An Analysis of Two Works for Orchestra: *Adagio Trágico* and *Ocho Miniaturas* by Panamanian Composer Roque Cordero

By

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Abstract

Roque Cordero (1917-2008) is perhaps the most successful composer to emerge from Panama, yet his compositions remain relatively unknown in the orchestral repertoire. This document studies two works for chamber orchestra: *Adagio Trágico* (1955) and *Ocho Miniaturas* (1948), and shows how his fusion of dodecaphonism and Latin American folk rhythms sets him apart from other twelve-tone composers. It begins by briefly discussing political history in mid-twentieth century Panama in order to better understand the climate in which Cordero was composing, and continues to discuss the life and compositional style of Cordero. This paper then discusses the challenges that twelve-tone works present to an orchestra, and suggested approaches to solve these problems. The analysis of *Adagio Trágico* shows how Cordero utilizes ostinatos, fugues, intense climaxes, and long melodies in a twelve-tone setting. The analysis of the second work, *Ocho Miniaturas*, shows how Cordero is able to combine dodecaphonism with the folk rhythms of Latin America, and how Cordero also utilizes incomplete rows, hemiolas, polyrhythms, and fugues in his music.

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EXAMPLES

I. INTRODUCTION

This paper is studies a portion of the contribution that Panamanian composer Roque Cordero (1917-2008) has made to the world of classical music. It will primarily focus on two of Cordero's works for chamber orchestra: *Adagio Trágico* (1955) and *Ocho Miniaturas* (1948). This document will also briefly discuss the political history in mid-twentieth century Panama, in order to better understand the climate in which Cordero was composing. This topic is of particular interest to me as an orchestral conductor because it allows me to study and promote the works of an overlooked composer, and as a Panamanian allows me to identify with and learn more about my own musical heritage.

When we first think of Panama, a few things may come to mind other than classical music: the boxer Roberto Duran known as "Manos de Piedra"; Mariano Rivera, who played with the New York Yankees; and the popular musician Ruben Blades. The diverse styles of music are part of their culture and used to describe a specific country's identity. In Panama these include popular music (salsa, merengue, reggae, samba, mejorana, tamborito, and many others), rock and roll, and jazz. Western classical music, however, has not found a place in the small country of Panama in its relatively short history.

Roque Cordero is perhaps the most successful classical musician to emerge from Panama. His compositions have been performed by major orchestras in North America, South America, and Europe. In addition, many of his works have received international awards. His early achievements brought him to the United States to study composition in 1943. Seven years later, upon returning to Panama, he was met with a series of political and economic obstacles that hindered his attempts to raise the

standards of music education and to create a truly professional symphony orchestra. After sixteen years of trying, Cordero left Panama frustrated and disappointed.[1]

The people of Panama are known for their pride in their indigenous roots, and they use their music to celebrate this history and culture. This fact, paired with Panama's tumultuous political history, help to illustrate the attitudes native Panamanians have on different genres of music and their reluctance to accept new influences. Studying Cordero's experiences in both Panama and the United States, help to show how the climate in which Cordero was composing.

Little has been written about Panamanian art music and composers, and most of what does exist can only be found in Panama City. Only a few journal articles and dissertations have been written concerning Panamanian folk music and the life of Roque Cordero, perhaps due to the young country's lack of a symphony orchestra in the first half of the twentieth century, and the relatively small number of compositions from Panama and Central American countries outside of Mexico. Cordero is the best-known composer from Panama and is most frequently mentioned in encyclopedias and surveys of art music in Panama. A few dissertations look into Cordero's chamber music output, studying his works for violin or viola, but little has been written about his orchestral works.[2] By studying two of Cordero's orchestral works, this document begins fulfilling that need.

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[1] Marie Labonville, "Roque Cordero (1917-2008) in the United States," *Latin American Music Center's Fiftieth Anniversary Conference* "Cultural Counterpoints: Examining the Musical Interactions between the U.S. and Latin America." (Bloomington: Indiana University Press 2011). Available from *IUScholarWorks*, https://scholarworks.iu.edu/dspace/handle/2022/15513 (accessed 5 December 2014).

[2] Marie Labonville, interviewed by the author, December 5, 2014.

II. PANAMA

Panama, a small country in Central America, has a unique history, culture, and people. Known for its multicultural and international ethnicity, Panama hosts people of Spanish, African, Caribbean, European, and American descent. Several major events in the country's history have influenced the development of music: the arrival of the Spanish in 1501, the slave trade to western South America, Panama's independence in 1821, and the construction of the Canal.

When the Spanish arrived in 1501, the indigenous people of Panama fled to the mountains, jungles, and other remote places in order to avoid genocide, some so remote that many indigenous tribes still occupy them today. Among other contributions to Panamanian, Colombian, and Venezuelan culture, these tribes created the traditional genres soloma and mejorana, which are played, respectively, on the mejorana, a five-stringed guitar, and the rabel, a violin with three strings. These genres combine the ancient languages of the indigenous tribes with early colonial instruments.[3] The people of Panama are known for their pride in their indigenous roots, and they use their music to celebrate this history and culture. In addition, understanding the conflict surrounding the construction and control of the Panama Canal helps to understand the atmosphere in which Cordero was composing.

The geopolitical significance of Panama has been recognized as early as the 1500s, but it was not until 1879 that a French company, led by the builder of the Suez Canal, Ferdinand de Lesseps, began construction of a Panamanian canal. In 1889, however, French workers fell victim to disease. This, along with financial problems, caused the project to be abandoned. In 1903, the United States and President

[3] Nicolas Slonimsky, *Music of Latin America* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1945), 73.

Theodore Roosevelt became attracted by the idea of building a canal to link the two oceans. In 1914 the Panama Canal was completed, and for the next 60 years would be owned and operated by the United States. The United States' presence in Panama, however, proved to be Panama's greatest source of frustration. Over the next couple of decades, the two countries devised treaties that granted a "Canal Zone" to the United States, consequently dividing Panama into two parts, much to the increasing resentment of Panamanians. The Panama Canal and the Canal Zone remained central to the shaping of foreign policy, and continued to influence domestic politics as well as international relations.[4]

With these events that altered demographic and cultural development came an absorption of various musical influences from many parts of the world. Panama's folk music contains a mix of indigenous, Hispanic, and African influences.[5]

III. ROQUE CORDERO (1917-2008)

Roque Cordero is perhaps the most successful classical musician to emerge from Panama. His compositions have been performed by major orchestras in North America, South America, and in Europe. In addition, many of his works have received international awards.

Cordero was born in 1917 in the Republic of Panama. He began his musical studies while still in high school, and at the age of 21 he founded the National Orchestra of Panama. In 1943 Cordero travelled to the United States for nine months on a

[4] Orlando J. Pérez, *Political Culture in Panama: Democracy after Invasion* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 35-60.
[5] Luis Enrique Casal, "Panamanian Art Music for Strings: Works for Violin/Piano and Viola/Piano by Roque Cordero, Eduardo Charpentier, and Fermín Castañedas," (PhD diss., University of Oklahoma, 2006), 37-50.

scholarship to study composition. As a result of a succession of grants, Cordero was able to stay for seven years. During that time he studied composition with Ernst Krenek and conducting with Dimitri Mitropoulos and Stanley Chapple. After his graduation from Hamline University in Minnesota, Cordero attended the Berkshire Music Center and later moved to New York to study conducting with Leon Barzin (1947-1949).

In 1950, Cordero returned to Panama in an effort to share what he had learned. He discovered that the standards of the National Conservatory were very low, and he began trying to raise the quality of music education. From 1950 to 1964 he served as professor of composition at the National Conservatory, as well as serving as the school's director. During his time there, the institute granted its first degrees in music education and composition. In 1964 he became conductor of the Panama National Orchestra, but, much to Cordero's frustration, the musicians resented the fact that Cordero had been educated in the United States. Facing this opposition, as well as a lack of financial support from the government, Cordero returned permanently to the United States in 1966. From 1966-1969 Cordero ran the Latin American Music Center at Indiana University, then taught composition at Illinois State University in Normal from 1972-1987. In 1987 he reduced his professorship at Illinois State University to part-time, and in 2000 he moved to Dayton, Ohio to be near his eldest son. During his final years, he authorized Dr. Marie Labonville to write his biography, and on December 27, 2008, Cordero died at the age of 91.[6]

Cordero received numerous awards for his accomplishments. These include an Honorable Mention in the Reichhold Contest in 1947, the Caro de Boesi Award in 1957, the Koussevitzky International Recording Award in 1974, the Chamber Music

[6] Labonville, "Roque Cordero (1917-2008) in the United States."

Award in Costa Rica in 1977, the Guggenheim Fellowship in 1949, the Grand Cross of Vasco Núñez de Balboa in 1982 (the highest award given to a civilian in Panama), and the Distinguished Teaching Award for the College of Fine Arts in 1983 from Illinois State University. His works have been performed by the NBC Symphony Orchestra, the Minneapolis Symphony, and the National Orchestra of Washington. His mature works include approximately 12 pieces for piano, 14 for orchestra, five for string orchestra, three for soloist and orchestra, 32 for chamber ensemble, five for chorus, one for chorus and orchestra, two for ballet dancers, and one film score.[7]

Compositional Style

The music of Roque Cordero is largely a union of European twelve-tone technique, or dodecaphony, and rhythmic elements from Panamanian folk music, which separates Cordero apart from Krenek and other composers who utilized the twelve tone technique in the mid-twentieth century.

In a 2006 interview with Luis Enrique Casal, former violin instructor of the National Institute of Music in Panama and currently Professor of Violin at the Brooklyn Conservatory of Music, Cordero described his compositional style as having two periods: the pre-dodecaphonic and the dodecaphonic. In both of these periods Cordero utilizes folk rhythms. Cordero uses Panamanian folk rhythms because they most distinctly represent Panama abroad. He refers to them as the “strong rhythms of Panama.”[8]

[7] Gerard Béhague, "Cordero, Roque," *Grove Music Online*. *Oxford Music Online*. Oxford University Press, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.www2.lib.ku.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/06468 (accessed January 19, 2015).
[8] Casal, “Panamanian Art Music for Strings” 44.

In Cordero's first compositional period, his works are tonal and nationalistic, a result of Cordero being exposed only to tonal melodic and harmonic structures during his early studies in Panama. This is seen in his first published orchestral work, *Capricho Interiorano*, which uses the rhythm of the *mejorana* throughout the entire piece. His second compositional period began in 1943, when Cordero began his studies Hamline University. Composition teacher Ernst Krenek exposed Cordero to the twelve-tone technique that was employed by many composers of the mid-twentieth century. Immediately, Cordero perceived the technique to be limiting and felt that it should serve instead as a way for the composer to express himself. He states: "It is just a matter of knowing how to use the sounds. If one is going to use the twelve notes following the strict formula of not using the first sound until one has reached the twelfth one, then it becomes mechanic."[9] In his dodecaphonic period he was not restricted by twelve-tone techniques and still composed a few tonal works.

> I had to integrated technical elements from Europe which I learned from Ernst Krenek, and before I studied Beethoven and Brahms and the others on my own but that technique has to be true for myself to express something that has to be completely personal. I am not necessarily quoting from Panamanian folk song because I have very seldom quoted directly from Panamanian folk song, but I do use rhythmic elements and some melodic design that can be found there without being any one in particular... But you can find that still in my latest compositions there is some element of Panamanian quotation that is based rhythmically on some Panamanian dances. Melody doesn't have anything to do with Panamanian folk song. And the point is: I will insist always to be recognized as a Panamanian composer.[10]

Cordero also uses melodic elements from the folk music of Panama, but he does not quote them exactly. Instead, he presents the melodies in a twelve-tone setting.

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[9] Labonville, interview.

[10] Thomas Carl Townsend, "A Conversation with Roque Cordero," *LAMusiCa*, vol. 2, no. 4 (May 1999): 5.

IV. ANALYSIS OF SELECTED WORKS

The works for chamber orchestra analyzed in this document were selected for two reasons. First, *Adagio Trágico* and *Ocho Miniaturas* are significant because they are among the first works for orchestra in which Cordero employs the twelve-tone technique. Second, from a practical standpoint, these works present appropriate challenges to the orchestra.

In performance, twelve-tone works such as these present the conductor and orchestra with several challenges. The most apparent is intonation. Symphony orchestras and other ensembles that consist of musical instruments with non-fixed pitches traditionally tune using just intonation. Musicians listen and tune to the other voices in the orchestra, utilizing the harmonic series. Twelve-tone works, however, do not have a hierarchy of pitches or intervals and are more effectively realized utilizing the equal temperament system. The difference in tuning systems creates a problem when these orchestral instruments play simultaneously, because musicians are not given a point of reference in pitch. The conductor and musicians must approach intonation issues in these works on a case by case basis, prioritizing octaves, fifths, and fourths. In a melodic context, narrow half steps should prevail, in an effort to preserve expression. The objective, throughout this process of reconciling these two intonation systems, must always be expression.

Another issue that twelve-tone works present to orchestras is with organization and interpretation. Without thorough analysis, it is difficult for the conductor to organize sections of the music and draw connections between motives. In Cordero's works, however, the conductor may also look at how folk rhythms are implemented as a guide to organize the music. In terms of dynamics and articulation, twelve-tone works are

best performed if the musicians strictly adhere to the instructions on the page. Only through thorough analysis can the intent of the composer be realized.

ADAGIO TRÁGICO (1955)

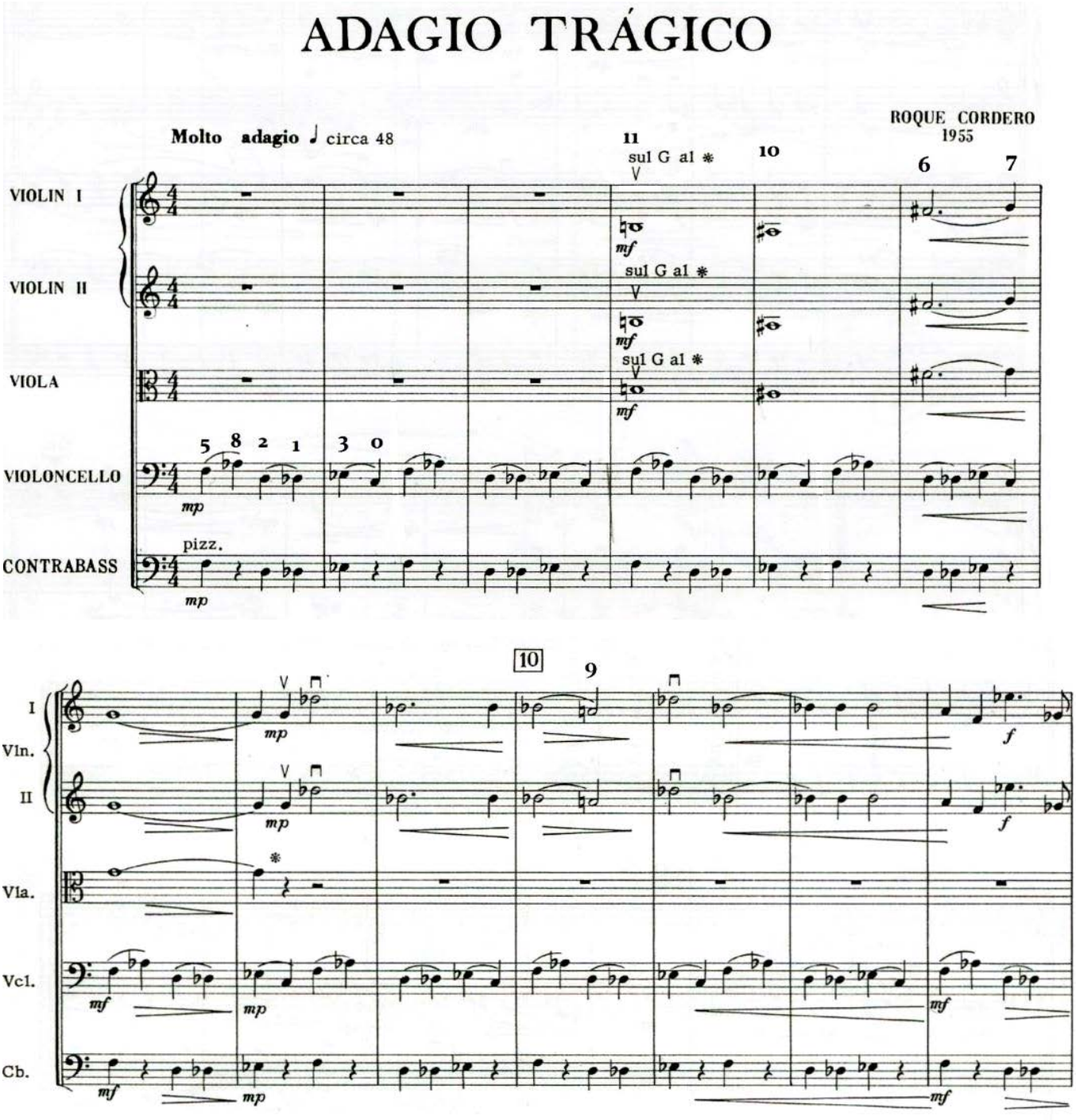
In 1946, Cordero received word that his mother was dying. He abruptly left his studies at Tanglewood to fly to Panama to be by her side. A week later, she passed away. The death of his mother served as the inspiration for *Adagio Trágico*. It was originally dedicated to her, but he would not complete the piece until 1955.

Earlier in his career, Cordero became close friends with a woman named Dona Cecilia, who would later become wife to Panamanian President José Antonio Remón Cantera. Dona Cecilia helped Cordero earn a living by commissioning orchestral arrangements for ballet productions. When President Remón Cantera was assassinated in 1955, Cordero was asked to compose something for the memorial. This allowed Cordero to finalize his *Adagio Trágico*, which was premiered on September 14, 1955 by the National Symphony Orchestra of Panama, conducted by Cordero himself.[11]

Cordero begins the *Adagio Trágico* slowly in the cello and bass, marked *Molto adagio*. They begin a series of repetitions on six notes: F, A-flat, D, D-flat, E-flat, and C (5, 8, 2, 1, 3, 0). This ostinato accompanies the long, lyrical melody played by the violins and violas, resulting in a hemiola, a technique that Cordero utilizes in much of his music.

[11] Labonville, interview.

Example 1



The remaining strings enter in unison in measure 4. Together with the ostinato in the lower voices, they form an incomplete row (which includes repetitions): 5, 8, 2, 1, 3,

0, 11, 10, 6, 7, 9; it is missing pitch class 4, or E. The crescendos and decrescendos in the long melody align with the ostinato in the cello and bass, so that the peak dynamics occur where the ostinato begins on the downbeat of a measure.

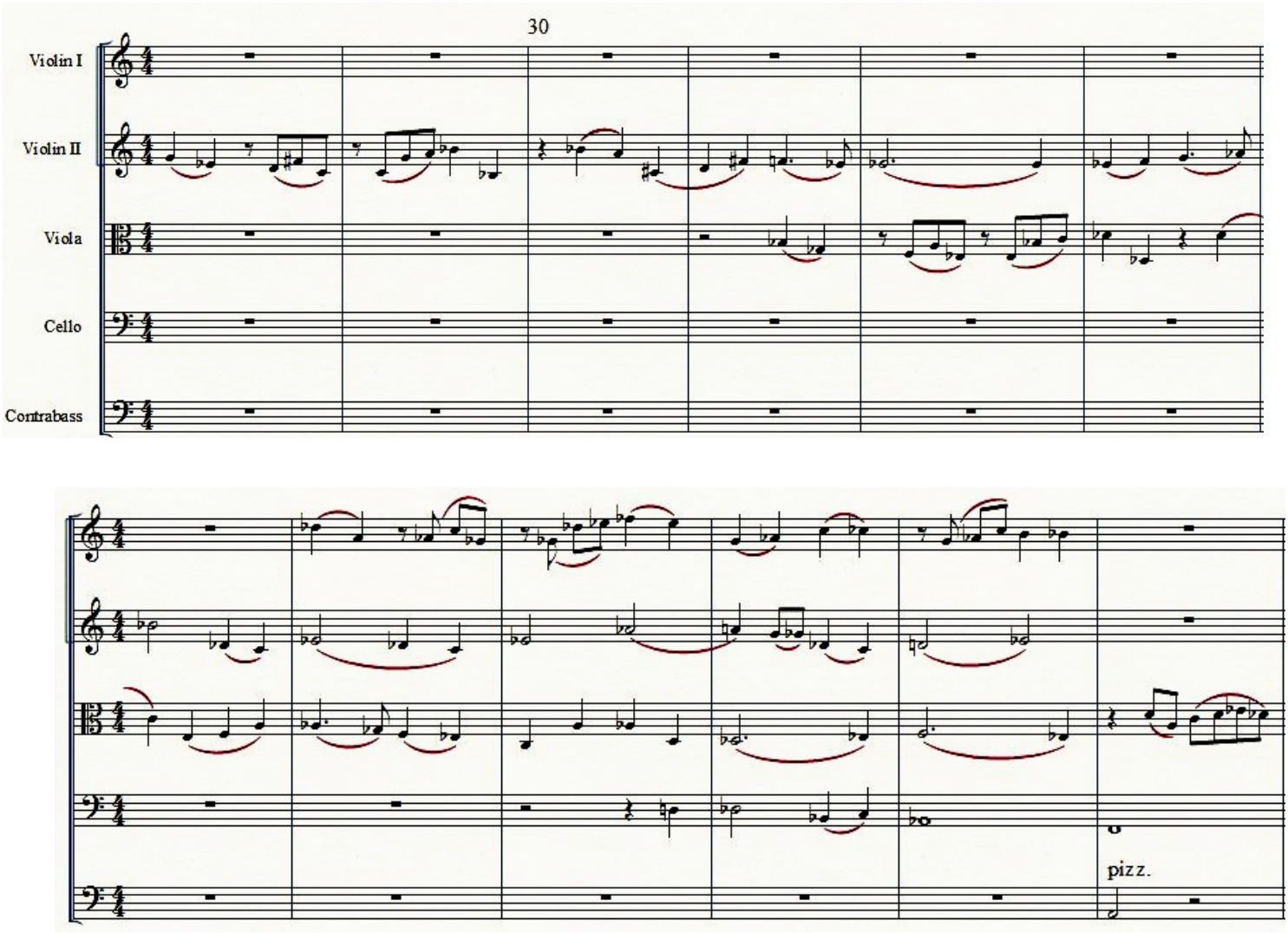
The ostinato changes in measure 19, only to start a pattern of two simultaneous ostinato in the viola (4, 2, 5, 6, 7) and cello (11, 0, 6, 7, 4) for these four measures. Cordero, however, displaces the ostinato in the viola by one beat, with the basses providing rhythmic support for the viola ostinato.

Cordero then breaks this pattern to have all of the strings play a unison prayer-like passage of long sustained notes. Measure 28 begins a fugal passage. The second violins begin with a four-bar subject consisting of eighth notes and quarter notes. The violas follow three semitones higher. The first violins follow the violas, again three semitones higher, and continue on an independent motive (example 2). The cello and bass are also given this motive in measure 48, stated two semitones higher than the original statement.

Table 1: Fugue, mm. 28-50

Instrument	Measure	Pitches
violin II	28	7, 3, 2, 6, 0, 7, 9, 10, 10, 9, 1, 2, 6, 5, 3
viola	31	10, 6, 5, 9, 3, 10, 0, 1, 1, 0, 4, 5, 9, 8, 6
violin I	35	1, 9, 8, 0, 6, 1, 3, 4...
cello/bass	48	9, 5, 4, 8, 2, 9, 11, 0

Example 2: *Adagio Trágico*, mm. 28-39

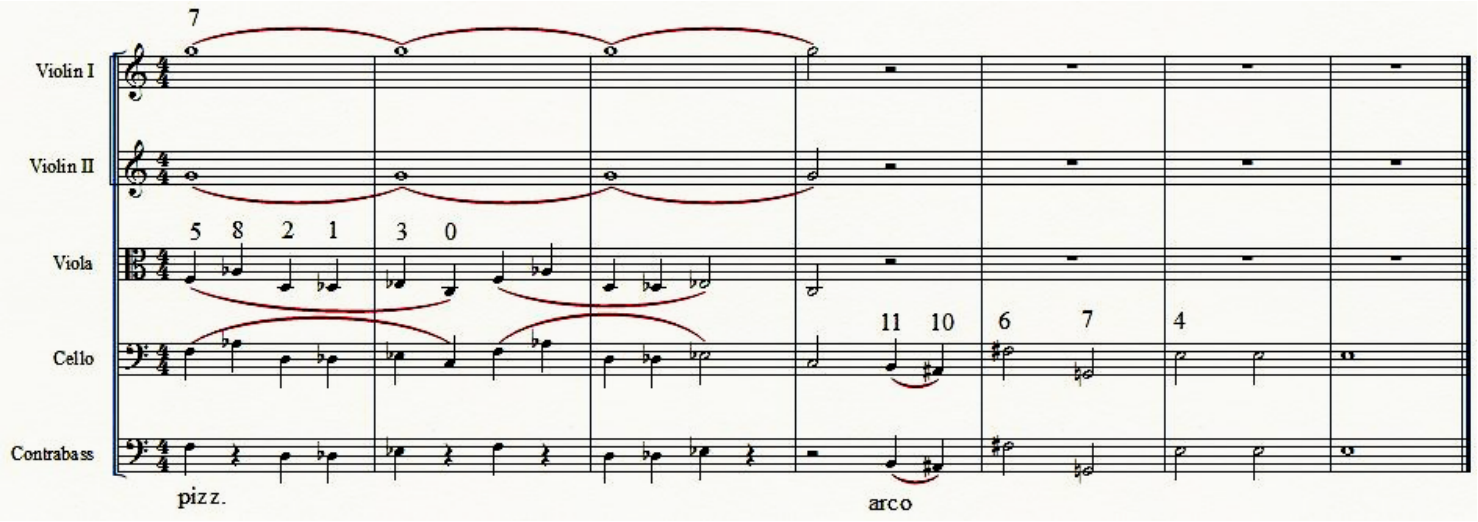


The three eighth-note rhythmic pattern that is introduced in the second violin subject is used both as an accompaniment (measures 53 and 54), and an expressive idea by Cordero. We hear an ascension begin in measure 61, which uses this three eighth-note motive, and reaches a climactic B-flat in measure 67.

After this section, the music decrescendos. In measure 70, Cordero repeats measure 15, this time with the first violins one octave higher. In measure 78 the initial musical idea returns, including the ostinato from the opening measures. The row,

however, contains the E that was missing from the opening bars in the final two measures of the piece: 5, 8, 2, 1, 3, 0, 11, 10, 6, 7, 4.

Example 3: *Adagio Trágico*, mm. 78-end



***OCHO MINIATURAS* (1948)**

Ocho Miniaturas (Eight Miniatures) was composed during Cordero's fifth year of study in the United States. He had just completed a Bachelor's degree in Music Education from The University of Minnesota and was well acquainted with dodecaphony. *Ocho Miniaturas* is one of Cordero's first attempts at using dodecaphony in an orchestral setting and was completed in 1948 after he had moved to New York. It is a prime example of his blending of twelve-tone music with Panamanian folk elements. The folk rhythms from Latin America that Cordero utilizes in the works studied in this document come from the dances of the *danzón*, the *mejorana*, the *punto*, and the *pasillo*. *Ocho Miniaturas* also shows how Cordero uses twelve-tone technique as a tool to serve other musical elements, such as form, melody, counterpoint, and texture. In

doing this, Cordero is able to employ fugues, imitative counterpoint, and intense climaxes without having to use chord progressions.

More often than not, the melodic motives in *Ocho Miniaturas* are not complete rows. *Cordero* spreads all twelve pitches among the voices within a section of music. This allows Cordero to freely utilize pitch classes in the melodic voice to express himself. Underneath this, Cordero uses folk rhythms as ostinatos in the accompaniment. In this light, it is necessary for the musicians to study repetitions, patterns, rhythmic motives, folk music references, and other musical elements in order to completely understand Cordero's music.

Ocho Miniaturas is composed for chamber orchestra and includes flute (doubling on piccolo), oboe (doubling on english horn), B-flat clarinet (doubling on B-flat bass clarinet), bassoon, french horn, B-flat trumpet, trombone, and strings. It contains eight short movements of contrasting character. The duration of *Ocho Miniaturas* is approximately 11 minutes.

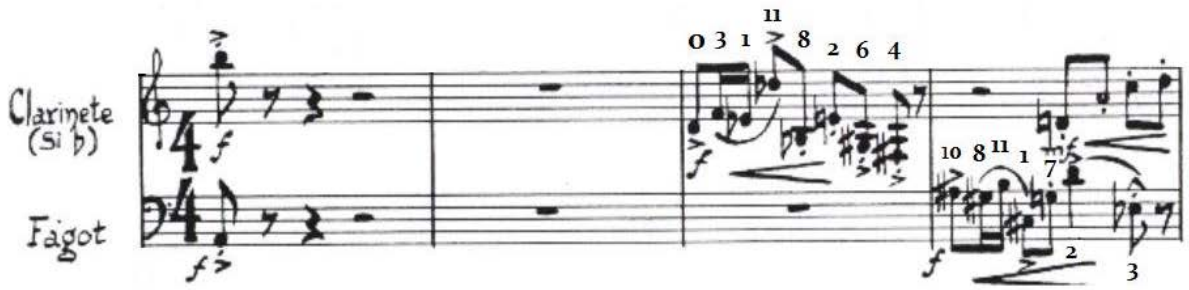
I. *Marcha Grotesca*

Marcha Grotesque (Grotesque March) is in 4/4 time with the tempo marking *Allegro assai*, and an overall ABA form. Throughout the movement Cordero clearly prioritizes rhythm and dynamics over the need to complete a twelve-tone row.

Cordero begins *Ocho Miniaturas* with a unison forte A played by the entire orchestra. On the second beat of the first measure the first violins and violas repeat the pizzicato A, this time in a different octave. Immediately, we can see that Cordero is not following the rules of general orthodoxy of conventional dodecaphonism, which state that a pitch may not be repeated within the row. Instead, he uses the first full measure

to repeat the same pitch four times, once on each beat. In measure 3, the clarinet enters with a one-measure rhythmic motive and the bassoon answers in the subsequent measure. The two melodic ideas are almost identical rhythmically, are in contrary motion, and together form an almost complete row of twelve pitches. Both measures (pitch classes 0, 3, 1, 11, 8, 2, 6, 4 in the clarinet and 10, 8, 11, 1, 7, 2, 3 in the bassoon) are missing pitch classes 5 and 9, or F and A. Cordero provides these pitches in the accompaniment figures, and completes the row in the first four measures of the piece.

Example 4: I. *Marcha Grotesca*, mm. 1-4

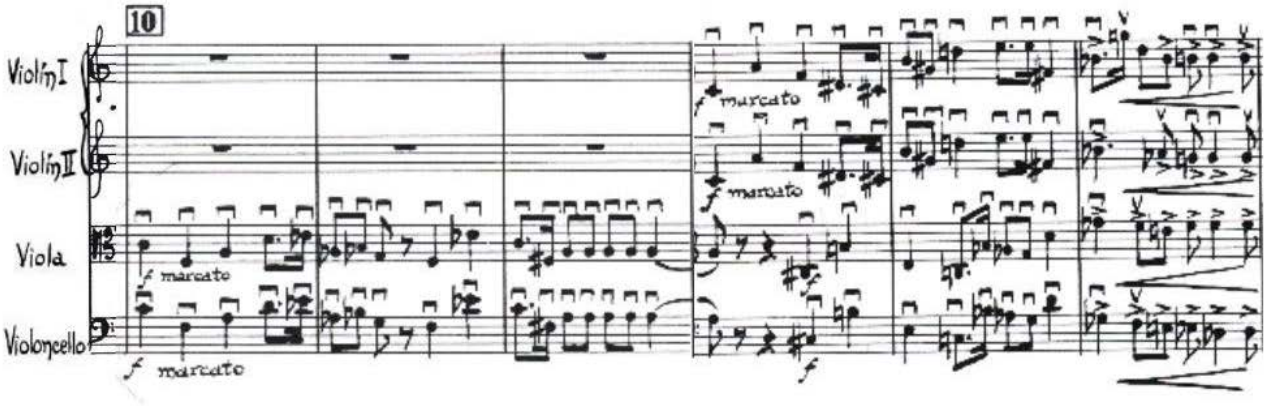


In measure 5, Cordero repeats the opening material, this time with the flute, oboe, clarinet, and bassoon providing a rhythmic motive of two sixteenth notes followed by dotted quarter note, now five measures long instead of four. Interestingly, measure 7 is built on four notes of the whole-tone scale (E, F-sharp, G-sharp, and B-flat). In measure 8 and 9 all twelve notes are stated, but dispersed throughout the different voices.

Measure 10 marks the beginning of the B section (example 5), and Cordero presents a melody in the clarinet, bassoon, viola, and cello using pitch classes 0, 5, 9, 2, 3, 8, 10 ,7 ,5 ,3 , 6, 9 in unison in measures 10-12. This three-measure idea is handed off to the violins in measure 13; they invert the motive and complete the row of

twelve notes; 0, 9, 5, 3, 1, 11, 8, 2, 4, 6 in the space of two measures. Simultaneously, Cordero displaces the same idea in the viola, cello, and bassoon, entering on beat three of measure 13.

Example 5: I. *Marcha Grotesca*, mm. 10-15



The two melodic ideas join in measures 16 and 17, with half notes that form a complete row of twelve pitches in just these two measures. The trumpet plays a restatement of the B theme in measure 20, beginning on the same pitch as in the original statement in measure 10, but quickly deviates to form its own unique but incomplete row (0, 5, 8, 10, 3, 6, 9, 5, 4, 1, 11, 6, 2).

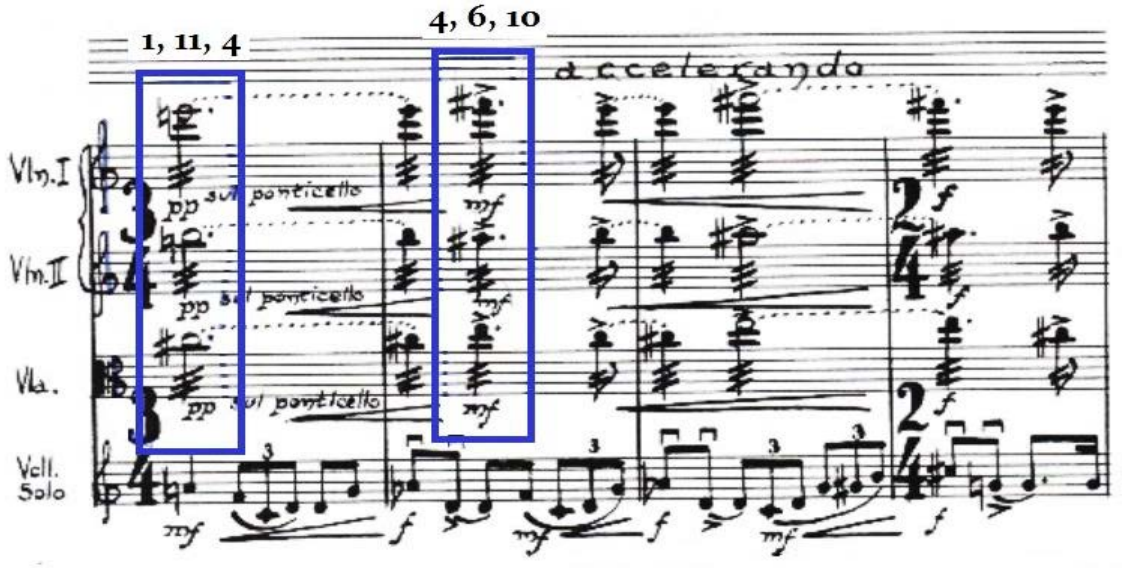
In measure 23, the trumpet and horn provide a third statement of the B theme, which quickly grows into a transition back to the A section, with a fortissimo A in the full orchestra. In the return of the A section, however, the instrumental forces have switched roles. The woodwinds provide the material from measure 1, while the strings in measure 28 have the short melodic motive. Another example of Cordero using an incomplete row occurs in the last measure of the movement, where he uses every pitch except B.

This opening movement is characterized by short rhythmic values, unison playing by different sections of the orchestra, aggressive and repeated motives marked "grotesque," and incomplete rows. The performance duration is just under one minute.

II. *Meditación*

The second movement, *Meditación* (Meditation), provides immediate contrast to the first. It is slow, marked *Largo*, and is a solo for the cello with the rest of the strings accompanying with long sustained notes *con sordino* and atmospheric *sul ponticello* and tremelo effects. Similarly to *Marcha Grotesca*, it is in three parts. In the first five measures, a complete row is distributed among all voices. This is the first time in this piece that Cordero presents a complete row without repeated pitches (9, 5, 7, 6, 4, 2, 10, 8, 3, 11, 1, 0). Measure 6 continues with the solo voice becoming more expressive, utilizing eighth notes and triplets in addition to crescendos and an accelerando. The violins and violas offer two sets of trichords; 1,11, 4 and 4, 6, 10, moving back and forth between them until the cello solo reaches a climax (see example 6).

Example 6: II. *Meditación*, mm. 6-9



After the fermata in measure 13, the cello restates the opening melody. This time, however, it is condensed through diminution.

Throughout this movement, the rhythm of the solo voice resembles speech, with tied notes and rhythmically asymmetric melodies that create an ambiguous sense of meter. The performance duration of this movement is approximately one minute and twenty five seconds.

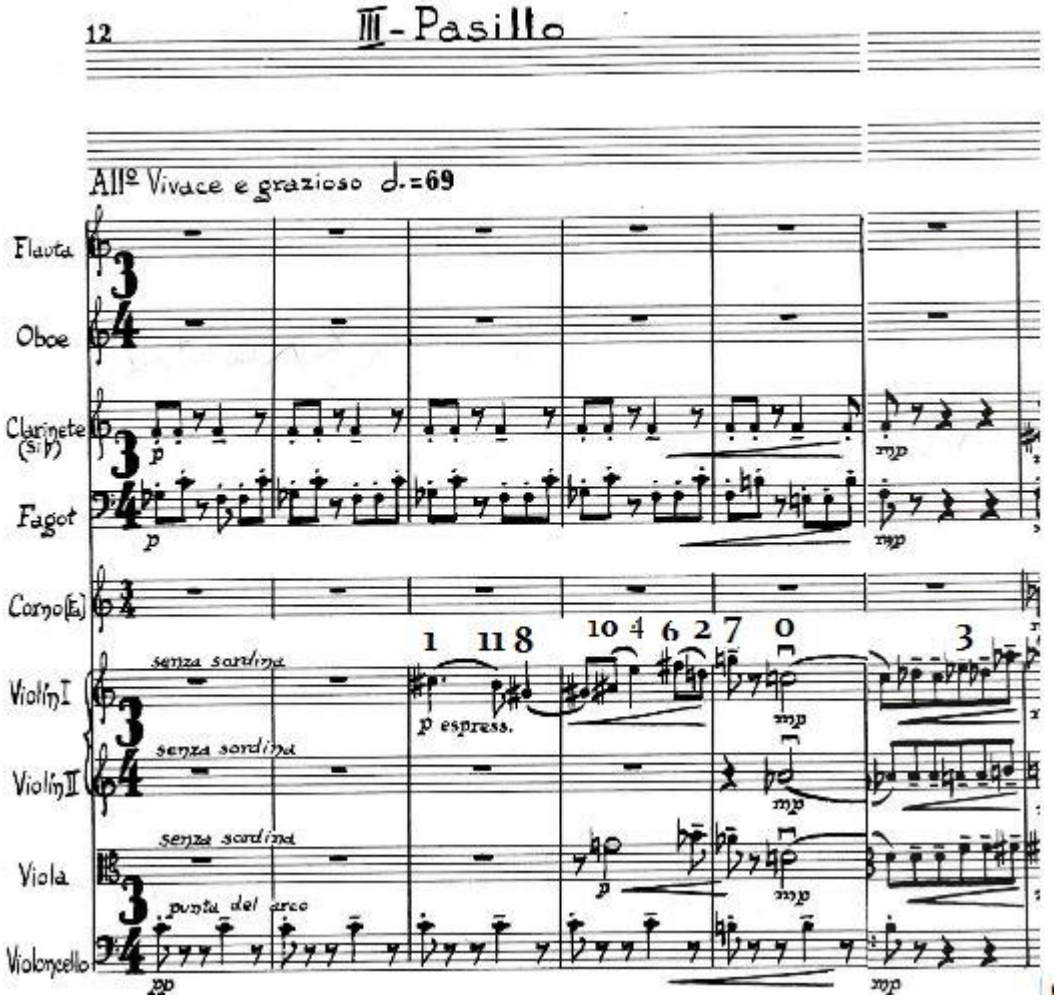
III. *Pasillo*

Pasillo refers to a South American dance found most often in Ecuador, but also in Colombia, Venezuela, and Panama. The *pasillo* is derived from the Viennese waltz. It is typically in 3/4 meter, but lacks the Viennese emphasis on the downbeat. It is considered by some to be the national genre of music in Ecuador.[12]

The rhythmic pattern in the opening measures in the clarinet, bassoon, and cello gives a sense of this dance-like meter, the cello line creates hemiola. The first violins enter in measure 3 with a seven measure phrase and introduce an incomplete row (1, 11, 8, 10, 4, 6, 2, 7, 0, 3) and rhythmic pattern that is to be repeated several times throughout this movement.

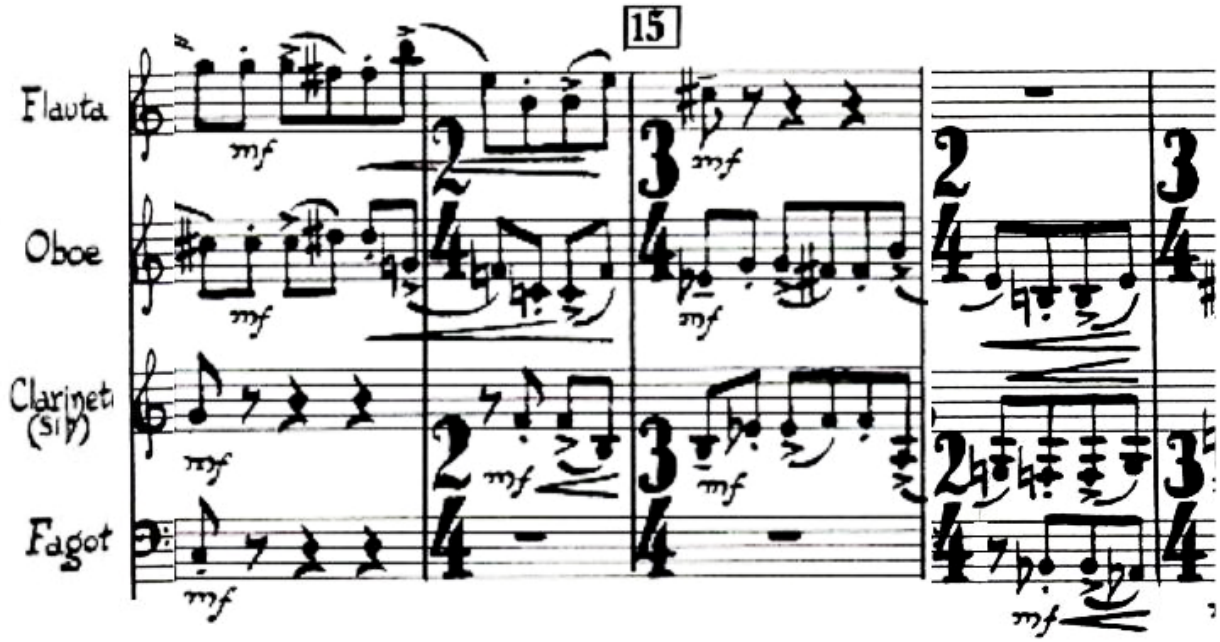
[12] Dale A. Olsen and Daniel Sheehy, *The Garland Handbook of Latin American Music* (2nd ed., New York: Routledge, 2008), 242.

Example 7: III. *Pasillo*, mm. 1-6



This material is restated in measure 10 (2, 0, 9, 11, 5, 7, 3, 1, 4), but is quickly diverted into a transition. Measures (13-16) is a sequence with 5 beats in each segment, first in the flute and oboe, then in the oboe and clarinet.

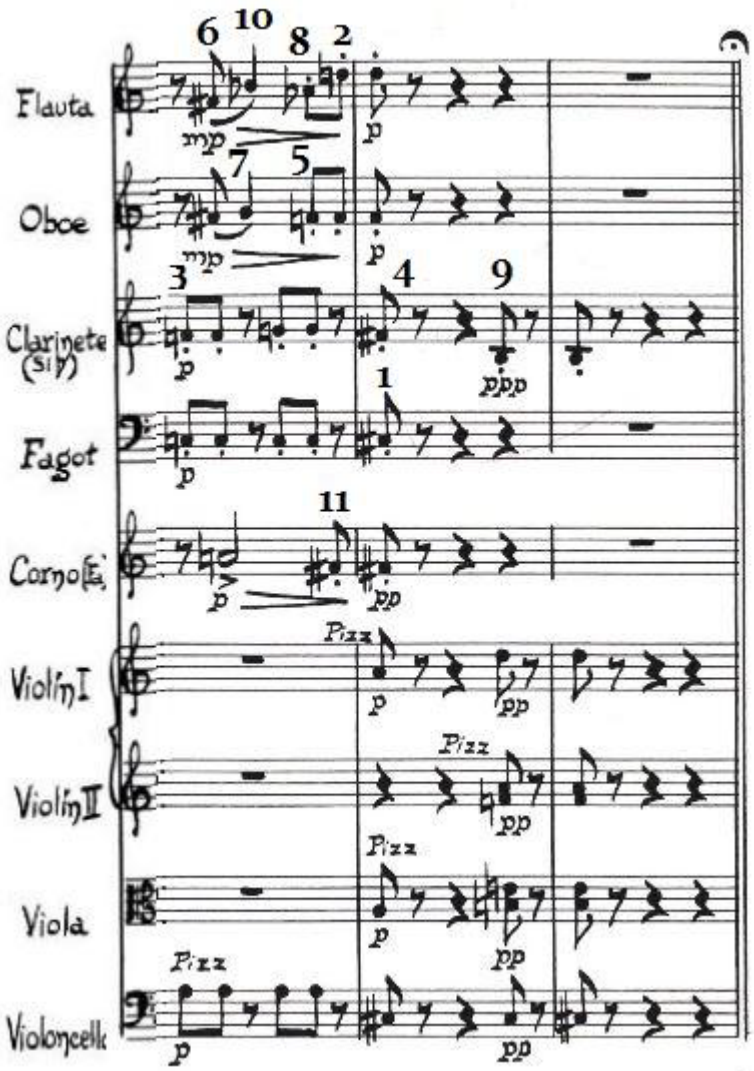
Example 8: III. *Pasillo*, mm. 13-16



As in the *Marcha Grotesca,* Cordero uses an ABA form in this movement. In the middle section (measure 20), the strings introduce a fugue subject, beginning with the cello and bass. The rhythm here is similar to the melody introduced in the first violin in measure 3; however, the motive is loosely inverted (9, 5, 7, 2, 6, 4, 10, 8, 11, 1, 3, 0) and forms a complete row, with some repetition. The violins answer three measures later with a repetition of this subject, this time seven semitones higher (4, 0, 2, 9, 1, 11, 5, 3, 6, 8, 10, 7). The subject and answer become condensed and in measure 26 become two-measure repetitions. The woodwinds and brass join with the strings to present all twelve pitches from measures 31 to 34, and reach a climactic fortissimo in measure 34.

In measure 41 we hear the return of the A section in the flute, oboe, and clarinet, which repeat the initial violin theme with octave displacement. The movement comes to a quiet close, with Cordero dispersing all twelve pitches among the orchestral voices in the final three measures.

Example 9: III. *Pasillo*, mm. 46-end

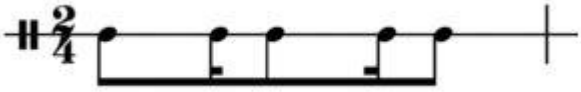


IV. *Danzonete*

The *danzonete* originates from the French *contradanza* that was imported via Cuba in the nineteenth century. The foundation of the Cuban *contradanza* is the *cinquillo* rhythm.[13]

[13] Bob Evans, *Authentic Conga Rhythms* (New York: Alfred Music Publishing, 1966), 8-9.

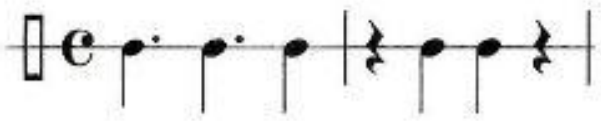
Figure 1: The *cinquillo* rhythm



The *contradanza* soon became the *danzón*, Cuba's first official dance. It is important to note that this is the only Latin American folk dance that Cordero uses in *Ocho Miniaturas* that is not particularly associated with Panama. Cordero gives the rhythmic characteristics of the *danzón* to the bass clarinet in the opening measures, with the bassoon providing rhythmic support.

Cordero employs a second Latin American folk rhythm, the *son clave* rhythm in measure 5 in the viola. The *son clave* rhythm serves as the basis for many Latin American dances. This rhythm originated in African musical traditions. Many Latin American styles such as the rumba, mambo, and salsa employ this rhythm, which can be in either a 3-2 or 2-3 pattern[14]:

Figure 2: The *Son Clave* rhythm (3-2)

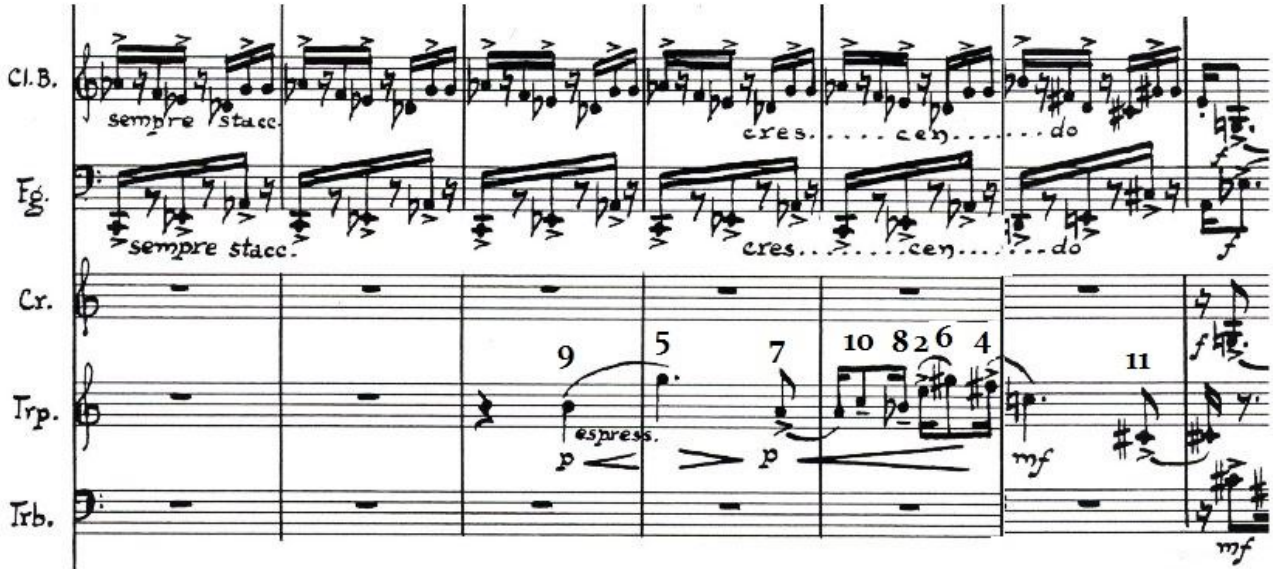


Cordero cleverly uses the *son clave* and *cinquillo* rhythms simultaneously, which create much of the rhythmic foundation for this movement.

[14] Horacio Hernandez, *Conversations in Clave: The Ultimate Technical Study of Four-way Independence in Afro-Cuban Rhythms* (Alfred Music Publishing, 2000), 13-18.

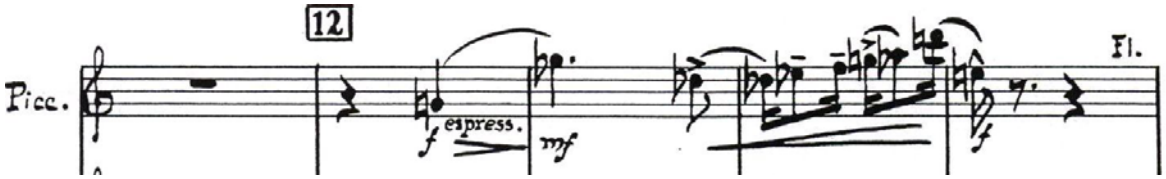
The general form of *Danzonete* is compound ternary (A A^1 A - B B^1 - A A^1 A). The A section has within it three statements of the motive. The first and third renditions use the same row, while the A^1 section in the piccolo states the motive with the same rhythmic values but using a slightly different row (see examples 10 and 11).

Example 10: IV. *Danzonete*, mm. 6-11 (trumpet in B-flat)



A = 9, 5, 7, 10, 8, 2, 6, 4, 11

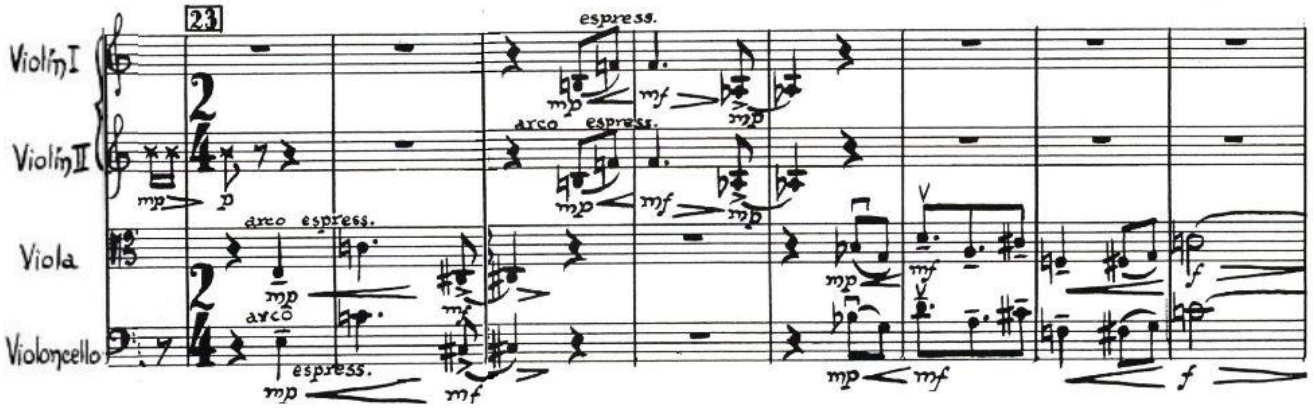
Example 11: IV. *Danzonete*, mm. 11-15



A^1 = 7, 6, 1, 3, 5, 8, 2, 4

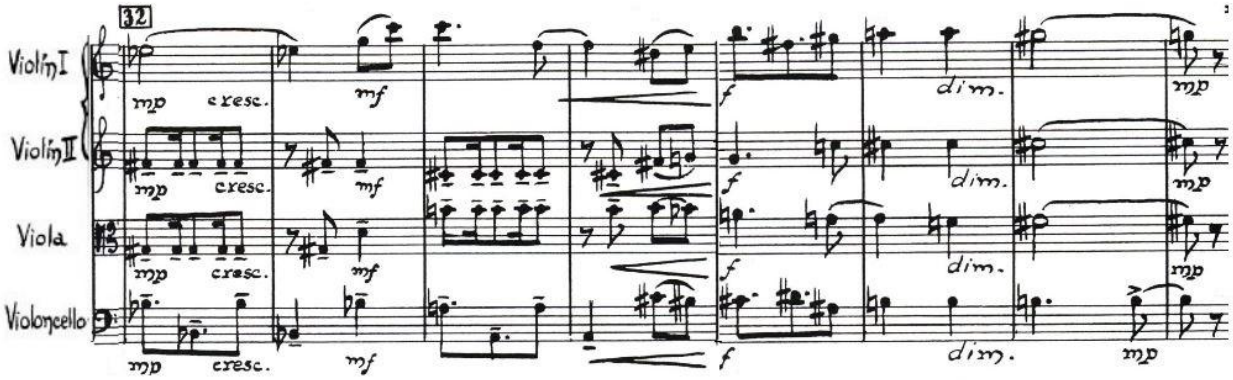
The strings begin the B section in measure 23, and they present a long, lyrical melody utilizing a new row. The first violins and flute in measure 32 present the B^1 section, which is rhythmically similar but uses slightly different pitches (see examples 12 and 13).

Example 12: IV. *Danzonete*, mm. 23-30



B = 4, 0, 1, 11, 5, 8, 10, 7, 2, 9, 6

Example 13: IV. *Danzonete*, mm. 32-38



B^{1} = 3, 7, 0, 5, 4, 11, 6, 8, 9

The table below describes the overall form of *Danzonete*.

Table 2: Form of *Danzonete*

Measure	Section	Instrument
8	A	trumpet
12	A^1	piccolo
16	A	trombone
23	B	viola, cello, violins
32	B^1	flute, violin 1
39	A	trombone
43	A^1	piccolo
47	A	piccolo

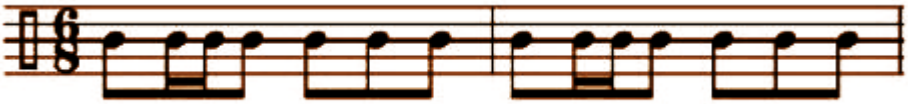
V. *Nocturno*

Like the second movement, *Nocturno* provides a single expressive voice, this time in the first violins, supported sparingly by the rest of the orchestra. Here is another example of Cordero repeating notes within the row, enabling him to prioritize rhythm over pitch. The first violin soli forms a complete twelve-tone row, with internal repetition. This movement is in ABBC form: a short introductory melodic motive (measures 1-8), two middle sections (measures 9-16 and 17-28) that culminate in an orchestral unison after a moment of extreme dissonance (pitch classes 5, 7, 8, 9, 11, 0 in measure 13, and 4,6,7,9,11,0 in measure 19), and a concluding melodic motive that utilizes the same row as the opening violin motive (11, 7, 9, 4, 2, 5, 3, 1) in measure 29. The movement in general is characterized by long melodies, moments of extreme dissonance followed by total unison, and many meter changes. The duration of this movement is approximately two minutes and forty seconds.

VI. Mejorana

In this movement, Cordero employs the rhythm of the *mejorana*, which originated in Spain in the 18th century. It gets its name from the accompanying instrument, the mejorana, which is a small guitar. A characteristic of the *mejorana* is polyrhythm. It uses "6/8 or 9/8 rhythms that oscillate between duple and triple pulses"[15]

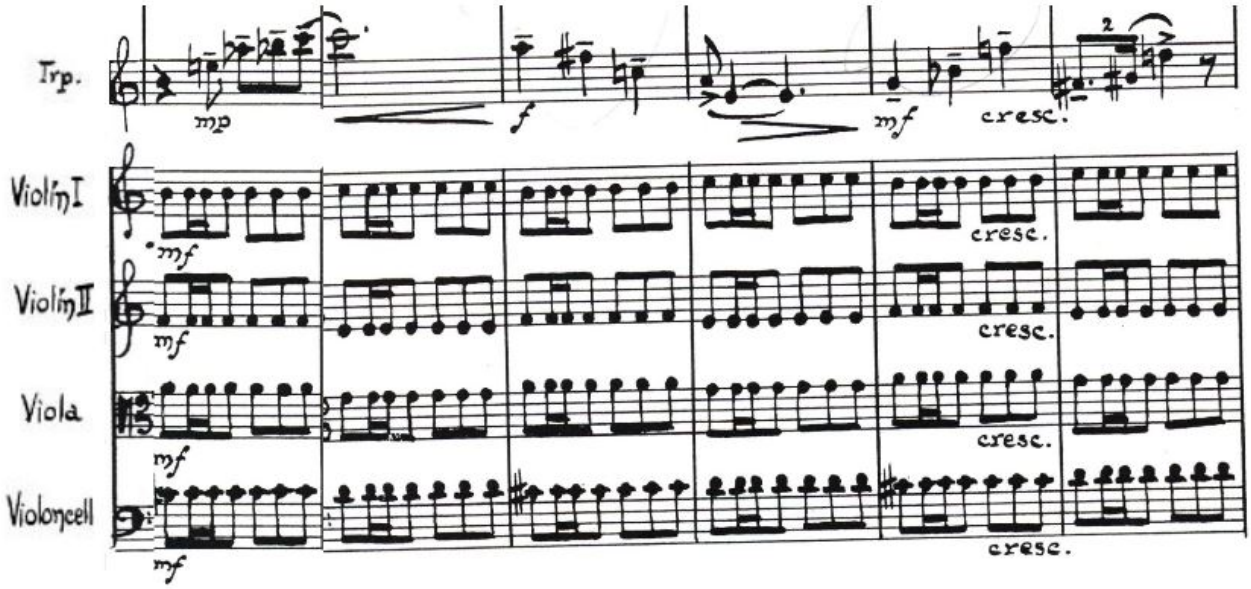
Figure 4: a typical rhythm associated with the *Mejorana*



The rhythm of the *mejorana* is clearly presented in all of the strings and appears in every measure of the movement, either in the strings or later, in the woodwinds. This relentless rhythm shifts back and forth between two tetrachords: 9, 11, 1, 5 and 0, 2, 4, 7. The melody in the trumpet that begins in measure 5 forms a complete row of twelve pitches (2, 6, 8, 10, 7, 4, 10, 7, 2, 5, 8, 3, 4, 6, 0, 11, 1, 5, 9) and through augmentation lasts twenty measures (measures 5-24)

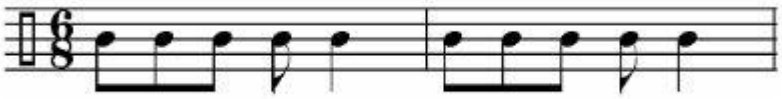
[15] Olsen and Sheehy, *The Garland Handbook of Latin American Music*, 242.

Example 14: *VI. Mejorana*, mm. 5-10



Another aspect of this melody is the rhythmic pattern of an eighth note followed by a quarter note or other note of longer duration, beginning in measure 12. This rhythm is also a characteristic of the *punto*, a beautiful and elegant dance popular in Panama.[16]

Figure 5: Characteristic rhythm of the *punto*



This rhythm also occurs in the strings numerous times in the second half of the movement. Under the trumpet melody the oboe, clarinet, and bassoon sustain whole notes that reflect the tetrachords occurring in the strings (measure 12 and 16).

[16] George Torres, ed., *Encyclopedia of Latin American Popular Music* (Santa Barbara, CA: Greenwood, 2013), 319.

This movement is characterized by the driving rhythm of the *mejorana*, a long serial melody in the trumpet, sudden dynamic shifts in the strings, and supporting long notes in the accompaniment that almost suggest tonality. The duration of this movement is just under one minute.

VII. Plegaria

Plegaria (Prayer) is in sharp contrast to the *Mejorana*. It begins with the violins sustaining a B at fortepiano. For the first five measures the violins remain on this pitch and play a combination of unpredictable rhythmic values of quarter notes, half notes, and eighth notes, marked *dolente*. After the flute, clarinet, viola, and cello reach a climactic fortissimo in measure 6, the violas and violins continue the long and slow melody to the end of the movement.

Plegaria presents one complete twelve-tone row. More significantly, this movement is the second and last time in the entirety of *Ocho Miniaturas* where Cordero does not repeat a note before the row is complete (not counting adjacent notes of the same pitch as repetition). Some of the pitches in this row occur simultaneously in the accompaniment, as in measure 6. The row presented in *Plegaria* is 11, 1, 9, 2, 0, 4, 8, 10, 7, 5, 3, 6.

The duration of this movement is approximately one minute and twenty-five seconds.

VII. *Allegro Final*

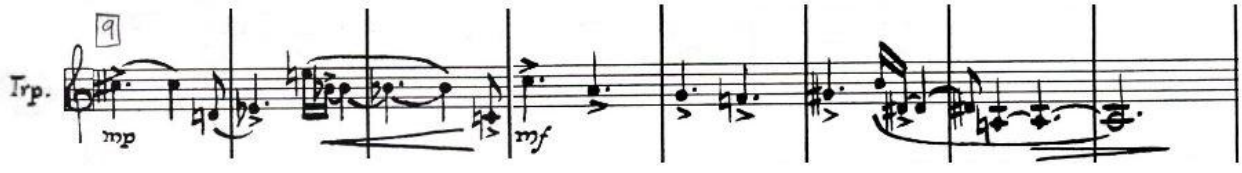
The final movement is by far the most complex in *Ocho Miniaturas*. The form is, once again, ABA.

Table 3: Form of *Allegro Final*

Measure	Melodic motive	Instrument
9	A	trumpet
17	A	violins
31	A(fragment)	piccolo/oboe
38	B	piccolo/oboe/clarinet/first violin
52	B^1	cello
70	A	flute/oboe/clarinet
76	A	trombone
86	A	piccolo/oboe/violins

From the beginning of *Allegro Final*, we hear a rhythm strikingly similar to that of the *mejorana*, this time in the horn, trumpet, and trombone. This rhythm is soon interrupted in measure 4 by the woodwinds playing a slurred passage in 9/8. The woodwinds followed by the violins and violas play three measures of introductory material that leads up to section A. In measure 7, we hear another instance of Cordero utilizing an ostinato accompaniment. The clarinet begins a cluster of three notes (0, 1, 2) that are repeated for twenty-seven measures. We hear the principal theme in the trumpet in measure 9. The melody is 8 measures long and, with the help of the bassoon playing an E in measure 10, forms a complete row (11, 0, 1, 2, 8, 10, 7, 5, 3, 6, 9, 1).

Example 15: VII. *Allegro Final*, mm. 9-16 (Section A theme)



A = 11, 0, 1, 2, 8, 10, 7, 5, 3, 6, 9, 1

The violins restate this theme in measure 17. This time, the trombone and horn provide the E that is missing from the row (measure 18). At the end of this statement, however, Cordero prolongs the melody in the violins by repeating fragments of the row:

(11, 0, 1, 2, 8, 10, 7, 5, 3, 6, 9, 1, 7)(6, 9, 1, 7)(6, 9, 1)(9, 1)(9, 1, 7)

A third statement of the principal theme begins in the piccolo and oboe in measure 31, but dissipates after three measures into a transition to the theme in section B. During this transition Cordero places the brass in 3/4 meter, creating hemiola with the rest of the orchestra, and they continue to provide a countermelody to the violin theme.

Example 16: VII. *Allegro Final*, mm. 38-44 (Section B theme)

B = 7, 5, 8, 3, 6, 2, 10, 0

In measure 52 Cordero abruptly changes the character of the music, marked *Moderato quasi Allegretto*, and begins section B¹. The cellos begin a slow, lyrical melody starting with the same pitches as the violins in measure 38 (7, 5, 8, 7, 5).

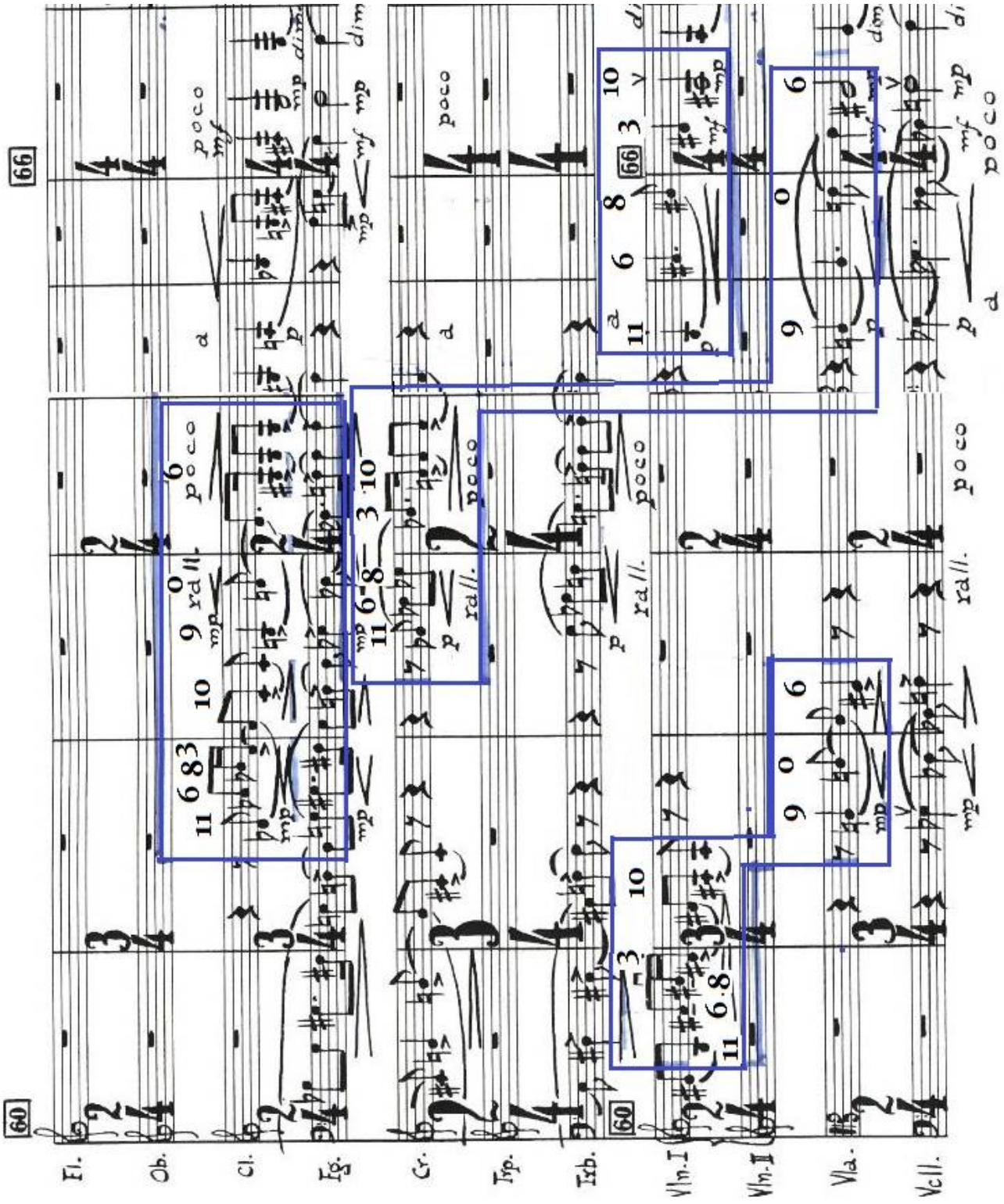
Example 17: VII. *Allegro Final*, mm. 52-55 (Section B¹ theme)

B¹ = 7, 5, 8, 1, 2, 3, 0

Measure 60 marks the beginning of repetitions of the same row in the strings, the clarinet, the horn, and then the strings again. From the second eighth note of measure 60, the first violins, together with the violas, play pitches 11, 6, 8, 3, 10, 9, 0, 6. The clarinet plays through this same row from measures 61 to 63, followed by the horn and violas from measures 62 to 66, and finally, by the first violins in measures 64 to 66 (see example 19).

In measure 70 we have a reappearance of the principal theme, this time in the flute, oboe, and clarinet. As in the opening section, the theme is restated in measure 76 in the trombone. In measure 82 the violins begin an ascension that leads to an exclamatory presentation of the main theme in a high register. The ostinato that was present in the opening section appears here, stated aggressively by the clarinet, bassoon, violas, and cellos. In the closing measures of the piece, we faintly hear the *mejorana* rhythm in the trumpet that we recognize from the opening measures of this movement.

Example 18: IV. *Allegro Final*, mm. 60-66



V. CONCLUSIONS

Roque Cordero was first internationally recognized as a composer when he employed the twelve-tone technique into his music.[17] *Adagio Trágico* is among his early twelve-tone works for orchestra, and in this composition Cordero shows his ability to create long, beautiful melodies while utilizing ostinatos, fugues, and intense climaxes. It is the combination of the twelve-tone technique with the Latin American folk rhythms, however, that makes Cordero distinct from many other dodecaphonic composers. *Ocho Miniaturas* is the first orchestral work in which Cordero utilized dodecaphony and implemented Panamanian folk rhythms, and is representative of his compositional style. In this work Cordero employs folk rhythms and uses them as ostinatos under melodic motives. He also utilizes hemiolas, polyrhythms, and incomplete rows. Each movement within *Ocho Miniaturas* carries its own unique character that seems to have its own narrative. The result is music that is at once intellectually rigorous and passionate, passionate, and expresses a sense of patriotism that Cordero has for his native country.

In a 2006 interview, Cordero was asked his opinion on the future of art music in Panama, and he expressed that there was a lack of interest from the state and from the press.[18] His experiences upon returning to Panama early on in his career reflect this sentiment. I personally feel that in order for classical music to thrive in Panama and in Central America, conductors must have a willingness to program new music and performers must have a willingness to learn new material. The inclusion of Cordero's works in the standard orchestral repertoire would help to promote Panamanian art music and help Panama find its own voice in classical music.

[17] Béhague, "Cordero, Roque".
[18] Casal "Panamanian Art Music for Strings," 101.

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