

# Chapter 2: Musemes

## *m1: instant altiplano*

Ex. 1. *Fernando*, bars 1-6

The song opens with an ethereal A major chord characterised by no bass register, long held notes in the treble, melodic interest in the upper middle register, etc. These opening bars feature three accompanying musemes and one main melodic figure. Apart from the obvious ‘string wallpaper’ function of the violin pad,<sup>1</sup> these musemes, set out in table 1 (p. 26), are referred to as ‘massed charangos’ (m1b) and ‘in paradisum’ (m3a). The melodic museme is listed as m1a — ‘quena’.

**m1a: quena**

Recorders, quenás and other types of *flauti dolci* (here with added studio reverb) playing melodic figures similar to m1a can be heard on *La Flûte Indienne* (1968) and library music pieces like *Spanish Autumn*, *Exotic Flute*, *Inca Flute*, *Cordigliera* and *Wine Festival* (the mainly pentatonic  $\square\square\square | / \square |$  figures in examples 2 through 6). Played by other instruments, similar rhythmic-melodic patterns<sup>2</sup> can be found in the songs *Lady of Spain* (ex. 7), *Grenada* and *E Viva España*, as well as in the parlando rubato charango-plus-guitar opening to Simon and Garfunkel’s cover of the Los Calchakis’ version of *El Condor Pasa* (ex. 8).<sup>2</sup>

1. The Swedish expressions *stråkskog* (= string forest) and *stråktapet* (= string wallpaper) cover both types of string pad (‘filling’). The ‘string halo’ (‘silver strings’ or *Streichenglorienschein*) is used by Bach in the *Matthew Passion* to accompany and enclose the figure of Jesus in an aura of otherworldliness. For further discussion of string pads, see Tagg & Clarida on *The Dream of Olwen*.
2. There is a fortuitous mnemonic link between (i) the Hispanic character of the melodic embellishment comprising m1a, (ii) the notational shorthand for that embellishment, known as a ‘turn’ (–), and (iii) the tilde sign (˜), so common in written Spanish (e.g. señor, mañana, niño).

Ex. 2. Haider: *Spanish Autumn* (Selected Sounds) - 'Spain, South America, country + people'

♩ = 104  
fl. dolci  
mf  
ac. gt.  
mp  
[+ double bass in Am]  
G F E

Ex. 3. Trede: *Exotic Flute* (Selected Sounds) - 'impression'....'journey over exotic landscape'

parlando rubato  
quena flute  
charangos  
F#m Bm F#m Bm  
F#m A Bm F#m  
+ charangos

Ex. 4. *Inca Flute* (CAM) - 'quena'.... 'Bolivia, Peru, N. Argentina, sadness and melancholy, valley'

♩ = 76  
[simple drum accompaniment, no chords]

Ex. 5. *Cordigliera*. CAM 004: 'Carnival, festivity in the valley'

♩ = 126  
D7 Gm F Eb D  
[accomp: castanets, ac.gt., bass]

Ex. 6. Duncan: *Wine Festival*, part (c) (Boosey & Hawkes SBH) - 'gay, exotic, Mediterranean'

2 fl. trav.  
mf

Ex. 7. Reaves & Evans: *Lady of Spain*


La-dy of Spain, I a - dore you Right from the night I first saw you  
ossia

Ex. 8. Simon & Garfunkel + Los Calchakis (1970): *El Condor Pasa* – introduction

Lento, rubato, senza misura  
pp cresc. mp molto dm. molto cresc. f

In the North-West European and North American cultural sphere, common VVAs (= verbal-visual associations) for the pieces of interobjective comparison material (=IOCM) mentioned so far (ex. 1-8) would be 'southern climes', with particular reference either to the Mediterranean — in which case probably Spain — or to South America, an Andean-Indian region being the most likely bet there. If, however, we narrow down our IOCM to correspond more exactly with the musemes found in *Fernando*, the only examples left will be those featuring a tempo giusto no faster than moderato and a pentatonic melodic profile only.

Thus, excluding examples 1, 5, 6 and 7, we are left with ex. 3 (VVA: 'impression, journey over exotic landscape'), ex. 4 (VVA: Andean-Indian regions, 'sadness, melancholy, valley') and ex. 8 (VVA: 'Los Calchakis' and the large condor bird passing presumably overhead). The common denominators of verbal-visual association (VVA) should be reasonably clear here: exotic environment (as viewed/heard by most Northern Europeans and North Americans), probably Andean-Indian, with a rural view large enough to see and experience the passing (overhead) of a single, very large, hovering bird.

**m1b: massed charangos** 

The quasi-parlando senza misura tonic A major tremolando on what might be 12-string guitars in the *Fernando* recordings under analysis has been given a substantial boost of treble frequency so that the percussive quality of plectrum quivering is readily audible, resulting in a sound reminiscent of massed balalaikas, bouzoukis, cimbalons, mandolins or charangos. Such sounds over static or extremely slowly changing harmonies are not only to be heard in ex. 3 and ex. 8 (p.30) but also in numbers recorded by such popular ethnic artists as Gheorghe Zamfir on *Les Flûtes Roumaines*, especially on tracks entitled *Balada Sarpelui* (violins only) and *Doina din Arges* (piano and violin tremolandi, cimbalon swirls). The latter, originally conceived as a lament upon the death and devastation caused by the Danube flooding the plains of Romania, was also used later as the title theme for the BBC TV series *The Light of Experience*, which ambitiously covered the history of human knowledge in a few episodes. Both the flooded plains of Romania and the history of knowledge from time immemorial constitute large stretches and spaces in place and time. It is therefore no surprise to find plains and other large, empty, motionless rural spaces musically portrayed in terms of static harmony, often furnished with an 'ethnic' or exotic flavour (i.e. distance in time, culture and/or place), as in such pieces as Borodin's *On the Steppes of Central Asia* (ex. 9), 'On the Prairie' from Copland's *Billy The Kid Suite*, (ex. 10), as in an extract of film music by Hugo Friedhofer called *In the Mountains* (ex. 11), or as in practically any library music purporting to conjure up this sort of VVA.<sup>3</sup>

Now, the static harmony in such examples referred to here need not only be regarded as a reflection of the 'calm grandeur of nature' but can also be taken as an almost direct reference to the 'folksiness' of drones. It seems to be more than coincidental that Händel (ex. 12), Beethoven (ex. 14), Schubert (ex. 15, 16), Bruckner (ex. 13), Mahler (ex. 17) and Grieg (ex. 18), not to mention Vaughan Williams (e.g. *The Lark Ascending*, *Fantasia on Greensleeves*), all use drones in music associated with calm and peaceful, large outdoor spaces connected with the bourgeois individual's idealised notions of pastorality.<sup>4</sup> However, static harmony articulated as constant or as quickly reiterated tones over a wide simultaneous pitch range is not enough in itself to convey an ethnic or exotic affect. In Ives' *The Unanswered Question* (ex. 19), the pianissimo sustained chords are described by the composer as connoting 'the Silences of the Druids Who Know, See and Hear Nothing'.

3. See also the end of Mussorgsky's *Night on a Bare Mountain*. For more about pastoral peace, see Tagg 1982a, 1989.

4. See Rebscher 1981, Tagg 1982a.