Cultural Hybridization in the Music of Paul Desenne: *An Integration of Latin American Folk, Pop and Indigenous music with Western Classical Traditions.*

by

Tulio Rondón

Copyright © Tulio Rondón 2005

A Document Submitted to the Faculty of the

SCHOOL OF MUSIC AND DANCE

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of

DOCTOR OF MUSICAL ARTS
WITH MAJOR IN MUSIC

In the Graduate College

THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

2005
As members of the Final Examination Committee, we certify that we have read the document prepared by Tulio Rondon entitled *Cultural Hybridization in the Music of Paul Desenne: An Integration of Latin American Folk, Pop and Indigenous Music with Western Classical Tradition.*

and recommend that it be accepted as fulfilling the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Musical Arts.

Nancy Green 5/4/05

Hong-Mei Xiao 8/8/05

Mark Rush 8/24/05

Final approval and acceptance of this document is contingent upon the candidate’s submission of the final copy of the document to the Graduate College. I hereby certify that I have read this document prepared under my direction and recommend that it be accepted as fulfilling the requirement.

Nancy Green 7/7/05

Director
STATEMENT OF AUTHOR

This document has been submitted in partial fulfillment of requirements for an advanced degree at The University of Arizona and is deposited in The University Library to be made available to borrowers under rules of the Library. Brief quotations from this document are allowable without special permission, provided that accurate acknowledgement of source is made. Requests for permission for extended quotation from or reproduction of this manuscript in whole or in part may be granted by the copyright holder.

SIGNED: [Signature]

[Signature]
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I want to express my sincere appreciation and admiration for my teacher, Professor Nancy Green, who has been a continuous source of inspiration and a guide during my work at the University of Arizona. Her support and encouragement have made this work and the completion of my degree possible.

I also thank Professors Mark Rush and Hong-Mei Xiao for being part of my graduate committee and for sharing their knowledge and professionalism in the completion of this work. Finally, I want to express my sincere gratitude to Dr. Joseph Knott, for his support since I first entered the University of Arizona.
DEDICATION

It is impossible to dedicate this work to one person, especially since I am fortunate in having so many great family members, friends and colleagues. I dedicate this work to all of them, especially to my mother, María Casilda Misle de Rondón, to whom I owe my life, my values, and strength always to move forward; to my wife Araceli Masterson, my inspiration, thanks for her love for my work and me; to Professor Nancy Green, with millions of thanks for making my degree journey a fantastic experience; to my friends, William Wolfe, Charles M. Kearns, and Kathleen Krause, for their support and encouragement of students in fine arts. Finally I dedicate this work to my dear friend Paul Desenne, for years of learning and wonderful experiences. I thank them for all their help, and him for writing such wonderful music.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES ................................................................. 8
LIST OF TABLES ................................................................. 10
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS ..................................................... 11
ABSTRACT ............................................................................. 12
INTRODUCTION ....................................................................... 13
BIOGRAPHY OF THE COMPOSER ........................................... 18
PAUL DESENNE'S INFLUENCES .............................................. 21

CHAPTER I GITANE
FUSION OF THE ROOTS: THE INTEGRATION OF
FOLK MUSIC FROM VENEZUELA, COLOMBIA, AND SPAIN ....... 24

IMPROVISACION LOCA/CRAZY IMPROVISATION ................... 30

CHAPTER II TOMBEAU POUR L'AMAZONIE
THE SHAMAN AND THE INDIGENOUS MUSIC FROM
VENEZUELA AND THE AMERICAS ........................................... 41

RHYTHMS, ARTICULATIONS, MARKINGS
AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO FOLKLORIC ROOTS ................. 44

CHAPTER III GAVOTTE
CARACAS AND LATIN AMERICAN POP .................................... 56

GAVOTTE ............................................................................... 57

CHAPTER IV BIRIMBAO (PRELUDE A "JAGUAR")
NEIGHBORS: THE MUSIC FROM BRAZIL ................................. 63

NEW COMPOSITIONAL TECHNIQUES ..................................... 66

BIRIMBAO ............................................................................ 67
CHAPTER V JAGUAR
THE MITH AND IMPORTANCE OF THE JAGUAR IN AMERICA'S INDIGENOUS CULTURES .......................... 71

LA SOPA/ THE SOUP:
THE FUSION OF TRADITIONS AND IDEAS ........................................... 74

NEW COMPOSITIONAL TECHNIQUES ............................................. 85

CONCLUSION
PAUL DESENNE'S HYBRIDS:
A NEW PATH TO A NEW LATIN AMERICAN MUSICAL INDENTITY ......................................................... 86

REFERENCES .................................................................................. 88
## LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>GITANE MEASURE 1-10</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>GITANE MEASURE 3-13</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>GITANE MEASURE 151-173</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>GITANE MEASURE 3-4</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>GITANE MEASURE 20-24</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>GITANE MEASURE 46-55</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>GITANE MEASURE 38-60</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>GITANE MEASURE 46-50</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>TRANSCRIPTION FROM A YANOMAMI CANTICLE</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>TOMBEAU POUR L'AMAZONIE MEASURE 42-44</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>TOMBEAU POUR L'AMAZONIE MEASURE 1-12</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>TOMBEAU POUR L'AMAZONIE MEASURE 10-21</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>TOMBEAU POUR L'AMAZONIE MEASURE 19-29</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>TOMBEAU POUR L'AMAZONIE MEASURE 30-35</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>TOMBEAU POUR L'AMAZONIE MEASURE 36-41</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>TOMBEAU POUR L'AMAZONIE MEASURE 42-46</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>TOMBEAU POUR L'AMAZONIE MEASURE 51-52</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.10</td>
<td>TOMBEAU POUR L'AMAZONIE MEASURE 57-62</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.11</td>
<td>TOMBEAU POUR L'AMAZONIE MEASURE 72-83</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>GAVOTTE FROM J. S. BACH CELLO SUITE NO. 6 MEASURE 1-13 AND PAUL DESSENNE'S</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>GAVOTTE MEASURE 1-3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF FIGURES—CONTINUED

3.2  GAVOTTE MEASURE 4-9 ......................................................... 59
3.3  GAVOTTE MEASURE 34-36 .................................................... 60
3.4  GAVOTTE MEASURE 40-50 .................................................... 61
3.5  GAVOTTE MEASURE 64-69 .................................................... 62
3.6  GAVOTTE MEASURE 70-82 .................................................... 62
4.1  BIRIMBAO MEASURE 1-6 ...................................................... 68
4.2  BIRIMBAO MEASURE 5-14 ..................................................... 70
5.1  JAGUAR MEASURE 1-9 .......................................................... 75
5.2  JAGUAR MEASURE 10-13 ....................................................... 76
5.3  JAGUAR MEASURE 36-46 ....................................................... 77
5.4  JAGUAR MEASURE 47-52 ....................................................... 78
5.5  JAGUAR MEASURE 62-66 ....................................................... 79
5.6  JAGUAR MEASURE 82-90 ....................................................... 80
5.7  JAGUAR MEASURE 102-109 .................................................... 81
5.8  JAGUAR MEASURE 123-127 .................................................... 82
5.9  JAGUAR MEASURE 110-116 .................................................... 82
5.10 JAGUAR MEASURE 126-130 .................................................... 83
LIST OF TABLES

1.1  GITANE STRUCTURE ........................................... 36
3.1  GAVOTTE STRUCTURE .......................................... 59
4.1  BIRIMBAO STRUCTURE .......................................... 67
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

II. 1. BIRIMBAO .................................................................................. 65
ABSTRACT

This project is an analytical and comprehensive study of the music of Venezuelan composer Paul Desenne, concentrating on his sonata, ‘Jaguar Songs’ for cello solo, written in the year 2002. The sonata, ‘Jaguar Songs,’ was written for French cellist Iseut Chuat and received the premiere performance by the composer Paul Desenne the following year in London. This sonata is a perfect tool for understanding Desenne’s work and what I call his musical hybridization, which I consider to be a groundbreaking compositional style that will shape not only Venezuela’s, but also Latin America’s musical identity.

After several personal interviews with the composer, I was able to deepen my understanding of his work. In the following pages I have analyzed ‘Jaguar Songs’ for cello solo and explained the influences and characteristics of Desenne’s music.
INTRODUCTION

This project is an analytical and comprehensive study of the work of Venezuelan composer Paul Desenne (b. 1959), concentrating on his sonata, ‘Jaguar Songs’ for cello solo, written in the year 2002. Paul Desenne belongs to a generation of composers and performers who have emerged in the last three decades and have devoted themselves to the integration of Latin American folk traditions into their classical compositions. In this group belong composers such as Luis Julio Toro and Juan Carlos Nuñez. Paul Desenne, however, has distinguished himself in the international field and become one of the most prominent of this generation of musicians because of his versatility and creativity, as well as for his constant search for new sounds and rhythms. I believe Paul Desenne represents a turning point in Venezuelan classical music. He is creating a new, and in my opinion unprecedented, Latin American musical identity. Hence, I have decided to call his musical project contemporary musical hybridization.

Nothing has been published about the new generation of Venezuelan classical composers who are experimenting with the musical elements of folk traditions, pop and indigenous music and integrating them into their classical works. Using Paul Desenne’s sonata Jaguar Songs for violoncello solo, I intend to show how his work has influenced a younger generation of composers, and how this piece is representative of his compositions.
This leads to my primary research questions:

- What are the repercussions and influences of this new direction in the Venezuelan musical scene, and how does Desenne’s work define a Latin American musical identity?

By “musical identity” I mean characteristics that define the music as a unique form of art from a particular country. One can also point to the characteristics of Latin American classical music, as in the works of Heitor Villa-Lobos, Silvestre Revueltas, Alberto Ginastera, Juan Bautista Plaza, and Vicente Emilio Sojo. Even though they are from different countries, the works of these composers share some compositional characteristics and have common elements that eventually form a musical identity. However, I do not think this Latin American compositional style is strongly represented at present, with the exception of the music of Venezuelan composer Paul Desenne. His new approach to composing differs from that of the aforementioned composers and is strengthening Latin American musical identity. Most Latin American composers share a compositional style that is rather westernized. Even though their music contains Latin American rhythms, this does not mean that their music has a Latin American identity. I predict that in time, Desenne’s music will be considered to be at the level of other Western composers of Europe or the United State such as Pendereski, Ligetti, Adler, and Glass.
The next question I pose will allow me to show the meaning of Paul Desenne’s integration of different musical genres from Latin America, as well as the intention of his creative musical and compositional approach, and how they make Desenne one of the most prominent composers in Latin America.

• What is the significance of Paul Desenne’s musical hybrids?
Paul Desenne uses the term “imaginary music archeology” on his CD “Tocatas Galeónicas” to describe the uniqueness of Latin American music and its roots in the Spanish colonization starting in the 15th century. The use of this term reveals the sense of discovery and depth of research of the composer in exploring the infinite richness of Latin America’s musical past.

• What is his aim as he engages “imaginary music archeology”?
This question will allow us to better understand the compositional philosophy of Paul Desenne and his approach to “imaginary music archeology.”

Up to the present, his music can be divided into two periods. In the first period, Desenne’s compositions consisted of Venezuelan folk music for western classical instruments. Many of these works are composed in the “old” fashion (meaning composing only with a piano).

The second period beginning after the 1990’s is a period in which Desenne writes classical Western music highly influenced by pop culture, Venezuelan indigenous music, and Venezuelan traditional music. Also during this time Desenne begins to employ electronic media and computer technology, which
allow him to come even closer to the type of sonorities that he is trying to embrace.

Desenne recognizes Venezuelan traditional music as an art influenced by many cultures over time:

"Venezuelan music contains elements taken from just about everyone who landed on its Caribbean coast over the past five centuries. Cultural interweaving seems to have chosen this wild territory to show how much diversity could spring from a handful of different seeds. Western musicologists would be stunned to find very pure strains of European Renaissance music, almost unchanged, in many popular Venezuelan songs and instrumental forms today. Our national instrument, the cuatro, which accompanied most of Venezuelan music, is in fact a strummed four-string Renaissance guitar. This persistence of musical memory is most remarkable in the descendants of non-European cultures. The treasures of African music, which came with the slaves, give us hundreds of rhythmic ingredients, which make up the temporal skeleton of most of our music. But in many places the music stayed pure, offering extraordinary opportunities for comparative studies in African musicology with its impressively energetic and complex drumming."\(^1\)

This variety of musical characteristics provides composer Paul Desenne with multiple sources of information and inspiration. In this work I illustrate how this is reflected in the 'Jaguar Songs,' an ideal choice because it was composed during the second period of Desenne's compositional career.

\(^1\) Desenne, Paul. "Tocatas Galeonicas". *Dorian Recordings.*
I was fortunate to be able to travel to Venezuela and meet with the composer in the summer and winter of the year 2003 and 2004. I had the opportunity to meet him on various occasions and to learn the piece from him directly while gathering information about the sonata, ‘Jaguar Songs’, in audio and video formats. During the past year I have learned about Paul Desenne’s goals as a composer through live interviews and cello lessons.
BIOGRAPHY OF THE COMPOSER

Paul Desenne was born in Caracas, Venezuela, on December 7, 1959. Son of a French father and American mother, he began musical studies at a very early age. His composition studies began in Caracas at age fourteen and continued in Paris in various academies including the Conservatoire Supérieur de Paris. He moved to Paris in order to pursue violoncello and composition studies at the Royal Paris Conservatory, where he received the highest honor in performance: Premier Prix, (first prize) Conservatoire National Supérieur de Paris.

As a composer Desenne has specialized in Latin American genres, bringing his knowledge of various local Latin traditions to the world of classical composition. He also has extensive performing experience with various chamber music groups in Europe and Latin America, and as solo cellist with several Latin American orchestras.

His catalogue of compositions includes pieces for many chamber ensembles, solo pieces, symphonic works and concertos. His works are performed around the globe by many different commissioning parties and hosts: among them: Nederlands Blasers and Fodor Quintet, Amsterdam (with premières at the Concertgebouw and the Paradiso, Amsterdam and at the Doelen, Rotterdam); Octuor de Violoncelles du Conservatoire de Paris; Duo Marimolin from Princeton (Meet the Composer commission), The Palladian Ensemble, London; cellist Carlos Prieto, Mexico, Camerata de las Américas.
The renowned Cello Festival of Beauvais, France (2002), features several pieces on the programs of different ensembles. The International Flute Convention (premières of works in 1998, 2002, 2003), Jacques Zoon and Iseut Chuat (double concerto for flute, cello & orchestra, acclaimed Boston première 2002), and many ensemble programs in Europe and the United States are among his achievements.

In New York City, commissioning parties and hosts have been New Juilliard Ensemble (Lincoln Center, Dec. 1999), the Focus Festival (Lincoln Center, Jan 1994), Ensemble Continuum, "Cello" Ensemble, Cellist Madeleine Shapiro and her trio, the Sonic Boom Festival 2000, the Sonidos de las Américas Festival hosted by American Composers Orchestra (Weil Recital Hall, Carnegie Hall 1994), Paquito de Rivera and his clarinet trio, and The MOMA Summer garden Series, conducted by Joel Sachs. In addition some of his pieces have been played at Juilliard School graduate recitals.

In Venezuela Paul Desenne has created music for remarkable local performers and groups, such as violinists Aléxis Cárdenas and Virginie Robilliard, flutist Luis Julio Toro, the Caracas Clarinet Quartet, the renowned Gurufio Ensemble, the Sinfonietta de Caracas, the outstanding Simón Bolívar Symphonic Orchestra, and the Camerata Criolla de Caracas.

Paul Desenne has received support from the Patricia and Gustavo Cisneros Foundation, the Venezuelan Youth Orchestra, the Service Culturel de l'Ambassade de France à Caracas, the Alegria Beracasa Foundation, the
Fundación Banco Mercantil (Caracas), the Venezuelan Cultural Centre in London, the CONAC (Venezuela), the Guy Prim Bordeaux Tour, and other institutions throughout the world.

Several CDs featuring his compositions have been produced in the United States and Latin America.

After having taught cello and chamber music for over eight years in Caracas, Desenne currently works exclusively as a composer and occasional performer of his own compositions.
PAUL DESENNE’S INFLUENCES

Paul Desenne’s most important sources are rooted in Caribbean and Latin American popular music, which embraces all Latin America, in a collective musical language. Desenne explains,

“No se ha explotado en la música Latino Americana escrita, la riqueza de los generos musicales ¡que son muchísimos! Y que cada uno contiene un significado sociopolítico, psicológico, filosófico y poético... Todos son como una gran paleta de ideas que no ha sido utilizada...”

There is a lack of diffusion of classical music in Latin America. Its medium is rather elitist, and for the most part the genre is completely disconnected from the general public. Desenne strives to solve this problem through his music. Using popular mediums such as folk, indigenous, and pop music, he creates an art that reaches the general public.

Composers such as Igor Stravinsky have shared Desenne’s aim in their techniques of composition. Like Desenne, Stravinsky integrated a variety of musical genres in his work. Such a procedure is one of the trademarks of Stravinsky’s music. Many Latin American composers, such as “Nationalist Composers,” have used the same procedures in their music, however, these attempts from Latin American composers have not conceived popular musical elements in a systematic way. Desenne separates himself from the tradition of

---

2 Desenne, Paul. Interview by Tulio Rondón, 15 July 2004. “Latin American written music has yet to exploit the incredible richness and variety of musical genres, that are many! Each contains a sociopolitical, psychological, philosophical and poetic meaning... They form a giant palette of ideas ready to be used.”
these nationalistic composers:

"En la música de los compositores Latinoamericanos nacionalistas o flolkloristas, siempre hay una deformación muy grande de los elementos folklóricos, como si hubiese una especie de pena de citar directamente la música popular y los ritmos populares, sienten que si los usan tienen que desf rmarlos hasta que ya son casi irreconocibles. A mi me gusta usar todas las referencias sin ninguna barrera."^3

In this sense, Desenne stands out as the innovator of a new tradition, where Latin American popular music shares equal status with elements of classical music. I decided to refer to this process of composing as ‘la sopa’ (the soup), drawing from Desenne’s own description of his influences as "un gran sancocho donde se mezclan muchos ingredientes."^4

Nonetheless, Paul Desenne has expressed interest in a variety of composers and arrangers of popular music from Latin America. In his words:

"Los compositores y arreglistas populares son una de mis grandes influencias, y tambien son los que me interesan más. Todos, hastas los arreglistas del pasado de música bailable, e incluso muchos de ellos que son anónimos."^5

Desenne describes his compositional process as a fusion of musical genres in "una paleta novedosa actual,"^6 which includes Afro-American, indigenous, pop, urban, commercial, and European musical traditions. Like a painter, Paul Desenne mixes assorted colors from the palette to create his music.

Desenne studies Latin American musical environments such as carnival,

---

^3 Ibid “There is always a deformation in the music of the Nationalist composers from Latin America, as if there was a need to change the popular elements and almost make them unrecognizable in order to put them into their works. I like using the reference without any barriers.”

^4 Ibid ... “a big soup where many ingredients are mixed.”

^5 Ibid “Popular music composers and arrangers are one of my greatest influences. I am extremely interested in all of them, those who worked making dance music and many who remain anonymous.”

^6 Ibid “A new and modern palette”
religious rituals and street music, and transfers them into the realm of classical music. The composer recreates these environments, using textures that evoke emotions such as humor, sadness, and melancholy.

Urban music is a constant presence in Latin America. The function of urban music is constantly challenged. People in Latin America listen to dance music for private pleasure, enjoy loud music in public transportation, and dance to elevator and supermarket music. This musical amalgam creates a sense of mélange. For Desenne, this chaos is a rich and fertile source of musical creativity, as he demonstrates in ‘Jaguar Songs.’
CHAPTER I

GITANE

FUSION OF THE ROOTS: THE INTEGRATION OF FOLK MUSIC FROM VENEZUELA, COLOMBIA, AND SPAIN:

The first movement of ‘Jaguar Songs’ is very much influenced by Spanish Gipsy, Colombian and Venezuelan music. I describe this movement, as well as the whole piece as an archeological musical journey. As Desenne states in his first compact disc:

“Como personajes de una ficción carpenteriana que intenta sacar del territorio del olvido colectivo fragmentos de mundos que fueron posibles, las piezas de este disco representan estratos de una arqueología musical imaginaria: del Joropo barrocoide a la reveliana barloventeña del Pizzi-Quití-Plás, reconstruyen un camino que serpentea por lo que podríamos llamar la historia del mestizaje musical de estas tierras.”

I believe Desenne’s music, especially the ‘Jaguar Songs’ for cello solo, embodies this very philosophy. It is an “imaginary musical archeology” from the Venezuelan musical past and the music that the Spaniards and Africans, among others, brought into the country starting in the 16th century.

Every group that settled in Latin America influenced the indigenous culture with its new religious and cultural beliefs, giving birth to new instruments and a whole range of new musical genres. With its arrival in the New World,

---

7 Desenne, Paul. Tocatas Galeonicas. Dorian Records DIS-80120, 1982. Compact Disc. “They are characters of a woodworking fiction that attempts to preserve possible worlds from collective memory loss. The pieces of this CD represent different layers of an imaginary music archeology: from the elaborate joropo to the rebelliousness of the north east coastal region, altogether to create through the historical musical miscegenation of these lands.”
European culture became the basis of Venezuela's folk music, in scholarly terms called "Hispano-Venezuelan."

"From the early years of the Conquest vihuelas and guitars, scales, harmonies, rhythms, cadential formulae and dynamic conventions of European origin found their way to Venezuela." 

Latin America suffered a dramatic change through the new European influence, which affected all forms of expression, and especially the arts.

These changes in music were also very much influenced by new instruments and the musical spectrum brought from Europe and Africa. I shall postpone the discussion of the contributions of African music until chapter V, and will now concentrate on the influence of the Spanish Renaissance guitarrilla, a member of the lute family, which led to the creation of a variety of Latin American string instruments such as the cuatro, charango, tiple, guitarrita, seis, doce etc. These instruments constitute a very important part of the folk music throughout the continent.

The cuatro is the principal instrument used not only in Venezuelan folk music but also in the folk music of other countries of Latin America such as Colombia, Puerto Rico and Cuba. Cuatros vary somewhat from country to country.

---

country, especially in the construction of the body, the number of strings and their
tuning. This instrument also has different names depending on the country of
origin, but its musical function is the same regardless. The *cuatro*, as explained in
the New Grove,

“...is a chordophone of the lute family directly derived from the Spanish
Renaissance *guitarrilla* (small guitar), named after its four strings. It is popular at
all levels of society for its ease of play; the strumming or *charasqueo* of the
strings is similar to the Spanish *golpe* and adaptable to singing accompaniments
and different combinations of instruments...”

The *cuatro* is crucial to my study. It is the most important instrument in
the music from the *llanos* (plains) of Venezuela and Colombia. Alberto Baquero
Narino highlights its importance: “*todo puede faltar en el joropo menos un
*cuatro...”

As previously mentioned, the *cuatro* shares the same musical purpose
throughout Latin America: it provides harmonic and rhythmic consistency to the
music.

The historical transition from Spanish *guitarrilla* to the Latin American
*cuatro* and *charango* has inspired Desenne in the first movement of Jaguar Songs.
Two musical genres influence his first movement ‘*Gitane,*’ the flamenco and
*pajarillo.* This is a perfect example of his archeological musical journey. In this

---

12 Baquero, Alberto Narino. Joropo: Identidad Llanera (La Épopeya Cultural de las
Comunidades de Orinoco). Bogotá: Lotería de Territorios Nacionales. “everything can be absent in
the Joroplo but the Cuatro...”
movement, Desenne connects the past and the present through a transformation of flamenco-like music to a *pajarillo*, the most popular of musical forms from Venezuelan and Colombian folklore. This *pajarillo* style is completely achieved at the end of the movement.

Flamenco music is a genre from Spain that can be traced back as far as the 1500’s. It influenced the cultures of all the Latin American countries under Spanish rule. This genre was born in southern Spain, predominantly from gypsies in the region of *Andalucia*[^13]. Gypsy translates in French as *Gitane*, the name of the first movement of the sonata ‘Jaguar Songs.’ The term gypsy often refers to a “lower” class community and can sometimes even be a derogatory term. The majority of the Spanish population that settled in Venezuela was originally from this region (*Andalucia*), most from the city of Cadiz.[^14] Venezuela shares many cultural traditions with this southern region, including gypsy music. Proofs of this are the many cities in Venezuela that were named after southern Spanish cities such as *Nueva Córdoba*, now Cumana.[^15]

Flamenco music is characterized by its freedom and improvisatory qualities, which are similar to those of the *pajarillo*. Therefore, I strongly believe

that this genre not only influenced, but also is a direct ancestor of the *pajarillo* of Venezuela and Colombia.\(^\text{16}\)

The *pajarillo* shares a very similar structure and character with Flamenco, the difference being that *pajarillos* are composed in minor mode, are very happy and full of charm. The *pajarillo* is one of many *golpes*\(^\text{17}\), or variations of the genre *joropo*\(^\text{18}\). Many of these variations depend on the tonal combinations\(^\text{19}\) and rhythmic meter. The *pajarillo* is one of the most popular genres in Colombian and Venezuelan folk music. I cite Colombian pianist and scholar Claudia Calderon’s article, *Analisis Musical de un Pajarillo Cantado*, to give a better understanding of the *pajarillo*:

“*El Pajarillo, Golpe de Joropo Llanero, es una de las piezas mas depuradas del folklore Colombo-Venezolano y donde mejor puede apreciarse el virtuosismo de los ejecutantes, dada su gran velocidad y fogosidad. Es, sin lugar a dudas, la pieza preferida por los músicos llaneros y donde se alcanza la máxima intensidad musical de Joropo.*”\(^\text{20}\)


“The Golpe is more common and varied from than the Pasaje. It is a generic term for a musical piece, whether African in character (played with drums) or Hispanic (played on the harp or bandola, cuatro and maracas).”


\(^{19}\) Ibid.

\(^{20}\) Claudia Calderon. *Analisis Musical de un Pajarillo Cantado*. Unpublished text. “The *pajarillo*, a variation of the *joropo* from the plains, is one of the most refined pieces of the Colombo-Venezuelan folklore, in which one can appreciate the virtuosity of the players/singers, due to its virtuoso passages and fire-like qualities. It is, without a doubt, the piece preferred by musicians from the plains and in which one reaches the maximum musical intensity of the *joropo*.”
The first movement is always interchanging the tonalities of C Major and G minor\textsuperscript{21}, G minor being the tonality in which the \textit{pajarillo} is commonly composed; although in this genre the minor modes do not necessarily communicate sadness or melancholy, but often passion\textsuperscript{22}.

\textsuperscript{21} Desenne, Paul. Interview by Tulio Rondón, 26 December 2004.
The first movement of ‘Jaguar Songs,’ Gitane (Gypsy), is a fantasia. This form enables the music to sound very improvisatory. La improvisación loca (the crazy improvisation as Desenne calls it) is a movement of very free sounding character. This freedom can only be appreciated in a performance of the movement; that is, because of the composer's specific indications on the score, one could ignore its improvisatory qualities. These indications make the performer of the ‘Jaguar Songs’ feel as if this first movement is not free or improvisatory at any moment, but the results are the contrary. Desenne specifies exactly how the piece should sound, or approximately what the intention is, with very specific notations and remarks. I think this is crucial, especially in new music, due to the almost monotonous approach that performers tend to have when playing new works.

The gradual transformation from Spanish gypsy guitar and flamenco music into the Colombo-Venezuelan cuatro and pajarillo was Desenne’s inspiration to compose the first movement ‘Gitane.’ The idea of “musical archeology” also is a key role in the inspiration not only for this movement ‘Gitane,’ but also for the whole sonata ‘Jaguar Songs.’ Referring to the Gitane,
Desenne mentions, in one of our interviews: “Es un viaje desde España hasta los Llanos de Venezuela and Colombia...”

The pajarillo creates an exciting ending to the first movement of the ‘Jaguar Songs’ because of its fast rhythms and fiery virtuosic qualities. Contrary to its Spanish ancestor, the genre of the pajarillo illustrates the development and transformation of flamenco music in Venezuela and Colombia during the colonial Spanish rule.

The first movement of ‘Jaguar Songs’ begins with a small introduction in two-measure phrases, which creates a very rhapsodic feeling (see in example 1.1). The composer’s indication at the top of page number one of the score, ben declamato, refers to a voice-like sound, which indicates a short sung introduction, similar to the one that happens commonly in flamenco music and also in the pajarillo. From the very beginning, Desenne is clear in depicting these influences and also the similarities between genres, flamenco and pajarillo. Furthermore, he makes it clear that these genres have experienced changes and transformations since the Spanish set foot in Latin America. As he describes it:

“La introducción (compás 1 hasta el 39) es la relación entre el Pajarillo y la Improvisación gitana, relizada usualmente por un cuatro o Bandola” en el caso

---

23 Desenne, Paul. Interview by Tulio Rondón, 26 December 2004. “It is a journey from Spain to the Colombo-Venezuelan plains...”
24 Unnamed article. “Bandola,” in The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians. 2nd ed 2, London: Macmillian Publishers Limited, 2001. “Bandola. A flat-backed lute of South and Central America, descended from the bandurria. The modern bandola of Colombia has a tear-drop shape, with a flat or concave back... There are two types of Venezuelan bandola: the first, found in the western plains, has four strings, tuned b-e’-b’-f”; the second, from north-eastern Venezuela, has four double courses, the lower pairs tuned in octaves and the higher strings in unison, as follows: A/a-e/e’-b’/b’/f#”f#”. ”
del pajarillo, y con guitarras en el caso Gitano, este pasaje es a su ves un preludio al pajarillo que explota al final del movimiento...”

Ex.1.1
Cello Solo

1-Gitane

The third measure starts a series of rhythmic and percussive passages that emulate the flamenco Spanish guitar, most noticeably in measure 11 with the marking of the word charango. The charango marking illustrates yet another transformation between the instruments of the Old and the New Worlds, such as from the gitarrilla to the cuatro. This passage stands out because of two characteristics:

- The use of a type of bow motion never used in cello pieces before. (See example 1.2)
- The transformation of this rhythm from Spanish character, almost flamenco, to a Venezuelan pajarillo. (see example 1.3)

---

"The introduction (measures 1 to 39) shows the relationship between the pajarillo and the Gypsy improvisation, usually performed by a cuatro o bandola in the case of the pajarillo, and with guitars in the case of the Gypsy. This passage is also a prelude to the pajarillo that explodes at the end of the movement."
Desenne marks this bowing as \textit{sul tasto, battuto silencioso punta d'arco}.

Although these markings may sound familiar, they are rarely encountered in the same sentence. Also, as seen in example 1.4, the composer writes a more unusual comment underneath these remarks, \textit{sautillé sur place}. Remarks such as these are normally left to the interpretation of the performer. A cellist himself, the composer is very careful to describe how specific passages in the piece can be interpreted in order to achieve the desired results. For instance, the above example (1.2) shows all the markings necessary to achieve the guitar sound or later the charango sound at measure 11.

Notice in the remarks how the composer mixes two languages, Italian and French. Also later in the piece, in the fifth movement, “Jaguar,” measure 62, English is used. This choice of language is important because language and music
are very closely related. This choice of international language is part of what Desenne calls "la Sopa" (the Soup), the integration of different cultures and influences in his music.

Ex. 1.3
Also important are a few words and remarks throughout the piece that are related to the composer at a personal level. Desenne has his own unique way of talking and referring to the music as a performer and as a pedagogue. For example, his use of the word 'cremoso' (creamy) refers to a very elastic legato sound, and the word caoutchoucteux (rubbery), refers to a rubbery sound as seen in measure 20 of the first movement (Example 1.5).

In most modern music one cannot talk about harmonies, but rather tonalities and rhythmic materials. In the case of 'Jaguar Songs,' one cannot talk in
depth about tonality, but about structure and tonal center. I believe that in the "Gitane" one can find an A B A form. (Table 1.1)

Table 1.1

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measures 1-40</td>
<td>Measures 40-150</td>
<td>Measures 150-172</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The rhythmical material in the episode from measure 3 to measure 15 ends in a fermata with an interval of a major seventh. This particular interval is often used in flamenco singing, and also in the pajarillo. As Claudia Calderon explains:

"El Pajarillo es una forma musical en donde el cantador entra con un grito sostenido y muy caracteristico, propio del canto al aire libre..."  

Starting at measure 15, there is a long interchange between the melodic “vocal-like” material and the rhythmic “guitar-like” material. It is also important to notice the flexibility of the melodic material. As indicated by Desenne, flexibility is particularly important in this movement because it communicates the improvisatory character of flamenco songs and pajarillos.

In measure 20, the composer indicates the beginning of a new section, which he marks as Tempo Ballabile (dancing tempo), and with the words cremoso (creamy) and caoutchoucteux (rubbery). Example 1.5 illustrates the character of this section.

---

28 Claudia Calderon, Analisis Musical de un Pajarillo Cantado. Unpublished text. “The Pajarillo is a musical form in which the singer comes in with a sustained scream, similar to that of the open space (Plains)”...
From the beginning to measure 39, Desenne uses a sub-form of A B A. The pick-up to measure 39 begins a new section that contains the same improvisatory material that will be transformed in measure 151 into a pajarillo motive that dominates the piece until the end. This section contains more modal-sounding material, as seen in measure 46 (example 1.6). The modal sound alternates with the tonalities of C Major and G minor throughout the piece until its eventual transformation into a pajarillo in a G minor.

Ex.1.6

Pajarillos are composed in a short sequence on a minor tonality, similar in form to a passacaglia (Dominant-Tonic-Subdominant-Dominant). Also, they are commonly composed in the key of G minor. The pajarillo in this movement is not an exception.

---

The improvisatory section starts from the upbeat to measure 39. It is easily recognizable because of the composer's indications at the top of the measure, *Flessibile quasi in tempo*. Other indicators are the syncopations and accented notes at the end of various beats from measure 49 through 52. In fact, the composer uses these displaced accented notes throughout the entire first movement in order to achieve this improvisatory quality (Example 1.7).

The key signature change at measure 46 provides the movement with a more arabesque tonality, a characteristic associated with the art of flamenco. From the very first measure of this key change (see example 1.8), one can hear a G harmonic minor tonality. Harmonic minor scales are usually associated with the Arabic scale in Latin America.
Between the pickup to measure 60 and the first note of measure 65 the composer inserts a recurring motive that acts as a small bridge between the
current material and its transformation into something new. Once again, this
section follows the commonly used tonality of the *pajarillo*, G minor.

Each section develops until the next G minor motive at pickup to measure
75, where a new section begins developing. At the upbeat to measure 98, the last
of these fragments is exposed. At this time, the composer chooses to elongate the
first note and add a dissonant tone (B natural). This last motive contains another
fermata at the end of measure 103. Contrary to its ancestors, it leads to a more
*pajarillo*-sounding passage, between measures 104 and 109. Finally, in measure
150 the *pajarillo* motive is completely exposed. Desenne’s *pajarillo* shows two
significant characteristics: first, the rhythmic motive, which is usually played by
the *cuatro* in *pajarillos*; and second, the harmonic part usually played by a bass
instrument, either the harp or double bass. The exposition of this motive is not
complete until the upbeat to measure 162, in which the motive repeats itself four
times. Before this motive is presented in a longer version, there is a quick
remembrance of the motive from the “crazy improvisation,” in measures 155 to
161. The movement ends with a bright-sounding *pajarillo* as if Desenne were
making a comment about history, stating the development of Venezuelan folk-
musical identity.
CHAPTER II

TOMBEAU POUR L'AMAZONIE

THE SHAMAN AND THE INDIGENOUS MUSIC FROM VENEZUELA AND THE AMERICAS:

The second movement of the sonata is based on music of indigenous communities of Venezuela, Panama and Colombia. Desenne is particularly inspired by the figure of the Shaman, or the medicine man. The sonata depicts the sounds of animals and insects native to the rainforest of Venezuela. In this quest to depict history through music, Desenne includes the sound of chainsaws disturbing the forest’s tranquility, and also uses these sounds to symbolize its destruction.

The subtitle *Tombeau pour l'Amazonie* denounces the destruction of the forest by human hands and describes the ritual of the shaman and its connection with death, the supernatural, and the spiritual.

Existing Western transcriptions of indigenous music from Venezuela are very similar to the material encountered in Desenne’s second movement ‘Tombeau pour l’Amazonie.’ These transcriptions show the same intervallic material of their canticles as in the second movement of the sonata. In addition to this, the *Tombeau pour l’Amazonie* is very much influenced by other Venezuelan indigenous traditions including melodies constructed by short cells consisting of repetition with slight variants of a single short motive, and also of descending tritonic to pentatonic motives.
The instrumentations of these groups vary between idiophones, membranophones, aerophones and chordophones. In the case of the ‘Tombeau pour l'Amazonie,’ Desenne employs a flute used by the Kuna groups in Colombia and Panama as inspiration. The examples below (2.1), show some of the characteristics of indigenous music and their relationship to Desenne’s sonata.

Ex. 2.1

The example above, 2.1, shows the predominance of the monothematic material that also continues throughout the piece. In addition, repetitive cells are crucial to emulate the shaman chants. The use of natural and artificial harmonics tinges the music with a mythical and mysterious feeling and describes the sounds of the rainforest jungle, its animals and insects.

---

All these images evoke the shaman at work, which is usually helped by his being under the influence of natural stimulants and hallucinogenic drugs, such as peyote. In the example below 2.2, the second part of this movement, specifically marked as shamanico, represents the actual shaman's trance, and his gestures when taking the hallucinogenic drugs, and his invocation of the supernatural. Desenne cleverly achieves this through the use of an ascending scale followed by the molto glissando in measure 44.

Ex. 2.2
RHYTHMS, ARTICULATIONS, MARKINGS AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO FOLKLORIC ROOTS:

Rhythmic patterns are among the most influential elements in Desenne’s music, and they are key to this sonata. The rich rhythms of indigenous, Latin American, and Caribbean music are present in all movements of the unaccompanied cello sonata, ‘Jaguar Songs.’

As mentioned on page 24, Desenne uses the quality of the harmonics, whether natural or artificial, to represent the sounds of the jungle, specifically the sounds of animals such as frogs and insects. At the beginning, the movement ‘Tombeau pour l’Amazonie,’ Desenne shows the combination of two main characters, the shaman and the jungle. To represent the shaman, Desenne uses the monothematic material seen at the beginning of the movement. The harmonic notes represent the jungle, whereas the repetitive notes act as an indigenous motive, representing the Shaman. The alternation between both characters continues throughout the piece. Between measures 1 and 11, the Shaman in the jungle is preparing for his ritual. Example 2.3 illustrates how the E-flat slur in one bow and with tenuto markings, helps the composer to emulate the mumbling of the shaman when singing. The simplicity of the melodic material responds to the indigenous influence. The markings, especially the fermatas, are extremely important in this movement. They add to the movement a sense of anxiety, uneasiness, and paradoxically, freedom.
Desenne uses the monothematic material later in the piece to represent the urban influence in his music, specifically pop music and some types of rock and roll. As in Desenne’s monothematic representation, the rhythms and themes are recurrent from beginning to end, following a minimalist form (See Example 2.3).

Ex. 2.3

Cello Solo

2-Tombeau pour l'Amazonie

For Isset Chout

Largo, flessibile

\( \text{\textit{a 2 voci} / sul tasto / arco norm.} \)

un peu allongé

un poco vibrato

\( \text{a tempo / arco norm.} \)

\( \text{gliss.} \)

Paul Desenne 2002
In measure 12, an interesting transition of two chords interrupts the tranquility of the beginning. A chord comprised of E-flat and D harmonics, and another chord of a D and harmonic C, make a transitional measure to the next section. These transitional chords add to the mysterious and very mystical quality of this section. The harmonic notes D to C contain an ascending gesture, while the real note E-flat to D contains a descending gesture.

This is particularly revealing because the sounds of animals (ascending pitches in harmonics) are usually stronger at night. The regular pitches represent the end of the daytime with its descending gesture, preparing the listener for a new section of entire harmonics that suggest the sounds of the rainforest at night. Desenne describe the interval of major 7th, especially the one of Eb to D thus:

“...El Intervalo de septima mayor en este movimiento siempre representa la quietud y el silencio de la noche, incluyendo el sonido de las ranas, grillos etc.”

From the pickup to measure 13 to measure 20, the sounds of the rainforest reach their fullest, as represented by the harmonic passage. (See example 2.4).

---

32 Ibid. "The major seventh interval in this movement always represents the quietness and silence of the night, including the sound of frog, crickets etc."
The shaman and the jungle appear together, starting in measure 21 and ending in measure 29. As illustrated in example 2.5, the shaman’s voice in this section differs from his previous voice. Now the repetitive-note motive is moving through different intervallic material: intervals of major seconds, perfect fourths, major thirds, diminished sevenths, and octaves. This intervallic material transmits to the listener a sensation of stillness.
On measure 29, the monothematic material returns, but it is now tied to the harmonics (jungle sounds) with two new additions: first the little episodes in sixteenth notes can be divided in two parts, the first from measure 30 to 35, and the second from measure 36 to 41. The first part comprises gestures of melancholy and sadness, perhaps illustrating the reality of the hard life in the forest (example 2.6). The second part, as seen in example 2.7, has sixteenth notes in a G minor sonority. Here *pizzicatos* and harmonics suggest a Spanish lament.
This movement is divided into two sections. Section A, as previously analyzed, describes the shaman in his environment, along with the melancholy, sadness, and anxiety of life in the rainforest. This section also includes the remembrance of the Spaniards, visitors of the past. Desenne marks the beginning of section B with the word *shamanico*. In this section, the shaman takes the lead role. Measures 42 to 56 depict the shaman at work, during the trance induced by...
hallucinogenic substances (see example 2.8). This is the moment when he is in
close contact with the spirits of the rainforest. The bass flutes used by the
indigenous Kuna of Panama and Colombia inspired the material at measures 42
and 43. Desenne describes this section as an illustration of the spirits of the
Yapururu flutes, other spirits, and the death itself.33

He also describes the gesture in measure 44, 45, 52, 62, 72 and 73 as
explosions and apparitions of spirits. To me, they also represent the shaman’s
consumption of the peyote, as the drug is called. An assistant uses a big bamboo
stick or other long cylindrical object to blow it directly into the shaman’s nose.
The drug enters the shaman’s nose in a fast and strong blow, causing him to
scream and to fall into an extreme spell for a few seconds before readying himself
for the next dose.

The Yanomami are an indigenous community in Venezuela, in which a
large part whose mythology involves the figure of the Shaman and the Jaguar. To
better understand the relation between the Jaguar and the shamans, I site an
extract from a Yanomami mythology tale entitled: Jaguar Encuentra a su Dueño
(Jaguar Finds his Owner):

"...Un anciano tomó la palabra:

-Ese Jaguar nos exterminará...A partir de ese momento el miedo le retuvo en el
campamento; no salían ya ni para defecar; dejaron de ir a cazar. Los ancianos
habían sido diezmados, no quedaban más que algunos adultos.
-¡Hija Mía! Estás tras de nosotros, ha seguido el rastro de nosotros.
El que pronunciaba estas palabras era un hombre de edad madura, uno de los
que inhalaban alucinógeno, un shaman. Exclamo:

33 Ibid.
-¡Qué desgracia!
*Los shamans se reunieron. Trajeron droga, la colocaron sobre hojas, la pusieron en el suelo. La inhalaron...*"34

Measures 44, 45, 52, 62, 72 and 73 are a perfect example of how Desenne is able to describe with music many different environmental situations. (Example 2.8)

---


-That Jaguar will exterminate us… From that moment on fear kept them in the camp they did not even go out to defecate; they quit hunting. The old men had been decimated by it; there remained only a few adults.

-Daughter of mine! He is right in back of us, he has followed our trail.

The one that pronounced these words was a man of a mature age, the kind that inhaled hallucinogenic drugs, a shaman. He exclaimed:

-What back luck!

The shamans got together. They brought a drug, they put it on top of leaves, they put it on the floor. They inhaled it..."
Ex. 2.8

In measure 51, the same flute material of measure 42 changes rhythmically to evoke the shaman's spasm after taking the drugs. (Example 2.9)

Ex. 2.9

Finally, in measure 57, the shaman connects with the spirits of the rainforest, who tell him about the atrocities performed by human hands:
To depict the chainsaws, Desenne employs fast repetitive triplets followed by even faster thirty-second notes, and mixes *franco ponticello* with left hand *pizzicatos*. In measures 60 and 61, specific markings such as *gyrophare sonore* (loud, rotating light), and *sauvage* (savage), cleverly exemplify the echoes or sound of the chainsaws through the rainforest. (See example 2.10)

---

35 Desenne, Paul. Interview by Tulio Rondón, 15 July 2004. “The material as measure 51 and the similar measures, represent the dance of the Shaman converted into the sounds of the Chainsaws cutting the trees.”
Desenne describes the gesture at measure 62 as apparitions of spirits. Measure 67 is similar to measure 57, which is in a G minor sonority (see previous example). This next section is exposed in a C minor sonority at measure 67. At measure 72 and 73 the last of the gestures portraying apparitions of spirits appears. This time these three gestures are written in a consecutive sequence, as a last explosion and last convulsion of the shaman and his ritual, in the climax of
the trance. Connected to the last gesture, the quiet sounds of the rainforest reappears, calming down the shaman’s excitement from measure 73 to measure 79. From this point on, the low voice of the shaman, that is almost a mumble, connects this section to the end. (Example 2.11)

Ex. 2.11
CHAPTER III

GAVOTTE

CARACAS AND LATIN AMERICAN POP:

Caracas is the capital of Venezuela, Paul Desenne’s city of birth and residence. Like most capitals in Latin America, Caracas is a chaotic city, yet for many Venezuelans, Caracas is a city of opportunities, a place to live and achieve one’s goals. Due to the centralization of the city, Caracas is the economic, political, and cultural center of the country. In terms of music, Caracas is the center of classical music and of an immense array of musical styles including sub-genres of pop, jazz, and rock and roll. Most of these urban forms are strongly influenced by African rhythms and Latin American genres such as salsa and tango.

Desenne draws from Latin American pop and jazz to compose the ‘Gavotte,’ the third movement of ‘Jaguar Songs.’ He utilizes elements from blues and pop, two genres heavily charged with African drumming. The Afro-Latino rhythms feed jazz and pop music hybrid genres such as ‘Latin-Jazz,’ and ‘Latin Rock/pop.’ Later in this paper, I examine the key role of African drumming in this movement, such as the offbeat characteristic that is very distinctive even from the beginning of the movement.
GAVOTTE:

The name of the movement Gavotte, (old French dance), refers to the fact that this is a dance movement in the sonata. As Desenne says:

“...Este movimiento es la fiesta, el baile, la diversión.”

This movement shows the dance quality of the Gavotte, as well as some of its formal characteristics. For example, gavottes always begin at the third beat of the measure, as does the Gavotte in Jaguar Songs. A comparison of the gavottes in both J. S. Bach’s sixth suite and Desenne’s Jaguar Songs, shows similar structural elements. Example 3.1, illustrates the similarities between Paul Desenne’s, and J. S. Bach’s gavotte.

37 Desenne, Paul. Interview by Tulio Rondón, 26 December 2004. “...This movement is the party, the dance, the entertainment.”
The key of this movement is C Major, and based on the blues scale. The blues scale is present in the movement even though Desenne does not incorporate the 12 measure phrases commonly used in blues. The blues scale is a combination of the major diatonic scale plus two additional notes, the flatted third and seventh, commonly known as the blues notes. The flatted 7th (Bb) in measure 1 of the Gavotte reveals the influence of blues.

The form of this movement is A, B, C, codetta and A’, in which section C functions as a little development section, and section A’ functions as a recapitulation. (Table 3.1)
Starting at measure 1, the offbeat rhythms clearly illustrate the Latin American pop influence. The accompaniment and the melody act as a group of different instruments playing at the same time. The off beats are the accompaniment, rhythm section, and the rest of the notes in the phrase are the melody. The three notes at the beginning become the ground bass in this movement, functioning as a pedal-note of the tonic C. The indication at the bottom of measure 7, *basses cottoneuses, soufflès, sans couper le son* (cotton-like bases, whispered, without cutting the sound), reveals the importance of the C pedal. (Example 3.2)
In measure 33 of section A, Desenne incorporates the Latin pop quality through the offbeats. He describes section B as: “...La sección Hendrix.”

This is where the heavy blues-rock influence is stronger. In order to give the heavy quality of “electric blues,” popularized by famous electric guitar player Jimmy Hendrix, the B section is slower than section A. Desenne emulates Hendrix’s electric guitar through the use of a new notation and sound effects in the score. At measure 34, Desenne writes an asterisk on top of the last beat to describe this effect: *bestial, distortionné, vibrato amplio e rápido*, bestial distorted, wide and fast vibrato. (Example 3.3)

Ex. 3.3

With the same purpose, Desenne also employs the *trèmolo non misurato* (non measured tremolo), and the indications *distortionné, quasi sul pont.* (Distorted, almost over the bridge). (Example 3.4)

Section B ends in measure 49 followed by a development section, or section C. This section begins at measure 50 and ends at measure 71. Section C incorporates the themes from section A and B in addition to new material. This

---

38 Ibid. “...The Hendrix section.”
resembles the development section in sonata form. Section C is also marked as quasi cadenza (almost like a cadenza). At measure 65, a quasi codetta marks the transition to the recapitulation. This passage is particularly interesting as well as demanding for the performer, as indicated by Desenne's markings on the score: super caoutchoucteuX mais transparent, super rubbery but transparent (Example 3.5).

The recapitulation begins on the third beat of measure 71 and continues calmly until the end.

Ex. 3.4
Ex. 3.5

Súbito un poco pesante, meno mosso
super caoutchouc mais transparent

Ex. 3.6

colando
tornando al tempo I°
cresc. Tempo I° \( \cdot \) = 100

laisser vibrer l'harmonique

élargir un peu

culando un poco
NEIGHBORS: THE MUSIC FROM BRAZIL:

The majority of indigenous communities in Brazil and Venezuela live in the Amazonian rainforest, sharing the border that separates the south of Venezuela from northern Brazil. These populations share cultural aspects that have undergone a similar historical process.

Like Venezuela, Brazil and Colombia received large numbers of African slaves during the Spanish conquest. African culture influenced all realms of culture, including music.

Brazil also shares many similarities with Venezuela and Colombia, including its population of African descendant. These populations in Venezuela, Brazil and Colombia, as well as the Caribbean, have maintained many aspects of their African ancestors, including religion, culture, and customs, and their identity is rooted in cults of African traditions. Documents that describe rebellious movements and political activity held by African slaves dated from 1552 and 1749, shows how long African communities have been part of Latin America. 39 African slaves were brought to Latin America mainly to work in the cacao, sugar cane, and cotton plantations. Venezuela still is one of the largest exporters of cacao to Europe and other parts of the world. These plantations still exist situated

mainly in the coastal region of the country where one can find the largest communities of African descendants, now Afro-Venezuelan.

Many cultural and religious manifestations for Afro-Latino communities are unchanged from their African root. Many of the instruments used in their music, religious rituals and costumes are also the same. One of these instruments is the *birimbao*, use in the Brazilian ritual of *capoeira*. *Birimbao*, or in Portuguese *Berimbau*, seen in illustration 1, is described by Tadeu Batista:

"The *Berimbau* is an instrument brought to Brazil from Angola, Africa, and a constitutive element of the Afro-Brazilian ritual *‘capoeira’* in Brazil."

African music also has greatly influenced the so-called “Latin American popular music.” Paul Desenne inserts these African rhythms and Latin American genres influenced by African culture, including Brazilian *bossa nova*, into the fourth movement, *Birimbao*.

As the title describes (*Prélude à Jaguar*), this movement is a prelude to the fifth movement (*Jaguar*). The fourth movement (*Birimbao*) is a short movement of 22 measures, including the 5 measures that repeat at the beginning of the movement. In this movement Desenne creates an atmosphere by once again utilizing the diminished sonority.

---

40 Batista, Tadeu. "*Berimbau: The Brazilian Berimbau.*" http://rhythmweb.com/berimbau/
As an introduction to the “Jaguar,” this fourth movement transmits the fear of the jaguar’s proximity and suggests the respect and fear of indigenous cultures towards this animal.

II. 1
NEW COMPOSITIONAL TECHNIQUES:

The technique used to play the birimbao requires drumming the only string of the instrument with a thin stick or mallet, generating a resonant and bright sound. Desenne transfers this technique to the cello. Thus at the beginning he writes Battuto senza mozione, quasi niente, meaning “stick without motion, almost nothing.” This technical process has never been used in a cello piece before. Hence, it is a particular bow stroke and a challenging technique for a cellist, especially for the right arm resistance.
Example 4.1 shows how Desenne employs the technique used to play the birimbaou on the cello. Despite the name of the fourth movement Birimbao, and the use of the technique to play the instrument, the fourth movement has no relation to Brazilian rhythms and harmony until the last four measures of the fourth movement Birimbao. At this point, in measures 14 through 17, Desenne starts a bossa nova type of harmony and rhythm.\footnote{Desenne, Paul. Interview by Tulio Rondón, 15 July.}

The form of this movement is ABAB. At the beginning, the A section is divided in six-measure repeated phrases. The ABA sections contain three more phrases of four measures each. (Table 4.1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Form</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Measures</td>
<td>1-6</td>
<td>7-10</td>
<td>10-13</td>
<td>14-17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*BIRIMBAO:*
The diminished sonority at the beginning of the movement will dominate the entire movement, functioning as a transition to the *bossa nova* that begins in measure 14 and continues to the end of the movement. From the beginning of the movement to measure 6, Desenne writes various sonorities of A minor diminished with an added major sixth, alternating the third (C) and the root (A) between the measures. (Example 4.1)

From measure 7 to the first half of measure 9, Desenne writes a C major diminished chord with an added minor third. In the second half of measure 9 and the first half of measure 10, he writes a series of F major diminished 7 chords.
From the second half of measure 10 the sonorities of the beginning (A minor diminished) repeat until measure 13 (Example 4.2).

Finally from measures 14 through 17, Desenne fully exposes the bossa nova chords and rhythm. The A minor 7 and B diminished 7 function as leading tones to the next movement "Jaguar" (V), which is attaca (without pause).
Ex. 4.2

cresc.

sim.

motto

smozz

suf

place

hen ritmico, pusto

sim.

sempre f

sempre molto ritmico

f

fp pp

senza cresc.

battuto senza mozione

our place

senza cresc.

f

battuto senza mozione

our place

suf

smozz

suf

place

hen ritmico, giusto

pp

mp ben ritmico, giusto
CHAPTER V

JAGUAR

THE MYTH AND IMPORTANCE OF THE JAGUAR IN AMERICA’S INDIGENOUS CULTURES:

The fifth movement of the sonata *Jaguar Songs* is the ultimate example of the “soup,” Paul Desenne’s philosophy of composition. In chapter V, I shall explain how this process functions and the importance of this philosophy.

The figure of the jaguar is a constant presence in Paul Desenne’s sonata *Jaguar Songs*, especially in the second and fifth movements, *Tombeau pour l’Amazonie* and *Jaguar*. These movements relate to myth and to death, precisely what the jaguar symbolizes. In most indigenous cultures in Latin America, certainly in Venezuela, jaguars are animals associated with death. There are many well-known legends about the jaguar, a protagonist of oral histories and storytelling sessions. Given its continuous presence in oral and written traditions, the jaguar is charged with cultural meaning.

Many of the myths told in the *Yanomami* communities of the Venezuelan Amazon reveal the significance of the jaguar. These histories disclose the ferocity of jaguars and the *Yanomanis*’ reliance on the shamans to free them from the jaguar’s attacks. *Yanomamis* do indeed suffer occasional jaguar attacks, and their belief is that this animal represents bad spirits, or is a bad spirit. Below are two extracts from the *Yanomami* mythology. The first describes how the shamans
protected their people from the jaguar and how, despite the shaman’s efforts, the
ejaguar ate one of them.

‘craneo de Jaguar’ (Jaguar Cranium):

"Thômihewê fue un gran chamán. En época, Jaguar estaba a punto de exterminarnos, estaba a
punto de exterminar a todos los chamanes. Thômihewê iba a cazar el jaguar, cuando encontró que éste iba a toda carrera. Le tiró varias flechas, pero las puntas lanceoladas entraron apenas…"\(^{\text{43}}\)

‘estuvieron a punto de morir’ (they were on the point of dying):

"…-¡Han estado a punto de ser comidos por el jaguar! El gran jaguar avanzaba cimbreándose. Los ‘hekura’ lanzaron sus flechas, pero solo le alcanzaron superficialmente y el jaguar gruñó. Saltó sobre los ‘hekura’, agarró a uno con sus garras y lo destrozó…"\(^{\text{44}}\)

The influence of indigenous music is apparent only at the very end of the
fifth movement. The “Jaguar” movement is related in many respects to the second
movement Tombeau pour l’Amazonie. Some sections of it illustrate jungle
sounds, and have a connection with religion and mythical content in the middle
section, which depict Spanish monks dying in the rain forest. The influence of
Gregorian chants in the fifth movement is particularly important. Chant-like
passages appear in the middle of the movement and suggest a messenger of death.

\(^{\text{43}}\) Lizot, Jacques, Luis Cocco, and Juan Finkers. Mitología Yanomami. Quito: Ediciones ABYA-YALA, 1991. ‘Jaguar Cranium’: "Thômihewê was a great shaman. At the time, the jaguar was going to kill us all. He was going to kill all the shamans. Thômihewê went out to hunt the jaguar. The jaguar was running fast Thômihewê’s arrows barely went through the jaguar’s skin.

\(^{\text{44}}\) Ibid ‘They were in the point of dying’: "…They were almost eaten by the jaguar! He was coming closer, showing anger. The ‘hekura’ shot arrows at him, but these barely reached him and the jaguar growled. He leaped onto the men, took hold of him with its claws and destroyed him"
Whether indigenous, African, or Gregorian, all these musical forms find their roots in their dialogue with religion and myth.
LA SOPA/THE SOUP: THE FUSION OF TRADITIONS AND IDEAS:

I refer to Paul Desenne’s most influential compositional philosophy as the “soup, a fusion of a variety of elements and ideas that blend into a final product. This final product is, in fact, the fifth movement, “Jaguar,” where Afro-Latino and indigenous influences and even Gregorian chants come together to create the “soup.”

“...Una mezcla interesante de referencias como la música Antigua, el Puya, Cumbia y otros, mezclados todos en una sopa rica en ingredientes.” 45

The “soup” philosophy is present throughout the entire sonata Jaguar Songs. It journeys from the Spanish flamenco to Venezuelan pajarillo in the first movement, Gitane, from a bossa nova type of rhythm in the Birimbao, movement four, to Colombian Cumbia and Puya (Afro-Colombian rhythms) in the last movement, “Jaguar.”

In the fourth movement, the bossa nova material is transformed to a Brazilian pop type of material46 at measure 1 to measure 9 of the fifth movement, "Jaguar." The Brazilian sound is kept through the use of the diminished chords, as well as of the offbeat rhythms that characterize Brazilian popular music.

(Example 5.1) In the paragraph that follows, I shall explain how Desenne integrates these elements and influences into the fifth movement “Jaguar.”

---

45 Desenne, Paul. Interview by Tulio Rondón, 15 July.. “...An interesting mix of cultural references including early music, the puya, Cumbia, and others, all ingredients mix in a rich soup.”
46 Ibid
Suddenly, from measure 10 to 24, Afro-Brazilian and Afro-Colombian rhythms mix with a Colombian cumbia. The rhythmic material of the cumbia will last almost the entire movement. The rhythmic pattern in the left hand pizzicatos resembles the African drumming of Afro-Latino music, whereas the glissandos and rhythmic patterns in the melody represent the Colombian cumbia. (Example 5.2)

Ex. 5.1
The example above (Ex. 5.2) shows the Afro-Latino influence. It begins on measure 10 and continues until measure 36. Desenne employs the materials from measure 18 and 19 as a transitional passage. This is also the case in measures 30 to the first beat of measure 36, 97 to 101, 127 to 129, and 149 to 150.

From measures 36 to 61, Paul Desenne introduces a very descriptive section. Desenne explains:

"Es una vision de la religion... de monjes Gregorianos perdidos en la selva y comidos por los gusanos y termitas."\(^{47}\)

Two elements, religion and death, connect the second movement, *Tombeau pour l'Amazonie*, to the fifth movement, "Jaguar." In the fifth movement the Gregorian chant melody represents religion, and the sounds of worms and termites eating the monks represent death. From measure 36 to 47, the

---

\(^{47}\) Desenne, Paul. Interview by Tulio Rondon, 26 December 2004: "It is a religious vision... Gregorian monks who get lost in the rain forest and are eaten by worms and termites."
Gregorian chant melody appears with unisons, first together and later in different variations, first alternating eighth notes, then triplets, and then sixteenth notes. This increases the intensity, communicates uncertainty, and illustrates the death of lost Gregorian monks in the jungle. (See example 5.3)

Ex. 5.3
Desenne describes the fatal outcome of the Gregorian monks in measures 48 and 49 by using the same Gregorian melody with successive suspended intervals of seconds (see example 5.4). Measures 50 and 51 show Spanish laments, similar to those in the second movement *Tombeau pour l'Amazonie*, (left hand *pizzicatos* at measures 39 to 48 in the second movement, example 2.7).

Ex. 5.4

From measure 62 until measure 81, Desenne continues the African percussive sounds echoing the passage from measure 10 of the fifth movement, “Jaguar.” This time the composer indicates the African influence with the marking *Cuasi “African Instrument”* (quasi “African Instrument”). This marking emphasizes the importance of the left hand *pizzicatos*, despite their similarity to the previous ones in measure 10. This passage requires greater ability from the
performer since there are additional notes that must be played in left hand

*pizzicatos* at the end of each measure. (Example 5.5)

Ex. 5.5

Measures 82 to 90 communicate a more primitive type of African rhythm.

This rhythmic material contains two sequences of three groups of cells, clearly marked by the composer with big numbers (1, 2 and 3). They differ from each other only in the last note of each cell. Thus, the first group of cells ends on F natural, whereas the second group of cells ends on F natural and G natural.

(Example 5.6)
The figure of the jaguar enters the score at measure 91. From measure 91 to 97 Desenne incorporates a blues scale, and at the same time he indicates 'soave' (soft) in the score. This illustrates the delicate and at the same time precise movements of the jaguar. Measures 98 to 101 contain transitional material similar to that in previous passages such as measure 30. The transitional material of measures 91 to 97 leads to the representation of the aggressiveness of the jaguar from measures 102 to 109. This passage is particularly interesting because Desenne employs and unifies many ideas in order to create a chaotic sensation, as if witnessing a jaguar attack. Desenne, in order to create chaos, mixes the African rhythms, ferocious sforzandos, dynamic markings, and harmonics (sounds of the jungle). In measures 102 to 109, Desenne uses harmonics for the first time in this movement. (Example 5.7)
A *presto furioso* from measure 110 to 122 illustrates the racing of the Jaguar inside the jungle. The passage that follows, from measures 123 to 126, (example 5.8) describes the jaguar running behind a prey. Starting at measure 110, once again Desenne utilizes harmonics to represent the sounds of the jungle and fast sixteen notes to represent the jaguar’s run. Desenne writes every pair of notes in a different string, which creates a sense of a busy environment of sound and visual chaos. (Example 5.9)
Ex 5.8

Ex 5.9

*Presto Furioso*

- quasi sul pont.
- quasi saltellato
- a tempo

\[ \text{Tempo: 160} \]
Measures 127 to 130 are a transitional passage that incorporates other elements including the African rhythms with the left hand *pizzicatos* and the harmonics that represent the jungle sounds. This harmonic passage at measures 128 and 129 is also a quote from the second movement, *Tombeau pour l'Amazonie*, where the interval of a minor 7th illustrates the sounds of the jungle. (Example 5.10)

Ex 5.10

African rhythms dominate the movement from measures 131 to the end. Desenne uses again the left *pizzicatos* to represent the percussive quality of the Afro-Colombian rhythm in the *Puya*. From measures 139 to 149, he inserts a brief fragment from the theme that represented the chaos of the jaguar in the Afro-Colombian passage. It is as if the mythical and religious power of the shamans had defeated the jaguar. At the end of the sonata, following the last measure of transitional material (measure 149 to 150), the shamans reappear (measure 151 to
the end). The eighth notes and harmonics bring us back to the sounds of the shaman in the second movement *Tombeau pour l'Amazonie*. 
NEW COMPOSITIONAL TECHNIQUES:

In the fifth movement, “Jaguar,” Desenne employs one of the most striking techniques in the entire piece. The unison passage, from measures 36 to 61, depicts the Gregorian monks, lost and dying as they are eaten by worms and termites in the jungle. This technique, besides being very demanding for the performer is without doubt new to the cello repertoire. (Examples 5.3 and 5.4)
CONCLUSION

PAUL DESENNE'S HYBRIDS: A PATH TO A NEW LATIN AMERICAN MUSICAL IDENTITY:

Paul Desenne’s sonata for cello solo, *Jaguar Songs*, is a milestone in Venezuelan and Latin American classical music. Desenne is the first Latin American composer to incorporate in his music Latin American musical traditions in a systematic way. His project of “musical archeology” marks a turning point in Latin American classical composition.

Desenne has taken a new route, different from that of Nationalist composers, in that he contemplates Latin America as a whole, united by a code of rich musical languages. For Desenne, Latin American musical elements are not merely complements; rather, they constitute the building blocks of his compositions.

Desenne’s work is a genuine product from Latin America’s rich musical environment. Through Desenne’s music, one can appreciate the variety of musical genres and tendencies that exist in Latin America. The sonata for cello solo *Jaguar Songs* is a perfect example of this. Desenne takes the listener on a journey through Latin America’s musical time and space. His “imaginary music archeology,” works as a historical narrative and dialogue between the past and present. Desenne conducts careful anthropological work, presenting the environments and uniqueness of each tradition and bringing them into dialogue by means of his musical “soup.”
In terms of compositional techniques, Desenne’s contributions are of immense importance in the history of Latin America’s classical music composition. He has crafted new techniques and notations that communicate cultural realities through cello performance. Paul Desenne’s techniques and notations reproduce culturally specific environments drawn from different Latin American realities. By doing this, Desenne is crossing the borders between reality and representation, classical and popular, European and Latin American musical traditions.

*Jaguar Songs* is most representative of Paul Desenne’s solo works. It is part of his life project to create a Latin American classical music identity. Through *Jaguar Songs* the voices of Latin American people speak, manifesting the diversity and contributions of the various populations that make up Latin American society. Desenne inter-mixes classical traditions with popular cultures, giving them equal status in their journey following the footsteps of the jaguar from the depths of the jungle to the busy streets of Caracas.
REFERENCES


