

ONLINE AUDIO GUIDE 5.4

PARAGUAYAN HARP MUSIC

title: “Piririta”

performing forces: harp (Martín Portillo), guitar (Alejo Benítez), string bass (Ariel Burgos)

composer: Alejandro Villamayor

form: free, with two main sections, melodically varied

function: for private or public performance; expression of Paraguayan identity

source: *Maiteí América: Harps of Paraguay* (Smithsonian Folkways SFW CD 40549, 2009). Note that “Maiteí América” is Guaraní for “Greetings, America.”

Listen for:

- recurring “walking” bass line, sometimes varied, played by the lower strings of harp (*bordonas*) and string bass, plucking the string
- compound meter
- sesquiáltera
- basic I-IV-V harmonies
- changes of texture
- symmetrical phrases
- broken chords
- glissandi (singular: glissando)

Timing	Structure	What happens
00:00	Introduction	“walking” bass, enhanced with off-beat chords and strumming in guitar
00:12	A	symmetrical phrases, each punctuated by “walking” bass
00:27	(a)	(a) starts on I, goes to V, then back to I, affirmed by an authentic cadence
00:35	(a1)	starts in I, goes to IV then to V, then back to I, affirmed by an
00:42		authentic cadence
00:45	B	contrasting rhythm, chordal texture strategic moments of silence in the supporting instruments

00:58		<p>symmetrical phrase structure continues</p> <p>reliance on I-IV-V continues</p> <p>sesquiáltera</p> <p>broken chord and a glissando lead back to</p>
1:14		<p>walking bass, now with variants</p>
1:25	A1	<p>same chords as A, same symmetrical phrases, and same punctuation by walking bass</p> <p>but extra notes (ornaments) added</p>
1:59	B1	<p>same harmonies as previous interlude and same symmetrical phrase structure</p> <p>but more frequent glissandi than in B</p>
2:12		<p>sesquiáltera</p>
2:27		<p>extended broken chord leading to . . .</p> <p>walking bass (notice unusual timbre)</p>
2:43	A2	<p>see above, A and A1</p> <p>more flourishes than in A1 via form of brief but repeated glissandi and rapid hand-motion back and forth</p>
3:17	B2	<p>see above, B and B1</p> <p>greater resonance, variety of timbre</p>
3:29		<p>sesquiáltera</p> <p>broken chords and other flourishes combine with walking bass</p> <p>strong final cadence preceded by an ornamented descending scale</p>

Consider:

- The listening chart enables you to identify the initial statement of the bass line. Can you follow its course throughout the piece? What is the musical function of the bass line?
- The composer of “Piririta” was inspired by bird calls and believed he was duplicating them. (You can search the internet for a picture of the piririta.) Does the piece suggest bird calls to you? Why or why not? Is it reasonable for composers to suggest real sounds in their music? If so, what are some sounds that would lend themselves well to musical realization and which instruments would be best suited to them?
- Can you hear the difference between a broken chord, quickly played, and a glissando?