and practical music-making with both artists to gain valuable insights into their work. Ibarra and Cárdenas perform and promote their music in the city of Asunción, but they are not well-known for their work on a national or international level. The type of artists discussed is a key consideration in the research methodology (see Chapter 1). Interacting with musicians from a wide range of performance backgrounds presents an opportunity to observe a wider cultural expression of art, un-governed by industry-led career pressure or influenced by outward-facing, high-status institutions. However, there are ethical questions to address when the music of a participant is not in the public domain. In the case of Ana Laura Cárdenas and her collaborative team, I was able to meet in person and discuss her work, as well as set boundaries for her involvement in the research. Ibarra’s work

is primarily in the public domain and promoted through online platforms, such as SoundCloud. Analysis of this work has been conducted with Ibarra's consent. In addition, all discussions on his working processes have been drawn from in-person interactions.

## **Derlis Ibarra**

Derlis Ibarra is an electronic music artist and educator living in Asuncion. As a teacher, he launched the Ibarra Music Lab in 2006 and was the first education-related business in Asunción to specialise in electronic music, working with DJs and EDM artists. The Ibarra Music Lab foregrounds the mission statement that 'Ibarra Music Lab, [is] a place where creativity and beats have no limits' (ibarramusica.com).



**Figure 5.3 Ibarra Music Lab**

The statement of creativity and intent that Ibarra imparts to his students is very much evident in his creative practice: 'In my role as a DJ I fell in love with electronic sounds, in the traditional 4/4 of techno or house, in the simplicity of minimal, in the warmth of deep house' (Personal interview, Ibarra. December 2018. See Appendix 16). A son of a harpist and folklorist, he reminisces:

In addition to having consumed this rhythm (the *polca* and the *guarania*) since as young as I can remember, it was always followed by jazz, classical music,

the contagious bossa-nova of Brazil, the force of Rock, etc. (Personal interview, Ibarra. December 2018. See Appendix 16).

Thus, Ibarra's musical influences stem from a folkloric base that originated in his childhood and extend to the globalised, urban electronic sounds that have connected dancefloors worldwide. In response to some questions posed in the initial stages of the research, Ibarra sent fragments of biographical material to me (see Appendix 16), targeting interesting elements of his musical influence:

I began to see a way to capture all these influences in my music, experimenting with rhythms, which has always been my characteristic. I took characteristics from everyone and let myself be carried away by the music without forcing anything, which motivated me. I liked it; I let it flow until I finished a song that could only be classified by genre. Since it did not comply with the "rules" of a single genre, it was what we call here a *jopara* (a mixture of elements). (Personal Interview Ibarra, December 2018, see Appendix 16)

By emphasising his musical instincts rather than adhering to the rules of a genre, Ibarra refers to *jopara*, a unique blend of Guaraní and Spanish languages spoken in Paraguay, further characterised by an individual's bespoke use of the language. In music, as in language, 'There is extensive mixing not just as an individual's choice but also at the societal level' (Estigarribia, 2015, 184). Catherine Grant (2014) discusses the importance of language in preserving traditions at a societal level. In the context of Ibarra's work, the linguistic link is metaphorical when directly aligned with the fusing of musical styles to be discussed in the next section of this chapter. We might more accurately see his use of the word *jopara* and linguistic terminology as relating to his interpretation of 'keeping the root', tied to an extra-musical consideration and the sense of *paraguayidad*.

## Folk Beats

Figure 5.4 shows an online Facebook event from 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic, of Ibarra's 'Folk Beats' project:



**Figure 5.4 Folk Beats, Facebook post, 2020.**

This event was developed from a series of individual compositions that Ibarra published to Soundcloud in 2017 and 2018 (see Figure 5.5). An analysis of Ibarra's music is developed through participant observation of his working practice during fieldwork conducted in autumn 2019.



**Figure 5.5 'Polca on the Dance Floor' (2017), Delis Ibarra.**

[Ibarra Lab Soundcloud](#)

On a very hot day in late October 2019, Ibarra and I met in downtown Asunción and drove to his home and studio in Luque, a small town to the Northeast of the capital city. Sitting in front of his computer, Ibarra begins to frame the overarching intentions of his work: 'I want to try to make something quicker, faster to make me dance more. I know if I do something in 4/4, for sure, we can make something to make people dance' (Derlis Ibarra, 7 November 2019). Ibarra is aware of my existing knowledge of his work, and thus, we dive straight into the fundamental point of contention in his music: the *polca* is not in 4/4. This issue raises a key point in relation to the earlier grouping of musical elements (Figures 5.1 and 5.2). Questions relating to the time signature of the Paraguayan *polca* traditionally centre on the decoding of the bi-rhythmic interaction between 3/4 and 6/8, or ternary, binary emphasis. One might interpret Ibarra's reference to 4/4 time as both an indication of the 'limit' as he sees it, but also an acknowledgement of the expectation of the new, fusion genre, and the potential pressure to conform.

Ibarra maintains the expected features of electronic music in terms of digital sounds and synthesised instrumentation, and in doing so breaks with the organological synergy used by the composers in Chapter 3 when blending genre influences. However, Ibarra appears to set his limit at this point; the archetypal metre of electronic music must conform to the *polca*. Ibarra expands on the initial points he made in relation to the overall tempo of his music:

‘But if we keep it, the 6/8 has to be extremely accelerated to 180 or 200 bpm, I think. For reaching that velocity, we need flow, it’s too different [6/8 at 180 bpm] and is too fast to make the feeling of the *polca* – it’s like, dang, dang, dang, dang - it not the same velocity that’s my trouble right now’. (Ibarra, 7 November 2019 ( [Video Link](#) 00:35: - 01:40))

Two forms of dance music, neither of which can be adapted with the simple use of tempo manipulation to fit the expectations of each environment or context, would seem to exacerbate the fundamental point of musical conflict. What must be established is whether Ibarra is setting out to develop a musical fusion that borrows elements of influence from both sides, to arrive in a ‘third space’. On the other hand, we might perceive the rationale of his creative choices to be driven by the exact origins as the musicians encountered in the previous chapter. The crucial point of conflict for Ibarra is the fact that the musical element he is manipulating is the metre, leaning towards a key construct from the electronic music world. Derlis is continuously addressing the question of what musical elements can be removed, and what must be retained for the music to maintain its fundamental qualities as a *polca*.

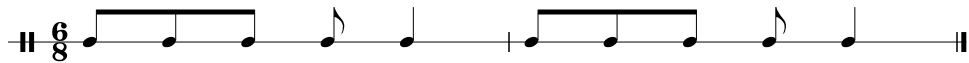
Ibarra loads up the Ableton Live project for his tune 'Polca on the Dancefloor' and we begin to reconstruct the finished arrangement. Ibarra initially focuses on the 'traditional' musical elements in the music, the most overt of which is the bass line, closely aligned with the 3/4 traditions of the *polca*.



**Example 5. 1 'Polca on the Dance Floor', Derlis Ibarra, bass line**

In a traditional *polca*, the bass line serves as the driving force of rhythm, due to the characteristic absence of percussion instruments in a typical instrumental ensemble. 'You hear the rhythm is fast and the melody is flowing/floating...this is more like *polca cancion*' (Personal interview with Ibarra, December 2018, see Appendix 16). Ibarra is referring to two different types of traditional *polca* with this statement: the *polca-kyre'y* and the *polca-cancion*. Traditionally, both forms are defined by their differing tempos, as Max Boettner points out: '*Kyre'y* or fast *polca* is generally not sung. The song carries a slower polca beat. It is today what constitutes the *polca-canción*' (Boettner, 2008: 198). Ibarra is not working with lyrics, though, as is standard for techno and deep house. Instead, he is developing a type of hybrid *polca* (at this level of his arrangement) built from traditional elements; crucially (to Ibarra's creative brief) the introduction of the slower lilting characteristic of the *polca-canción* in the upper melody, is helping drive down the frenetic 6/8 pulse that he had identified as the key concern when writing 'new' instrumental *polcas* for the nightclub dancefloor.

As we move through the layers of texture in the overall arrangement of the piece, rather than replicating a typical guitar strumming rhythm, Ibarra syncopates the middle voice and keyboard:



### **Example 5. 2 Paraguayan *Polca* strumming pattern**

Ibarra is, again, looking to simplify the rhythm. An example from Luis Szarán's depictions of another form of traditional *polca*, *polca saraki*, 'generally instrumental and fast-moving', in his book *Diccionario de la Musica en el Paraguay* (Szarán, 1988: 392).



### **Example 5. 3 *Polca Sakari*. (Szarán, 1998: 392)**

Ibarra plays the syncopated chords in Example 5.3 on a small Akai controller keyboard whilst the track plays, in order to illustrate the position of this rhythmic element in the electronic soundscape ([Video Link](#)). It is clear to define, yet at the same time highlighting *síncopado Paraguayo* as an element of Paraguayan music that has bamboozled my ears as an outsider to Paraguayan music (see Chapter 3). However, *síncopado Paraguayo* is also evident in the middle voice of the guitar/keyboard chords,



not to be notated as per the example above, but to be felt naturally. Ibarra demonstrates this on a guitar ([Video Link](#)); a perfectly metronomic 1, 2, 3 with the thumb (bass line), yet, if the fingers follow the notated rhythm shown in Example 5.3, the feel is more akin to ska or reggae. Instead, Derlis aligns his playing to Boettner's 'delicious sense of laziness' and the music is now a *polca*.

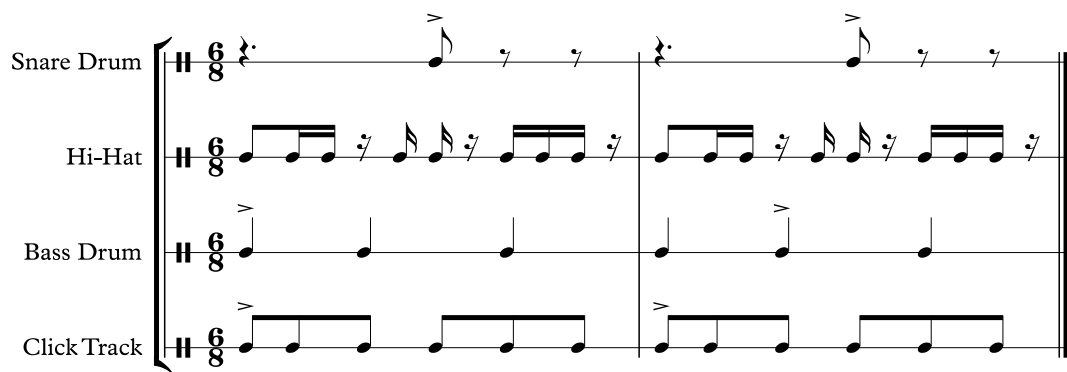
Ibarra moves away from the explanations and analysis of his existing creative work and begins to construct a composition from scratch. The purpose of this is to show the working process of his method forensically. Up until this point, my role in the meeting has been clearly defined as the researcher. However, Ibarra is aware that I am a guitarist, and as the dual roles in my positionality have been defined, the transition to a more performative role enables me to gain a deeper insight into the ideas Ibarra is demonstrating. In essence, we begin to compose a new piece: starting with a repeated, syncopated pattern (typical of the *polca*) played on the guitar, over a I-V chord progression in C-minor (the key of the electronic track). Derlis replicates the bass line and synth parts on a small controller keyboard and remarks that we now have all the core poly rhythmic elements of a traditional *polca*. I am conscious not to quantise the syncopated rhythm that I play; however, I know that I am not playing the syncopation 'like a Paraguayan', it sounds a little too forced! ([Video Link](#)). That said, our scratch duet still exhibits a discernible *polca* rhythm. However, as an outsider to Paraguay and a student of the country's music and culture, Bruno Nettl's observation seems applicable: 'The major *intellectual* objection to fieldwork by an outsider is based on the belief that musical systems are essentially untranslatable' (Nettl, 1983: 261). Nettl's words relate to the attempts of an outsider to piece music together from the component parts and, in doing so, miss the deeper meaning. In this instance, the *síncopado Paraguayo* is not 'untranslatable' in terms of its meaning and sound;

however, it immediately becomes clear that there is an internalising of the rhythm that cannot be developed easily by the outsider.

The next layer Ibarra adds to our arrangement is a 6/8 metronome, and we begin to work with the synthesised computer sounds. Starting with arguably the least traditional, or perhaps the most radical, element of an electronic drum kit. Ibarra states: 'Now the bass drum is four to the floor' and when played alone, it feels entirely like a characteristic 4/4 dance music kick drum. He continues,

I use the snare – we can say the snare is an element of the 4/4 but I place it in 6/8 [...] this gives a late feel and a syncopation and creates a sound different to the expected [if the 4/4 bass drum is the foreground] “boots and cats”. (Derlis Ibarra, 7 November 2019, [Video Link](#), 03:00 - 04:00)

The hi-hat sound is also placed in a 6/8 pattern over the 4/4 kick drum. Derlis demonstrates multiple rhythmic variations of differing complexity to give a range of feel to the hi-hat. The example below illustrates the variation Ibarra made; however, despite the numerous alignments to a 6/8 meter that are now being added to the arrangement, the presence of a kick drum playing relentless crochets seems impossible to separate from a sense of 4/4. Example 5.4 shows perceived accents in the kick drum part.



#### **Example 5. 4 'Polca on the Dance Floor', Derlis Ibarra, texture**

Ibarra pauses, 'Now we have the most important part' (Personal interview Derlis Ibarra 7 November 2019), and finally, he makes a slight adaptation to the kick drum part to add the last semi-quaver on the 3rd beat. It is this small addition to the part that changes everything, pushing the sense of 4/4 backwards and out of focus.

The concern Ibarra articulates is that a 4/4 kick drum is not a traditional musical element in the *polca paraguaya*, as it was not present in any previous iteration. Moreover, the treatment and integration of percussion instruments in general is not a common traditional characteristic of the *polca*. Therefore, the choice to integrate a key musical element in electronic dance music raises the creative issue he faces and poses the question of whether this type of compositional decision defines a radical approach. Ibarra knows that working within the modern genre of *polca electronica* will not automatically grant his work acceptability within the traditional paradigm. In addition, his work may not even be considered as a reinvention of tradition. An answer to the question of who decides this may lie in the fact that any reimagined tradition must always have a historical context.

One way of justifying and identifying (Ibarra's) 'supercharged' beat as a heavy adaptation of the *polca* is from a historical context, comparing the *polca* to the *galopa*,

a dance also in 6/8 with many similar characteristics: ‘The distinction between the *polca* and the *galopa* remains hazy, although [...] *galopas* seem to have a closer association to folk and traditional dancing with the accompaniment of a *banda típica*’ (Colman, 2015: 66). Colman expands his description of the *banda típica*, as amongst other instruments, to contain a snare and bass drum. One might look to the *guarania* in notation form and discern little difference from the *polca* in some of the core rhythmic traits (see Figures 5.5 and 5.6), the placement of accents being the only discernible difference in the rhythmic patterns shown by Giménez:



**Example 5. 5 Guaranía Rhythm (Giménez, 1997: 64)**



**Example 5. 6 Polca Kyre'ÿ Rhythm (Giménez, 1997: 65)**

However, as Boettner reflects, it is a difference in harmonic approach and a slower tempo that underpin the *guarania*: ‘a slow, melancholy song, appropriate to certain

moods of the people was missing [from the national music]' (Boettner, 2008: 209). The work Ibarra is producing continues a creative lineage of development that blurs the lines of total distinction between the *polca*, *gallop*, and the *guarania*: the *polca*, too, representing a musical reimagining of Paraguay's 'golden era'. The fact that Ibarra is introducing beats to the music can be seen as a more modern incarnation of the *banda típica*: music aimed at a performance forum.

A nightclub dancefloor is another cultural space in which musical rules or traditions apply; there are perceptions of what a musician can and cannot do, as well as audience expectations to meet. Ibarra and I converse about the broad societal misconceptions of electronic musicians: 'Okay, I am a musician,' he states, '[however] electronic music is not simple or bad, it depends on your point of view - but it is the music I want to play.' Ibarra seems frustrated, and his remarks illustrate the musical tightrope he is walking. It can be argued that there is a negative stigma attached to the credibility of electronic music artists (in the eyes of their acoustic peers) – and that is even before the musical building blocks of traditional music have been reimagined or tampered with. This creative balancing recalls a discussion on the placement of beats (if not notes)

We try something experimental, and Ibarra finds one rhythmic loop in 4/4. He is keen to state that for the purpose of the experiment, 'traditional loops we can buy from a search on Google'. The task is then to put it (the 4/4 loop) in the 6/8 loop.

I picked this because I like it! [no other reason] The trouble is here [when we place it] with the 6/8 (metronome) is that the original [loop] is 4/4 - we get a funny accent. It sounds just like drum and base, of course like this is no good - the element - trouble here is the loop has its own accents, and it is very hard think about is a lot of accents there - too much (Personal interview, Ibarra. November 2019, [Video link](#), 11.36 – 13:40)

Ibarra is not showing me a finished (published) tune; instead, he is keen to demonstrate his process for electronically generating the characteristic rhythmic structures found in the traditional *polca*, but crucially using computer-generated sounds and quantised samples. I immediately default to my early interactions with the guitar and the Paraguayan *polca*, as well as the organic and personal relationship with *sincopado paraguayo*. The extra musical perspectives that link the gentle pace of the language in landlocked South American nations to the natural tempo of syncopation are the reason I cannot play this syncopation like a Paraguayan guitarist, despite thirty-five years of classical training in the UK. Attempting to manipulate and layer the rhythms to construct this natural sense of syncopation artificially is challenging, if not impossible.

Regarding the melodic influences on Ibarra's work, he attributes the traits of the polca melody to be emblematic of the nation's history and reflecting personal struggles: 'In the country [rural] and the interior, the people are like solo [alone] - like the Blues'. Ibarra refers to the sentiment in the typical lyric that is reflected in the melody, lamenting and melancholy in tone, and lines that rise and fall with some rapidity. An example of this can be seen in Mauricio Cardozo Ocampo's '*Galopera*' (1959):



**Example 5.7 'Galopera' (1959), Mauricio Cardozo Ocampo**

More than a degree of subjectivity must be allowed for when analysing a personal reflection (such as this) on the general characteristics of the *polca*'s melodic characteristics. However, one might offer some support in a cultural sense to this claim if traced back to Lambert's (2010) definitions of war and isolation, key factors that have influenced Paraguay's historical development. If we extract the words from a melody, then our pre-conditioned musical connotations for a melodic contour such as that found in '*Galopera*' can influence the analysis. However, if the composer is reimagining a tradition as a 'radical', then surely, a musically divisive outcome is expected. To that end, Ibarra does not place the same degree of singular emphasis on a clearly defined melodic line. This is perhaps unsurprising, given the fact that the music is purely instrumental and rather more heterophonic in texture; multiple melodic lines converge around the uniquely quantised syncopation in the synthesised rhythm.

To summarise, Ibarra appears to utilise texture as a key asset when aligning his work with perceptions of the traditional *polca*. It is the overall groove that is the defining factor in Ibarra's decision-making, and he places value on capturing the *polca*'s unmistakable and characteristic bi-rhythmic qualities. Moreover, Ibarra is examining what the *polca* means to him on a personal and social level, and he is conscious of the output of his music on a dance floor: music for a social space.

## **Ana Laura Cárdenas**

Ana Laura Cárdenas is also a young electronic music artist in Asunción, but inhabits a different electronic space from Ibarra. The music is minimalist in arrangement and invites an introspective listening experience, offering a distinct type of dancefloor vibe. I came into contact with Cárdenas through similar online channels

to Ibarra (word moved quickly on social media that I was interested in folklore and electronic music in Paraguay):

Hi Matt, how are you? Thanks for the add. I am Anna Laura. I read that someone wrote in a post that you study Paraguayan music, is that right? And that you were wanting to know about electronic music projects, but with folk influences from Paraguay. I have an electronic music project, and it has details of Paraguayan folklore. If you have any questions, I am at your disposal.

Best regards!

Ana

Our virtual introduction came in June 2017, and in the months that immediately followed, Ana Laura sent me four tracks that comprised a project she had been working on with co-writers Fernando Figueredo Maricevich and Alejandro Villalba. The list below presents the track title, accompanied by a very brief synopsis given by Ana:

Song: **'Arribada Caacupe'** - Producers: Ana Laura Cárdenas, Fernando Figueredo Maricevich, Alejandro Villalba

Característica e inspiración: Sonido del Arpa Pya.

(Characteristic and inspiration: sound of the Paraguayan Harp)

Song: **'Francisco y Elisa'** - Producers: Ana Laura Cárdenas, Fernando Figueredo Maricevich, Alejandro Villalba

Característica: Arpa y danza Pya. Sonidos agudos similares a la imitación de aves.

(Characteristics: The harp and Paraguayan dance. High-pitched sounds, similar to imitating birds)



Song: **'Tapé'** - Producers: Fernando Figuerdo Maricevich, Alejandro Villalba,  
Ana Laura Cárdenas

Características: (blank)

Song: **'Villa Rica'** - Producers: Fernando Figuerdo Maricevich, Alejandro Villalba  
Ana Laura Cárdenas

Características: Ritmo clásico del bajo en la polca

(Characteristics: Classic bass rhythm in the polca)

The snapshot of information Ana sends with each track is interesting, and although not detailed, immediately illustrates points of connectivity with tradition. The name 'Francisco and Elisa' seems to hark back to the sentiments of an 'ideal historical past', previously encountered in Chapter 2. A short vocal sample, overlaid at the beginning of the track, imitates Eliza Lynch's voice: 'This story, my story, is all that remains,' taken from the 2013 documentary *Eliza Lynch: Queen of Paraguay*. The characteristics that relate to the imitation of traditional instruments (in three of the four songs) seem logical and expected. However, sounds that imitate birds lead directly to traditional *polcas*, such as '*Pájaro Choguy*', which draw on bird song and the natural world, both in the lyrics and in the characteristics of the accompaniment. The short example below comes from Tania Ramos' arrangement for solo guitar:



**Example 5. 8 'Pájaro Choguy' transcription Tania Ramos (2016) bars 1-3**

The rasgueado chords and rhythmic motif are said to emulate the call of the Choguy bird, demonstrating the power that extra-musical influences have on the creation of new music.

A first impression of Ana Laura, Fernando and Alejandro's music is the sense of space that they create, which offers an immediate sense of departure from the frenetic and rich textures found in 'traditional' Paraguayan music, *polcas*. The reflective sentiment of melancholy leans towards the *guaranía* (rather more than the *polca*), yet the music is removed from characteristic evocations of romance with a relentless quantised pulse that underpins Ana Laura, Fernando and Alejandro's music. I asked Ana Laura the question of which musical elements typical of the *polca* she felt most important to retain or represent when approaching this type of work. Anna Laura cited her influence as: 'sound elements are the harp, 6/8 beat or elements of nature such as running water or singing birds' (Personal interview, Cárdenas, 28 November 2019, see Appendix 17).

## **Analysis of 'Tape' and 'Francisco y Elisa' and 'Villa Rica'**

### **Tapé**

Interestingly, 'Tapé' is the only track that does not come with a synopsis. The piece begins unlike any traditional *polca* or *guaranía*: full of space, and only a syncopated rhythmic pattern on the note of A played on a distorted synth:



### **Example 5.9 'Tapé', Villalba, Maricevich, Cárdenas, synth bass rhythm**

This motif is overlaid against a light wash of synth pad that swirls in the background. The bass rhythm emulates the rhythmic motif that Remigio Pereira had tapped to me on the desk of his studio in 2019 to accompany a recording of his 'Symphony Guarani':

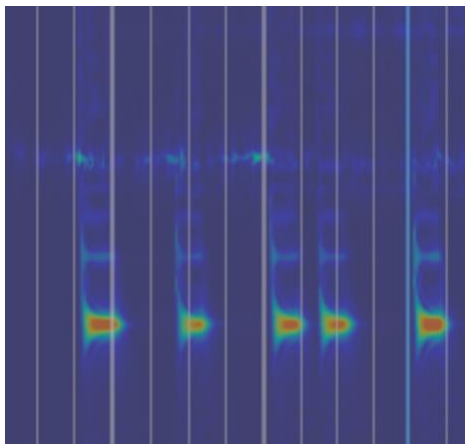


### **Example 5.10 Rhythm tapped on a table (fieldwork) - Remigio Pereira**

Cárdenas and the late Pereira are musicians from two very different backgrounds and statuses. Until his death in 2022, Pereira held a position at the very top of Paraguayan musical society, writing large-scale orchestral works. In contrast, Cárdenas is an independent young artist who, during her college years, collaborated with Villalba and Maricevich as fellow young artists. Notably, both composers have, in distinct ways, chosen to foreground this simple rhythmic structure, emphasising its significance as a defining element of Paraguayan music. The distorted bass synth obscures the initial sense of tradition, as the timbre of the sound is unexpected, and indeed places the instrument selection within Romero's lens of radicalism (the synthesiser replacing an acoustic instrument). However, despite the changes they make to this aspect, the use of this rhythmic motif retains its core traditional element, which has been referred to

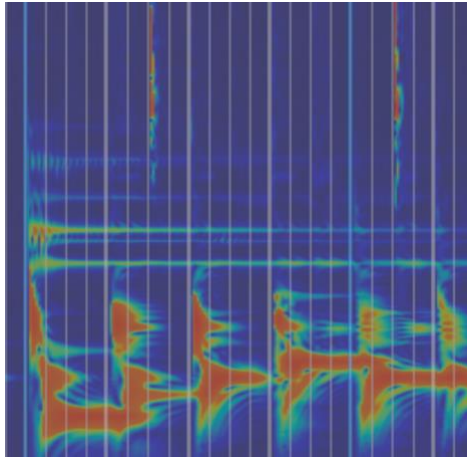
on multiple occasions. Therefore, the creative choices might be viewed as part of a spectrum of authenticity, moving from a reconstructed authenticity to a new identity authenticity (Schippers, 2009), as opposed to the rigid boundary (radical) proposed by Romero (2001).

Suppose the approach taken to defining the music of Cárdenas, Villalba, and Maricevich is mapped onto a spectrum of radical elements that depict a negotiation between traditional and radical elements. In that case, there are musical features of the piece that push away from traditional influences. The overall structure of the '*Tapé*' aligns with the traditions of electronic music (EDM).



**Figure 5.6 Spectrum map of 'Tapé' 0.00 – 0.15**

Layers build up and fall away, and interest is maintained with the manipulation of tensions caused by peaks and troughs (archetypal of EDM). The heat (orange) in the lower part of the spectrum, as shown in Figures 5.6 and 5.7, outlines how percussion and bass frequencies are used to add layers to the rhythmic texture.



**Figure 5.7 Spectrum map of 'Tapé' 1:28 – 1:38**

The delay in building texture creates a sense of tension that draws anticipation in the listener, a technique often used in EDM and described as “the drop”. The full texture or layer of the piece (*'Tapé'*) is delayed until 03:12:

♩=80

Drum Set

Wood Block

4-string Bass Guitar

Electric Piano

♩=80

Synth Bass

**Example 5.11 'Tapé', Villalba, Maricevich, Cárdenas, texture**

Chords in the electric piano (0:28 – 0:44) introduce harmonic variation to the falling notes of E – D that the piece begins with, building tension with the chromatic passing note Eb and finishing on the leading note of G (E – D – Eb – G).



### **Example 5.12 'Tapé' electric piano chords 0:28-0:44**

This use of harmony notably diverges from the traditional use of I, IV, and V. In this piece, Cárdenas, Villalba, and Maricevich challenge the concepts of tradition in multiple directions, both in form and harmony. However, it is challenging to firmly place these choices within the domain of a racial approach, given that both Corbalán and the artists involved in the Jeporeka project also incorporated similar musical elements into their work.

### **‘Francisco y Elisa’**

In contrast to ‘Tapé’, the layering of texture follows a more predictable formula that implies a verse/chorus structure. For example, the first chorus appears to begin at 00:07 and then returns to the verse material at 00:52. In the chorus sections, Cárdenas, Villalba and Maricevich create a dense texture in ‘Francisco and Elisa’ that is more reminiscent of a traditional *polca*. However, to maintain continuity and cohesion in the body of work, density is created through the layering approach, which is stylistically akin to modern electronic dance music forms. To begin with, slightly

arpeggiated synthesised chords that resemble the timbre of a harp are placed on beat one in the metre of 6/8 (see Example 5.12), while a bass line intermittently picks out a characteristic 3/4 pattern. The harp-esque chords add an enhanced sense of style, emulating a characteristic harp finger roll through the chord progression.

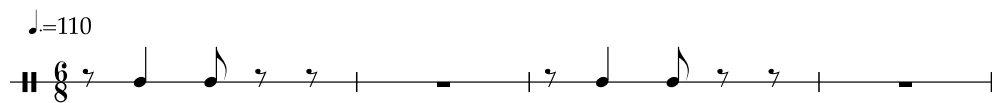


**Example 5. 13 'Francisco y Elisa'. Cárdenas, Villalba, Maricevich, bars 1-12**

This attention to detail aligns well with Ana Laura's brief synopsis of the piece on page 215 and suggests a complexity to the minimalism in her work that complements the notion of a coexistence between tradition and modernity. Cárdenas, Villalba and Maricevich seem to place importance on subtle compositional devices that reference elements of tradition. Rather than the overt use of software instruments sampled from acoustic versions, stylistic performance directions play a key role. The example of the harp is a direct performative action. Elsewhere, timbral contrast creates a sense of 'realism' (in a traditional sense): sounds are synthesised, yet waveform and EQ manipulations isolate differences in instrumentation to give the feel of an instrumental ensemble.

Cárdenas's stated influence of bird song in the piece enables an insight into her use of rhythm. As before, this is subtle and archetypal of a series of understated musical devices that collate to become something more profound. In addition to the

subsequent timbre quality of the sound, they use a short rhythmic motif to characterise the bird (01:07):



#### **Example 5.14 'Francisco y Elisa', Cárdenas, Villalba, Maricevich, bird call rhythm**

Using Tania Ramos' arrangement of '*Pájaro Choguy*' as a comparative (see example 5.8). It is possible to observe a similar two-note syncopated idea to that used by Anna to imitate the call of a bird in example 5.14.

#### **'Villa Rica'**

From the outset, the characteristic sense of space in the music is striking, perhaps more so than in the previously analysed tracks. This is due, in part, to the sampled bird song that punctuates the sonic landscape. The addition of this compositional device seems to further reinforce a sentimental reference to nature in Paraguayan music, which could be argued as omnipresent. The reference to sentiment is closely tied to the frequent associations of Paraguayan music with evocations of the land and nature. The use of birdsong in 'Villa Rica' is less structured than in 'Francisco and Elisa' and cannot be pinned down to a definable rhythmic motif that conveys meaning as a musical device. However, the extra-musical meaning of the sound is evocative (as in other examples of Paraguayan music) of Paraguay's natural landscape, indigenous wildlife. This is particularly important when considering historical points of friction related to the isolation of indigenous music in Paraguay. To re-state Dr Juan Max Boettner's comment: 'We do not cultivate a single native dance' (Boettner, 2008: 194). Indeed, there is an acknowledgement that it is the text-based



elements of Paraguayan traditional music that incorporate the most definable indigenous factors, written in Guaraní. Therefore, there is currency in the creative approach of musical adaptation re-development, and it is in this notion that the extra-musical elements in Paraguayan traditional music can be found in the narrative of influence in a range of historical contexts. Equal importance might be placed on the use of sounds that depict the natural environment as a compositional device when analysed as a 'radical' development of traditional music. Artists understand the cultural significance and reference key traditional concerns. This notion is summarised in

Beyond the audio connections to wildlife and the natural world, the sparse texture comprises only a single warm chord on the first beat of every other bar. The placement of this chord (first heard at 00:01) is an interesting way to stretch the interpretation of the time signature; the piece could be in 6/8 or 3/4. Ana Laura, Fernando and Alejandro's presentation of the metre is abstract in its minimalism, yet could be regarded as a traditional characteristic of the *polca*, as it is not uncommon to see published music scored in either 3/4 or 6/8.



**Example 5.15 'Danza Paraguaya' (ca.1930) - Agustín Barrios Mangoré ed. Richard Stover**

## Jha Che Valle (Danza Paraguaya No. 2)



### **Example 5.16 'Jha Che Valle' (ca.1930) - Agustín Barrios Mangoré, ed. Richard Stover**

The examples above are both taken from Barrios' interpretations of two traditional *polcas*: 'Danza Paraguaya' and 'Jha Che Valle'. Richard Stover, notes (in the preface to the publication) that his arrangement is derived from, 'five distinct versions of *Danza Paraguaya* [...] 4 manuscript and one transcribed from the 78-rpm record' (Stover, nd: 4). Stover states that two of the four scores he is working from are written in a 3/8 metre and two in a 6/8. Therefore, to factor in the 3/4 metre of 'Jha Che Valle' into this equation is to show a brief alignment of Cárdenas, Villalba and Maricevich's thinking on metric ambiguity to one of the 'greats' of Paraguayan musical history. Moreover, reasons for such ambiguity can be connected to issues discussed in Chapter 2 regarding historical contexts. Crucially, in the case of Cárdenas, Villalba and Maricevich's track, the interpretation of the metre will depend on which voice is listened to. As with a traditional *polca*, focusing on the middle (chordal) voice leads to a sense of 6/8, whereas fixating on the bassline guides the listener towards a strong 3/4 pulse.

At 1:06 in 'Villa Rica', a bass line is introduced in rhythmic unison with an open-sounding kick drum. In a timbral sense, the treatment of the drum is quite distinct from the sub-bass kick drum sounds previously encountered (and more synonymous with the genre). Cárdenas, Villalba and Maricevich are eager to articulate the drum with an accent on every third beat and the higher frequencies of this kick drum sound help to

articulate the accented note. However, the low synth bass line that accompanies the kick drum on each crochet beat does not rise through the arpeggio (1, 3, 5) like a traditional polca bassline, and therefore the accented third beat gives the illusion of a pitch raise on the last beat of the bar. This use of articulation removes the emphasis on the first beat of the bar, resulting in a more consistent beat throughout. This might be interpreted as a stylistic borrowing from EDM, which has been influenced by the conditions of folklore.

There is a subtlety to Cárdenas, Villalba, and Maricevich's reimagining of the traditional Paraguayan *polca*, which deploys a musical knowledge of key traditional elements into intriguing new positions within the form. However, a likely point of contention when debating whether this type of work could be accepted as the next stage in the Paraguayan polca's evolution leads to a reconsideration of the words of Florentín Giménez that emphasise a traditional approach is that of 'adding of multiple rhythmic and thematic segments' (Giménez, 1997: 154). In other words, if, in order to be considered a folkloric interpretation of the Paraguayan *polca*, all the musical elements are required to be delivered to the listener in one textural snapshot, then this music fails. There are many examples of electronic *polcas* that do deliver this quality. That said, we might pay closer attention to Giménez's use of the term "thematic segment" and how this might resonate against Britta Sweers comments on folk music revival: 'Every revival of traditional music always entails losses from as well as additions to the original material, and revivalists always move between these two extremes, whether they are aware of it or not' (Sweers, 2005: 263). If the revivalist depiction put forward by Sweers indicates that losses to the original, then this occurs on multiple levels. This is relevant to a radical approach, particularly in relation to the changing of instrumentation and the texture of the music. However, in all of Cárdenas,

Villalba, and Maricevich's work, there is an acknowledgement that traditional aspects can be created by adding 'diverse components that implicitly form part of it' (Giménez, 1997: 154). This is not to suddenly place the label of 'revivalist' on the work of Cárdenas, Villalba and Maricevich – or indeed any of the creative work discussed in this thesis. However, if we are to assume that to move between the two extremes creatively, a higher degree of cerebral activity is required of the 'revivalist' in order to calculate and decide the changes that would be required to simply replicate the original music (or create a cheap copy). A summary position on the creative practice of Cárdenas, Villalba, and Maricevich helps to link these two critical theories: one that focuses solely on the addition of musical elements (or thematic segments) and another that involves the removal and replacement of elements. Cárdenas, Villalba and Maricevich are carefully moving thematic segments of the *polca* in its original form between two extreme positions. The perceived authenticity of this reimagining of the Paraguayan *polca* may prompt abrupt conclusions that suggest a radical approach. However, this judgement only seems credible in relation to the choice of instrumentation. There are a myriad of creative ideas in their work that pull the music towards tradition, suggesting that the new identity they create with these materials (musical and extra-musical) reflects a perception of unique authenticity.

## **Towards a Conclusion**

A clear point of commonality sits in the emphasis that both Ibarra and Cárdenas place on recreating the core instrumental parts of a traditional *polca*. This facet of their approach connects to a radical perspective by replacing acoustic instruments with synthesised electronic sounds. However, the colouration of these sounds is a point of divergence, as Cárdenas and her collaborative team place greater importance than

Ibarra on the retention of traditional sonorities that characterise the *polca*. In terms of overall texture, Ibarra's music combines rhythmic elements of the polca in relatively close alignment to a traditional acoustic ensemble. The dense texture that he creates is a consistent presence in each song, reflecting the fact that a traditional sound is achieved by adding multiple rhythmic segments (Giménez, 1997). By contrast, Cárdenas, Villalba, and Maricevich are expansive in their treatment of texture, choosing to manipulate the sense of space in their work creatively. Both artists include percussion as a compositional device, particularly a sub-bass kick drum. This element appears to push their reimagining of tradition beyond the radical approach put forward by Romero (2001), no longer affecting their sound with synthesised alternatives, but introducing a new ingredient. Therefore, it seems that the particular use of specific musical elements can be viewed, not as definitive, but as part of a spectrum approach; tradition is in a constant state of flux. This is alluded to in Chapter 3 in relation to Corbalán's discussion on finding a 'limit'. Individual musicians move this boundary to align with their own perception of unique authenticity.

Reflecting on the lived musical experiences of two 'ordinary' music makers in Paraguay can help to partially address the macro question of how Paraguayan musical traditions are evolving in the twenty-first century. Framing musical decisions in terms of *paraguayidad* is something that binds personal identity to a collective sense of nation, 'Paraguyan-ness'. How are feelings of *paraguayidad* expressed in the production of music? Was a question posed to Ana Laura, who responded:

In my opinion, I consider *paraguayidad* as the spirit of friendship and solidarity that characterises the Paraguayan people, its most prominent feature. Through the *polca* or *guaranía*, a kind of celebration and magnetism is generated that

brings together the family and/or friendships (Personal interview with Cárdenas, 28 November 2019, see Appendix 17)

The factors that define the authenticity of musical traditions as interchangeable may be linked to either personal or national identity, to whom the traditions belong. For example, one factor to reflect on is whether musicians should be limited in their thinking when approach traditional music. The value of the 'average' musician in this debate can place importance on our understanding of an individual's interpretation of, on the one hand, intensely musical considerations, and on the other, non-static, universal and emotional elements. To re-state Vera, 'Culture is a process' in which the reimagining of traditions is just one part.

## **The Bigger Picture**

The music discussed in this chapter could be aligned to the notion put forward by David Hebert and Mikołaj Rykowski (2018) in relation to glocalisation: 'local musical identities in the context of global forces' (Hebert & Rykowski, 2018: 346). They discuss the need for musicians to re-emphasise the local aspects of their practice amidst the pressures or 'pervasive forces' brought to bear by globalisation. Whether Derlis or Ana Laura feel that they are re-emphasising the local in their musical identity through the music they make is not for an outsider to judge. However, many global examples can be taken in which the biography of an artist begins, electronic music from... (insert country). In the Paraguayan context, this would be the dance music trio LPZ. In examples such as this, the prevailing musical force is quite clearly the globalised genre of dance music, specifically techno. To be provocative, nothing makes the music of Groove Armada distinctly British other than their place of existence – maybe it does

not need to. In such examples, the dominant musical genre is a global force, arguably bringing people together with a shared expectation of how the music should sound in order to comply with stylistic norms. The local in this instance is largely confined to the contextual information that accompanies the music. Therefore, with this consideration in mind, the electronic music that both Ana Laura and Ibarra create might be seen to address the balance somewhat, placing greater emphasis on the local musical influences and elements. This is perhaps exemplified in the simplest of musical terms – 6/8 is often chosen over 4/4, despite the ubiquitous use of 4/4 in globalised dance music forms. Drawing creative red lines that prevent such a fundamental aspect of the global force to take precedence over the local aspects of the music, indicates a strength and agency in the work of musicians and: ‘when the local folklore has been interwound with some universal musical language into an artistic synthesis – with special regard to the preservation of the once indigenusness – then we can discuss a positive example of a glocalization process’ (Hebert & Rykowski, 2018: 360). Questions may remain unanswered regarding perceptions of authenticity in relation to the synthesised sounds that Ibarra and Cárdenas use in order to sonically achieve the preservation of traditional musical elements that they both strive for. However, Grant points out the value of multiple perspectives:

If cultural traditions should and do naturally change, approaches to supporting music genres need not only take into account what are often referred to as ‘authentic’ and ‘traditional’ musical practices, but also how those practices are situated within changing, contemporary contexts (Grant, 2014: 22).

The balanced view that Grant offers here suggests what might be required for radical (if indeed 'radical' is the correct term) approaches to reimagining tradition. To

enable the complex negotiation that individuals make between the global and the local, a fluid transaction, perceptions of authenticity might best be derived from a constructivist position. Musicians in this space do not passively absorb information to recreate an essentialized vision of culture. Instead, it could be argued that the radical is constructing their own authenticity as they incorporate information from changing contemporary contexts into pre-existing cultural traditions.

## Conclusion

The interface with traditional music and its constituent parts is a driving force in the creative practice of all the musicians discussed in this research. However, a microanalysis of this engagement reveals a significant degree of nuance in the approaches taken by individuals. The differences in creative approach can, in part, be connected to the second main research question that pertains to how feelings of *paraguayidad* are expressed in their work. When expressing such feelings through music, participants often used words that implied that the process was intensely personal. Contrary to the politically constructed origins of this socio-cultural concept (as highlighted in Chapter 2), participants did not seem to acknowledge historical contexts in their views. Instead, they chose to draw on non-prescribed spontaneous response as a motive for the expression of this feeling. In addition, extra-musical factors that were non-political tended to figure in the thoughts of participants, citing family and the natural environment as key grounding elements in their personal sense of *paraguayidad*.

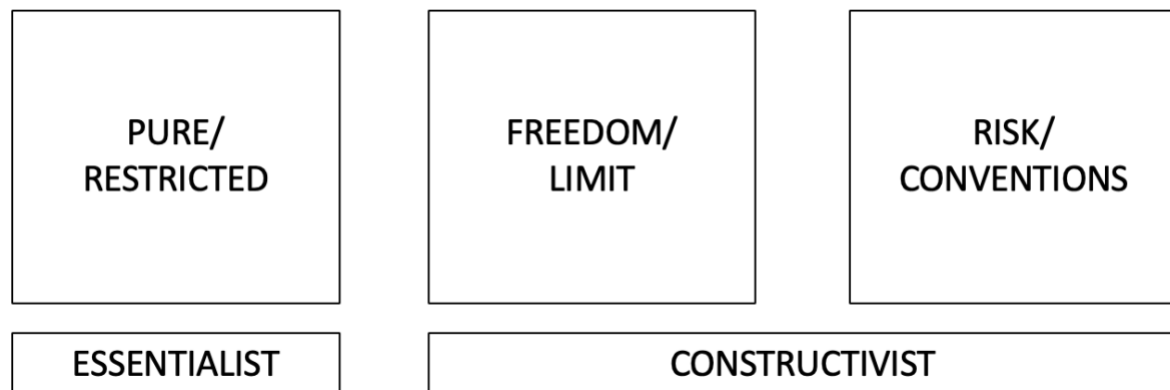


The words 'restricted', 'limit', and 'convention' are prevalent in the previous chapters, and all carry a similar meaning at the surface level. However, the 'limit' tended to be set by the musician in an approach driven by freedom or a natural spontaneity that comes from musical freedom. The 'radical' approach reflected a degree of creative risk-taking, although this was often connected to the stylistic conventions of EDM imposed on the musicians and their careful alignment of traditional elements of the *polca* of the *guaranía*. The term 'restricted' arose mainly from the desire to protect against pressures that come from external sources on an institutional level in education or cultural policy. Hard categorisations of authenticity, such as 'pure', have been found to be problematic, and thus avoided in this thesis in favour of a sentiment of perceived authenticity more closely aligned to an individual's agency to express their own sense of self through the music that they create.

### **The Problematic Issue of Authenticity**

At every turn, the inquiry in this research has encountered the challenging issue of authenticity. In order to avoid an essentialised and fixed notion of what constitutes authenticity, the term 'perceived authenticity' was defined and adopted in Chapter 3. However, as each Chapter illustrated thereafter, the term functions somewhat as a quarantine zone, from which an indefinite duration of contemplation can begin. The concluding remarks in Chapter 5 began to mark the end of the period of quarantine to a small extent. It is worth noting that the use of the word 'quarantine' is not inherently loaded with negative connotations. It could be argued that this is a safe space in the context of avoiding inappropriate and ill-conceived sweeping statements about what is or is not authentic. However, it cannot be ignored that perceptions of authenticity, whether external or internal to the individual, have played a role in how participants

have made judgments about their work. I propose that an initial development of this process could align with either an essentialist or constructivist position in relation to the three categories presented in Figure 6.1:



**Figure 6.1 Essentialist vs Constructivist layer**

The rationale for this initial conclusion stems from the fundamental principle that the essentialist approach focuses on what to retain, while a constructivist approach inquires about what can be altered. As the research has shown, the two questions are not mutually exclusive. However, the issue is one of emphasis and what the dominant thought process is in each approach.

In 2010, Tim Rice called for depth to be applied to the discourse on identity themes in ethnomusicology. In response, Suzel Ana Reily highlighted that this was not only an issue in ethnomusicology, but the humanities more widely:

In the general move away from structures and essentialized notions of “culture(s),” constructivist orientations became dominant across a range of disciplines. Identity as a conceptual construct encourages us to think about how people/groups see themselves, how others see them, and how

They imagine themselves to be seen by others (Reily, 2010: 331).

A critical issue in the discussion on authenticity is that it is often used as a term to define an essentialized notion of culture. In this situation, the perception of authenticity is derived from the criterion of functional elements that are deemed to be essential by an external force. Bigenho's (2002) thoughts on the notion of unique authenticity illustrate how authenticity occurs within an individual's mind, as they perceive themselves. This is particularly clear based on the responses given by participants, which express agency regarding freedom of personal expression. In terms of perceived authenticity, the constructivist approach set out by Vargas (2012) seemed to resonate: 'Inner sense suggests that authenticity is something that can only be known to an individual, tacit and subjective nature – what feels true to us' (Taylor, 2022: 2). Corbalán offers his experience of the Festival del Takuare'ê and festivals more generally:

What I'm saying about my colleague [...] they're always playing the same [music], they don't want to change, but not because they don't have the talent, they have the school, they have the root inside, like every artist. But the system says Ok, always play '*Galopera*' or '*Danza Paraguaya*' (Personal interview, Corbalán, 11 November 2023, see Appendix 12)

Corbalán's perspective reflects the essentialist approach discussed in relation to the traditionalist: there are elements or pieces of music (in this case) that must be included.

Of interest is the observation that, while a strong sense of unique authenticity seems evident in the creative work of the participants, this did not appear to create a

feeling of division or friction when they engaged with collective notions of culture. It is possible that a fleeting, third-party analysis of their work may find singular judgment in the terms 'modern' or 'radical'. However, it was my observation that collective and individual considerations were hard-wired into the creative process of each musician. Therefore, the notion that the product (they create) is dictating the construction of the work does not feel like a comfortable conclusion to draw. The process of reimagining the traditions of Paraguayan music appears to straddle both constructive and essentialist positions.

### **Musical *Jopara* or Fusion?**

There cannot be a single answer to the question of how musicians in Paraguay reimagine traditional music: the process is nuanced and complex. Musical traditions are reimagined so that they connect with a new audience, enter a new social space, and endure the omnipresent test of time. Words such as preserve or innovate might imply that neat and tidy answers exist to solve this problem.

Cut and Paste. It's an impulse as old as humanity [...] simply by existing, truly new music asks of those who care for it, how can we set a sound aloft so that it reaches those who most need to hear it? (Clayton, 2016: 140)

If the process of reimagination is to be viewed as a collection of tasks that either adopt or adapt traditional elements, then the title of this thesis does not serve the intended purpose. In this situation, the term 'reimagine' becomes, as in many instances before, a buzzword that does not reveal much beyond its title. However, evidence gathered through this research hopefully contributes towards understanding and articulating how the process of 'reimagining' can provide greater insight into a creative process

that incorporates many of the well-adopted descriptors that denote the saving or rescuing of music. By way of paradox, the Paraguayan musicians introduced in this research are not seeking to rescue or save the Paraguayan *polca*. Instead, they are expressing their identity as musicians and as Paraguayans through the spontaneity of music.

One key criticism of the term 'fusion' that has emerged stems from the problematic nature of quantifying the elements that make up the fused musical activity. As Bayley and Dutiro point out, 'it's not a hybrid or a fusion but new music if it's done in a way that has a historical context [...] we can't separate the history and say, oh let's forget about that' (Bayley & Dutiro, 2016: 395). This notion relates to the linguistic coding found in *Jopara* and was a term directly used by Derlis Ibarra in Chapter 5 to refer to the fusion of music he was creating. The alignment of *Jopara* as a descriptive tool for his creative practice seems to accurately summarise the multi-perspective complexity in defining fusion. For example, in an educational context, Bruno Estigarribia notes that: 'Some authors call it a variety of Spanish, some a variety of Guaraní, others a new mixed language. The choice of one characterisation over the other has important implications for the status of Guaraní vis-à-vis Spanish (Estigarribia, 2015: 183). This issue is further compounded by the urban-rural differences highlighted in Chapter 3. Andrew Nickson points to José Pedro Rona's comments that 'Paraguay is not a bilingual nation, but a Guaraní-speaking country where, on the higher levels of administration, education and wholesale trade, Spanish is used out of necessity [...] only a small elite uses it even in everyday private life' (Nickson, 2009: 8). The re-introduction of Guaraní as a language is woven into the historical contexts of post-colonial Paraguay discussed in Chapter 2.

The suitability of *Jopara* as a term to characterise the musical fusions discussed in this research can be further gauged in relation to the personal nature of such linguistic decisions. The use of *Jopara* offers ‘various possible bilingual strategies, using of a plethora of structural and sociolinguistic criteria to identify them is well suited to the case of Guarani-Spanish, which displays many distinct kinds of mixing’ (Estigarribia, 2017: 48). Specifically, the terms functional and emotional are used in connection with the distinct mixing that Estigarribia highlights in this quotation. Therefore, when applied to music, there is a potential for fusion to occur on both functional and emotional levels. Which aspects of the music relate to each term is a personal choice, and one that is influenced by historical context and location. Thus, a notion of musical *jopara* seems an appropriate conclusion to draw from this research as a multi-perspective descriptor of musical fusion unique to the Paraguayan context. As Sixto Corbalán eloquently describes, we first keep the root, then find the limit.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Ethics Information Sheet

#### Information Sheet

**Research project title:** The Paraguayan Polca: understanding *Paraguayidad* in creative practice

**Research investigator:** Matt Dicken

**Address & contact details of research investigator:** Music Department, Bath Spa University, Newton St Loe, Bath, UK, BA2

**Email:** matthew.dicken12@bathspa.ac.uk

**Phone:**

#### About the Project

This project explores *Paraguayidad* in the creation of new music in Paraguay and follows an ethnographic study of musicians and musical events in and around the city of Asunción. Combining interviews with participant observation and performing as research methods, I aim to look at how the Paraguayan *polca* (as a traditional music) is being used as a musical influence and as a means of defining Paraguayan identity. The aim of the research is to understand how specific musical elements pertain to feelings of *Paraguayidad* and are thus either positively expressed or contested in creative practice. The principle aim of the research project is provide a cultural study of the Paraguayan *Polca*, I hope that my research will help to grow interest in Paraguayan music around the world.

#### Who is responsible for the data collected in this study?

- Matt Dicken. PhD researcher
- Interviews, participant observation and performing will be used as methods for collecting information.
- All data will be stored by Matt Dicken
- No information gathered from this research will be shared with other organisations

Taking part in this study is voluntary. You may choose not to take part or subsequently cease participation at any time.

You will receive no payment for your participation. The information you provide will not be used for commercial purposes. Therefore, you should not expect any royalties or payments from the research project in the future.

#### For more information

The ethical aspects of this study have been approved by the Institute for Education Ethics Committee at Bath Spa University prior to the commencement of research. If you have any concerns about any ethical aspect of your participation in this research, you may contact the Institute for Education Ethics Committee via [researchsupportoffice@bathspa.ac.uk](mailto:researchsupportoffice@bathspa.ac.uk). Any



concerns you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated, and you will be informed of the outcome.

## Appendix 2: Ethics Consent Form

Music Department  
Bath Spa University  
Newton Park  
Bath  
BA2 9BN

Phone: [REDACTED]

Email: matthew.dicken12@bathspa.ac.uk

Matt Dicken, BA (Hons), MMus, PhD  
Researcher

### Participant Information and Consent Form

Name of Project: **The Paraguayan Polca: understanding Paraguayidad in creative practice**

Interview Consent Form

Research Participants name:

The interview will take approximately 30 minutes. I don't anticipate that there are any risks associated with your participation, but you have the right to stop the interview or withdraw from the research at any time.

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed as part of the above research project. Ethical procedures for academic research undertaken from UK institutions require that interviewees explicitly agree to being interviewed and how the information contained in their interview will be used. This consent form is necessary for me to ensure that you understand the purpose of your involvement and that you agree to the conditions of your participation. Would you therefore read the accompanying information sheet and then sign this form to certify that you approve the following:

- the interview will be recorded and a transcript will be produced
- you will be sent the transcript and given the opportunity to correct any factual errors
- the transcript of the interview will be analysed by Matt Dicken as research investigator
- access to the interview transcript will be limited to Matt Dicken and academic colleagues with whom he might collaborate as part of the research process.
- any summary interview content, or direct quotations from the interview, that are made available through academic publication or academic outlets will be anonymized so that you cannot be identified, and care will be taken to ensure that other information in the interview that could identify yourself is not revealed.

- you have the right to waive anonymity if you wish
- the actual recording will be kept

- 
- any variation of the conditions above will only occur with your further explicit approval

## Quotation Consent

**I also understand that my words may be quoted directly. With regards to being quoted, please initial next to any of the statements that you agree with:**

- **I wish to review the notes, transcripts, or other data collected during the research pertaining to my participation.**
- **I agree to be quoted directly.**
- **I agree to be quoted directly if my name is not published and a mad-up name (pseudonym) is used.**
- **I agree that the researchers may publish documents that contain quotations by me.**

All or part of the content of your interview may be used;

- In academic papers or news articles
- On my website and in other media that i may produce such as spoken presentations
- On other feedback events
- In an archive of the project as noted above

By signing this agree that;

1. I am voluntarily taking part in this project. I understand that I don't have to take part, and I can stop the interview at any time
2. The transcribed interview or extracts from it may be used as described above
3. I have read the information sheet
4. I don't expect to receive any benefit or payment for my participation
5. I can request a copy of the transcript of my interview and may make edits I feel necessary to ensure the effectiveness of any agreement made about confidentiality
6. I have been able to ask any questions I might have, and understand that I am free to contact the researcher with any questions I may have in the future

Participant's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Any questions about the research should be directed to the researcher in the first instance, at [REDACTED] or [matthew.dicken12@bathspa.ac.uk](mailto:matthew.dicken12@bathspa.ac.uk)

The ethical aspects of this study will be approved by the Institute for Education Ethics

Committee at Bath Spa University prior to the commencement of research. If you have any concerns about any ethical aspect of your participation in this research, you may contact the Institute for Education Ethics Committee via [researchsupportoffice@bathspa.ac.uk](mailto:researchsupportoffice@bathspa.ac.uk). Any concerns you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated, and you will be informed of the outcome.

**(RESEARCHER'S [OR PARTICIPANT'S] COPY)**

## Appendix 3: The Lady's Newspaper 9 December 1854

### GENERAL LOPEZ.

We learn from that very interesting new, but now standard, work on South America, Hadfield's "Brazil, River Plate, Paraguay, and the Falkland Islands," that Brigadier-General Solano Lopez is the accomplished eldest son of the President of Paraguay, from which country he was accredited as Minister Plenipotentiary to England and France, for the purpose of ratifying the Malmebury Treaty, referred to in the following article. Though a young man, the General, previous to his arrival here, had for some years commanded the Paraguayan forces, and established for himself a high character for sagacity, energy, urbanity, and love of justice. This character he has fully maintained during his sojourn in Europe, where his conduct has afforded a much more exalted estimate than was previously entertained of the intelligence and advanced civilization of Paraguay. The author alluded to, writing at the beginning of the present year, says, "General Lopez came here accompanied by a numerous suite of military officers and civilians, together with a younger brother, a gentleman of great promise. He manifests much ability and a large faculty for observation, evincing a keen desire to obtain information on all subjects likely to be of benefit to his country. He made a very favourable impression in England, and still more in France, where he was received with the greatest distinction, the Emperor, Napoleon III., according him public and private audiences amidst the most imposing ceremonial of imperial state. He has made a tour of Italy and the chief part of the Continent, as also of the British Isles, and returns soon to Paraguay, his naturally fine mind stored with the fruits of an observant and diversified experience, and his excellent disposition in no way deteriorated, it is to be hoped, by his acquaintance with the peoples of the old world." We make no doubt that these anticipations will be fully realized very speedily. The magnitude of the contract for steamers, entered into with Messrs. Blyth, shows the scale on which Paraguay may be expected to progress through the all-important auxiliary of steam; while the large number in the Paraguayan suite during his sojourn here will not fail to diffuse the benefits of their European acquirements throughout their native country, precisely in the manner expected by Sir W. Gore Ouseley, when, in 1845, he urged on President Lopez that "a number of distinguished young natives should be sent to England, that they might judge of our institutions and commercial spirit for themselves, and report to him that this country had, and could have, no sinister motives to serve by a treaty with Paraguay."

### BRITISH-BUILT WAR-STEAMERS FOR PARAGUAY.

Experience has recently removed many an erroneous notion as to the supposed attributes and capacity of certain nations; but probably in no instance has this more strikingly corrected the fallacy of a received opinion than in the case of Paraguay. Hermetically sealed for nearly half-a-century from intercourse with the external world by the domestic policy of Francia, and subsequently isolated from surrounding states through the aggressive designs of Rosas; peopled by a native race whose docility had rendered them plastic to a proverb under the agents of Loyola; ruled by the descendants of Spaniards in whom the indolence of the original Iberian character was supposed to be aggravated by an enervating climate and luxurious soil; impelled to enterprise by no necessity for imported luxury, and no desire for territorial aggrandisement; prosperous, peaceable, and contented, enjoying a strong government administered under popular forms, Paraguay might reasonably be looked upon as the paradise of *laissez faire*. It was in such belief that so many at this side of the world regarded the treaty effected by Sir C. Hotham and the Chevalier St. George, for opening up the great South American rivers, as certain to be a virtual dead letter. Yet two years have not elapsed since the ratification of that treaty, when we find Brigadier-General Solano Lopez, son of the President of Paraguay, and Minister Plenipotentiary to Great Britain and France, returning to his own country in a fine steamer expressly built for him in the Thames, to be followed by several others. The command of means to make purchases necessarily so costly exhibits pecuniary resources to which the treasury of Paraguay was supposed to be inadequate, while its executive was believed to be incapable of employing them in a manner so enlightened and so little in keeping with its antecedents. sanguine expectation may indeed be formed of a country whose admission into the community of nations is signalled by so promising and unlooked for a demonstration. The construction of the intended steam fleet has been entrusted to Messrs. J. and A. Blyth, the eminent marine engineers of Limehouse, by whom the pioneer vessel, now on her way to Asuncion, the capital of Paraguay, has been built. It is not yet known whether the whole of the vessels are to be fitted in the manner of the *Tacuari*,

the one in question, but it is supposed that some of them will be adapted for more strictly commercial purposes. The principal dimensions of the *Tacuari* are—length between perpendiculars, 166 feet; ditto of keel, for tonnage, 152 feet 2½ inches; extreme breadth, 23 feet ½ inch; ditto, for tonnage, 23 feet; depth in hold, 11 feet 3 inches; burthen in tons, 493. She is classed at Lloyd's A 1, for fourteen years, having been built under special survey, on the principle of diagonal and longitudinal planking, similar to the *Bankee* whose performance, after many years' experience, still gives such unqualified satisfaction, contrasting so favourably with other gun boats recently built,



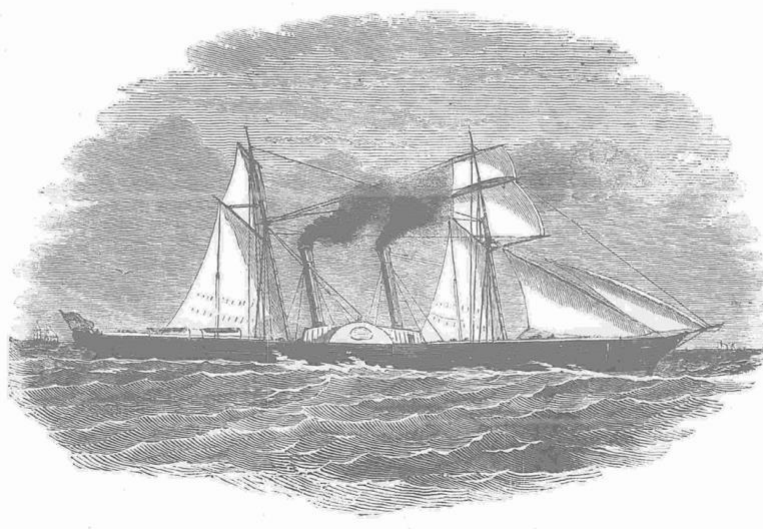
BRIGADIER-GENERAL FRANCISCO SOLANO LOPEZ.

The *Tacuari*'s draft is under seven feet when fully equipped for service with coals, stores, and her heavy and very efficient armament. This consists of two 32 pounder pivot guns, and four 24 pounder carronades, with a complete outfit of small arms for one hundred men, including Minié rifles, Dean and Adams' revolvers, together with rockets, night and fog signals, and all other appliances proper to a vessel of this kind, in whose construction everything that skill could prompt or expenditure secure has been employed. In looking at her thus equipped, in a very brief period, and without any great hurry having been used, it was impossible to avoid speculating on what might have been the fortunes of early English enterprises in the Baltic this year, had gun-boats of the same draft been fitted out some months ago, as they might have been, of course in infinitely less time than it has taken to finish so elaborate a piece of naval architecture as the *Tacuari*, destined for service some two thousand miles inland, in South America, after crossing half the globe. The cabin accommodation is exceedingly commodious in a ship of such burthen, with the best and most recent arrangements for ventilation, and every provision for the health and comfort of the crew, not forgetting three boats, ac-

cording to the usual Admiralty model, and one life-boat. Her appointments in all respects are most complete; patent pumps communicating with all the compartments fore and aft, and applicable to the extinction of fire, in case of which her magazine can be at any moment flooded if required; she is likewise supplied with fire annihilators, furnished by the Fire Annihilator Company, who supplied these important means of extinguishing fire to government transports, by order of the Admiralty. The *Tacuari* has a light schooner rig, suitable for her destined service; she is propelled by a pair of oscillating cylinder engines of the collective power of 140 horses with mechanical paddle-wheels, such mode of propulsion having been adopted in preference to the screw, on account of the peculiar condition of certain shallow parts of those great affluents of the Plata—the Parana and Paraguay rivers—she is intended to navigate. Her speed on trial in the Thames was found to exceed fourteen miles per hour, the vibration of the machinery being unusually trivial. On her passage to Bordeaux, to receive his Excellency General Lopez and suite, for whose accommodation during the voyage to South America special provision had been made, she experienced tempestuous weather, but proved herself a most excellent sea-boat in every respect, whether as to buoyancy or speed, though not working her engines to the maximum, as there was no necessity for doing so, and though her upper deck was encumbered by thirty tons of patent fuel, her bunkers also being quite full. During the voyage between Bordeaux and Lisbon (where she was in quarantine at the date of last advice), she encountered a tremendous storm which lasted two days, but braved the sea admirably, carrying her four quarter boats well out of water, and perfectly safe, rolling very easy, laying to readily, very dry, and seawinding beautifully; while the operation of her engines in such a gale was everything that could be desired. Her course after leaving Lisbon would be that pursued by the vessels of the Liverpool South American Steam Navigation Company, who have undertaken to supply her with coals at their several stations, viz., Madeira, Cape Verde, Pernambuco, Bahia, Rio Janeiro, Monte Video, and Buenos Ayres, whence she will proceed at once to Asuncion, where she will doubtless be received with all becoming *clat*.

Considering the difficulty of obtaining hands in these straitening times, it is worthy of note that the *Tacuari* should be provided with a picked crew of Englishmen, engineers, stokers, and officers, in the same ratio as on board a British man-of-war steamer of corresponding size and armament. But General Lopez was fortunate in securing the services of such a commander as Captain Morris, R.N., whose gallantry and seamanship, excellent temper and firmness, were sufficiently well known to render service under him an object much to be desired. Besides the English officers and crew, there embarked an English "Mining Captain," with all the requisite tools and implements for testing the great mineral capacities of Paraguay by the most approved Cornish or Cumberland methods, there probably being no country in the world richer in metalliferous wealth of every kind than the region lying between the junction of the Parana at Corrientes, and the Brazilian boundary on the north-east. It is somewhat remarkable that Sir W. Gore Ouseley, our late minister at the court of Brazil, and Plenipotentiary in the River Plate, should be on board the first man-of-war that ever sailed in European waters on her trial trip, he having been the first English diplomatist to recommend the recognition of Paraguayan independence; for during his mission at the latter post, as long ago as 1845, he urged our government—not more with a view to counteract the political schemes of Rosas, than to facilitate the progress of a country abounding in the *matériel* of mercantile success if developed—to acknowledge such independence, and to admit Paraguay to those commercial privileges of which she has so promptly proved herself desirous and deserving, and his presence on this occasion testified to his undiminished interest in her welfare. The gentleman he employed in negotiating with the Paraguayan Executive at the time referred to, was the same who has since carried out the South American Reciprocity Treaty, namely, the distinguished officer, the present Governor of Australia, Sir C. Hotham.

TRUE NOBILITY IN THE RANKS.—Cromwell and Blake first taught us that a fellow may be religious without being a coward, and now our soldiers give us daily proof that a man may serve his country in the humblest rank without being insensible to the noblest impulses. Will no one publish a collection of these soldiers' letters—of these popular expositions of the war? In some of these we catch the spirit of a Sydney and a Raleigh—a spirit of devotion, sacrifice, and chivalry. Few things arising from the war, though it has stirred and shaken us to the depth of our nature, have excited more attention than the unexpected development of so large a share of high spirit and literary culture on the part of men in the ranks.—*Douglas Ferriels.*



THE PARAGUAYAN WAR STEAMER, THE "TACUARI."

The Lady's Newspaper (1854) 'General Lopez', *The Lady's Newspaper*.

Available at: <https://go.gale.com/ps/start.do?p=NCUK&u=bsuc>

(Accessed on 1 Dec 2025)



## Appendix 4: The Times 3 April 1853

### NEGOTIATIONS WITH PARAGUAY.

(Translated from *La Prensa Uruguaya*.)

MONTEVIDEO, APRIL 3. The British Plenipotentiary, Sir Charles Hotham, reached Assumption on the 19th of December last. The steamer Locust, which took him up the river, was stopped at the first guardhouse belonging to Paraguay (Las Tres Bocas), and the captain was required to exhibit his ship's papers. Upon his stating that he had nothing but his flag to show, he was ordered at once to return; and, as he appeared not to be in any hurry to obey this command, the Paraguayan officer lighted his matches and made signs that he should be obliged to fire his guns at him. After some explanations, however, it was agreed that the English steamer should return as far as the entrance of the river Paraguay, and there await the orders of the Supreme Government.

It was not till four days after that the President, Don Carlos López, sent orders to the officer commanding his Botilla to allow the Locust to pass; but he fell into a violent rage when the foreign ship of war, made in front of his capital, without having either hoisted the flag of the Republic or condescended to fire a salute. These two grievances (*agravios*), as he considered them, influenced the negotiations throughout.

The Locust had to go back to Corrientes to bring up the correspondence which had arrived by the English packet; but the President refused to allow her to do so, and a negotiator of 10 days was necessary before the prohibition was removed.

In the meantime the President of Paraguay, whose object is to blind his subjects upon every occasion, manifested his desire that they should formally recognize the independence of the country. On the very day, however (the 5th of January), on which this acknowledgment was made in due form by Sir Charles Hotham, he declared that he would make no treaty with the British Government, although up to that moment he had never ceased to give him to understand that upon that point he would raise no impediment.

Great was the surprise and anger of the British Plenipotentiary at finding himself thus taken in by the astute President.

The French steamer of war Flambart had left the Bajada, in Estercios, on the same day as the Locust, both having stayed there eight days, during which the Plenipotentiary had frequent conferences with the Provisional Director of the Argentine Confederation and his Minister, Dr. Peña; but, on reaching the Esquina (50 leagues above the Bajada), the Flambart ran upon a sandbank, from which she could not get off for several days, and then with her engine damaged, in order to repair which Mr. St. Georges stopped at Corrientes, where he heard of the treatment his English colleague had met with in Paraguay. Thinking to avenging a similar reception, he despatched thence a letter to the President, acquainting him with his mission, and soliciting his authority to proceed to the capital, which was in due course forwarded to him at Corrientes by Don Carlos López; further to show the sense of the injury of the French Minister, the Paraguayan officers of Tres Bocas and Pilar, as he passed by, brought him presents of fruit and fresh provisions, at which the Chevalier St. Georges, to show his satisfaction, saluted each of the said places as he passed with 21 guns. He did the same at Assumption the day after his arrival; but it was not till after 10 days' delay that he obtained a public audience of his Excellency the President. The reception was a most brilliant one, his Excellency in full uniform, all the local authorities, and all the legations, and among them Sir Charles Hotham, and all his party, being present.

The President of Paraguay remained the whole time seated with his back to the French Minister. The speech which the Chevalier St. Georges addressed to him in French seemed to please him, and at each complimentary phrase of the French Minister he raised his hand to his hat. The negotiations lasted a month. The French Plenipotentiary, forewarned of the mode he had to deal with, declared from the first that he could not recognize the independence of Paraguay till he had settled the treaty he had come to negotiate.

At length, on the 16th of February, the bases were agreed upon, and the President of Paraguay formally promised the Plenipotentiaries that he would accept them. The terms of the said treaty, which has been signed by the French and English Plenipotentiaries and the Nono American and Sardinian Charges d'Affaires, are more or less as follows:—

Free navigation of the rivers granted to the contracting parties.

Individuals of their nations may carry on retail trade (hitherto not permitted to foreigners). They may visit the towns in the interior and trade there (hitherto they have only been allowed to reside at Assumption); and, lastly, they may intermarry with the women of Paraguay (which has hitherto not been permitted).

We hope that this treaty, which will introduce a new legislation into Paraguay, will be but the commencement of a long list of reforms very necessary to be made in that country. Then foreigners may proceed thither with some assurance of safety; but they must be cautious in doing so before they have their accredited agents in the Republic of Paraguay.

The President would not consent to treat with the Plenipotentiaries except on condition of their using their good offices with the Brazilian Government to bring about a treaty for the settlement of his frontiers with that Power.

It will be sufficient briefly to allude to the pretensions of Don Carlos López in this respect, to understand what he is aiming at. The territory of Paraguay is bounded on the north by Brazil, but the frontier is separated from that of Brazil by immense forests, which towards the north are the refuge of Indians who have never yet been subjugated. To the south, the territory which has lately been given up by Paraguay to Corrientes (in virtue of the treaty made with General Urquiza) is quite uninhabited, and is, besides, bounded and protected by the river Paraná, there running from east to west. It is only, therefore, respecting his northern frontier that he is solicitous; and if, with regard to that, he can obtain what he wishes, which does not seem likely, he thinks he can at any time completely isolate Paraguay from the rest of the world; but for this object he requires that Brazil should give up a portion of territory now solely occupied by Brazilian subjects. Under such circumstances, it is not likely that any such pretensions can be admitted. We know, on the contrary, that Brazil is little disposed to give up the territory in question, greater, as it is, than some of the smaller States of Europe; and that, at this very time, that Government is raising a new city on the right bank of the river Paraguay, and on the extreme frontier of the province of Matto Grosso. This city, which already has its 1,000 inhabitants, is called Albuquerque.

Whatever may be the result of these negotiations, we are very glad that foreign Powers are seriously engaged in establishing commercial relations with one of the most charming countries of the world, and in opening its gates to knowledge and civilization. Paraguay can furnish at very low prices many of the principal productions of the West Indies. It has a great variety of woods and timber of all kinds, suitable for shipbuilding, as well as for objects of luxury; and no country can boast of a greater variety of mineral and vegetable resources. Nevertheless, it may be well to observe, *en passant*, that in our opinion, whatever treaties have been made, or may be made, with the existing Government of Paraguay, will be little more than empty words if they be not supported by forces sufficient to insure their being respected.

The Times (1853) 'Negotiations with Paraguay', *The Times*. Available at:

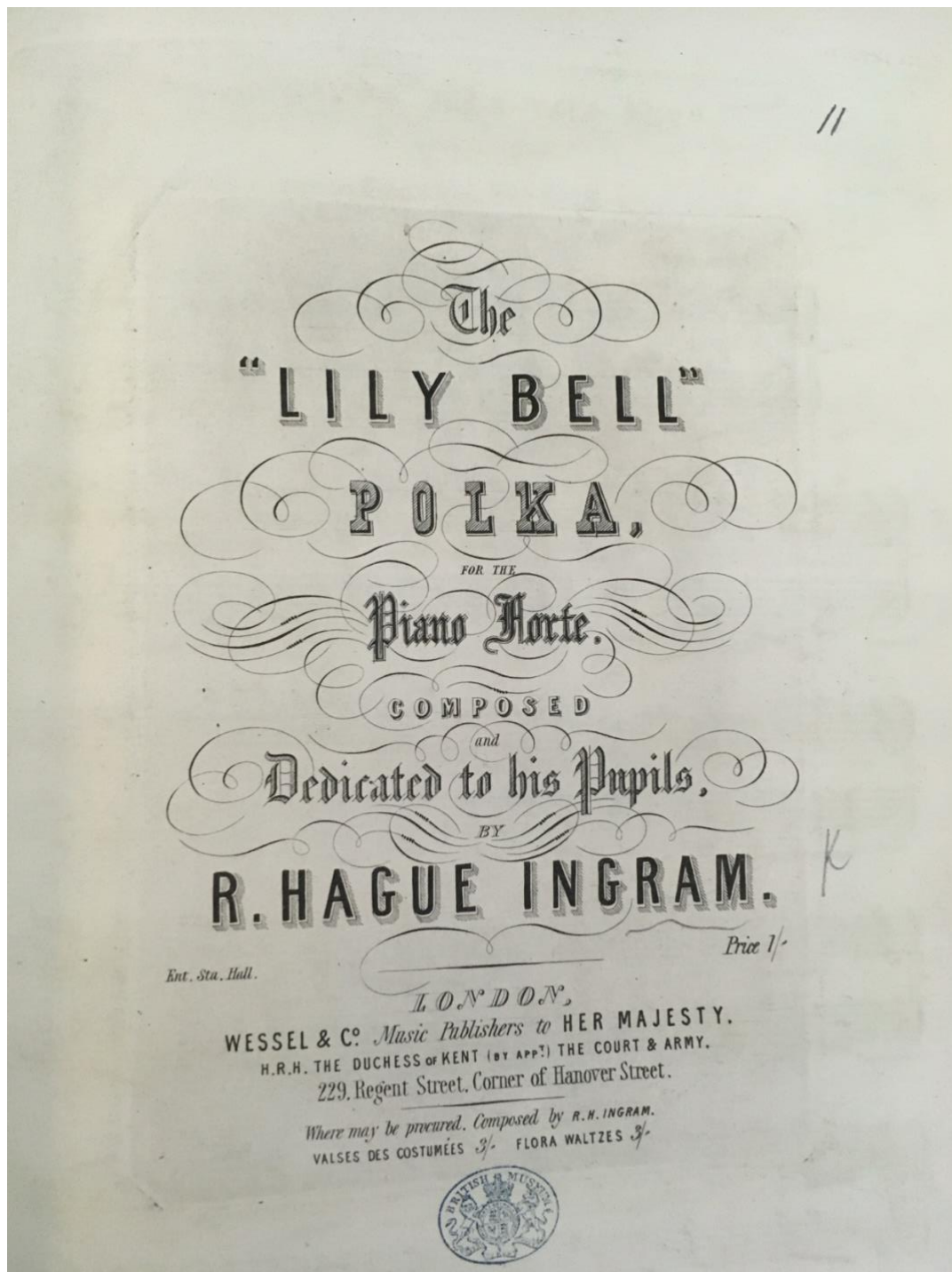
<https://go.gale.com/ps/start.do?p=NCUK&u=bsuc> (Accessed on 1 Dec

2025)

## Appendix 5: Album de los Toques mas Populares del Paraguay – Luis Cavedagni

Title	Sub-title	Time Signature
Himno Nacional del Paraguay	Temp di marcia	4/4
Palomita	Danza Paraguaya	2/4
Paloma	Danza Paraguaya	2/4
Radio Terere	Danza Paraguaya	2/4
El Ciego	Danza Paraguaya	2/4
TO = O	Danza Paraguaya	68
Galopa Paraguaya		2/4
Montonera	Danza Paraguaya	3/4
Cierlo de Santa Fe	Danza Paraguaya	3/8
Galopa de Arpa	Danza Paraguaya	2/4
Galopa Colorado	Danza Paraguaya	2/4
Mama Cumanda	Danza Paraguaya	2/4
Taita Mandió	Polka Chistosa, Danza Paraguaya	2/4

## Appendix 6: Lily Bell Polka



Ingram, R. (ca. 1850) 'The Lily Bell Polka' [score]. Available at: The British Library.



**"THE LILY BELL POLKA"**

composed by

**R. HAGUE INGRAM.***ALLEGRETTO.*

The musical score is written for piano in 2/4 time. It consists of five systems of music, each with a treble and bass staff joined by a brace. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings. The first system begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The second system features a vocal line with the lyrics "cen do." and a forte (*f*) dynamic. The third system includes a fortissimo (*ff*) dynamic and a piano (*p*) dynamic. The fourth and fifth systems continue the melodic and harmonic development of the piece. The score is marked with "CTUS" at the end of the first system and "ff" and "p" in the third system.

**Ingram, R. (ca. 1850) 'The Lily Bell Polka' [score]. Available at: The British Library.**

## Appendix 7: UNA Module List

### MÚSICA

**Título que otorga**

**LICENCIADO/A EN MÚSICA CON ÉNFASIS EN:** <sup>1)</sup> EDUCACIÓN MUSICAL, <sup>2)</sup> INSTRUMENTISTA, <sup>3)</sup> DIRECCIÓN CORAL Y ORQUESTAL O <sup>4)</sup> INVESTIGACIÓN MUSICAL <sup>5)</sup> POPULAR

**Duración:** 10 semestres

**Modalidad:** Presencial

**Carga horaria:** <sup>1)</sup> 3.689 horas, <sup>2)</sup> 3.332 horas, <sup>3)</sup> 3.689 horas, <sup>4)</sup> 3.519 horas y <sup>5)</sup> 2.907

**Turnos:** Mañana o tarde

**Requisitos de Titulación**

- Aprobar todas las asignaturas del Plan de Estudios vigente.
- Aprobar el Proyecto Final de Grado o Tesis.
- Cumplir con 30 horas reloj en tres actividades diferentes de Extensión Universitaria.

**Perfil del Egresado**

**El egresado podrá:**

- Desarrollar en forma integral competencias disciplinarias, interdisciplinarias, investigativas, de docencia, sociales y comunicativas, para desempeñar con solvencia su profesión, y liderar procesos de desarrollo musical a nivel institucional y comunitario, nacional y regional.
- Generar una función social activa, acorde con los requerimientos de nuestra comunidad paraguaya actual, dirigiéndose su actividad hacia la persona integral para superar una formación meramente profesionalizarte, para ello forma a sus estudiantes intelectual y moralmente para el servicio a la sociedad.
- Desarrollar técnicas de vanguardia en la creación musical, aplicadas dentro de un contexto artístico nacional y con proyección universal para forjar una conciencia de innovación y protagonismo, apuntando al grado de excelencia.

**Plan de Estudios aprobado por Resolución N° 0502-00-2013, de fecha 16-10-2013 del Consejo Superior Universitario**

### PLAN DE ESTUDIOS

**PLAN COMÚN**

**Primer Semestre**

Lenguaje Musical I

Medio de Expresión I

Metodología de la Investigación

Informática Básica

Acústica

**Segundo Semestre**

Lenguaje Musical II

Medio de Expresión II

Historia de Arte I

Informática Musical I

Práctica de Conjunto I

**Tercer Semestre**

Lenguaje Musical III

Medio de Expresión III

Historia del Arte II

Informática Musical II

Segundo Instrumento I

Morfología I

Práctica de Conjunto II

**Cuarto Semestre**

Lenguaje Musical IV

Medio de Expresión IV

## **Appendix 8: Interview with Manual Martínez Domínguez, Director. 20 September 2023**

### **[original text in Spanish]**

Hola

Estoy realizando un proyecto de investigación sobre la participación de los jóvenes en la música tradicional y tengo mucho interés en conocer más sobre la educación musical que se brinda en el Ateneo Paraguayo. Visité la escuela brevemente en 2019 para comprar algunas partituras, aunque no estaba en condiciones de hacer más preguntas. ¿Sería posible solicitar una descripción general de los siguientes puntos?

¿A qué edades enseñas?

¿Qué estilos musicales se sirven?

¿Hay algún énfasis particular en los estilos/instrumentos tradicionales?

Por último, ¿la escuela ofrece algún título formal en música?

¡Pido disculpas por mi español! pero espero tener sentido y tengas tiempo de responder.

Muchas gracias

Matt Dicken

### **[English translation of the original text]**

I am carrying out a research project on the participation of young people in traditional music and I am very interested in learning more about the musical education provided at the Ateneo Paraguayo. I visited the school briefly in 2019

to purchase some sheet music, although I was not in a position to ask further questions. Would it be possible to request an overview of the following points?

What ages do you teach?

What musical styles are served?

Is there any particular emphasis on traditional styles/instruments?

Lastly, does the school offer any formal degrees in music?

I apologize for my Spanish! but I hope it makes sense and you have time to respond.

Thank you so much

Matt Dicken

**[Response to questions in Spanish]**

Respondiendo a sus preguntas va este mail, esperando sepa disculpar la tardanza.

1. ¿A qué edades enseñas? Desde los 6 meses de edad. Recordemos que el Ateneo ha implementado en Paraguay la Estimulación Musical Temprana (EMT) en el año 2007.

2. ¿Qué estilos musicales se sirven? Principalmente música académica occidental, aunque los métodos de enseñanza que el Ateneo utiliza para enseñar, no se encuentra enmarcado en el rigorismo de los planes de estudios academicistas.

3. ¿Hay algún énfasis particular en los estilos/instrumentos tradicionales? Primero habría que definir qué es "tradicional", luego podríamos responder.

4. Por último, ¿la escuela ofrece algún título formal en música?. Sí. El Ateneo Paraguayo fue la primera institución del país en hacerlo. Los títulos se expiden de conformidad a un Decreto Presidencial y otro Ministerial, pero la situación en la que se encuentra el sistema educativo paraguayo hace que el Ateneo no se avenga a los enfoques propuestos por el Ministerio. De ahí que el Ateneo sea una institución autogestionada académicamente.

Estamos a sus órdenes. Cordialmente, Manuel Martínez Domínguez, Director General.

This email is in response to your questions, hoping you can excuse the delay.

1. What ages do you teach? From 6 months of age. Let us remember that the Ateneo has implemented Early Musical Stimulation (EMT) in Paraguay in 2007.

2. What musical styles are served? Mainly Western academic music, although the teaching methods that the Ateneo uses to teach are not framed in the rigorism of academic curricula.

3. Is there any particular emphasis on traditional styles/instruments? First, we would have to define what "traditional" is, then we could answer.

4. Lastly, does the school offer any formal degrees in music? Yes. The Ateneo Paraguayo was the first institution in the country to do so. The degrees are

issued in accordance with a Presidential and a Ministerial Decree, but the situation in which the Paraguayan educational system finds itself means that the Ateneo does not comply with the approaches proposed by the Ministry. Hence, the Ateneo is an academically self-managed institution.

We are under your command. Best regards, Manuel Martínez Domínguez,  
General Director.

## **Appendix 9: Interview with María Eugenia Ayala – 4 September 2023**

### **Comunicación Bellas Artes**

Buenas tardes.

Esta respuesta remite el Coordinador de la carrera de Música.

En la carrera de la Licenciatura musical estamos abocados al saber general, que es el principio principal de la educación, o sea, no acercamos a nuestros estudiantes a un conocimiento basado en géneros o estilos. Ahora bien, si, se encara el aprendizaje de los mismos según las necesidades pedagógicas del profesional de turno. Nuestra malla curricular compone una materia que sustenta el saber de la música en el Paraguay denominada Investigación musical e Historia de la Música Paraguaya. También implementamos la asignatura Lengua Guaraní dictada por una excelente profesional de una manera muy práctica, donde nuestros estudiantes a través de el canto aprenden canciones del acervo cultural musical paraguayo, de tal forma a afianzar la lecto escritura y el hablar del idioma.

Good afternoon.

This response is sent by the Coordinator of the Music degree.

In the Bachelor of Music degree we are focused on general knowledge, which is the main principle of education, that is, we do not bring our students closer to knowledge based on genres or styles. Now, yes, their learning is addressed according to the pedagogical needs of the professional on duty. Our curriculum consists of a subject that supports the knowledge of music in Paraguay called

Musical Research and History of Paraguayan Music. We also implement the Guaraní Language subject taught by an excellent professional in a very practical way, where our students through singing learn songs from the Paraguayan musical cultural heritage, in order to strengthen reading, writing and speaking of the language.



## **Appendix 10: Interview with Fidel Zarza – Festival del Takuare'ê**

En primer lugar agradezco la confianza y quiero informarte que con mi señora Myrian Solis aparte de ser presentadores del Festival Del Takuare'ê, somos de un centenar más anualmente en todo el país. Con gusto puedes usar nuestros nombres, nuestra productora se denomina MUNDO DEL FOLKLORE Producciones y si te parece también puedes nombrar.

First of all, I appreciate the trust and I want to inform you that with my wife Myrian Solis, apart from being presenters of the Festival Del Takuare'ê, we are about a hundred more annually throughout the country. You can gladly use our names; our production company is called MUNDO DEL FOLKLORE Producciones and if you like you can also name.

- 1) El Festival Del Takuare'ê fue idea de un grupo de jóvenes quienes en el año 1977 sentados sobre la muralla del mercado de abastos que hasta ahora se encuentra frente al Club Luis Alberto de Herrera donde se realiza el evento, que actividad podrían realizar para la comunidad de Guarambaré, entre algunas sugerencias alguien dice, hagamos un Festival, la pregunta entre ellos si como se va denominar, muchos nombres dieron pero eligieron TAKUARE'Ê, primero por que es el rubro agrícola que mas caracteriza a los guarambareños, aparte la ciudad cuenta con dos ingenios azucareros. Buscaron algunas personas como asesores y aceptaron el cargo Serafín Francia Campos un referente comunicador e investigador del folklore, también el escritor

Rudi Torga. El Festival desde el año 1982 pasa a ser competitivo, actualmente se convierte para muchos talentos como un trampolín a la fama. Muchos son los artistas hoy día ya reconocidos por todo el mundo y quienes fueron ganadores del Festival en su momento.

The Takuare'ê Festival was the idea of a group of young people who in 1977, sitting on the wall of the food market that until now is in front of the Luis Alberto de Herrera Club where the event takes place, what activity could they do for the community of Guarambaré, among some suggestions someone says, let's have a Festival, the question among them is what is it going to be called, they gave many names but they chose TAKUARE'Ê, first because it is the agricultural sector that most characterizes the Guarambareños, apart from the city. It has two sugar mills. They looked for some people as advisors and Serafín Francia Campos, a leading communicator and researcher of folklore, and also the writer Rudi Torga, accepted the position. Since 1982, the Festival has become competitive; it currently becomes a springboard to fame for many talents. There are many artists today already recognized around the world and who were winners of the Festival at the time.

- 2) Los participantes entre los cuales hay niños, adolescentes, jóvenes y de todas las edades, todos aficionados, sin tener una grabación, vienen de diferentes localidades del Paraguay. Las más distantes son Vallemi Departamento Alto Paraguay 600 km, Pilar, Laureles, Cerrito Departamento Ñeembucu 400 km, Encarnación Itapua 380 km,

Ciudad del Este, Hernandarias, Pte Franco 350km. Cito esto a lugares nada mas como ejemplos. Se destaca los festivales competitivos 40 aproximadamente en todo el país y uno en Bs As Argentina. Éste año los clasificados de éstos pre, sumaron 350 números artísticos, 2400 artistas en escenario que se presentaron en 50 hs aproximadamente de Festival.

The participants, among whom there are children, adolescents, young people and all ages, all amateurs, without having a recording, come from different locations in Paraguay. The most distant are Vallemi Department Alto Paraguay 600 km, Pilar, Laureles, Cerrito Department Ñeembucu 400 km, Encarnación Itapua 380 km, Ciudad del Este, Hernandarias, Pte Franco 350km. I cite this to places only as examples. Approximately 40 competitive festivals stand out throughout the country and one in Buenos Aires Argentina. This year, the pre-qualifiers totaled 350 artistic acts, 2,400 artists on stage who performed in approximately 50 hours of the Festival.

- 3) La mayor preocupación que tenemos es la falta de política vultural del Estado, TAKUARE'Ê es una Asociación sin fines de lucro y no dispone de rubro para dar acompañamiento a estos niños y jóvenes artistas, ojalá muy pronto el Gobierno Nacional pueda brindar apoyo a los ganadores, sería la mejor inversión que se puede hacer por el país.

The biggest concern we have is the lack of cultural policy of the State, TAKUARE'Ê is a non-profit Association and does not have the area to provide support to these children and young artists, hopefully very soon the National Government will be able to provide support to the winners, it would be the best investment that can be made for the country.

- 4) Digamos que en un 50% ya son alumnos de conservatorios, otros que van a seguir, pero aclarando que en su mayoría hacen por su propia cuenta, muy pocos en instituciones públicas del estado.

Let's say that 50% are already students of conservatories, others who are going to continue, but clarifying that the majority do it on their own, very few in public institutions of the state.

- 5) En forma espontánea se involucran, entendemos por naturaleza misma. Reitero, falta una política de difusión de nuestra cultura.

They spontaneously get involved, we understand by nature itself. I reiterate, there is a lack of a policy to disseminate our culture

- 6) En un 50% se distribuye el involucramiento de los talentos de la ciudad y el campo. The involvement of talents from the city and the countryside is distributed 50%.

7 )El mayor desafío del Festival del Takuare'ê es lograr que el Estado declare de interes cultural Nacional y por ende incluir en el presupuesto del Estado y así facilitar más el apoyo para éstos artistas participantes.

The biggest challenge of the Takuare'ê Festival is to get the State to declare it of National cultural interest and therefore include it in the State budget and thus further facilitate support for these participating artists.

8) El patriotismo y paraguayidad expresan los participantes a través del arte en gral, destaco que el evento artístico cultural abarca todo el rubro artístico. La danza tiene según reglamento 7 categorías. El teatro, la música en sus diversas expresiones, poesía en guarani y castellano, Caso ñemombe'u (contar cuentos) suman 26 categorías. Total 33 categorías.

Se siente en sentimiento de paraguayidad y reitero, es en forma espontánea, desde mi punto de vista un sentimiento expreso a través del arte.

The participants express patriotism and Paraguayidad through art in general, I highlight that the cultural artistic event covers the entire artistic field. According to the regulations, dance has 7 categories. Theater, music in its various expressions, poetry in Guarani and Spanish, Caso ñemombe'u (storytelling) total 26 categories. Total 33 categories.

It is felt in a feeling of Paraguayidad and I reiterate, it is spontaneous, from my point of view a feeling expressed through art.

## **Appendix 11: Interview with Tania Ramos – 30 December 2019**

- 1. I was lucky enough to listen to some of the compositions that Remigio Pereira has dedicated to you.**

**Could you talk about some of these new works and their importance to modern traditional music?**

I am going to talk about Remigio Pereira's music, in general and in particular: in general, he is a musician who, using the language of our time, always incorporates elements that allow him to be recognized as Paraguayan. He is a great arranger as well as a composer who makes his music accessible to both the connoisseur and the general public.

In relation to the music for guitar and orchestra that he dedicated to me, the “Little Fantasy for Guitar and String Orchestra” in addition to what has already been mentioned, I find the prominence that the guitar has at all times interesting.

- 2. Regarding observing possible audience differences throughout Paraguay. How do you feel that the people of Asunción consider traditional music?**

Assumption as such I feel that it considers traditional music as something out of fashion, from another era, that no longer represents them.

In fact, there were rock groups that took the guaranias and polkas that are in 6/8 and performed them in 4/4.

Young performers are also exploring the reharmonization of Paraguayan music using many chords from jazz as a synonym for modernity.

**3. What challenges do you feel traditional music faces when attracting a younger audience?**

The greatest challenges would be found in education: if from the academy itself, considering the academy the study of music in general and Paraguayan music in particular, it is not given the corresponding value, it is very difficult for it to find an echo among the young public. That, added to the media where traditional music does not find a valuable space either, is an enormous challenge that can hardly be reversed.

**4. I have read many interesting things about *Paraguayidad* and the rich Paraguayan cultural identity. Could I ask you about your understanding of *Paraguayidad*, in a general sense and also in relation to specific musical elements of Paraguayan music?**

Among those of us who today think about Paraguayan music from research and composition, we are positioned in two lines:

- There are those who consider Paraguayan music to be composed by Paraguayans, regardless of whether we find identifying musical elements in it.

- There are those of us who consider that for a composition to be considered Paraguayan it must have some identifying element, generally it is the rhythm or the language, Guaraní in this case or sometimes situations or descriptions specific to our Paraguayan identity. It could also be a reference to well-known works. Currently there are young people recording rap in Guaraní for example, and I find it interesting from the point of view of the language and the reach it can have among the youth population.

**5. Do you feel that *Paraguayidad* as an expression resonates with young people today as a means to define their cultural identity?**

Yeah. Fortunately, I find Paraguayanism in many compositions and I find it interesting as a reaffirmation of it. In the email I will give you some examples.



## Appendix 12: Interview/conversation with Sixto Corbalán 11 November 2023

Thinking as a harpist

From the way of thinking is a and seven note which we needing to preserve certain elements of sound and traditional tradition yeah or whether this is much more natural, or you don't even think in that way and it's what comes naturally

I am thinking from a harpist, the harp, and the harpist here in Paraguay, the way of thinking is just with seven notes. We don't where is the other five (at the beginning when we start playing). We have a diatonic harp, we know at first, we have to find something, but we have a limit – but when we cross the limit, we want to find out if there are another five notes we can put inside there, the music. That means we can have a challenge in the harmony, and the melody of course.

Before that is the rhythm section, how can we develop the rhythm section. In that rhythm section we don't have a lot to say because if you listen to Paraguayan music every rhythm is like not the same, but we change with the melody seems to be different but always there is the *syncopado* [syncopation] in general.

So, we developed with the seven notes, with the diatonic. I will always talk from the view of the harpist. So, from there is my experience of course we go because I'm a harpist in in after that I saw that all harpists, we're talking from the 1930s, 40s, 50s they developed lot of rhythmic section that they don't really

think about [developing] it is natural. In the countryside when I told you when we went to Guambare, the countryside is really that rhythmic inside.

When you listen to the music, the music and the melody, the rhythm and the basic harmony, because the basic harmony is a more beautiful for me, you know we're talking about 1-4-5 you know! It is the most beautiful in the world. You can change this 1-4-5 and make a difference with the functional harmony, but when we talk about functional harmony it is very academic. Now that I'm talking with somebody that is inside [academia] like you or something but we're talking with these people [from the countryside], let's think that we're talking with these people.

So, for me is, this is the beginning of the of the root to understand what they want to say to us with the rhythm, because the people, when they listen to the music they want to dance.

if you saw the people, the people just listen to the music and dance and if you can do this, that is the traditional popular music because this is a is a mix of everything you just listen to music and dance. I don't want to think commercially and nothing this is the music.

So, when you make a new sound, by a new sound I mean out of the seven notes - when we try to find the other five, or simply just seven note just diatonic music and so that's mean in everything is OK but make music with seven notes in the piece in this moment. I think in not not so many people want to want to

do this because it's very difficult, but they say that it's very easy, do you understand?

MD: yeah I understand absolutely because it's just it is who may be putting unnecessary pressure in the in that said to over complicate and the question is in the creation maybe where the seven notes can be different enough but still familiar and the challenge is a very difficult skill as a songwriter or as a composer to change - to be able to change the small amount of material gently but not so much. It has to still have as you say still have everything that people need because maybe it's the thing that people need from music rather than what they that they acted as you say the academic thing of trying to pick it to pieces and it's a far more fundamental me need for a need for elements to be there like you say without the... without the three

SIXTO: you know the fruit where you buy in the supermarket we can it can fruit yeah yeah yeah when it is it's

like a conic music you know already which scale is you know already that you were working on the articulation you know really that is functional harmony, this is a sub five to go to the five and is in the secondary dominant to go to some somewhere else - or the goal is you know it's like planet music you're in sound for me –

When I listen to new music, I want I don't want to hear how many scales you know, or you learn in the university or whatever. I want to listen your soul if you if you believe in the soul or there is more of the soul that say something if I listen that OK I can say I using something interesting and is modern because the meaning of modern I understand right now in this moment and in saying say right now with the music that is folk music just folk in traditional just think that it's the same – think that folk music is of the people - that music of the people or something like that music accepted of the people. In this moment we have for example the reggaeton is accepted for so many people many years ago, so that is traditional folk music in this moment that is modern.

I understand very well when you say traditional - but when I listen to this traditional research or search of the musician I don't want to listen (that I told you) to how many scales you are doing in your music to make it better [because then] you're making music for a musician - and then you see some of them say “oh wow that is a whole scale” in the traditional music and really the rhythm section is great and whatever - you can smoke a weed and think whatever you want - but in that that is not my goal and when I listen the new music or a modern music, traditional music, so that's why when I compose music I really don't want to go out from the 6/8 - because I'm in my house, in my home is a traditional music that I can't hear inside -

but sometimes I say: I want to be out of that and make other friends like a new friend in France. OK I want to make friends with the Chacuera this is the cousin of the polca or I want to make friends with the chamame or let's go far away

and I want to make friends with the samba Brazileras - but I have to be there many years to understand really because they have the same root like us – and when I'm in other neighbour that will be my neighbour - when I'm in this neighbourhood [musically] I understand that they also have the same goal to try to keep the root – keep the root and sound different I listened that, so in I'm not far away from my house like home is always but

OK I will play now it's like nice and modern to say like new play jazz - OK if you say to me speak to let's play a 'Night in Tunisia' - OK we are gonna play it, but I'm not gonna play like the real root but if I understand exactly the reading it is easy - it's easy to understand it's easy to know. And from that, I say to the jazz musician, they develop something interesting for me to understand the functional harmony and out of that is great, but very functional and mathematic because it is a mathematical and automatically makes me not like the mathematic part - I never liked the mathematic. However, I think that when everything is like, the second to the five to go to the one, or something like that, it's very nice harmony.

How can I develop the harmony?

OK in that moment in the 2002 I made this music 'Susurros de la Noche'

That was my research in that moment (2002) So I made this (insert score of the tune on the guitar) – it is easy to understand – the melody moves down step by step – 5 to 5 to go to the one -

So for me it was a challenge to understand where is the secondary dominant and make possible and use the tension and if it's possible to put more extension to the chords - it's the harmony was the way of thinking in that moment – for me it was very interesting from the [perspective of] harp, the harp was always - but I wanted the music to be danceable and how can I make this. Most of the music (traditional polcas) is in major [key]. In that moment in 2002 I was travelling abroad, in Europe and Asian with a dance group and the dance group always had a musician and this musician make this kind of music always. So, I wanted to make this in music in a minor key – how to change this?

Because we have the *polca* and the fast *polca* is the *polca kyre'y*. So, this *kyre'y* I wanted to make with '*Susurros de la Noche*'. Especially in the rhythmic section I wanted it to sound like that - but changing the harmony that was my challenge - I wanted to put three sections A B & C and the B is (Insert score example)

That is my goal to make that sound harmonically, but rhythmically the same as polca Kyre'y – but to be danceable. At that time (2002) the people from the dance group made a choreography of this music – so the music is structured (in terms of the form) but there is room for improvisation. I often play this music with Pedro Martinez, because his way of thinking is very much like this.

The same as all music, so rhythmically the music is a *polca*. Not [like] in the countryside, because it's not with the same phrases - it's not from the countryside. If I use the phrasing of the countryside maybe will be much better!

But I'm in real tune [with the countryside], the real time will be the seven diatonic notes in the music. In this case, of course the people can understand and can accept the music when it is diatonic and is easier to understand, understand and feel the music. The music I make is a little more difficult, but they [countryside folk] can still understand and feel the music but the feeling is not 100%. This music is more the City Music.

you would see a very clear difference between the sort of urban City Music and the country. We would use the word liberal, but it's simple I want to this is the chromatic [scale] when I think about composing in this period of my life.

I mean a period that I don't want to sing to the people, I want to see what happens if I mix this experience with the rhythm and harmony and melody, but nothing commercial of course. I just want to play in and see what happens in the here and now. I don't think like it's math and I don't think with a chord - I just play the music is just comes.

OK I want to play this, I want to play it differently and I want to play out of what I was playing with the traditional and the functional and say, OK let's make something I don't know what could happen.

I make this music it is only the rhythmic element of that root - but everything harmonically is pushing again against this indeed the discordance is almost borrowing a sort of classical dissonance but then and this is something I notice

with the trio with Pedro as well - those moments of like interlude so just snapping away from the rhythmic pulse for a second.

There's something that's been popping in my head and is I think this this thing of you know how do you spell having to explain what is mad yes so so it's not about so much putting the music into a box but saying and saying well this this needs to be modern thinking or this needs to be traditional thinking it's actually just moving much more fluidly or much more smoothly between worlds but without prescribing over that saying like this I'm doing this I'm doing that but just moving smoothly between

maybe it's the modern way of thinking is more appropriate rather than the modern music itself we're calling it modern music but just a yeah I don't know I mean we perhaps call it a multicultural or a global way of thinking maybe yeah maybe but for me for example my experience this music

The name [of the piece] is 'conversations' it is the name of the music - like to make conversation of the life is like a micro composition that I make attack but is really was difficult for me to finish maybe took me two weeks something like that to finish because the speech is different when I'm in a different key different key I mean with the G melodic minor - making a mix of all the sounds that we were hearing in in our life in the 19th century you know with mother with szalinski chamber they will see but when I make music traditional music is faster the speech you have you have to say something we're talking about that yeah when you make mother or traditional or something like that you say something



interesting not something interesting and make something tracking of course depend of you depend on the other person who received the message so how you receive the message so in that could

yes I was thinking in his in he did so many things I I was reading that he makes also the music of the videos so something like that that you can keep wow that is that is the way of thinking of the of the world in with the music I think the music is news it is not it's not change or try to change a massive people yeah in in the gift of the culture from that.

After the Second World is very strong immigration more in Europe but here in South America is not too much and also in Paraguay is not because we didn't have that. Maybe until the 90s we are not very intoxicated of the massive people like that. Effective antiquity was amazing!

would you see then the political link so if you say sort of, from the transition to democracy in the in the early 1990s that there is that change - so when perhaps under Stroessner's rule was used to that power - not so bothered by the rest of the world but looking more inside the nation and that impact on tradition is that for that reason the there's a strength in the in the traditional music and the folk music that in the 90s starts to change because of then all of a sudden looking outwards instead of focusing inwards you know a little bit of politics? not my way of thinking, we are musicians we're not politicians – I'm not political but in the culture is politics - my parents they're not political also they're not musician but my mom is born in the countryside very countryside my dad is from

Asunción she came here and found my father my dad and you know it's a mix of the countryside with the city.

OK my mom always say the music was amazing - she loved music. My dad also, my dad likes The Beatles, rock'n'roll and everything. My mom is very *polca, polca, polca* My mom said in the past the polca was amazing - in that moment with the people stronger and before the stronger or better in the 60s in the 60s to 76 a wow lot of musicians they were working together to make a more strong stronger the music people

moment they knew how to work in community musician community that's why we make lot of music because the community of the artist load of artists of course that make possible because I strongly help them in also the people here inside the music you know that the music is very important for the people they know we need help to make in the polls and the point in the *polca* in some people when you talk with some of the people you know that love other kind of music not only polka you know the classic music I don't want to say name but when they listen for me just it's my thinking they don't like Luis Alberto Parola why they don't like I always ask in ice cream

three start to make a tool we never have like that in the moment and not make really great music and great root music in from their start load of music musician too to make their own speech in music that for me is thanks to the dictator after the detector in 1989 in the 90s when I start did the democratic for me is just thinking for the opportunities of the other forms or the people yeah yeah just

make music in they don't care just they want to be free because that is the democracy

they want to feel they are free, but you are not free - everything is always more complicated is that perhaps it isn't it to see binary things - you know the dictatorship must be bad - but you see it's much more complicated isn't it and it means different things.

In that moment they start playing of course was the same way of singing of the Colorado yeah same way of singing of the Colorado like Stroessner - I'm not saying that he is perfect no! I'm just talking about the music - he was crazy, I mean he was crazy a crazy man - but just for the opportunity of the musician in that time they make possible, something different that they never imagined they never imagined inside of his mindedness consent conscience yeah yeah in

after that [democracy] the people just think like the Colorado in the way of thinking was changing and changing and it's very commercial and when you arrive in the 2000/2002

Fine until now it's very commercial and before not was very commercial it was like the system told you how to do music. or how to do your job making just money not making with your soul and that is the problem - so before it's showing the music is important for Society - the music is identity it is national identity is in an important part of it.

I often hear this you know, the terms like the harp being the symbol of national identity - you know the harp itself symbolising Paraguayan identity in lots of ways but I think this is maybe a question around folk and traditional again - the music of the people but music that is something that is important to society in that I suppose the political element is using music to glue people together or to bind people together when he [Stroessner] said when I listened at least in National Instrument and for the for the Paraguay people and you told me the harp is why is the national hard why is very important for you and they're going to say lot of things and I can send you a lot

they're singing just they're simply he is very strong that what I'm saying of my colleague but they're always playing like the same they don't want to change - but not because they don't have the talent, they have the school they have the root inside like every harvest the every artist but the system say OK play always 'Galopera' or 'Danza Paraguaya' etc row an and that make you possible to live in the world that is difficult and so when you see heart is here on the stage this week - why you are playing the same music

always it is my experience to be flexible because - I'm making the world healthier, and every year is the same I say we don't want to descend anymore a paragon partner just one heartbeat one I want to listen because it's always the same we we're not at tourist he is of course music for export but in

I don't want to listen in my festival the same every year for harpies so why you are playing ladies you asked to the six to because the tradition we have to keep

the tradition I say it's important to keep that tradition, of course it's important to keep the tradition.

yeah, I totally I understand, so the view that to keep the tradition they feel as if you have to preserve it to have to freeze - they have to preserve of course Matt I agree with that we have to preserve.

he talks he writes about the wait sometimes I thought traditions are sometimes stores are gonna static frozen whole and is how that isn't how helpful way to think of culture and traditions moving but that is outside lightly said to take like a galloper or something and play it the same every time is perhaps freezing the tradition and then that does that that doesn't become something that breathes and become and moves with people naturally it's something like a like a museum or something if I made that but if I said that very clearly but yeah it's a good book hello I like I like reading the he said he's got an interesting writer but I I really of course I worry about the tradition I'm worried about the tradition an I'm worried about the this musician like the composer of column panna or the great composer that we have but they not gonna die then you're gonna die never ever in I'm not in I'm not in I want to listen always I love to listen paragon manages to say example I like to listen paragon panel in but not always in the same way that you are playing every single week you're playing the same your but in 20 years you're playing the same of course you are keep your keeping the root that is your speech yeah you want to keep the truth of course when you play after poll cabana you play you know in lava can you play different level but you don't playing like la bamba from Mexico exactly the route like that you

play different so that doesn't make sense if you if you play traditional music from Latin America you have play like that play the same and keep their root but they're not keeping the root they're saying different embark just the speeches to keep the provision route because we don't have to lose so you find people and you discuss with them and with using static we then really is not

## Appendix 13: 'Conversaciones' Sixto Corbálan (2022)

### Conversaciones

Sixto Corbalan

The musical score is written for Arpa (Arpeggiator) and Ar. (Acordeón). The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 6/8. The score is divided into five systems, each with a measure number in a box at the beginning of the first staff.

- System 1:** Measures 1-4. The Arpa part has a whole rest in the treble and a rhythmic pattern in the bass. The Ar. part has a whole rest in the treble and a rhythmic pattern in the bass.
- System 2:** Measures 5-8. The Arpa part has a whole rest in the treble and a rhythmic pattern in the bass. The Ar. part has a whole rest in the treble and a rhythmic pattern in the bass.
- System 3:** Measures 9-12. The Arpa part has a whole rest in the treble and a rhythmic pattern in the bass. The Ar. part has a whole rest in the treble and a rhythmic pattern in the bass.
- System 4:** Measures 13-16. The Arpa part has a whole rest in the treble and a rhythmic pattern in the bass. The Ar. part has a whole rest in the treble and a rhythmic pattern in the bass.
- System 5:** Measures 17-20. The Arpa part has a whole rest in the treble and a rhythmic pattern in the bass. The Ar. part has a whole rest in the treble and a rhythmic pattern in the bass.

©

**Corbálan, S (2016) *Conversaciones* [score]. © Sixto Corbálan**

## **Appendix 14: Interview with Carmen Monges May 2024**

Aquí van las respuestas. Matt, te pido una disculpa por la demora, sinceramente, fue un trabajo difícil entrar nuevamente en la idea de aquella canción, volver a aquel 2021 y tratar de revivir lo que sentía en ese momento, sin embargo, fue lindo recordar y conectar nuevamente con esa canción.

### **Influencias musicales al crear la canción:**

Las influencias que traigo son las folclóricas. La música tradicional paraguaya fue la raíz y el camino de la canción.

### **Elementos de la música tradicional era importante retener en la canción**

Podemos decir que la canción está dentro del subgénero de la polca paraguaya: la polca canción. Elementos como la rítmica y acompañamientos tradicionales dieron paso a una exploración también melódica que buscaba integrar ese lenguaje tradicional con una estética propia.

### **Tomaste alguna influencia estilística de otros géneros:**

El sentido libre o de improvisación y la estructura de la canción; fueron influencias foráneas en la canción. Expresar la paraguayidad en la música. ¿Qué aspectos de la canción crees que reflejan esto?

Es importante conocer las raíces de la música tradicional para poder acercarse a una búsqueda propia con una identidad paraguaya. El idioma guaraní, un aspecto que expresa la paraguayidad. “Eremina”, en idioma guaraní, significa “Dime”, título de la canción.



Espero que estas respuestas te ayuden y quedo a tu disposición.

Estaría encantada de leer el trabajo de investigación.

Muchas gracias Matt.

Saludos!!

Carmen

Here are the answers. Matt, I apologize for the delay, honestly, it was a difficult job to get into the idea of that song again, to go back to that 2021 and try to relive what I felt at that moment, however, it was nice to remember and connect again with that song.

**Musical influences when creating the song:**

The influences I bring are folklore. Traditional Paraguayan music was the root and path of the song.

**Elements of traditional music were important to retain in the song:**

We can say that the song is within the subgenre of Paraguayan polka: the polka song. Elements such as rhythm and traditional accompaniments gave way to a melodic exploration that sought to integrate that traditional language with its own aesthetics.

**Did you take some stylistic influence from other genres?**

The free or improvisational sense and the structure of the song; They were foreign influences on the song.

Express Paraguay in music. What aspects of the song do you think reflect this?

It is important to know the roots of traditional music to be able to approach your own search with a Paraguayan identity. The Guaraní language, an aspect that expresses Paraguay. “Eremina”, in the Guaraní language, means “Tell me”, the title of the song.

I hope these answers help you and I remain at your disposal.

I would be delighted to read the research paper.

Thank you very much Matt.

Greetings!!

Carmen

## **Appendix 15: Interview with Alejandra Almada – 9 May 2024**

### **[Questions in Spanish Language]**

Noto una fuerte influencia de la música rock en la canción; sin embargo, me interesa saber ¿cómo creaste una fusión con elementos musicales tradicionales paraguayos?

¿Qué elementos musicales sentiste que eran los más importantes para reflejar la identidad paraguaya?

En cuanto a la letra de la canción, noté que hay letras originales y nuevas en el sitio web de Jeporeka. ¿De dónde viene la canción original? ¿Y cuáles fueron tus ideas creativas para desarrollar una nueva versión?

En mi opinión, la canción es una de las más aventureras del proyecto Jeporeka 2021. ¿Fue esto una preocupación para usted y el equipo creativo? por ejemplo, ¿querías traspasar los límites? ¿O fue la fusión de estilos un proceso natural?

### **[Questions in English Language]**

I notice a strong influence of rock music in the song; However, I am interested in knowing how you created a fusion with traditional Paraguayan musical elements?

What musical elements did you feel were the most important to reflect Paraguayan identity?

As for the lyrics of the song, I noticed that there are original and new lyrics on Jeporeka's website. Where does the original song come from? And what were your creative ideas for developing a new version?

In my opinion, the song is one of the most adventurous songs from the Jeporeka 2021 project. Was this a concern for you and the creative team? For example, did you want to push the boundaries? Or was the fusion of styles a natural process?

### **[Spanish Language Answers]**

Buenas noches! Te envío las respuestas, espero puedan ser de utilidad, tardé un poco porque esta canción fue un trabajo en equipo, entonces quise agregar también las opiniones de mis compañeros compositores, Mijael Peralta y Majo Rodríguez 😊 si hay alguna duda, puedo traducir las respuestas al inglés ya que también hablo un poco 🤝😊

Aquí van:

1. En cuanto a la música, digamos que todo sucedió de manera muy intuitiva, no hubo parámetros técnicos ni académicos con los cuales evaluábamos el proceso creativo. Sino más bien una tendencia a explorar musicalmente. Los

tres integrantes del equipo veníamos de estilos diferentes, yo de la música clásica, como cantante lírica, Mijael del rock y Majo tenía una base de música popular, al final, nos dimos cuenta de que teníamos una estética muy parecida, por más de que veníamos de estilos muy distintos, decidimos jugar y sacar todo lo que teníamos dentro sin limitarnos en pos de construir esta canción. En cuanto a los elementos paraguayos es difícil definir qué es y qué no es nacional, al fin y al cabo es una canción creada por 3 personas paraguayas, se podría decir que simplemente tomamos la decisión de hacerla en 6/8 y el resto lo fuimos descubriendo por el camino. En cuanto a los instrumentos, cabe destacar que el sonido de las guitarras también forman parte del folklore paraguayo ya que junto con el arpa paraguaya, son instrumentos base de nuestra música.

2. La letra de la canción, viene de una larga introspección acerca de lo que vivimos socialmente en un período de tiempo complejo, en el que el individualismo es lo que prima. Esta canción nos habla del encuentro, y de como podemos construir la paz, desde el encuentro con el otro, una paz que existe también, dentro de cada uno de nosotros. Además, la inspiración nace de las obras de un compositor paraguayo, Emiliano R. Fernández, quién en vida estuvo en la guerra del Chaco, y compuso varias canciones al respecto. A través de sus letras, pudimos ver otro punto de conexión con la obra artística elegida "Paz del Chaco". Donde pudimos ver a dos seres humanos, estrechando sus manos, reflejados el uno en el otro, como un signo de paz.

El mensaje general de la canción va más allá de un hito o evento histórico específico, quisimos trasladar esas vivencias y lo aprendido de esta experiencia histórica, al contexto de vida actual de cada individuo que escuche la canción, para así dar esperanzas y sanar, a través de nuestra música.

3. En concordancia con la primera respuesta, la idea siempre fue que suene un poco tradicional pero dentro de lo que nos identifica a los 3 compositores, musicalmente, ya que consumimos mucha música extranjera también. El elemento rítmico es lo principal en esta canción, quizá lo que más representa ese aire paraguayo, aunque el solo de batería está totalmente inspirado en el rock. Luego armónicamente se podría decir que es una exploración, podríamos llamarlo hasta progresivo, ya que estructuralmente la canción no es un estándar. Y la cereza sobre el pastel, como siempre, la melodía, no hubo limitaciones creativas en cuanto a las voces o melodías de ciertos instrumentos (cuerdas y guitarra), sino más bien quisimos crear una melodía que represente lo que queríamos transmitir, dentro del rango vocal de los cantantes... algo que nos inspiró también fue la imagen de la fotografía, es por eso que durante toda la canción reflejamos la idea del "espejo", el vernos reflejados el uno en el otro, a través de nuestras voces e instrumentos.

Estas son nuestras respuestas, si algo no está claro, favor avisarme, y lo traduzco al inglés. Muchas gracias y espero sea de utilidad 🙏😊. Saludos desde Asunción!

**[English Translation Answers]**

Good night! I'm sending you the answers, I hope they can be useful, it took me a while because this song was a team effort, so I also wanted to add the opinions of my fellow composers, Mijael Peralta and Majo Rodríguez 😊 if there is any question, I can translate the answers to English since I also speak a little 🤝😊

Here they go:

1. As for the music, let's say that everything happened very intuitively, there were no technical or academic parameters with which we evaluated the creative process. But rather a tendency to explore musically. The three members of the team came from different styles, I from classical music, as a lyrical singer, Mijael from rock and Majo had a base in popular music, in the end, we realized that we had a very similar aesthetic, even though we We came from very different styles, we decided to play and bring out everything we had inside without limiting ourselves in order to build this song. As for the Paraguayan elements, it is difficult to define what is and what is not national, after all it is a song created by 3 Paraguayan people, you could say that we simply made the decision to do it in 6/8 and the rest were discovering along the way. As for the instruments, it should be noted that the sound of the guitars is also part of Paraguayan folklore since, together with the Paraguayan harp, they are the basic instruments of our music.

2. The lyrics of the song come from a long introspection about what we experience socially in a complex period of time, in which individualism is what prevails. This song tells us about the encounter, and how we can build peace, from the encounter with the other, a peace that also exists within each of us. Furthermore, the inspiration comes from the works of a Paraguayan composer, Emiliano R. Fernández, who during his lifetime was in the Chaco War, and composed several songs about it. Through his lyrics, we were able to see another point of connection with the chosen artistic work "Paz del Chaco". Where we could see two human beings, shaking hands, reflected in each other, as a sign of peace.

The general message of the song goes beyond a specific historical milestone or event, we wanted to transfer those experiences and what was learned from this historical experience to the current life context of each individual who listens to the song, in order to give hope and healing, to through our music.

3. In line with the first answer, the idea was always that it sound a little traditional but within what identifies the 3 composers, musically, since we consume a lot of foreign music as well. The rhythmic element is the main thing in this song, perhaps what most represents that Paraguayan air, although the drum solo is totally inspired by rock. Then harmonically you could say that it is an exploration, we could even call it progressive, since structurally the song is not a standard. And the cherry on the cake, as always, the melody, there were no creative limitations in terms of the voices or melodies of certain instruments (strings and guitar), but rather we wanted to create a melody that represents



what we wanted to convey, within the range vocal of the singers... something that also inspired us was the image of the photograph, that is why throughout the song we reflect the idea of the "mirror", seeing ourselves reflected in each other, through our voices and instruments.

These are our answers, if something is not clear, please let me know, and I will translate it into English. Thank you very much and I hope it is useful 🙏😊.  
Greetings from Asunción!

## **Appendix 16: Derlis Ibarra 19 January 2018**

Continuando en mi propia experiencia y entendimiento sobre la creación de la polca paraguaya, al tomarse como referencia la polca europea 4x4, y las músicas folklóricas locales en su 6x8, los músicos locales dada la popularidad de este nuevo baile (la polca Europea) , mantienen en el acompañamiento en 6x8 y la melodía en 4x4, líricas en cuartetos, esta ultima con lo toques característicos de la forma de hablar del campesino, como arrastrada y a destiempo en el pulso, creando una yuxtaposición rítmica que da como resultado la polca paraguaya que ya conocemos hoy en día.

Continuing in my own experience and understanding about the creation of the Paraguayan polka, taking as a reference the European polka 4x4, and local folk music in its 6x8, local musicians, given the popularity of this new dance (the European polka), maintain in the accompaniment in 6x8 and the melody in 4x4, lyrics in quartets, the latter with the characteristic touches of the peasant's way of speaking, as if dragged and out of time in the pulse, creating a rhythmic juxtaposition that results in the Paraguayan polka that already we know today.

La Polca Paraguaya así genera un patrón rítmico complejo, hablando en términos no técnicos, que hasta hoy día es confuso y difícil de comprender para cualquier músico que no haya consumido nativamente este genero, principalmente extranjero.

The Paraguayan Polca thus generates a complex rhythmic pattern, speaking in non-technical terms, which to this day is confusing and difficult to understand for any musician who has not natively consumed this genre, mainly foreign.

En mi vida como músico, me he topado hasta con doctores de música contemporánea egresados de Universidades de Europa y sudamericanos que pueden hasta si se quiere decir, romper su instrumento, de tan buenos que son interpretando cualquier obra de jazz, fusión y cualquier genero contemporáneo, pero al hablar de improvisar una “polquita paraguaya” no son capaces ni siquiera de seguir el ritmo correctamente, en contrapartida un músico autodidacta local, sin ningún estudio académico musical lo hace como si nada, esta arraigado ya en su ADN auditivo y sensorial haciéndolo ver hasta muy fácil.

In my life as a musician, I have even come across doctors of contemporary music who graduated from European and South American Universities who can even break their instrument, so to speak, because they are so good at interpreting any work of jazz, fusion and any contemporary genre. , but when talking about improvising a “Paraguayan polquita” they are not even able to follow the rhythm correctly, on the other hand a local self-taught musician, without any academic musical study, does it as if nothing had happened, it is already ingrained in his auditory and sensory DNA doing so. see up very easy.

En mi faceta de Dj me enamore de los sonidos electrónicos, en el tradicional 4x4 del techno o el house, en la simpleza del minimal, en la calidez del deep house (mezcla de house y Jazz), y como Músico (hijo de un arpista folklorista) además de haber consumido este ritmo desde que tengo memoria, ( la Polca y la Guarania ) le siguieron el jazz, la música clásica, el contagioso bossa-nova de Brasil, la fuerza del Rock, etc.

In my role as a DJ I fell in love with electronic sounds, in the traditional 4x4 of techno or house, in the simplicity of minimal, in the warmth of deep house (mix of house and Jazz), and as a Musician (son of a harpist folklorist) in addition to having consumed this rhythm since I can remember, (the Polca and the Guarania) it was followed by jazz, classical music, the contagious bossa-nova of Brazil, the force of Rock, etc.

Ya más maduro en todos los sentidos, empiezo a ver la forma de poder plasmar todas estas influencias en mi música, siendo siempre mi característica la experimentación de ritmos, tomando características de todos y dejándome llevar por la música sin forzar nada, lo que me motivaba o me gustaba lo dejaba fluir hasta terminar algún tema que no podía encasillarse solo dentro de un genero, ya que no cumplía “las reglas” de un solo genero, era lo que llamamos aquí un jopara (mezcla de elementos).

Now more mature in every sense, I begin to see the way to be able to capture all these influences in my music, my characteristic always being the experimentation of rhythms, taking characteristics from everyone and letting

myself be carried away by the music without forcing anything, which motivated me. . or I liked it, I let it flow until I finished a topic that could not be classified only within one genre, since it did not comply with “the rules” of a single genre, it was what we call here a jopara (mixture of elements).

Viendo que era difícil sentarse y componer solo un techno, porque después ya necesitaba más armonía, después ya necesitabas solos instrumentales, el flujo de trabajo creativo me arrastraba a confluir en temas sin genero específico al final del proyecto.

Seeing that it was difficult to sit down and compose a techno alone, because later I needed more harmony, later you needed instrumental solos, the creative workflow dragged me to converge on songs without a specific genre at the end of the project.

Así surge la idea de hacer Polca Paraguaya Electrónica nueva, no reciclar temas del cancionero popular conocido y agregarle un kick en 4x4, sino tratar de elaborar canciones que en su esencia sea polca paraguaya, y obviamente utilizar recursos de mis otras influencias contemporáneas.

This is how the idea of making a new Electronic Paraguayan Polka arose, not to recycle songs from the well-known popular songbook and add a 4x4 kick, but to try to create songs that in their essence are Paraguayan polka, and obviously use resources from my other contemporary influences.

Así nace Polca on the dance floor (ver adjunto) donde con metrónomo en 4x4 inicia una percusión de 6x8 y va evolucionando hasta terminar con toques de jazz fusión, pero con el marcaje tradicional de la polca, y solos pentatónicos característicos del Blues, hasta cerrar con el clásico kick en 4x4 del techno mientras se desarrolla el marcaje de la polca normal 6x8 con un instrumento de percusión latinoamericano (cajón peruano) acompañado del bajo en una fusión casi perfecta, que es dejado adrede para dejar plasmado claramente esta yuxtaposición tradicional de la polca como en sus orígenes pero con géneros más “modernos”.

This is how Polca on the dance floor was born (see attached) where with a 4x4 metronome a 6x8 percussion begins and evolves until it ends with touches of jazz fusion, but with the traditional marking of the polka, and pentatonic solos characteristic of Blues, until closing with the classic 4x4 kick of techno while the marking of the normal 6x8 polka is developed with a Latin American percussion instrument (Peruvian cajón) accompanied by the bass in an almost perfect fusion, which is left on purpose to clearly capture this traditional juxtaposition of the polka as in its origins but with more “modern” genres.

Hoy en día siguiendo con esta línea, además de otros tracks de E-polca (como la denomino a esta mezcla) desarrollo la también Guaranía Electrónica,

*(La Guaranía es una variación de la polca Paraguaya, donde básicamente se mantiene el 6x8 pero con un pulso mucho más lento y delicado, creado por*

*Herminio Giménez*) en un álbum a denominarse E-folklore o E-Folk, donde estarán expuestas estas nuevas canciones, (ver maquetas en el adjunto).

(The Guaranía is a variation of the Paraguayan polka, where basically the 6x8 is maintained but with a much slower and more delicate pulse, created by *Herminio Giménez*) in an album to be called E-folklore or E-Folk, where these new songs, (see demos in the attachment).

## **Appendix 17: Interview Ana Laura Cárdenas 28 November 2019**

Thank you so much for all your help this week Ana, I have some audio from the meeting, however I think the background fan affected the quality a little. Here are the questions again, with a few expansions. Please don't feel you have to answer every question or go into super detail if you don't think its necessary. I am already checking out flights for April!!

Just a few things I have to ask; Are you happy for me to use your words in my research? If yes, would you give permission to use your name? I am very happy to keep all of your answers anonymous or perhaps add your name to bits directly about your work and not for the more general opinion things?

1. Could you describe your musical project?

It is a fresh and sophisticated electronic music project that contains sound elements of Paraguayan Polka and Guarania. These sound elements can be the sound of the harp, and the 6x8 rhythm or elements of nature such as the flow of water, singing of birds. All this is mixed with avant-garde sounds that characterize current electronic music.

2. Which musical elements typical to the polca and guarania did you feel most important to retain when approaching this type of cross-genre work?



The most important elements that must be present are the 6x8 rhythm and mainly instruments such as the Paraguayan harp or acoustic guitar.

3. Could you say a few words about your opinion of the popular music scene in Asunción at the moment? And is traditional Paraguayan being used in 'new' music?

Currently what is booming in music with popular overtones is a mixture of Pop or Rock with Polka. I believe that these types of projects will revalue native Paraguayan music and will perhaps stimulate the person to search for who were the main composers of traditional Paraguayan music and its meaning at that moment in time.

4. How do you feel traditional music is regarded by young people in the city?

I think they consider it something old-fashioned, like something that is no longer heard. Perhaps this is due to the accessibility to the number of styles that currently exist and the preferences of the set of sounds to listen to. These sounds emit certain types of stimuli that simultaneously generate certain types of feelings or behaviors that influence culture.

5. Could I ask you about your understanding of *Paraguayidad* in a general sense and also in relation to music? (please relate this answer to question 2 if you feel it is appropriate)

My personal opinion about what I consider “Paraguayidad” (friendship, spirit of solidarity) of the Paraguayan people, is its most outstanding characteristic and through the Polka or Guaranía a kind of celebration magnetism is generated that brings together the family and/or friendships.

6. Do you feel that *Paraguayidad* socio-cultural expression resonates with young people today?

I believe that the attitude of Paraguayanism in young people is still valid since the Paraguayan upbringing occurs in a family environment where these values are practiced. In this way, when young people form friendships throughout life, they practice the same values within that core.

## Appendix 18: 'Renacer' arranged by Matt Dicken and Romy Martinez

**Renacer**

Arr. Matt Dicken  
Romy Martinez

Oscar Cardozo Ocampo

$\text{♩} = 80$

Voice

Guitar

*p*

5

*mp*

*p*

10

*mp*

15

## Appendix 19: Festival del Takuare'ê – Promotional Flyers 2015-2023



Festival del Takuare'ê (2015) 'Promotional Flyer' [Facebook]. Available at: <https://www.facebook.com/ASOCIACION.CULTURAL.TAKUAREE>. (Accessed on 3 Jan 2024)



Festival del Takuare'ê (2017) 'Promotional Flyer' [Facebook]. Available at: <https://www.facebook.com/ASOCIACION.CULTURAL.TAKUAREE>. (Accessed on 3 Jan 2024)



Festival del Takuare'ê (2023) 'Promotional Flyer' [Facebook]. Available at: <https://www.facebook.com/ASOCIACION.CULTURAL.TAKUAREE>. (Accessed on 3 Jan 2024)

## Appendix 20: Music Education in Asunción: Higher Education and the Conservatories

The purpose of focusing on the formal education system is not to deliver a comprehensive assessment of music education, but to question whether the canon of Paraguayan academic writing has percolated into the music education system, in particular, to discover whether the teaching of traditional folkloric music in higher education institutions, contributes to a formal qualification in music. Table 3.1 lists the Higher Education institutions and dedicated music colleges in the city of Asunción and provides an outline of the music curriculum delivered in each case. Institutions omitted from the list, do not provide a music or music related course.

Institute Name
The Universidad Nacional de Asunción
The Ateneo Paraguayo
The Instituto Superior Bellas Artes
The Conservatorio Nacional de Música
Conservatorio de Música (Universidad Católica)
Universidad Evangélica del Paraguay
Big Sonus
Concierto Conservatorio y Estudio

The following discussion occasionally refers to music education programmes outside HE, purely for context, and not to draw direct comparisons.

### **Universidad Nacional de Asunción**

The Universidad Nacional de Asunción (UNA) is: ‘The largest and most important university in Paraguay’ ([www.una.py](http://www.una.py), no date.) according to its advertising. Founded in 1889, it was the first HE institution in the country. It initially opened with Faculties of Law, Medicine and Mathematics, and Schools of Pharmacy and Obstetrics, and Notary. In the twenty-first century, the university now has:

14 Faculties, 5 Centers, 1 Health Research Institute, 1 National Atomic Energy Commission, 2 Colleges, 40 Branches. It has 78 undergraduate degrees, 2 technical programs and 234 graduate programs ([www.una.py](http://www.una.py)).

The scale of the UNA’s reach in Paraguay is such, that the claim to be the largest and most important university in Paraguay appears just.

The Bachelor of Music programme resides within the Faculty of Architecture, Design and Art. The department webpages present a strong call to action as a founding principle of the programme, stating that: ‘The bachelor’s degree in music arises from the need to cover an aspect totally neglected by the Paraguayan university system’ ([www.fada.una.py/musica](http://www.fada.una.py/musica)). The course offers students a choice of five pathways that have been highlighted in the course literature as specialist areas of study: Music Education, Instrumentalist, Choral and Orchestral Conducting, Musical Research or Popular. The title of

each pathway emphasises clear student outcomes and vocational aims. The undergraduate course is delivered across ten semesters that span a 4-year time period. All students (irrespective of their chosen pathway) take the same core modules in the first 5 semesters with specialisation occurring from semester 6 onwards.

The Popular Music pathway is of particular interest to this research, and places a clear focus on folkloric tradition in Paraguay and Latin America more widely:

Specialized training for Instrumentalists in the popular area through updated programs. Techniques with solid theoretical, technical, and anthropological knowledge, developing interpretive and creative abilities. A fundamental pillar in which Paraguay is rich in folklore and original rhythms, both of the Guaraní tradition as well as the Latin American one. This will help promote its quality and aesthetic sense to society ([www.fada.una.py/musica](http://www.fada.una.py/musica), Accessed: 04.05.24).

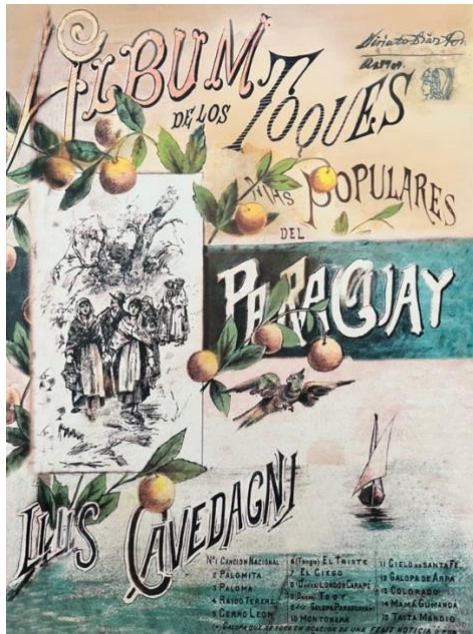
An emphasis on Paraguayan music traditions differentiates this pathway at the UNA from other routes of study in HE that carry a similar title, in which the focus is on Western popular music. Furthermore, each pathway features two dedicated modules on Paraguayan music in semesters six and seven. A complete list of all the modules offered to students on the Bachelors programme can be seen in appendix document 7.

### **Ateneo Paraguayo**

The Ateneo Paraguayo is the oldest dedicated music institution in Paraguay. Established in 1883, the Ateneo was conceived shortly after the end of the Triple Alliance war. It was the first education institute to emerge following

the end of the war and was heralded as a beacon in the re-building of the nation: 'It is the one that begins the national cultural resurrection' (Doldán, 2013). However, feelings towards the Ateneo changed in the immediate years after its inception, and by 1887 it had closed. In the final years of the nineteenth-century a consortium of 14 members joined together to re-establish the Ateneo and it has since remained open. Music tuition is one component of the centre and generally delivered on a private basis. In addition, broader cultural projects percolate the study of music and has published numerous important historical artifacts and documents that relate to traditional music. I visited the Ateneo in 2019 in search of a book of piano scores of some of the earliest *polcas* and *danzas* compiled by the staff at the institution. The *Album de los Toques más Populares del Paraguay* (2018) (analysed in the previous chapter) is a collection of dances written by the Italian born composer Luigi Cavedagni (1818-1916) who resided in Paraguay from 1874, as the country was entering into a period of re-building after the Triple Alliance War. The book is the result of research conducted by Boettner in association with the Ateneo Paraguayo and claims to contain the earliest written [scored] music found in Paraguay.





**Cavedagni, L (1877) Album de los Toques más Populares del Paraguay**  
**[score]. Asunción: Ateneo Paraguayo**

In a short email interview (see Appendix 8), the Director General of the Ateneo, Manuel Martínez Domínguez, outlines some of the fundamental aspects of music education ethos at the Ateneo. The institute teaches children from as young as 6 months. He points out that, ‘the Ateneo has implemented Early Musical Stimulation (EMT) in Paraguay in 2007’ (Personal Interview with Domínguez, 20 September 2023). The EMT (Estimulación Musical Temprana) is advertised as a ‘Program for children aged 6 months to 3 years where we will develop musical skills through experiences such as rounds, songs, body movements and percussion instruments’ (Facebook Ateneo Paraguayo, 2024). A Facebook post taken from February 2024 shows a cross section of the programmes of study that Ateneo offers:



**Ateneo Paraguayo (2023) Programas [Facebook]. Available at:**

**<https://www.facebook.com/ateneoparaguayo>. (Accessed on 23 August 2023)**

As the social media advert indicates, the Ateneo focuses mainly on Western academic music. However, ‘the teaching methods that the Ateneo uses to teach are not framed with the rigour of academic curricula’ (Personal Interview with Domínguez, 20 September 2023). In this quote Manuel is alluding to a wide range of innovative pedagogic approaches the institute takes to teaching music. There is a sense that the Ateneo holds a unique position within the educational (music) landscape in Asunción. In addition to the legacy outlined above, the Ateneo was the first institution in Paraguay to offer formal degrees in music. Domínguez outlines the current position:

The degrees are issued in accordance with a Presidential and a Ministerial Decree, but the situation in which the Paraguayan educational system finds itself means that the Ateneo does not comply

with the approaches proposed by the Ministry. Hence, the Ateneo is an academically self-managed institution. (Personal Interview with Domínguez, 20 September 2023. See Appendix 8).

### **Instituto Superior Bellas Artes**

The Instituto Superior Bellas Artes is located in Asunción and is regarded alongside the Conservatorio Nacional as being at the forefront of traditional music education, taking an active role in the propagation of Paraguayan music to young people. The institute runs a Bachelor of Arts programme in Music. The course was opened in 2013 and introduced on the university website as follows:

The Higher Institute of Fine Arts, in accordance with its mission to promote artistic expression, teaching and research, opens the Bachelor of Music. The Music Race is enabled on May 17, 2013, in the Multipurpose Hall of the ISBA before a gala concert with the presence of renowned artists in the musical field. ([bellesartes.edu.py](http://bellesartes.edu.py))

The course runs over a 4-year period and comprises 8 semesters of study and students choose from one of six possible study pathways: Choral Direction, Composition, Singing, Instrumental (Strings, Winds, Percussion), Instrumental (Piano) and Orchestral Conducting. Each pathway offers two modules in Paraguayan music history (investigacion musicale historia de la musica paraguaya i-ii). In a short email interview, Maria Eugenia Ayala (Coordinator of the Music degree) was able to explain that the central purpose of these modules is to support the knowledge of music in Paraguay. In addition, the course integrates the study of Guaraní language, and this is taught 'in a very practical

way, where our students singing through learning songs from the Paraguayan musical heritage in such a way as to strengthen reading, writing and speaking of the language.’ (Personal Interview, Ayala, 4 September 2023. See Appendix 9).

### **Conservatorio Nacional de Música**

Conceived in 1996, The Conservatorio Nacional de Música (CONAMU) was the product of Florentín Giménez’s second educational project following his return to Paraguay in 1969 (Colman, 2021). It is a leading institution in Paraguayan cultural activity. Specific course information is limited on the institute’s main website, and bold statements of intent are projected in its mission and vision:

#### **Mission**

Training of competent professionals in the sciences and musical arts, committed to the social and cultural development of their environment, with indigenous and universal values that guarantee transformation and innovation, with a broad ethical, critical and inclusive sense, promoters of research with national and international projection, guided by a specialized and prestigious teaching staff in a context of academic excellence.

#### **Vision**

To be a leading institution, with a varied and quality educational offer, recognized nationally and internationally that offers a comprehensive training of the sciences and musical arts in higher education of Paraguay with the purpose of transforming society through values oriented to

academic, human and artistic excellence. ([www.conamu.edu.py/mision](http://www.conamu.edu.py/mision)  
Accessed: 03.05.2024)

Colman states that, 'the Conservatorio Nacional, established in 1997, has been a cornerstone of the cultivation and propagation of Paraguayan traditional music' (Colman, 2015: 92). He recounts his experience visiting a concert in 2002 at a newly remodelled concert hall (for the Conservatorio) at the ministry for education in Asunción and highlights the prevailing concern (at the time) that, 'local musical traditions [might be] displaced by other genres and styles such as *tecno-cumbia* and *reggaeton*' (Colman, 2015: 93). He notes, however, that the audience did not seem unduly concerned in this regard, albeit in a partisan cultural space. That said, the Conservatorio Nacional stands out amongst rival institutions in Asunción for its visible and proactive statements of intent with regards to the importance of traditional music as a key element in Paraguayan musical education.

### **Universidad Católica**

The Universidad Católica was conceived by the Catholic hierarchy of Paraguay as a centre for higher education in 1959 and was empowered to grant degrees and diplomas by the Honourable House of Representatives of the Nation on 6 September 1960. The only music related course offered by the Institution (at the time of writing) is a 4-year undergraduate programme in music therapy.

### ***Conservatorio de Música, Universidad Católica***

The Conservatorio de Música was established in 1993, and it resides in the Faculty of Philosophy and Human Sciences at the Universidad Católica. However, there is no official homepage for the Conservatorio on the School of Philosophy and Human Sciences website. Instead, singular events that have been programmed by the Conservatorio de Música can be searched for through the link to external social media accounts.



**Conservatorio de Música (2023) Concierto [Facebook] Available at:**

**<https://www.facebook.com/conamuparaguay>. (Accessed on 20**

**September 2023)**

The image shows a digital flyer for a concert on the 27 October 2023 to celebrate 30 years of the music school. The Conservatorio de Música offers musical training to a wide range of age groups, from children to adults. However, the training is focused on performance in Western classical and pop styles and is not formally offered as an HE qualification.

## Universidad Evangélica del Paraguay

The Universidad Evangélica del Paraguay offers an undergraduate programme in Music. The course page on the university website presents the following statement of intent for the Bachelor of Music degree:

The Bachelor of Music of the Evangelical University of Paraguay (UEP) seeks to train professionals who can contribute to local, regional and national development through research and creative development. In an area that needs to be valued and appreciated as a nation ([www.uep.edu.py/web/carrera/licenciatura-en-musica](http://www.uep.edu.py/web/carrera/licenciatura-en-musica) Accessed: 02.05.2024)

The course is targeted primarily at those interested in a career in education at both instrumental teaching and classroom teaching at primary and secondary level. Applicants are required to present a letter of recommendation from the pastor or manager of their church, and thus, students are guided towards the development of musical projects in church and community contexts. Modules are mapped across four semesters of study and offer a large range of choice for the student. Appendix item () shows the full list of modules available, notably, there is only one module in the third semester that directly references folk or traditional music: LMHMP Historia de la Música Paraguaya (History of Paraguayan music). Beyond this, other module options focus on the overarching aims of the course, preparing students in areas of music theory, arranging, and performance.

## **Big Sonus**

Big Sonus is a private musical arts academy located in Asuncion and focuses graduate aims directly at careers in the music industry. The school is predominantly focused on delivering contemporary music education in rock and pop and therefore not of direct relevance to the discussion of traditional music. However, naturally schools such as this form part of the larger debate around young people favouring this style and genre of musical performance over that of traditional music.

## **El Concierto Conservatorio y Estudio**

The Concierto Conservatorio y Estudio is a dedicated music school in Asunción. In February 2023, the school celebrated 26 years as a centre of music education in the city of Asunción. It offers tuition in keyboard, piano, violin, singing, guitar, bass guitar and drums; notably the harp is not offered.

## **A Brief Summary**

An overview of the formal music education landscape in Paraguay shows that traditional music and its associated history is represented in one or more complete modules of study in all major HE providers. In addition, the conservatories appear to extend their reach into active cultural projects that promote traditional music. It seems possible to observe that institutes in Paraguay do place an emphasis on the study of traditional national music. However, it must also be noted that in many Paraguayan music courses (University or Conservatoire) the harp is not offered as a principal study instrument, or at least it is not advertised in the marketing material.