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***Canto por la Vida:***  
**Embracing alterity in social action through music-making**

Natalia Juliana Puerta Gordillo

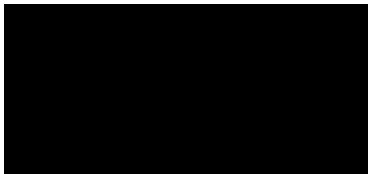
Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
PhD - Doctor of Philosophy  
Guildhall School of Music & Drama  
Postgraduate Research Programme  
February 2025

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Natalia Juliana Puerta Gordillo



## **Abstract**

This doctoral project examines the case of Canto por la Vida, a music school and cultural foundation located in Ginebra, Valle del Cauca, Colombia. Nationally recognised for its musical training programme centred on Colombian Andean music, this community initiative has provided educational and artistic opportunities to hundreds of children and young people for over 25 years.

Using an ethnographic approach, this study explores the nature of the school's community, organisational, musical and artistic practices and relationships. The research seeks to understand how and to what extent a music school in Colombia can serve as a catalyst for human and social development at the local level.

Drawing on an experience from the Global South, the research illustrates how diverse philosophies, practices, and expectations surrounding music-making converge within a single educational and cultural project, shaping the elusive concept of social impact. The study highlights the intricate interplay of tensions, conflicts, and inquiries that emerge when four interconnected yet distinct pursuits coexist: 1) the preservation and deepening of musical heritage (tradition); 2) the pursuit of social action through creative, pedagogical, and aesthetic experimentation and disruption (alternativity); 3) the recognition of individuals and their life projects (subjectivity); and 4) the endeavour to ensure the project's long-term viability and impact (sustainability). The findings suggest that a nuanced, interrelated, and contextually situated understanding of these four phenomena provides critical insights into the factors influencing consensus-building, political action, human relationships, and the potential to construct shared projects. Such projects, rooted in difference, alterity, and diversity, are posited as vital assets and pivotal points in navigating conflict and fostering cohesion within polarised and rapidly changing societies.

This research was conducted with the support of a doctoral scholarship awarded by the Social Impact of Making Music platform (SIMM) and the Guildhall School of Music and Drama (GSMD), London, UK.

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# Chapter One

## Introduction

This research took place in Colombia, a country with one of the most complex and rich cultural and musical ecosystems in the world (Ospina, 2013). However, as has been widely publicised, the country's extensive natural and cultural wealth has been undermined by abysmal inequality, leading to "structural violence" (Galtung, 2003) and lengthy periods of armed conflict that have made it one of the nations most prone to the violation of fundamental human rights. These circumstances have caused a profound crisis in social bonds and have diminished the living conditions of communities. The magnitude of these issues is emphasized through their inclusion as the very core of the 2016 Final Agreement for the Termination of the Conflict and the Construction of a Stable Country and Lasting Peace.<sup>1</sup>

In this context, civil society, cultural agents, and the State have turned to culture and the arts as spaces and mechanisms for both individual and collective recognition that contribute to building conditions of equity and coexistence, "through the expression of their affective worlds as a vital form of social fabric reconstruction" (Colombia, Ministry of Culture. Plan Nacional de Música para la Convivencia PNMC, n.d.). Music has been one of the artistic and cultural practices used by the government, institutions, organisations, and communities to promote processes and discourses of social transformation throughout the country.

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<sup>1</sup> The 2016 Final Agreement for the Termination of the Conflict and the Construction of a Stable Country and Lasting Peace marked a historic accord between the Colombian government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), aimed at ending a decades-long armed conflict. The agreement addressed issues such as rural development, political participation, transitional justice, and disarmament, seeking to pave the way for a more stable and peaceful future in Colombia.

In Colombia, there are numerous initiatives, both public and private, working toward these purposes and there is a growing interest in supporting, promoting, and making visible the potential social impact of music-making in academic, governmental, educational, artistic, and cultural spheres. Social action for music programmes such as the Music for Reconciliation programme by the Ministry of Culture, operated by the National Batuta Foundation, *Vamos a la Filarmónica* by the Bogotá Philharmonic Orchestra, *La Red de Músicas de Medellín* and recent national government initiatives such as the debated *Sonidos para la Construcción de Paz* (Sounds for Peace Building) project are reflective of this trend.

Alongside these initiatives, an emerging body of scholarship focuses on how music as creative practice and pedagogy might contribute to social integration, inclusion, development, well-being, peacebuilding, citizenship education, or other social goals. Thanks to the independent research in the field of the social impact of music-making (SIMM), we now have many more critical conceptual and methodological tools to better understand the extent to which music-making can support these objectives. These developments have allowed us to question and clarify that music alone does not create these social miracles and, on the contrary, can also serve as a vehicle for inequity, exclusion, abuse, and the perpetuation of multiple forms of symbolic, cultural, and social violence that do not lead to the construction of a more just, democratic, and healthy society (Baker, 2014, 2022).

In Colombia, there are also community music projects and processes that do not operate from a logic of instrumentalising the arts to achieve social objectives. Instead, they are collective musical practices inherent in the traditions and cultural expressions of communities, which emerge from different and complex processes of social appropriation and historical configuration. This constitutes a distinctive feature compared to the concept and practice of “community music” mostly used in the British and North American contexts, where it often refers to musical interventions with a social purpose. As a matter of fact, “community music is a contested term with different meanings in different contexts” (Mullen, 2018, p. 13). In culturally rich and diverse contexts, like those that are found within Colombia, the study of the relationship between music-making and social construction may align more closely with other conceptual frameworks, such as that of Boeskov (2017), who defines community music as

“cultural performance”. As Bartlee (2023) has coined, by conceiving the community music practice as a cultural performance, Boeskov draws attention to the complex connection between the meanings and relationships experienced inside the musical practice and how this transforms the relationships that constitute the broader social and cultural world of the participants.

In this regard, the profound diversity of cultural, sonic, and musical practices in Colombia serves as a rich reservoir and observatory of the ways in which communities have woven life from their territories, processes, and everyday practices, in open dialogue with their traditions and the social challenges they face daily, such as violence, displacement, drug trafficking, illegality, economic precariousness, inequality, poverty, among others. These ways of being, doing, knowing, and “senti-pensar” (Fals Borda, 2015) that are inherent to popular, rural and urban communities can teach us divergent ways in which music acts as a medium to weave the social fabric in contexts such as those found within Latin America.

Studies on Afro-Colombian, indigenous, peasant, rural, and urban-popular music practices been conducted in Colombia with links to the SIMM interests and purposes. Ian Middleton's study (2018) on trust highlights, from a musicological standpoint, how the weaving of social relationships within community musical practices of cultural traditions on the Caribbean Colombian coast is crucial for understanding their potential contribution to conflict transformation. Also, Luján (2016a) has explored the role of music in transforming societies in conflict. Based on findings from several years of fieldwork with rappers in Cali (Luján, 2016b; 2016c), he has suggested that music, from a sociocultural perspective, can identify social conflicts; consider diverse solutions within the community and facilitate dialogue and conflict transformation. Furthermore, Rodríguez (2017) has studied how music can serve as a means for preserving the social fabric in conflict contexts and presented a systematic literature review analysing the impact of collective musical practices on communities affected by war.

Additional research has been carried out on the role of music in post-conflict processes. Muñoz (2021) has explored the role of music in the healing and holistic restoration of the victims of the El Salado massacre in El Carmen de Bolívar (Bolívar), where the community's sonic territory was desecrated. Similarly, Rojas (2019) has studied the role of “Bullenrap” to peacebuilding

examining the case of Libertad, in San Onofre (Sucre), as part of the Comprehensive Collective Reparation Plan (PIRC) implemented by the Unit for Comprehensive Attention and Reparation to Victims (UARIV).

Niño and McDonald (2023) studied the musical and political identities of former FARC guerrilla fighters within Colombia's post-conflict framework. Through an in-depth analysis of narratives, practices and songs, this work reveals how musical identities serve as a catalyst for profound political and cultural transformations at both individual and collective levels in Colombia. Likely, Pinto's study (2014) highlights how music, particularly the autonomous creation of songs, enables victims and ex-combatants to reconstruct the historical memory of the conflict, express their feelings about past events, and redefine their identities, broadening their perspectives. Also, the study points out the limitations of music as a tool for reconciliation, noting that musical meaning cannot be assumed to transfer to listeners without transformation. Even more, it suggests that music can potentially widen the gap between enemies, reinforce stereotypes, or even be manipulated for adverse purposes.

Following Boescov's approach to community music, the Afro-Colombian, Indigenous, peasant, rural, and urban-popular Colombian musical practices have also deepened our understanding of the "epistemologies of the South" (Santos, 2009) that underpin these community practices, shedding light on other ways of being, constructing reality, understanding the world, and valuing music and social. In Colombia, these practices -their languages and aesthetics, forms of sociability, transmission, spirituality, rituals, and connection with the body and territory- have been crucial for understanding how music is expressed in the global South and its potential role in social transformation (Arango, 2018); the recovery of the ancestral memory of Indigenous people (Durán, 2016) and their territorial construction (Miñana, 2008); the social and political empowerment of youth in large cities (Garcés and Medina, 2008); and the resilience, identity and well-being of displaced populations (Zapata and Hardgraves, 2017). These ontological, epistemological, methodological, and axiological perspectives on music have contributed to fostering dialogue between different forms of knowledge and social justice in academic, research, and public music policy spheres (see Arenas, 2016, 2009; Puerta, 2017), while also

enriching music education in both formal and non-formal settings (see Samper, 2018, 2011; Puerta, 2022).

In order to continue exploring the relationship between music and social construction in Colombia, a group of researchers, educators, and musicians have created *Sonido Colectivo*. We initiated this ‘community of knowledge’ (Valero, López and Pirela, 2017) based on the recognition of the rich cultural diversity present and the willingness to learn and make more visible the social experience available. In this sense, beyond large socio-musical or social action projects and their institutional narratives, we have sought to map other experiences that, from different narratives, logics, contexts of practice, and territories, teach us other ways of understanding the field. In this sense, we have moved away from prior conceptualisations that may limit the scope of observation and learning, without losing dialogue with the knowledge constructed in the global north (Samper et. al, 2024).

In the same vein, this research aims to shed light on experiences outside the narratives, objectives, practices, and intervention logics surrounding the social impact of music, seeking to map alternative ways in which the relationship between music and social construction is shaped, both within the musical experience itself and beyond it.

### **Plan Nacional de Música para la Convivencia (PNMC)**

The questions and motivations of this research emerge from a Colombian music policy which deliberately distanced itself from using music instrumentally to address social issues: the Plan Nacional de Música para la Convivencia (PNMC) by the Ministry of Culture of Colombia. Although the PNMC was created and named within the framework of a government policy that viewed music as an instrument for reducing violence, the PNMC positioned itself from its beginning as a policy that placed music as a cultural and creative expression, as an axis of social development and as an educational and cultural right (see Annex 1).

The PNMC is not presented here as the central focus of this doctoral study. Rather, its political principles, epistemological, conceptual, and methodological approaches, along with its achievements and challenges, provide the foundation for the questions and motivations guiding

this research, which delves into one of its most powerful political action axes: non-formal music schools at the local level.

My experience and direct involvement with the Plan gave me first-hand understanding of the complexity of its internal debates, struggles and efforts to foster alternative understandings of music and its role in social construction and development inside the Ministry of Culture. This approach raised intriguing questions for this research: is it possible to investigate the potential social impact of music-making programmes that deliberately distanced themselves from instrumentalised approaches and did not target specific populations with specific social problems? Could these experiences shed light on alternative ways in which music could facilitate social development in contexts such as that of Colombia? Is it possible that Colombian musicality allows us to engage with alternative ways of understanding who Colombians are and have been socially? These questions are at the heart of this study.

The PNMC was established by the Ministry of Culture of Colombia in 2003 with the goal of guaranteeing the Colombian population's right to know, practice and enjoy musical creation. It draws inspiration from Colombia's diverse musical heritage and ongoing social appropriation processes. These processes have resulted from “a continuous blending of social groups, the rich geographic and cultural diversity of its regions and an increasingly active dialogue with the sonic expressions of the world” (Colombia Ministry of Culture, PNMC, n.d.).

To achieve this, the PNMC has promoted the creation, strengthening and consolidation of music schools in approximately 1,104 municipalities across the country. It has encouraged music education for children and youth, the updating and professionalisation of musicians, community organisation, intergenerational dialogue and the affirmation of creativity and cultural identity in each context. These schools, focusing on collective musical practices of regional tradition, choirs, symphonic bands, orchestras and popular and urban music, have, to a large extent, been the path toward achieving its two most important policy axes: 1) citizen musicalization and 2) the professional development of the music field; these approaches will be explained in the following chapter. Annex 1 offers a comprehensive overview of the PNMC's developments and evaluations up until 2019, providing much more detailed information.

By 2010, I was serving as the coordinator for the music training component of the PNMC. In this role, my responsibilities included overseeing the pedagogical development of municipal music schools, enhancing collective music practices such as symphonic bands, choirs, traditional folk music ensembles, and orchestras, and fostering connectivity across various levels and modalities of musical education nationwide. Thanks to this experience, among others, I was able to obtain first-hand knowledge of the work carried out by more than 55 municipal music schools subscribed to the PNMC and, indirectly, of more than 800 other institutions that were affiliated to the Plan. This has enabled me to acknowledge the vast musical, cultural and geographic diversity of the country, the heterogeneity of its populations and social realities, and the challenges, difficulties, and opportunities of fostering the “cultural and educational right to know, practice and enjoy music” that the PNMC policy has envisioned through the creation and strengthening of non-formal public music schools in every municipality of the country.

***Figure 1***

*Music school corporation Tom & Silaya. Providencia (San Andrés and Providencia, Colombia).*



Created by municipal resolution of 2009. Picture by PNMC.



As music training coordinator and in subsequent roles as a member of the pedagogical management team, I visited municipalities to assess the factors that the PNMC defined for the sustainability of these schools, such as the structuring of their pedagogic project; the training background of teachers; community leadership and participation; infrastructure and endowments; and the processes of institutionalisation of the schools (see Annex 1).

Traveling to various music schools across the country not only allowed me to discover and appreciate the rich musical diversity from different geographical regions, as well as the artistic and creative potential of children, youth, and music teachers, but also to grasp an important reality: the extent to which municipal music schools received local government support largely depended on -and was often justified by- an instrumental logic of music. Mayors, cultural secretaries, and communities supported the creation of these programmes as a response to pressing social issues such as forced recruitment, rising drug addiction, the involvement of children and youth in criminal activities, lack of productive leisure time, increasing violence, or teenage pregnancy, among others. During my visits to government officials, I very rarely encountered narratives that framed artistic musical training as an educational and cultural right of the population or discussed how schools were making a substantial contribution to the development of the municipality.

Alongside this, numerous mis-guided practices occurred including large portions of public resources for culture being spent on expensive foreign artists who enlivened municipal festivals of one or two days. In other cases, teacher recruitment was carried out for six months at a time, with salaries that did not correspond well to the responsibilities and expertise of the teachers and with very precarious infrastructure conditions. In other cases, although much less frequent, the schools had dusty instruments and no hired teacher. In one or two cases, the sitting governor understood culture as mere entertainment and celebration. These experiences highlighted the valuable work of those municipal music schools that had strong community processes, decent infrastructure, consolidating pedagogical projects, interesting musical processes, and forms of teacher leadership that ensured the retention of children and local as well as governmental support, among other factors. This is how I began to take a greater interest in the factors of how this process was made possible in one municipality and not in another, the underlying

framework that is not visible, but which weaves the connections and ties the project together. In this sense, I began to understand why the PNMC focused on training parents as community leaders, on the research and pedagogic training of musicians and teachers, on their professionalization, on the creation of pedagogical materials, on the consolidation of information and circulation platforms, on the development of infrastructure and instrument provision alliances, on entrepreneurship and musical production, among other components with their policies. In other words, I became more interested and began to question the role of this entire framework that supports these processes of training children and youth, but which is not sufficiently valued when understanding its role in achieving impact and social action through music.

Then, despite the difficulties I observed on these brief visits, I also witnessed first-hand how certain schools, which had achieved notable levels of consolidation, managed to influence cultural and educational processes. They also catalysed social, and at times even political and economic, transformations that contributed significantly to local development. This experience prompted me to question whether the monitoring processes and mechanisms employed by the PNMC, and the schools were adequately capturing these social phenomena. I became intrigued by the nature of their impacts and their relationship with the schools' pedagogical, artistic, community, and organisational processes, as well as whether there were other, less visible effects worth investigating.

Despite the PNMC's efforts to monitor schools through various processes and strategies, there remains a paradox: the absence of comprehensive and qualitative indicators for local level music processes has resulted in a chronic lack of data regarding the social and human development impacts achieved by these non-formal music schools. Consequently, it raises questions about whether these schools could foster alternative perspectives on social development beyond prevailing paradigms (Stupples, 2007). As of 2021, the sole ministerial and governmental indicator to evaluate the PNMC was “the number of municipal music schools created and strengthened” (Colombia National Planning Department, 2022), a metric that fails to capture the complexity and diversity of social processes stimulated by music schools.

Indeed, as detailed in Annex 1, the monitoring and comprehensive evaluation of the PNMC weakened after 2017, as it ceased to be considered a priority project of the national government during the peace process with the FARC and the following years. This contrasts with the increase in investment in the Music for Reconciliation programme, aimed at symphony orchestras, which operates under the logic of social intervention and targets poor and vulnerable sectors and victims of the conflict. The above is particularly interesting because of the focus of this research. Even though these two programmes are not comparable, the point is to highlight the political and social phenomenon. Although the PNMC attended to populations in vulnerable sectors and was implemented through strategies that sought to strengthen territorial capacities, autonomy, participation, cultural identity and institutional strengthening, and horizontal interinstitutional dialogue, among others, even with a higher level of coverage and consolidation, paradoxically, it was not considered a priority policy at that historical moment. This phenomenon also helped to formulate the motivations and questions of this research: how is territorial peacebuilding understood through music? Is the narrative and instrumental approach to music the only way out for social action, financing, and sustainability of our field?

In a country with a fragile cultural sector at the institutional level, limited recognition and societal appreciation of cultural and artistic work and barriers to the improvement of living conditions for cultural workers and sustainable growth of the music sector, (Colombia Ministry of Culture, 2022) municipal music schools can teach us a great deal about possible ways to build social bonds at the local level. They also shed light on the challenges faced by the SIMM field in terms of pedagogy, music, community and organisational processes in contexts like Colombia and wider Latin America. Ultimately, these music schools can contribute to understanding the field from new perspectives.

As a matter of fact, the PNMC's conceptual, political, and methodological approaches now serve as a key reference point for debates within the contemporary Colombian SIMM field. Recent significant shifts in public music policy in the country underscore this.<sup>2</sup> From its

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<sup>2</sup> Paradoxically, with the arrival of Colombia's first left-wing government in its historical republican history in 2022, the president proposed to implement the ASPM model of Venezuela's System of Orchestras, which stirred up the most pressing dilemmas in the SIMM field in the country. In fact, since the year 2000, the PNMC had

inception, the PNMC has had to prevent the importation of Social Action through Music (SATM) models to the country that proposed the homogenisation, centralisation and verticality of music education policies and threatened the ontological, epistemological, pedagogical and methodological diversity of musical practices and sonic expressions in the country. Some of these issues are explored in Chapter eight.

As stated above and notwithstanding the contextual significance of the PNMC, the primary goal of this doctoral research is not to directly investigate the Plan itself, but to understand how, in what way and to what extent informal music schools, their music pedagogies, management structures and the set of relational practices at the community and institutional levels have played a role in local social and human development in the country. All of these are in dialogue with the PNMC's conceptual, political, and methodological approaches.

To achieve this goal, the research initially proposed the study of three cases, aiming to compare different sociocultural contexts, musical practices, and forms of organisational structure: public, private, and mixed-economy music schools. However, with the impact of COVID-19 and the time required for fieldwork, a decision was made to concentrate the research on a single case. While this decision limited the potential for obtaining more information about how schools operated in these different contexts, it was clear that investigating a single case would allow for a greater depth of analysis, enabling the study of emerging factors given the researcher's level of involvement. Therefore, it was proposed that the selected case for study should provide a rich environment for pedagogical, musical, community and institutional practices, resources, processes, and meaningful experiences.

The criteria for selecting the case study were as follows: 1) a school with a strong musical and pedagogical project, 2) the integration of cultural and/or regional musical traditions with the school's overall approach, 3) the extent of the school's engagement with its community context,

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already been leading heated discussions within the Ministry about the need to recognize the musical, sonic and cultural diversity of the country, the importance of stimulating territorial empowerment and autonomy and outlining the role of the state in musical and cultural development. It moved away from interventionist approaches and sought to build concerted public policy tools that would bring to life the principles and purposes of decentralization from the 1991 Constitution and cultural democracy from the Decennial Plan of Culture of that time.

4) the inclusion of critical reflection and research as part of the school's mission, 5) recognition at the regional and national level and 6) a connection with the PNMC. Analysing these criteria, the music school of the educational and cultural foundation Canto por la Vida, located in the municipality of Ginebra, Valle del Cauca, was selected for the case study.

### **Canto por la Vida**

The Canto por la Vida music school was officially established in 2002, but its origins date back to 1993 with the creation of a music training programme by FUNMÚSICA, which has organised the renowned Colombian Andean music festival Mono Núñez since 1975. The school has been working continuously for over 27 years and has focused on the musical education of children and young people based on Colombian “Andean” music, aiming to impact their human development and improve their quality of life and educational and cultural conditions. Although the school is mainly based on the traditional Colombian “Andean” music, it also has expanded its spectrum of musical languages and the study of other musical Colombian traditions as part of its pedagogical and artistic project.

#### ***Figure 2***

*Canto por la Vida music school (Ginebra, Valle del Cauca)*



Source: Institutional website.

Canto por la vida's programming consists of varying projects that are deeply interrelated: 1) the musical training programme; 2) the lutherie project; 3) the Music Documentary Centre MDC;

and 4) the studio recording project. As it will be characterised in Chapter 5, the musical training programme of the school is structured through a curriculum that has three components: 1) sensitisation; 2) foundation; and 3) deepening. The artistic and pedagogic project of Canto por la Vida works around the collective practice of music. ‘The ensembles aim to stimulate the artistic potentialities of students, the recognition of individual and collective responsibilities, the acknowledgement of diverse roles, and the creation of musical and cultural references for the community around the school’ (CPV, website).

Through the *Semillero* musical programme developed in partnership with the municipal government of Ginebra, Canto por la Vida benefits approximately 793 children between the ages of 7 and 10 years old, in elementary grades (1st, 2nd and 3rd) of various public schools in Ginebra: Manuela Beltrán, La Salle Ginebra institute and La Inmaculada Concepción. Additionally, about 250 children, adolescents, and young people from Ginebra's county seat attend the foundation's facilities during times outside of regular school hours. Although Ginebra has 8 additional townships (“corregimientos”), the music school is unable to reach that population. The students mostly come from socioeconomic strata 1 and 2, being children of residents of Ginebra who attend local educational institutions. According to the former pedagogic coordinator of the school, many children, and young people from strata 3, considered a middle-high socioeconomic level in this municipality of category VI, receive their basic and secondary education in the neighbouring municipality of Buga (Valle), which has better infrastructure and educational development.<sup>3</sup> This makes it difficult for them to attend the music school. Similarly, other children or young people from neighbouring municipalities such as Cerrito travel to attend the music school; however, this trend has decreased over time.

The Canto por la Vida Foundation is a non-profit cultural and socially beneficial organisation. Its organisational model is mixed, receiving both public and private resources for its operation. The school charges a symbolic and minimum fee of the equivalent of 8 GBP per year to

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<sup>3</sup> According to the law 617 of 2000, the classification of municipalities into categories refers to a system that classifies municipalities based on their size, infrastructure, and level of development, primarily to allocate resources and plan public policies. Category 1 corresponds to the largest and most developed municipalities, and Category 6 to the smallest and least developed. Currently, the multimodal poverty index of Ginebra is 14,7.

participants to encourage their enrolment and commitment. To operate the music school, it requires support from the Ministry of Culture of Colombia through the National Cultural Coordination Plan (PNC) and a smaller contribution from the local government of Ginebra to carry out initial music education in public schools in the municipality. However, this is not sufficient. In order to sustain a project for over 20 uninterrupted years, maintaining a team of more than 20 staff members, including teachers, administrative and operational personnel, the foundation must manage projects, apply for public and private tenders and seek donations. Also, it has developed other start-up projects that favour the sustainability of the foundation and the school. Amongst them are: 1) the Infrastructural Project, to build a proper edification with the conditions needed by the school, in a land that has been donated to the foundation; and 2) the ‘Cacerola Cantora’, which is an entrepreneurship project, which expand the gastronomic, tourist and leisure offer of Ginebra, with the stamp of the artistic and cultural proposals of the foundation.

Canto por la Vida has been an ally of public policies and governmental entities at the local, regional, and national levels. Although it is not entirely a public municipal school it has had a strong connection with the PNMC and has been deeply influenced by its principles and policies. In effect, the foundation has been a strategic regional and national partner for the development of the PNMC’s training and research activities in traditional music from the Southwestern Andean Region (Cauca, Nariño and Valle del Cauca). It has provided pedagogical and musical advice to neighbouring municipal music schools and have also been involved in agreements to provide musical instruments and technical training to “luthiers” in traditional Colombian music. It has also supported programmes of psychosocial attention and music creation contributing to conflict management and violence reduction in municipalities such as Buenos Aires, Cauca. Additionally, it has been an allied partner of the Ministry of Culture of Colombia in the development of various territorial projects related to reading promotion (Fiesta de la Lectura programme). Among other cultural initiatives the school has been involved with includes the “Itinerancias artísticas por Colombia” project in 2018. Here, Canto por la Vida supported the artistic and scenic production for performances of renowned and high-quality Colombian companies of dance, theatre, music, puppetry, and circus, fostering the circulation on areas of the country where artistic offerings are scarce during 2018. Canto por la Vida has been also

responsible for the entire operation of the Departmental Music Plan of Valle del Cauca since 2018, under an agreement with the Governor's Office of Valle del Cauca through the Departmental Secretariat of Culture. The Departmental Music Plan of Valle del Cauca aims to support the stakeholders in the musical sector of the department and strengthen musical practices in the region through its components of circulation, research, training, management, and entrepreneurship.

Its artistic strength, the structuring of its music pedagogical project, its involvement in regional traditional musical practices, its organisational growth, its dynamism in research and production, as well as its leadership and role in advising music schools at the regional level, made this music school an interesting case study for the research purposes. The school has been recognised as a significant institution at the national level by the PNMC and has even received some international recognition. In 2010, the foundation received the National Award for the best private municipal music school by the Ministry of Culture; and in 2016, was invited to Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts, to take part in the SITA symposium (Social Integration through the Arts), an event organised by the David Rockefeller Centre for Latin America Studies and The Programme Of Arts in Education of the Harvard Graduate School of Education, which brings together programmes with a path of excellence in both pedagogical, artistic and cultural; management, organisation; and of course, significant impact in the communities where they take place. This case study raises thought-provoking questions about the relationship between pedagogical, artistic and community dimensions and the challenges of sustainability in contexts like Colombia and Latin America.

### **Methodological approach**

Small facts speak to large issues.  
(Geertz [1973] 1996, p. 35)

To understand how and to what extent music pedagogies, management structures and the relational practices within music schools play a role in local social and human development, this research primarily focused on investigating the pedagogical and organisational team and



structures of the school and its relationship with musical, pedagogical and community work. Many studies in the field of SIMM have focused on the participants in the projects, allowing for an in-depth exploration of the quality of the experience and understanding multiple ways in which music and its creative practice can impact individuals on a human and social level. However, the context of this research suggests a need to explore the nature of the organisation and management of these programmes to understand other factors that may or may not influence or enable such experiences or goals. In a Latin American context, with a profound fragility at the cultural institutional level and a deteriorating social fabric that affects the ability to build long-term collective projects, it is crucial to understand how communities have managed and organised their music projects and how this has influenced potential social impact. All of this is done in dialogue with the key debates and issues raised in the SIMM field.

In light of the above, the research adopted a qualitative and ethnographic approach, focusing on the case study of Canto por la Vida. Ethnography provided descriptive and interpretative tools to engage with experiences, practices and the meanings attributed to these practices and experiences, delving into the complex relationships among them. As Restrepo (2018) suggests, ethnographic work does not place high importance in finding inconsistencies between these two aspects but rather considered that levels of action and reflection on action, even if they are in tension, are equally important when it comes to understanding the density of social life. In other words,

It is not that what people do is the truth that must be described by the researcher and what is said to be done is a falsehood that must be discarded. What must be understood is why there is this gap (...), which implies that the researcher understands that the way people represent and present what they do to others constitutes an important source of research on the meanings of social life for these people. The same is true of 'what should be done'. It should not be confused with what people do, but in itself and by its difference with what people do, constitutes a great source on the moral universe of the people with whom we are working. (Restrepo, 2018, p. 43)

As a result, the ethnographic approach used in this project aims to describe the “situated understandings” of the school members that accounted for their various ways of imagining, inhabiting, doing, and giving meaning to their experiences, according to their individual

trajectories, the social relationships in which they are embedded and the tensions they embody. This facilitated the uncovering of certain social realities and ways of life within the community during specific time periods.

In effect, according to Gurdián (2010), qualitative research is primarily characterised by its interest in understanding reality through the eyes of the subjects themselves, based on their perception of their context. It is assumed that reality is socially and historically constructed, and constantly changing. In this way, one of the aims in this doctoral project was to build a type of knowledge that captures the different points of view of those who create and live the social and cultural reality of Canto por la Vida's music school. This translates into the adoption of a dialogical methodology in which beliefs, values, myths, prejudices, and feelings, among others, are accepted as elements of analysis to generate knowledge about human reality.

For its part, this case study, from an ethnographic and qualitative approach, required a significant level of flexibility, patience, complexity, and reflexivity. The knowledge and process of engagement with the case generated transformations in the research questions and focal points, in a cyclical and spiral process that involved moving from a deductive to an inductive approach<sup>4</sup>. In other words, "a process in which the hypotheses or assumptions adopted an emergent character and evolved within a heuristic dynamic" (Gurdián, 2010, p. 98). However, during fieldwork, this process was experienced as a back-and-forth, as progress and setbacks, and therefore required patience and flexibility. Moreover, the case study, as a methodological approach, meant embracing complexity. That is, a holistic and systemic understanding required the integration of multiple factors, variables, perspectives, and forms of interrelation that made the interpretation of phenomena complex.

Denzin and Lincoln (2005) propose that the central image for qualitative research should be the crystal, not the triangle (referring to data triangulation), because crystals grow, change, alter, and are prisms that reflect and refract externalities, creating different colours, patterns, and spreading them in different directions. However, Durán (2012) proposes the metaphor of the hologram which seems more appropriate as

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<sup>4</sup> The inductive approach is more related to discovery and finding than to testing or verification.

(...) it reflects the complexity of a case study, shifting from linear thinking to an interactive and complex one, integrated and interrelated, allowing to highlight the relationships that connect each element or data of the case, considering different perspectives, according to the context of the actors in the research. (p. 124)

Finally, this process involved a continuous reflexive exercise (in the interpretative sense) to transcend the observational level and integrate the collected information with experiential knowledge (Stake, 2005) but also to be aware of my own ontological, epistemological, methodological, axiological and rhetoric paradigms.

### *Research process*

This doctoral research began in the second semester of 2018 and concluded in 2024. During the first doctoral year, the research benefited from numerous seminars, academic exchanges, symposiums, and workshops conducted by the doctoral team at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama (GSMD) and the Social Impact for Music Making (SIMM) research platform. During this time, this doctoral research profited from dialogue with the international academic community of SIMM, gaining insights into research advancements and challenges in the field, as well as from inquiries, conversations, and interviews with academics and expert practitioners in the field of music and international development, within the context of the Global North. During that year, the ethics protocol was designed and approved, and an agreement was signed between the GSMD and the Canto por la Vida foundation, establishing the joint and tripartite conditions for fieldwork in Colombia.

Fieldwork was conducted from the second semester of 2019 to the first semester of 2022. In order to prepare the Canto por la Vida community for my arrival, meetings were held with teachers, collaborators, students, and parents to explain the context and purpose of the research and to inform them about the participation protocols and the use of project information. During certain stages of the process, observations and visits to the school were affected and interrupted by the isolation and closure of educational and cultural institutions in the first semester of 2020

due to the Covid-19 pandemic, as well as by the effects of the social unrest in Colombia in the first semester of 2021, which dramatically affected Cali and the Valle del Cauca with murders of students, youth, and social leaders, protests, and serious mobility and access problems to basic goods. However, amid these conditions, the research process continued through virtual interviews and conversations with school collaborators, students and PNMC officials from the Ministry of Culture. Finally, in the first semester of 2022, there was a research hiatus due to the death of my father. In sum, although observations and visits to the school were carried out intermittently over two years, the work of conducting interviews and documentary research continued during this period. Finally, the process of analyzing and writing this document was carried out from the second semester of 2022 to the second semester of 2024.

*Techniques: participant observations, interviews and documentation*

As mentioned, this research primarily focused on investigating the pedagogical and organisational team and structures of the school and its relationship with musical, pedagogical and community work. To achieve this, I carried out observations of the school's musical artistic, pedagogical, community, and organisational practices and the human and institutional relationships; I conducted semi-structured and in-depth interviews; and collected and reviewed documents such as internal reports, academic theses (Solano, 2012; Cobo, 2010; Cayer, 2010), and public policy documents, among others.

Observations of community and institutional practices and relationships, as well as other phenomena and events, were documented in a field diary. Observations of musical performances and some moments of specific classes and pedagogical processes were recorded briefly on video, allowing for later review. I avoided recording classes to not disrupt the group's energy and intimacy, even though my presence at the school became familiar. When I felt confident and saw an opportunity, I recorded video snippets of interesting moments during practices as a keepsake, which were complemented with notes in the diary or voice notes. Particularly, taking photographs served as a documentary memory to support key aspects that caught my attention. Also, the photographic records published on the school's website and social media served as a documentary source of analysis and information.

Interviews and conversations were conducted with various community members, including founding members, directors, teachers, collaborators, students, alumni, parents, officials from the PNMC, and other experts in the educational and musical fields who are familiar with the case and context. Depending on the person, a different type of interview was defined considering the purposes and the interviewee's role. In-depth interviews were conducted with founding members, directors, and teachers. I was interested in learning about their musical life history, professional and educational background, motivations related to the project, among other aspects. With them, I applied the “life stories” technique (Chárriez, 2012). I also conducted interviews with this group that were more related to the school's pedagogical, artistic, musical, and community project, discussing organisational advances and challenges, and their vision regarding the project's areas of social contribution. The combination of interviews allowed for a better comprehension and analysis of the relationship between the areas of training and professional background, philosophies and ideologies, and their role and positioning within the project. This type of information, in triangulation with observations and documentation, made “explicit the implicit, visible the hidden, the unformed, formed and the confused, clear” (Lucca and Berríos, 2003). As I deepened my understanding of the case, which also underwent changes during the two years of fieldwork, the focal points shifted. For this reason, new interviews were conducted and conversations with this same group were intensified, providing new information in an evolving but cyclical process, as described in the previous section.

Also, the processes mentioned above did not mean overlooking the perceptions of some students and community-family members. Particularly, interviews were conducted with students who were about to graduate and had joined the programme at a very young age. Some of them had decided to pursue a career in the arts. A focus group was also conducted with one of the school's most outstanding chamber ensembles, composed of its alumni. Additionally, interviews were conducted with some graduates, including one who had abandoned a music career at university. I also had long conversations with an undergraduate student at the university, an alumna of the school, who developed her thesis by investigating her personal experience in the pedagogical process of *Canto por la Vida*. With students and graduates, the interviews focused on recognizing aspects of their experience at musical, pedagogical, and community levels, as well

as exploring their perceptions regarding the school's transformations. It is important to note that some graduates had a different programme and experience from the others, as they belonged to different cohorts. This information was compared with interviews with graduates from the school's first cohorts, who are now current teachers. Finally, interviews were conducted with collaborators who are family members of the students and teachers. Although this information was extremely valuable for developing areas of inquiry and triangulating previous information, it is clear that the research focused on the first group, which presents a limitation but also a distinctive character of the study.

In this light, more than 70 semi-structured interviews and recorded conversations were conducted, as follows:

**Table 1**

*List of interviews*

Semi-structured Interviews	Number
<b>Management board and other members</b>	
President (benefactor)	3
Founder and manager	3
Founder and pedagogical coordinator	6
Founder, teacher (musical conductor and arranger)	3
Founder and Teacher (strings)	2
Teacher and researcher	6
President's wife of foundation (benefactor)	1
<b>Funmúsica – ex members</b>	
Funmusica President (Mono Nuñez Festival)	1
Ex Artistic Director (Funmúsica)	1
Ex Academic Director (Funmúsica)	2
<b>Teachers and former students, other key members</b>	
Former student, Teacher; Ida y Vuelta trio performer	2
Former student, Teacher (new academic coordinator) Ida y Vuelta trio performer	5
Former student; Ida y Vuelta trio performer	1
Teacher (theater; corporal expression; musicales criollos)	4
Former student -Teacher (winds instruments)	1
Former student - Musician - family (living abroad)	1

Former student - Semillero Teacher - family member	1
Young former student - Semillero Teacher	1
Teacher (semillero, Rondalla, piano)	1
Focus group of former students - Colorin Colorado ensemble	1
Former student - Bachelor student Univalle	2
<b>Current Students</b>	
Student (started at 5 years old and just finished the formative process)	1
Student (started at 6 years old and was about to finish the formative process)	1
Student (started at 17 years old and was about to finish the formative process)	1
<b>Collaborators and former students</b>	
Teacher and "Luthier" Atellier's project leader	1
"Luthier" collaborator and musician	1
Former student - Communications area	2
Former student - Administrative area	2
Former student - visual arts and "luthier"	1
<b>Officials, scholars/experts, and other musicians</b>	
Ex PNMC Director	3
PNMC's Coordinator of Production Component	2
PNMC's Coordinator of Information Component	1
Coordinator of Music Plan of Valle del Cauca and music manager	1
External Scholar, musician, educator, expert in Colombian Andean Music	3
Musician, expert in Colombian Andean Music	2
Musician teacher in Colombian Andean Music from (Chicoral, Valle del Cauca)	1
Arts therapist, communicator, and university teacher (knows CPV)	1

### *Ethical considerations*

To mitigate the potential negative effects of the research on participants (students, teachers, parents, senior members, and the Ministry of Culture HQ), differentiated strategies were identified and applied to safeguard both their integrity and the information resulting from observations and interviews, as follows:

- Students: Observations could have affected the behaviour and the way participants engaged in sessions and classes. This was mitigated by the presentation we made together with the teachers and administrators to the community about the research objectives, along with the familiarity

that developed over time, which helped students feel more comfortable and confident. Although interviews were not conducted with students under 16 years old, all interviews with students were conducted in the space allocated by the school, supervised by the Pedagogical Coordinator.

- The teachers and administrative members might have felt scrutinized by me, which could affect their behaviour and communication. To mitigate this, individual conversations were conducted before starting the investigation to build an initial trust base, and they were continuously informed about the objectives and process of the research.
- Parents and family members might also have felt uncomfortable with my presence and interaction with their children. This was addressed by providing clear information through meetings and virtual and written communications to the community, where I introduced myself as well as the research, and specified the channels for asking questions.
- Also, I required consent to the organisation when using and sharing images and films as part of dissemination and research process.
- I adhered to the ESRC Research Ethics Framework, ensuring this research abided by the expectations that participation was voluntary, that the value of the research outweighed the risks of harm, that participants were fully informed of the research procedure, and that the need for confidentiality and anonymity was respected.

Furthermore, studying such a small case presented several ethical challenges. Canto por la Vida is not a large organisation like other SATM programmes within the region. It has a team of approximately 20 people, making it more complex to handle sensitive information. To address this, participants were always consulted about what kind of information they wished to keep confidential. Anonymity was also provided. However, because the research took place in a particular renowned school and municipality in Colombia that had information publicly available on websites, press materials, and social media, it was unable to completely protect anonymity in the case of teachers, senior members, and HQ members of the Ministry of Culture. In that case, I used my judgment and communications with the participants to decide whether data should be credited to one specific name or simply 'one of the senior members' or 'one of the teachers,' or 'one of the HQ members'. On the other hand, in order to contribute to the memory and recognition of the work of various actors who also made distinctive contributions to the identity and the project at pedagogical, musical-artistic, organisational, and community levels, the personal names of the members are retained at different points.



Also, as mentioned above, when inconsistencies, paradoxes, ambivalences, and conflicting and contradictory views were identified as interesting for understanding the SIMM field, I did not focus on determining the truth or falsehood of what members said, did, or intended to do, either as an organisation or as individuals. My aim was trying to identify and understand the nature of the tensions and gaps between perspectives and ways of experiencing and intervening in the project, based on the observation of diverse narratives, experiences, interpretations, and practices.

I made a constant effort to examine my own perspectives and reflect on my positionality and way of seeing the phenomena, avoiding judgment. This process allowed me to de-idealize the project and its members, steering clear of evaluating how situations and people “should be” and instead embracing complexity, ambivalence, and ongoing contradictions. This approach enabled me to navigate the intricate relationship between work and family spheres and the public-institutional and intimate-personal matters. This approach helped me build relationships of understanding and trust with the project members, fostering everyday spaces -and even friendships- where it was possible to share thoughts and reflections on collective and individual histories, as well as on complex and conflicting matters of interconnected organizational and personal life. To respect the shared intimacy, individuals were asked if they wanted certain information to remain confidential. Similarly, members recognized my role as an external researcher, as I visited the school periodically. This allowed for a balance between familiarity and the detachment that comes with not living permanently in Ginebra.

#### Data analysis process

As mentioned, the cyclical process of interpretation that unfolded as the case study progressed required a more inductive focus. The events and dynamics intrinsic to the organisation set the pace for new areas of attention, inquiry, and analysis. Consequently, interviews and conversations were refined to delve into the nature of the conflicts, tensions, and gaps that I identified as key factors during a critical and changing phase of the project.

In this context, the treatment of the collected information (diaries, interviews, conversations, documents) involved two types of analysis and processing based on two distinct objectives. The first objective was to evaluate the contributions and work that Canto por la Vida has been continuously doing for more than two decades in dialogue with the educational, social, and cultural development needs of the local population and context. The second was to identify and analyse the nature of the tensions, gaps, ambivalences, and conflicts that emerged in the case study and that could shed light on the challenges faced by the SIMM field in the Colombian context.

Regarding the first objective, I considered it essential that the research capture the pedagogical, and methodological approaches in their organisational, educational, musical, artistic, and community dimensions, with an emphasis on the ‘how’, that is, the nature of the processes. This was especially important given the limited existing documentation on the organisation. To achieve this, a characterisation was conducted through the reconstruction and analysis of memories, experiences, interviews, and observations of practices in these areas. During this process, categories of analysis emerged that helped guide the treatment of the collected information, which I found to be of interest to the field regarding pedagogical processes and their relationship to social impact. In order to capture features of the project's identity in each of these dimensions, the continuities, discontinuities, and new proposals developed by the founding team were also analysed, considering historical moments of crisis, rupture, and decision making. Chapters 3, 4, 5, and 6 are the product of this analytical process. It should be reiterated that this description was not developed from an impact study with the participants, but rather from an analysis of the working methods, values, principles, and methodological approaches of the project. However, it was based on narratives, experiences, and observations, as mentioned.

The second objective was to delve into the nature of the organisation's tensions, gaps, and conflicts to better understand the factors and variables that influence the capacity and scope of music schools to contribute to social action through their structures and dynamics of pedagogical and organisational management. Particularly, the acceptance of the complexity, ambiguity, and conflict surrounding music in social action (Baker, 2022) served as a basis for identifying the

multiple realities and perceptions of the case and distinguishing the legitimacy of existing forms of representation and interpretation. The recurrence of certain debates, conflicts, and tensions within the project, reflected in other historical moments of the same case and in other areas and contexts of the SIMM field in Colombia, clarified both the focus of analysis—through which conceptual elements that served to categorise the collected information were identified—as well as the triangulation of the identified phenomena.

In this regard, triangulation, according to Stake (2005), is the use of multiple perceptions to clarify meanings and verify observations or interpretations by checking their repeatability. It is not a validation tool in itself, but an alternative for validation (Flick, 2015), reflecting an attempt to gain a deep understanding of the case, since objective reality cannot be directly captured but only through its representations (Durán, 2012).

## Structure of this work

This research included a conceptual framework that, as the project progressed, shifted from a deductive to an inductive approach (grounding theory). Chapter 2 illustrates this conceptual process. The chapter begins exploring the “world of development” and its relationship with the arts, from the perspective of the global North and the international context, placing the debates and issues surrounding a still diffuse and complex concept. Subsequently, it references other conceptual approaches to the relationship between development and music, specifically from a Colombian experience which operates within non-instrumentalised logics of musical creation such as the PNMC. Specifically, the section explores the relationship between development as creative freedom and development as the organisational field of music.

The third, fourth, fifth and sixth chapters delve into the case study of the Canto por la Vida school. Chapter 3 delves into the beginnings of the project, describing the processes that led to the creation of the music training programme and its close ties to the Colombian Andean Mono Núñez music festival. The chapter aims to illustrate the factors that play a role in the project’s construction and configuration, as well as the tensions, conflicts and debates that led to internal ruptures with Funmúsica members at the aesthetic, musical, pedagogical, organisational and

community levels. This chapter was not intended to offer a detailed historical account of events, but rather to illuminate such factors and tensions. As will be seen in Chapter 7, many of these tensions and conflicts persist within the Canto por la Vida project, which raises analytical implications regarding the nature of music projects based on traditions within the SIMM context.

Chapters 4, 5 and 6 aim to characterise the Canto por la Vida project based on the identification of continuities and discontinuities concerning its origins in relation to Funmúsica and its early history. This characterisation is developed through the analysis of the material resulting from fieldwork. These chapters aim to illustrate the project in its community, organisational, pedagogical and artistic dimensions. The chapters predominantly highlight and value aspects that make it a unique and significant project, shedding light on the correspondence of these aspects with the social role that the music school can and has played at the local level. While these chapters mention some preliminary points about the tensions identified in relation to these dimensions, they are not described throughout. These issues receive a more differentiated treatment in chapters 7 and 8. In this regard, it is important to inform the reader that these chapters do not aim to delve into the conflicting, contradictory, or tense issues identified in each of dimension (organisational, community, pedagogic and artistic), but rather to appreciate the contributions that Canto por la Vida has been making in its quest to contribute to the educational, cultural, and social transformation of Ginebra, examining its practices, experiences, and ways of working.

Chapter 4 addresses the community and organisational dimensions. It describes how the community relationship and its connection to the organisational structure, unravelling the political, philosophical, ethical, and aesthetic investments of the collective and describing preliminary possible tensions that the “family-work” relationship entails. The chapter illuminates forms of relationships and values of community work strengthens the project at an educational, pedagogical, and training level, but that are invisible in the description of the musical educational project of the same organisation. Chapter 5 delves into the educational dimension. It describes the musical and artistic pedagogical management practices that characterize the school and influence the development of its students. This chapter highlights

the solutions that have been consolidated through programmatic, curricular structuring and didactics to generate social processes from the heart of musical development and the nature of traditional Andean music practices in Colombia. The chapter highlights the role of the “pedagogical” in human development processes and the value of interdisciplinarity for the enhancement of critical and creative capacities.

Chapter 6 focuses on describing the artistic and cultural practices and investments of the school. Based on an analysis of continuities and discontinuities in the project concerning the founding organisation Funmúsica, it describes how the team seeks to expand the musical aesthetic references while maintaining an anchor in regional traditional music, particularly so-called Colombian “Andean” music. The chapter presents the members’ reading of key aspects of this musical tradition and their appreciation within the framework of the training project. Nevertheless, Canto por la Vida does not define itself as the literal continuation of a tradition but has sought to challenge it. The chapter shows the efforts around preserving this musical tradition, but also the endeavours to promote aesthetic, music, and social diversification within the pedagogical and artistic project as part of its cultural and educational commitment.

Chapter 7 gathers the tensions and conflicts identified during fieldwork related to the pedagogical, musical, community and organisational dimensions and in relation to the social action of the music school. The chapter explores tensions related to tradition, creativity, and innovation; identity and alterity; and the organisational relationships. In the treatment and analysis of tensions, it shows the inherent complexity of the SIMM field within Latin American contexts with rich musical traditions, deep-rooted traditions and a fragility of cultural institutions that pose significant challenges for the survival and sustainability of projects. The chapter seeks to illustrate this complexity by presenting positions and angles of analysis that, while appearing critical and opposing, are complementary and necessary for the balance and health of organisations in the SIMM field, as will be seen later in Chapter 8.

To conclude, Chapter 8 proposes a conceptual framework that illustrates, within the Latin American context, four key dimensions for managing organisations in the SIMM field: 1) tradition, 2) alternativeness 3) subjectivity and 4) sustainability. Using the metaphor of a

kaleidoscope, it aims to show the importance of these four dimensions for analysing divergent and complementary angles for decision-making and guiding processes of evaluation, renewal, or transformation of projects in light of the goals of social action and development in the musical, artistic, educational and cultural field. The chapter extrapolates this framework or dimensions to issues in other Colombian cases, such as the Network of (Music) Schools in Medellin and recent events related to the Ministry of Culture of Colombia's music policy. This helps exhibit how these dimensions are expressed within the framework of the democratic game and its processes of negotiation and political and institutional construction. Finally, the chapter proposes strategic axes for applied research within the field of management that not only make the challenges faced in the development of projects in the SIMM field visible but also introduce tools for pedagogical, human, organisational and community management in music and artistic training processes with a social vision.

This project was conducted within the framework of a doctoral scholarship offered by the Guildhall School of Music & Drama and the international research platform, Social Impact of Music Making (SIMM platform).

## Chapter Two

### Development and the social impact of music making, notions towards a conceptual and political framework

Considering that this research work emerges within the framework of studies on the social impact of making-music SIMM, which brings together various musical projects aimed at social intervention, this chapter seeks to frame some conceptual elements and critical debates that will allow the reader to understand the positionality of the researcher regarding the context of this study.

This chapter highlights two of the axes through which I initially situated the research. On one hand, studies on development and its relation to arts-based intervention projects from an international perspective; on the other hand, alternative understandings of development and music that have been emerging in the Colombian context and that I believe can offer new angles of understanding regarding the social action of music.<sup>5</sup>

As I noted in the previous chapter, at the outset of this research, I had navigated and, to some extent, internalised the political, conceptual, and methodological principles of the PNMC from my role as a training coordinator and pedagogical advisor. These principles were grounded in a particular understanding of the role of music in development, and consequently, in the design of public policies for music within the Ministry of Culture of Colombia. Building on this background, my research concentrated on a central aspect of one of the PNMC's policies: municipal music schools as a key element of local social development. However, this approach has been consciously conceived outside the logic of instrumentalising music for social objectives. On the other hand, as I embarked on my doctorate and delved deeper into debates on development and the arts in the international context, I identified a strong focus on creating intervention projects with social objectives, which raised a question regarding my case study: a

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<sup>5</sup> It is worth mentioning that the concept of development addressed here is not related to the field of musical developmental psychology studies.

music school that does not officially position itself or operate from an instrumental logic of music. However, this process of gaining knowledge and engaging with research in the SIMM field has allowed me to explore interesting questions about the various ways in which the social can be configured both within and outside of the logic and projects of social intervention. This chapter explores these elements by raising some critical debates and highlighting some problematic effects that arise from instrumentalist and developmental approaches in the arts, such as the polarisation of the social and artistic dimensions. I should also note that the aim of exploring these differences and issues is not to discredit instrumentalist approaches, which have indeed contributed to the development of key processes for the social action of music, but rather to explore other angles in which the social can manifest within musical and educational practices, and to interrogate issues that enable or hinder human and social development.

Consequently, this chapter aims to underscore the importance of examining musical experiences outside the realms, practices, and narratives of social intervention programmes through music. It also seeks to conceptualise alternative approaches to understanding the interplay between musical practice and social and human development, drawing on the Colombian experience. In this context, the chapter endeavours to illustrate various epistemological and conceptual elements that can enhance our understanding of how music—encompassing its practice, knowledge, and enjoyment—can contribute to development. The subsequent analysis, including interviews with the PNMC's creator Alejandro Mantilla, aims to explore these conceptual foundations and address the tensions and polarisations that arise when artistic and social dimensions are treated as separate entities in music-based social action programmes.

### **Exploring critical debates on development and the arts**

According to Crewe and Axelby (2013), development has emerged as a powerful global industry, leaving its mark worldwide and aspiring to manage change in the economic, political, and social realms. Through meticulously planned interventions like crafting and executing policies, programmes, and projects, both governmental and non-governmental actors have driven social change using an array of frameworks, tools, and formulas.



However, development is a complex, contested, ambiguous and elusive term. People working in this field employ this word in different ways and either understand or misunderstand each other in the context of its use (Crewe & Axelby, 2013). In effect, the idea of development has served many purposes in our times: “as a reason of state, as a legitimiser of regimes, as part of the vision of a good society and, above all, as a shorthand expression for the needs of the poor” (Nandy and Visvanathan, 1990, p. 145).<sup>6</sup>

Thus, the world of development “is not simple or autonomous” (Cornwall, 2007). On the contrary. It entails both a political process -because it raises questions about who has the power to do what, to whom- and a sociocultural dimension that shapes discourses, practices, and forms of social production. In essence, “it’s ideological implications become clear only in the context of its use by particular political and social actors, positioned” (Cornwall, 2007 p. 481). Thus, development is deeply related to the position of its actors, their sociohistorical context and to the “cultures, moralities, languages, rituals, and symbolic practices already there” (Crewe and Axelby, 2013, p. ix). Development is both a sociocultural construct and a political field in which diverse logics, agendas and forms of social aspiration converge and collide.

Understanding how certain notions of development shape realities, discourses, practices, and forms of human relationship is essential to cultural, artistic, and educative domains and particularly, to those processes that seek to promote social transformation through the integration of such fields. Notions of development have implications on how we think and act in terms of the cultural, the artistic and the social. Then, artistic and cultural projects are shaped by ethical, political, and aesthetic positions that underlie certain beliefs and ideologies about social change.

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<sup>6</sup> In effect, Crewe & Axelby (2013) identified five ideas of development from which policy-makers, scholars and practitioners have mobilised and justified action: 1) development as *easy* understood as the fight against poverty, ignorance and disease and criticised by its naivety and simplistic approach to problems and solutions of the ‘underdeveloped; 2) development as *modernity* dominated by the notion of a straightforward route which sees all societies arrayed at various points along a linear and unique form of progression; 3) development as a form of *control* and an exercise of power; 4) development as *empowerment* from which a huge industry on promoting participation has arose and that has been criticised when it co-opted the rhetoric of empowerment, stripping its political nature and potential for transformation; and 5) development as *discourse* that shows how language, structures, symbols and rituals reveal the ways in which discourses has served to the interests of powerful actors and structures.

As a matter of fact, development frameworks impact the way in which artistic processes are valued:

Development tends to frame artists' agency primary in relation to local 'issues', thus reinforcing the social distance between 'developing' and 'developed', restricting artists from engaging in the 'global and the complex' (García Canclini 1998, p. 374) and from dealing with universal subjects such as loss, alienation or belonging. Aesthetic considerations are also often reduced, in instrumentalised development frameworks, to social productivity -becoming largely invisible as carriers of content and as a mediating field. This has the effect of flattening the subjectivity of artists, reducing their creative practices to functional tools, reducing criticality (evident also in the debate about form and aesthetic values) and constructs a social distance between artists of the South, who are expected to be politically (and/or socially) productive and artists from the North, who maintain a monopoly of aesthetic sensibility. As Patricia Belli has pointed out: '[t]he stereotypes is on us: leave aesthetics to the *superficial* artists of the first world and let artists of the third world think and act on their political issues' (Belli, 2007). (Stupples, 2017, p. 98)

Additionally, as Stupples (2017) sustains, art's liminal relationship to development has meant that many arts advocates have sought to demonstrate art's relevance to mainstream development frameworks in order to secure both: legitimacy and funding, a form of what Eleonora Belfiore (2006) has called "policy attachment" (p. 92). One implication of such is that art's agency tends to be defined in instrumental terms: commonly valued as contributors to economic growth, employment and exports (via creative economy) and as contributors to more human centred development outcomes such as peace building and social inclusion (see UNCTAD 2008, 2010; UNESCO and UNDP, 2013).

This instrumentalisation has been reinforced by *results-based management* approaches from which "a veritable industry has sprung up to measure 'results' and provide the necessary evidence that development is working" (p. 477). As Cornwall (2007) maintains, "the days when *process* showed a glimmer of becoming fashionable came and went very quickly; today's development is all about the quantifiable and measurable". These issues have been centre of debate within the evaluation of the social impact of arts field (sees Matarasso 1997, 2019; and Fontes, 2017).

But the instrumentalisation of the arts is not a problem by itself. What it is at stake here is pointing out that other ways of framing development could possibly illuminate alternative forms of artistic agency that could favour transformations towards more just, dignified, and enriched societies. For example, when they are rooted in other cosmogonies, epistemologies, values, and forms of collective work. The nature of artistic and cultural processes, their forms of knowledge production, their sociability practices and pedagogical relationships can possibly unfold alternative fields of social imagination, cognitive capabilities and transformative aesthetic experiences. They could also offer counter-hegemonic views to development that cause the pauperization of human –and non-human– life today. As Achille Mbembe has claimed, the function of art in the development context is both to “free us from the shackles of development both as an ideology and as a practice” and to “pave the way for a qualitative practice of the imagination” (cited by Stupples, 2017, p. 99). Then, a question arises from all the above, “how could we explore the value of artistic practices in the context of development in more expansive ways that can still speak of ‘development’ but in different ways than imagined by most development actors?” (Stupples, 2017, p. 93). Latino American and Colombian experiences can offer contributions on this matter.

Seeking to value agentic practices in the South around alternative forms in which music and cultural processes can possibly have a role in society’s development, this research maintains a prudent distant from focuses and practices that equates development as *aid*.<sup>7</sup> Conversely, this research is placed within the heart of a conceptual, philosophical and an ethical-political horizon from which music-making processes on development can be alternatively valued. As Vanclay (1999) maintains, the valuing of social impact rather than an evaluation exercise, constitutes a philosophy about development and democracy.

In light of the above, reflection on the early phases of my fieldwork and my previous experience working and researching on the PNMC (Puerta, 2017), have allowed me to identify conceptual

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<sup>7</sup> An approach used by the development industry that since the middle of 1990s (and after post-development theories) has been roundly critiqued for homogenising diverse experience, reproducing powerful binaries (lack as opposed to abundance, traditional as opposed to modern, developed as opposed to underdeveloped) and denying the agency of those on the receiving development assistance (Stupples, 2017).

categories of development from the Colombian context and helped me to situate and value the informal music schools, under the SIMM context debates and purposes.

Below, I will describe part of the PNMC's conceptual approaches on the relationship between music and development. The section was prepared with information and analysis obtained previously and during the field work, but which is not included as results of the study, since they constitute, on the contrary, the political, conceptual, and methodological framework that underlines the questions and motivations of this study, in the Colombian context. The section does not describe the PNMC. Annex 1 is offered to the reader wishing to understand this policy in greater detail.

### **Music-making as social development: conceptual contributions from a Colombian public policy for music-making**

Although the PNMC was depicted as a music policy for the sake of coexistence, since its creation, it consciously positioned itself as a music policy “to dimension music from its intrinsic nature and not only as an object to be instrumentalised based on certain social objectives” (PNMC, 2018, p. 16). So, from the beginning, the Plan radically distanced itself from programmes such as El Sistema in Venezuela or Batuta Foundation in Colombia that have proposed discourses and indicators that sought to solve social issues for vulnerable populations through music. Even more, in its almost two decades of implementation, the PNMC has set the challenge of overcoming the dichotomy between the artistic and the social, and the instrumentalisation of music-making as the ultimate purpose of a cultural and musical policy.

This is interesting in the light of the debates on the instrumentalisation of arts and the research context that has critically revealed how music as a social practice intrinsically does not necessarily promote impacts aligned with values and practices for social justice, equity, and democracy, as the SIMM field has debated (Baker, 2014, 2022; Berg and Sloboda, 2010)<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> In his later work “Replanteando la Acción Social por la Música” (2022), Geoffrey Baker offers a comprehensive discussion on this matter, examining how various scholars in different fields (music education, music psychology, sociology of music, community music, music and peace, music development, etc.) have debated the ambiguity, ambivalence and excessive simplification related to music as vehicle for social development and action.

As a result, lines of enquiry opened up for this project around the following questions: why does this public policy takes a radical distance from approaches that instrumentalise music towards specific social objectives? Does the PNMC exhibit a form of naivety in this respect? Or, on the contrary, could it offer clues that help to elucidate the basis of music *as* social development? Can this conceptual and political approach be useful in the evaluation of musical experiences and programmes that do not explicitly propose social objectives as the ultimate goal of their action? These questions pose implications for the value of the social impact of music-making projects based on community and participatory approaches, such as those deployed by Canto por la Vida.

Although the relationship between the social and the artistic dimensions might seem obvious in our field, in my experience accompanying some social action through music programmes in the country, I have observed how the necessary critical, ethical, and political reflection on the social impact of musical training programmes has posed a significant challenge: the polarisation of the artistic dimension from the social one. For instance, in some programmes the social dimension has been addressed through strategies that do not organically align with the nature of the technical, aesthetic, and artistic musical development processes. In other words, to achieve their social objectives (such as integration, inclusion, civic education, coexistence, or others), some of these programmes create separate teams and strategies to address the social aspect on one hand and the musical aspect on the other. Then, these teams then must find bridges from their own disciplinary logics at the conceptual and methodological levels, which sometimes leads to deep conflicts and tensions at the pedagogical and organisational dimensions<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> For example, isolated strategies from musical processes or practices, such as socio-emotional, self-esteem, and care workshops, or the introduction of new learning methodologies from the humanities or social sciences, have generated internal tensions and conflicts within programmes like La Red de Músicas de Medellín. As a pedagogical advisor during 2021-2023, I observed how some of the musicians, conductors, instrumental teachers, or managers criticised such approaches and discourses, as they believed that the emphasis and time devoted to these strategies caused the musical pedagogical process to lose focus, since musical development processes require time for their progress. Some argued that it was the quality of the aesthetic and artistic dimension, as well as community engagement, that enabled the achievement of the social dimension. They also expressed feeling marginalised when regarded as professionals who did not know how to contribute to the social impact of the programme. Some of the coordinators even rejected performing arts projects that were not strictly musical, believing that these initiatives distracted from the focus of the programme. Meanwhile, the teams dedicated to addressing the social dimension (sociologists, social psychologists, anthropologists, cultural managers) have felt their knowledge is undervalued. They also highlight the problem of musicians who come from conservatories and pedagogical traditions with conservative and dogmatic ideologies. These teams criticise the technicist and mechanistic vision of training

In particular, these tensions and ways of understanding the social and artistic dimension become problematic for social action through music when they generate polarizations, distortions, and reductionist and Manichean ideas that set up oppositions such as: the educational process versus the artistic product; technical development versus enjoyment; symphonic tradition musical practices versus popular or regional traditions; the sequential nature of the music education process versus exploration and creation; the individual versus the collective; among other factors that end up being characterised as either “artistic” or “social”. These are some of the aspects that will be discussed in Chapters 5 to 8.

To explore these issues and questions, I interviewed Alejandro Mantilla, a sociologist, musician and cultural manager who created the PNMC and coordinated it for more than 18 years. The following section seeks to illuminate the conceptual and epistemological bases that underlie the PNMC, as a policy which sought to not dissociate such development dimensions.

### **Towards the integration of the artistic and the social: development as creative freedom**

Since the PNMC creation and within his role in the Ministry of Culture, Alejandro Mantilla has sought to promote the importance of creating a music policy in Colombia that does not dissociate the artistic from the social in order to address issues in an instrumental way. Instead, he has advocated for music as a constitutive axis of social development and, therefore, as a human, cultural and educational right of population. Thus, from the perspective of PNMC policy, the artistic process is seen as inherently social, rather than viewing the social dimension as a set of realities and factors that can be influenced or subject to intervention.

In all the experience we have had, a very strong challenge was precisely to overcome the dichotomy between the artistic and the social; and it seems to me that, to a large extent,

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processes, which they feel undermines the enjoyment and experience of children and young people. Although these tensions, presenting themselves in a dichotomous form, have had different faces and many facets, they are significant because they have generated interesting rifts and complex challenges regarding the relationship between the artistic and the social.

overcoming the tendency to dichotomise these two great dimensions was precisely mediated by the *educational aspect*, its *purposes*, and *processes* (italics added).

(...) if we are working in a methodological approach that promotes and manages to build real bases of artistic creation and expression, we are precisely making feasible the process of social renewal. (...) In other words, promoting autonomous perceptual and sensitive training is the most expeditious way of approaching an ideal of a social project that contributes to freedom, autonomy, creative independence, and self-judgment. (A. Mantilla, personal interview, Nov 2019)

According to Mantilla, the way to achieve social objectives is by deepening the artistic creative process, affecting the perceptual and sensory education that is autonomous in each individual and in each collective work. He believes that achieving this creative musical development is the most direct way to approach an ideal social project that contributes to freedom, autonomy, creative independence and individual judgment. Consequently, artistic creation and its symbolic and pedagogic mediation, allows the individual to objectify in a unique, personal and distinct manner compared to other dimensions of knowledge and human experience:

In other words, the way you create and express yourself is absolutely unique. It's like your physical features, your temperament, your thoughts; they are all absolutely singular and this uniqueness is irreplaceable. No one else can do it for you and not doing it deprives you of the opportunity to recognize yourself in it, to materialize in it. That's why this sense of self-expression is so powerful. (A. Mantilla, personal interview, Nov 2019)

This capability to aesthetically materialize the subjectivity is also social:

(...) And it is both individual and collective because the dimensions of integration and collective enjoyment of artistic expressions are also very unique, that is, they have their own value. So, precisely, when an entire community, whether it be a neighborhood or an ethnic group, integrates ritually through artistic expressions and symbolism or artistic creation, it contributes ways of experiencing the social and the collective that are fundamental to the processes of integration, identity and the construction of social or collective orders. (A. Mantilla, personal interview, Nov 2019)

Mantilla maintains that it is necessary to contemporaneously and more precisely establish how this creative and expressive dimension is fundamental for human dignity or for the precisely humanizing condition. In other words, he states that it is essential to understand how the social project and the project of subjectivation are constructed, or the implications of becoming a subject and the scope of a social order much closer to justice, equity, freedom and democracy. In this light, Mantilla references the work of the Latin American scholar Enrique Dussel and his *Philosophy of Production* (1984) to refer to the artistic dimension as a key to understanding the process of shaping subjectivity and the possibility of forming a balanced and democratic social order:

For now, what I see is that there is an autonomous dimension of the artistic and the creative that is equivalent to other spheres but is exclusive to it and that is *poiesis*. It's a bit what Dussel works on in his *Philosophy of Production*. That is, how in *poiesis*, both the technical or technological aspect and the aesthetic aspect are integrated. I think that's where the exclusivity of the artistic lies. In other words, the scope of *poiesis* would be to consolidate that dimension of the *homo faber*, the producer, the creator, but with a focus on the aesthetic and symbolic dimension. That is to say, it's not a sphere of the technological, it's not a sphere of the scientific, it's not just a sphere of everyday doing as such, but it's already its own sphere where the way that *poiesis* is materialized, that is the key. (A. Mantilla, personal interview, Nov 2019)

Mantilla believes that artistic practice as an aesthetic production (*poiesis*) allows the subjects to objectify themselves in a unique, personal, and different way compared to other dimensions of knowledge and practice. This could explain the way in which the artistic within the social is integrated, the artistic as a constructive dimension of the social, not dissociated, or separate. Mantilla thinks that this aesthetic creation capacity could be a *sine qua non* element of both the individual and societal projects without which the aspiration for humanization would remain incomplete. In consequence, he argues that the lack of opportunities for expressive, aesthetic and creative development puts individuals and communities at a disadvantage in relation to the ideal of humanization, because that expressive and creative dimension precisely embodies the principle of freedom and, at the same time, the principle of identity, at an individual and collective level.



At the heart of this perspective and conceptual framework lies the Nobel economist Amartya Sen's work *Development as Freedom* (1999). According to his approach, the expansion of freedom is both the primary *end* and the principal *means* of development:

Development consists of the removal of various types of unfreedoms that leave people with little choice and little opportunity of exercising their reasoned agency. The removal of substantial unfreedoms *constitutes* a definite part of what we mean by development. Yet to understand the relationship between development and freedom better, we have to go beyond this basic recognition (crucial as it is). The instrumental effectiveness of some forms of freedom in advancing other freedoms is a powerful complement to the intrinsic importance of human freedom as a magnificent objective of development. (p. 16)<sup>10</sup>

This biunivocal relationship between freedom and development, where freedom serves both as an *end* and as a *means*<sup>11</sup> is analogous to the artistic realm, according to Mantilla:

It's the same relationship with the artistic field. Artistic expression is an *end* and simultaneously a *means* and there's no incompatibility between these two functions because precisely that artistic process is both a means and an end in the perspective of freedom and the creative and expressive autonomy of the individual and the community. So, when you delve into the development of expressive and creative capacities through an artistic language like music, you are deeply working towards social objectives of freedom, autonomy, self-confidence, and the possibility of enjoying these artistic developments individually and collectively. (A. Mantilla, personal interview November 2019)

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<sup>10</sup> The relationship between individual freedom and social development goes beyond the constitutive connection, as important as it may be. According to Sen (1999), what individuals can positively achieve depends on economic opportunities, political freedoms, social forces and the possibilities provided by health and basic education, as well as the promotion and cultivation of initiatives. The institutional mechanisms to harness these opportunities also depend on the exercise of individual freedoms, through the freedom to participate in social decisions and in shaping public decisions that drive the progress of these opportunities. These interconnections are also explored by Sen.

<sup>11</sup> Amartya Sen identifies five distinct types of freedom, viewed from an "instrumental" perspective: 1) political freedoms, 2) economic facilities, 3) social opportunities, 4) transparency guarantees and 5) protective security. Each of these types of rights and opportunities contributes to enhancing a person's overall capability. (p. 27). Also, they can also complement each other, for instance, political freedoms (in the form of freedom of expression and free elections) help promote economic security. Social opportunities (in the form of educational and health services) facilitate economic participation. Economic services (in the form of opportunities to engage in trade and production) can contribute to general personal wealth as well as public resources to finance social services.

In this light, for the PNMC, musical development is both an *end* and a *means* for freedom and creative autonomy as a *constitutive* dimension of development. Under this conceptual framework, the PNMC aims to convey the essential value of music not only as an ornamental, utilitarian, or recreational element but as a constitutive dimension of the social.

This approach draws attention to the framework proposed by the American philosopher Martha Nussbaum (2011) inspired by Sen's capabilities approach.<sup>12</sup> However, Nussbaum offers a further inflection of Sen's work.<sup>13</sup> She proposes measuring ten central capabilities for human development. These capabilities represent the various dimensions of a person's life that contribute to their overall well-being and functioning:

1. *Life*: Being able to live a normal life span, which includes not facing premature death due to avoidable causes.
2. *Bodily Health*: Being able to have good health, including reproductive health.
3. *Bodily Integrity*: Being able to move freely and be secure against bodily harm or assault.
4. *Senses, Imagination and Thought*: Being able to use the senses, imagination and thought in a truly human way, which includes a rich range of experiences and the opportunity for self-expression.
5. *Emotions*: Being able to have attachments to things and people outside of ourselves, including love, friendship and affiliation.
6. *Practical Reason*: Being able to form a conception of the good and engage in critical reflection about the planning of one's life.
7. *Affiliation*: Being able to live for and in relation to others, to recognize and show concern for other humans.

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<sup>12</sup> Capabilities are the *real freedoms* that people have to achieve their potential doings and beings. Real freedom in this sense means that one has all the required means necessary to achieve that doing or being if one wishes to. That is, it is not merely the formal freedom to do or be something, but the substantial opportunity to achieve it.

<sup>13</sup> Nussbaum and Sen (1993) collaborated in developing the theory of human capabilities, which focuses on assessing human development beyond traditional economic indicators, taking into account the capabilities and freedoms that individuals have to lead a full and meaningful life. Their approach highlights the importance of individual freedom and participation in decisions that affect people's lives. Martha Nussbaum has given a twist to Sen's capability approach by defining ten central capabilities, including life, health, integrity, meaning, emotional expression, practical reason, self-respecting empathy, life and environment, play and control. Sen preferred not to define such a list, leaving the debate about them open for each situation.

8. *Other Species*: Being able to live with concern for and in relation to animals, plants and the world of nature.
9. *Play*: Being able to laugh, play and enjoy recreational activities.
10. *Control over One's Environment*: Being able to participate effectively in political choices that govern one's life; having the right of political participation and protection against discrimination.

Mantilla's point of view aligns with this approach focused on capabilities when he emphasizes the importance of artistic practice and aesthetic creation as constitutive of human development. For example, it is particularly related to the capability number four, which, according to Nussbaum, refers to the ability to use the senses, imagination, thought and reason for expression in conditions of freedom and protection and cultivated through an adequate education. This capability also contains the ability to experience and produce self-expressive works; to participate in personally chosen events (such as artistic and musical practices); being able to enjoy pleasurable experiences and avoid unnecessary harm; and being able to seek the individual meaning of life.

On the other hand, Mantilla considers that this creative and expressive capacity has become alienated and that connection between most people and the aesthetic creation has become increasingly rare, absent, exclusive and privileged. Hence, through the PNMC, he has argued the vital importance of recovering this human capacity as a democratically inclusive dimension, in other words, to re-establish the creative and expressive act as a daily necessity, habit and permanent capacity. He considers it necessary to recreate the conditions and habits so that creative processes do not remain strange and exclusive but truly become of collective property and practice of Colombians. In this regard, he also maintains a critical stance towards contemporary cultural conditions, arguing that the functionality of culture and the arts has been objectified, exoticized and has lost its ability to contribute to the project of subjectivity and the social. He suggests that these dimensions have been excessively trivialized due to the influence of cultural globalisation, particularly through entertainment and recreational practices. In other words, although entertainment and recreation are social needs and functions fulfilled by cultural and artistic processes in particular, he highlights that the problem is that the emphases and predominant forms of interaction are excessively leaning towards these dimensions.

This is the reason why Mantilla thinks that music-making should also be the subject of deepening, development, skill, and aesthetic achievement, as this creative capacity does not arise by itself. For this reason, he asserts that the possibility of integrating the artistic and social dimensions needs to be mediated by *education*. Therefore, the PNMC advocated for the creation and strengthening of informal music schools in Colombia, as educative and cultural processes aimed at achieving one of its main policy axes: the ‘musicalization of citizenship’. This concept is understood as the appropriation of the musical by each citizen, building a deep bond of understanding, practice, and enjoyment, which in turn contributes to the sensible, creative, and expressive growth of society as a whole.

However, at the same time, Mantilla highlights a contradiction in the musical domain. He criticizes approaches to music education that tends towards formalization in such a way that creativity is pushed to a later stage than is the case with structured training or foundation programmes. To him, this situation poses a problem since, in some approaches, the goals of autonomous development and a more fluid, free relationship with the musical language are replaced by processes of training and technical enablement, as has been seen for many decades in conservatory or in academic development processes. He stated that this can lead to the abandonment or foreclosure of creative developments, driven by an obsession with technical perfection and the orientation of appropriation processes. Mantilla argues that it is crucial for appropriation processes to be creatively grounded, emphasizing a significant difference with some contemporary approaches to working with children, youth, and adults in the musical domain.

Despite the above, I found that there is no explicit information on how the PNMC has evaluated creativity in the musical educational processes of traditional, popular, urban, choral and/or symphonic music schools. Nevertheless, this approach can be seen in how the PNMC focused musical work with people and communities from vulnerable contexts, affected by violence and armed conflict, as part of the programmes developed by the peace agreement processes (see Annex 1).<sup>14</sup> For instance, the PNMC implemented laboratories of collective creation for the

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<sup>14</sup> The implementation of the peace accords and the programmes derived from the National Development Plan *All for a new country* (2014-2018) had an impact on the PNMC action plan that naturally had to meet and harmonize its actions with the governmental goals and redistribute its budget to develop new and diverse projects and actions.

Adolescent Criminal Liability System (SRPA) aimed at young people lodged in the Specialized Care Center (CAE) of the Buen Pastor prison in Cali (2014) and in the CAE's of Bogotá, Medellín-Antioquia, Turbaco-Bolívar, Cali-Valle (2015). This project was carried out with the articulated participation of the Visual Arts department of the Ministry of Culture and it led to a Diploma course that planned to be implemented in other SRPA contexts. Also, the PNMC designed and implemented the *Musical Creation and Psychosocial Care Project* for the Victims Unit (UV) in El Salado, El Carmen de Bolívar (2015–present) and in the village of San Miguel, municipality of Buenos Aires, Cauca (2016–present), among other projects. According to PNMC reports (2018), the apprenticeships that emerged from the implementation of these projects allowed the development of a conceptual model to situate musical practice in post-conflict contexts. The model proposed that musical practice was framed within the repair process with a different criterion than its instrumentalization or its use as a resource for psychosocial care. It was suggested that it should be conceived from the importance of community artistic creation perspective.

In the PNMC latest stage, in a Caucan community victim of violence, we proposed that the processes of individual and collective repair, from both a symbolic and material perspective, were related not only to the therapeutic use of the artistic, but above all to the creative use of the artistic. If we worked on an approach or methodology that promoted and managed to build real foundations for artistic creation and expression, we were precisely facilitating the process of social renewal, from opportunities, personality developments, the generation of trust and the strengthening of social bonds. (Colombia ministry of culture, 2018)

In consequence, the PNMC has been radical on positioning itself as a developmental policy aimed at providing benefits to citizens as 'passive recipients', as Sen has categorised. On the contrary, this policy has sought to recognise Colombians as *agents* who, with better conditions and opportunities can define their own development according to their own interests, sociocultural frameworks and self-determination processes; as Sen (1999) stated, with sufficient social opportunities and conditions, individuals can genuinely shape their own destinies and help one another.

Although the capabilities approach is not explicitly mentioned by this musical public policy, the enhancement of some of the capabilities proposed by Nussbaum (2011) can be seen in the political, methodological and relational approaches of the Plan with the regions, communities and sectors of the musical field.

### **Towards the integration of the social and the productive: political engagement and the structuring of the music field**

Through the development of the municipal music school policy, the PNMC also built and enhanced conditions and opportunities that contributed to other human capabilities such the “control over the environment”. According to Nussbaum, this central capability to human development can be political and material:

a) *Political*. Being capable of effectively participating in political decisions that govern our lives, having the right to political participation along with the protection of freedom of expression and association; or b) *Material*. Being capable of owning property (both land and movable goods) not only formally but in terms of a real opportunity; having rights to property on an equal basis with others; having the right to seek employment on equal terms with others, being free from unjustified records and seizures. (Gough, 2008, p. 184)

In the political realm, as PNMC evaluation reports (Colombia National Planning Department, 2021) and actors of the musical sector have remarked, the PNMC has been consistent with the 1991 National Constitution, which established decentralization, social participation, and ethnic and cultural plurality as new fundamental constitutional principles for Colombia. It has contributed to the decentralization of culture, encouraging the strengthening of cultural institutions at the territorial level and the establishment of appropriate channels of coordination between these institutions and the nation. In this sense, the PNMC has contributed to creating conditions and territorial capacities for strengthening public institutions at the local and regional levels, as is demanded in other sectors of public policy (health, education, justice, etc.).<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> The information extracted here is part of a letter constructed by different sectors and actors in the musical field in January 2023, as part of the national mobilization in front of the Ministry of Culture of Colombia, which tried to implement the Venezuelan System model in the country.

In the context of government initiatives, it is worth noticing that the PNMC was methodologically constructed through a continuous exercise of consultation and dialogue with the musical and cultural sectors of the country. This process began in the 1990s with the creation and development of national programmes, including bands, choirs, music education and traditional and popular music programmes. The participation processes of the PNMC were not limited to meetings, encounters and consultations with the sector; instead, a process of policy and programme agreement took place in all departments of the country, involving both state institutions and local music sectors. This brought together the voices of various actors, institutions and government entities, primarily at the national level but also open to the international scene, in continuous processes of consultation, exchange, training and creation. This included pilot programmes, the development of educational guidelines and resources and programme diversification according to local contexts and realities. As stated during his speech at an event celebrating 15 years of the PNMC, Eliécer Arenas (2013) defined the PNMC as a “school of thought and political action”.

This raises the question about the political culture in the construction of the musical educational project proposed by the PNMC. Mantilla defines political culture not only as the ability to understand the role of participation and organisation but also as the ability to politically mature culture. This means being able to structure one’s own agenda, a personal project, knowing how to negotiate, implement and enhance it in relation to the perspectives of the State and private enterprises.

Further advancing his analysis, he argues that there is a notable divergence in Colombia concerning the interplay between music and politics, attributing this to the relatively underdeveloped political culture. He points out that Colombians are generally unaccustomed to viewing every cultural and artistic endeavour through a political lens. Rather, the prevailing attitude tends to regard politics as a distinct and separate realm, one that is often approached with reluctance and irritation. Consequently, to Mantilla, the relationship between the artistic and the social is equivalent here to *the political* and *the cultural*:

The political must be an intrinsic dimension that determines the orientation, that determines the scope, that determines the method, the permanent hallmark of cultural action and not a gesture or an area of action that is added when we already have a profiled and defined cultural process.

(A. Mantilla, personal interview Nov. 2019)

This also raises questions for socio-musical organisations focused on social action. As Geoffrey Baker has argued (2014; 2022), the principles, values, work methods, and understandings of leadership and power—both within and outside the musical training processes of an organization—also challenge the political dimension of social action projects through music. This will be a key aspect of the present thesis, which is focused on the organizational dimension, a topic that will be explored in Chapter 8.

Finally, regarding the *material* aspect of the ‘control over the environment’ capability, the PNMC has worked towards diversifying actions around the professional development of the field, to strengthen infrastructure prototypes, production platforms and entrepreneurship (see Annex 1).

In effect, the PNMC conceives musical development as both a *social* and *productive* project, without separating its purposes and actions. This is why it has also proposed development also in terms of ‘the organisational field of music’. This concept helps describe and understand the relationships between musical practices, their contexts and conditions of production, the actors involved and their broader cultural, social, economic, and political interactions.

This approach to musical culture in Colombia emphasizes that music production and circulation cannot be viewed in isolation. Instead, it considers the broader implications and impact of music on society. It takes into account the interactions and relationships between the State, the market and civil society, recognizing that music development goes beyond being merely a cultural industry. It serves as a means of social integration, contributes to the creation of social and cultural capital and plays a role in strengthening democracy and fostering coexistence in society (Juliao & Wills, 2015, pp. 10–11).



This implies that music-making processes occur in a space that transcends the artistic and the scenic, as well as the market and the industry. Music is not only developed through the promotion of talent, virtuosity, or disciplined practice, but also through its relationships with the economy, power, society, communities, territories, organisations, and social events; relationships that are broad, diverse and complex. This raises questions within the SIMM field regarding the scope of our domain and the potential significance of these dimensions for the social impact of music.

### *Final note*

Critical debates on development and the arts reveal that the concept of development remains complex, contested, and ambiguous. This complexity is compounded by development's dual nature as both a political process, involving power dynamics and ideological implications, and a sociocultural construct shaped by existing cultures, moralities, and social practices. In this context, this chapter has provided insights into the relationship between music and development through the lens of the Colombian experience, particularly, the PNMC. It aimed to highlight the comprehensions that underpin this research, offering a nuanced understanding of how music can intersect with human and social development.

In this light, the chapter not only underscored the challenges encountered by artistic projects shaped by development frameworks, particularly those arising from their instrumentalisation but also offered a conceptual approach that presented a view of music and development, encompassing both artistic and socio-political dimensions.

By viewing music as both a *means* and an *end* of social development, the PNMC represents a significant shift from traditional public policy approaches and other sociomusical programmes that often use music primarily as a tool for achieving social outcomes, viewing music as an intrinsic component of the social and as a basic human right. This approach rejects the fragmentation of artistic and social dimensions, advocating instead for a holistic perspective in which the artistic process is intrinsically connected to social outcomes, especially when supported by *educational frameworks that foster creativity and autonomy*. Thus, a vibrant artistic practice not only enhances individual and collective freedom -a central axis of development- but also requires *pedagogical mediation* that encourages participation,

experimentation, and creative exploration to fully realize its potential. All of this constitutes the “musicalisation of citizenship” envisioned by the PNMC as an axis of its policies.

Furthermore, it was explored how the PNMC’s methodological framework highlights the intricate interplay between music, social development, and political engagement. This encompasses both political and material aspects such as effective participation in political decision-making and access to property ownership. By promoting political engagement and material security, the PNMC aligns with broader human development goals. It has significantly advanced decentralised cultural governance in line with the 1991 National Constitution, strengthening local cultural institutions and improving coordination between regional and national bodies. This decentralisation demonstrates a commitment to boosting local capacities and integrating cultural practices into the governance framework, thereby reinforcing the cultural and political fabric of Colombian society.

This suggests that social and human development through music not only focuses on the ability to conduct creative pedagogical processes that promote autonomy and individual and collective expression through musical experience but also requires platforms that facilitate conditions and opportunities for the sustainable development of the musical field. Such development should not separate the productive aspect of music from the social integration and participation objectives that music can support. In summary, the structuring of the musical field is presented here as a key element of social and human development, with implications for the sustainability and flourishing of the social action of socio-musical organisations.

## **Chapter Three**

### **The birth of a school**

The following chapter describes the processes that led to the creation of Canto por la Vida. In particular, this section explores the project's beginnings, strengthening processes, and moments of disruption within the context of its relationship with the organisation Funmúsica. The aim is to provide the reader with a comprehensive understanding of how the project's genesis has impacted its identity formation, as well as to address: 1) the factors that enabled the creation and development of the project at organisational, pedagogical, musical, and community levels; and 2) the tensions the organisation faced in relation to innovation, transformation, and openness. These latter aspects are crucial as they will be the focus of future analyses in this research in Chapter 7 and 8. This chapter is primarily based on interviews with various members who have been part of the Canto por la Vida history and has been supplemented with information from documents about the Mono Núñez festival and the music school.

To understand the potential social impact of the Canto por la Vida's music school it is necessary to delve into its origins: the Mono Núñez festival. The music school in Ginebra is intimately linked to the festival, its history, its stakeholders, its musical and social practices. The following chapter narrates the establishment of the music school and the close dialogue Canto por la Vida foundation had with it. The basis of this close relationship can be explained by the fact that both the festival and the Ginebra music school were created by the same organisation, FUNMÚSICA.

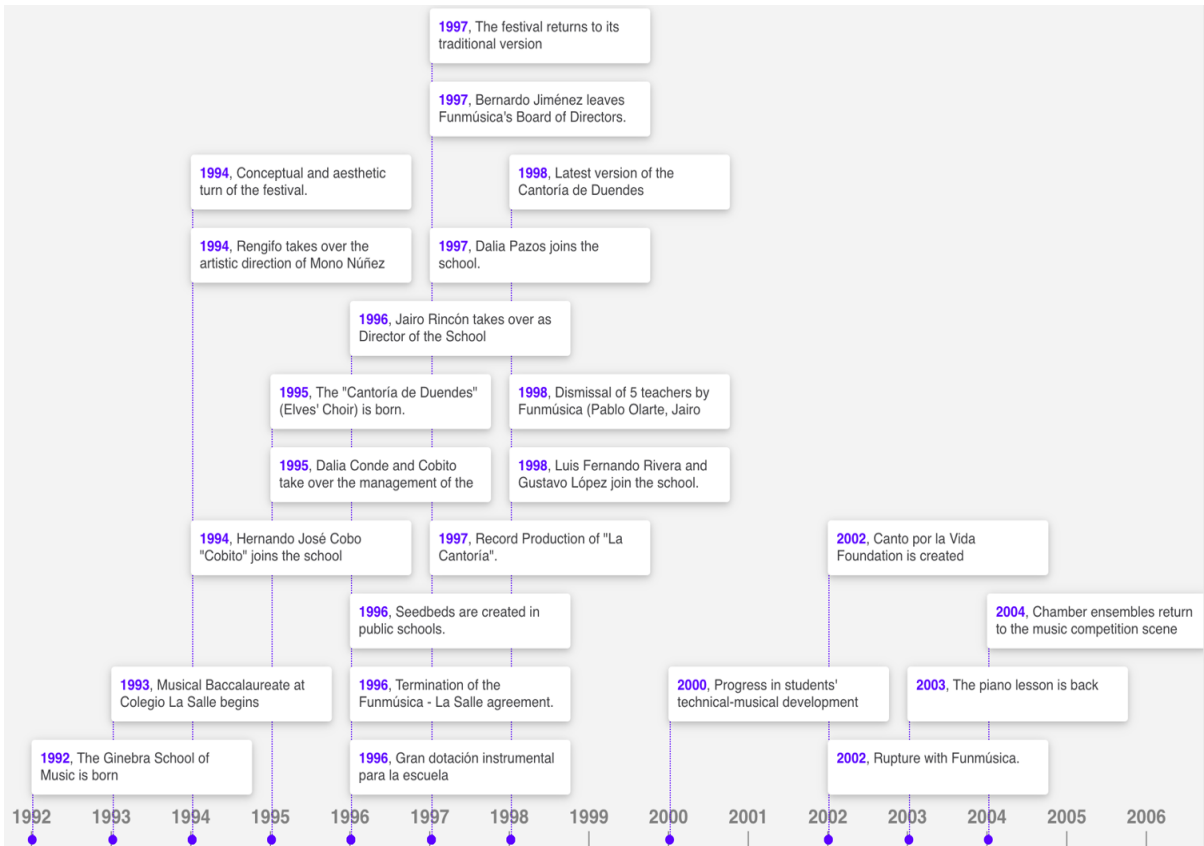
Specific aspects of the festival are narrated in this initial phase of the chapter to bring to light the types of tensions, conflicts and aspirations that converged in the creation of the Canto por la Vida foundation and as will be seen later, shaped key aspects of its identity. These tensions, conflicts and aspirations are substantial precedents for the most important discussions to be addressed and developed in this doctoral study, as a contribution to the SIMM field.

The chapter begins by recounting the dramatic moment when FUNMÚSICA made the decision to close the Ginebra music school in 2001. It then describes the events that led to the music

school’s formation in 1993 and narrates some factors that influenced its subsequent consolidation. The chapter concludes with the same event it started with, detailing the events that led to FUNMÚSICA’s decision to close the school in 2001.

To guide the reader through the sequence of events, an initial timeline is provided, illustrating key points for understanding the sequence of events narrated in this chapter, which spans from 1973 to 2002 (See table 2). As mentioned, beyond offering a detailed account of historical events, the following section outlines the factors that shaped the creation of the Canto por la Vida music school, factors which will be crucial for the identity and configuration of this educational, artistic, cultural, and social project.

**Table 2**



*Timeline of events*

*Made by the author.*

### **From Funmúsica's music school to Canto por la Vida foundation**

In 2001, the festival of Colombian Andean music, Mono Núñez, was in what could be characterised as its golden age. Hundreds of Colombians gathered in the municipality of Ginebra, Valle del Cauca, to listen to musicians and groups from the different departments that comprised the Colombian Andean region (Valle, Nariño, Cauca, Antioquia, Santander, Norte de Santander, Quindío, Risaralda, Boyacá, Cundinamarca). The festival, formally established in 1975, had become a landmark in the country and had managed to consolidate an artistic, cultural and social movement around what the festival itself called “Colombian Andean Music”. Musicians and groups, instrumentalists and singers, amateurs and professionals, competed each year for the most coveted prize in this type of music: The Great Mono Núñez. The winners of the prize would secure great prestige and reputation within the national scene.

#### **Figure 3**

*The monument to the Bandola located at the entrance of Ginebra, Valle*



Scale reproduction of Mono Núñez' bandola. Made and designed by luthiers of Canto por la Vida foundation. Donation by Pichincha sugar mill in 2012. Photograph by the author.

At that time, Funmúsica had over thirty years of existence and had managed, with various public and private support, to construct an enclosed stadium to accommodate a growing audience. Its appearance and structure however had not been designed with technical and acoustic criteria in mind. Personal initiatives and collective enthusiasm surrounding the festival generated, albeit not in a very planned manner, significant economic activity around the event. Informal businesses, family ventures and local entrepreneurs began to flourish alongside it. Ginebra was identified as a municipality with its own gastronomic brand. Visitors came in search of the distinctive *sancocho de gallina* cooked over firewood, still offered in restaurants located in old and imposing estates belonging to heir families.<sup>16</sup>

By decree, during the days of the Mono Núñez festival, the City Council prohibited any other music from being heard in the vicinity of Ginebra. Two years later, in 2003, the festival would be declared a Cultural Heritage of the Nation under the government of Álvaro Uribe Vélez and it would have led to something unprecedented in the region: the Parque de la Música, an impressive and promising cultural infrastructure for the development of the cultural and artistic field in the region, which unfortunately, by the time my fieldwork began in 2019 had been forgotten and abandoned.

During that time, the festival positioned itself as one of the obligatory events in the genre of Colombian Andean music. Parallel to this, Funmúsica had successfully fostered the education of children and youth in this particular genre of music through the creation of a music school, a collection of a wide range of musical instruments and a strong team of teachers. However, despite these achievements, in that year, the board of directors made a sorrowful decision: to end the music school that Bernardo Jiménez, at the time president of the organisation, had dreamed of establishing as the beginning of a cultural policy for the municipality of Ginebra, Valle del Cauca. This rupture would be the seed for the birth of one of the most recognized and stable educational and cultural projects in the Valle del Cauca scene: the Canto por la Vida foundation. Now, we will go back seven years in history to describe the factors that shaped the

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<sup>16</sup> The Municipality of Ginebra is nationally recognized for the tourist activity generated by the tradition of Vallecana food restaurants. This activity generates approximately 400 direct jobs and about 100 indirect jobs, which are increased on special dates throughout the year. (Alcaldía Municipal de Ginebra Valle del Cauca, 2002)

establishment of the Ginebra music school, which would later become the Canto por la Vida music school.

In 1993, Bernardo Jiménez was the president of Funmúsica, the civil society organisation responsible for organizing the Mono Núñez festival. Jiménez, who was an entrepreneur, visionary and lover of Colombian music, believed that in order to achieve the social, educational and cultural development that Ginebra needed through music, it was necessary to promote long-term educational processes with the new generations of children and youth. This would serve as the foundation for human development and the establishment of a cultural policy that would generate identity, attachment and social ownership around the festival: “He knew and still knows, that without education, there is no human development” (G. Rengifo, personal interview, 19 February, 2021).

To achieve this, Jiménez proposed to the board of directors of Funmúsica the creation of a music school:

The school is the result of the utopia of Bernardo Jiménez and Nelly Lozano. When he was President of Funmúsica, being a great entrepreneur and a person with a lot of vision. He envisioned Ginebra with trees and now it has them. He envisioned the streets of Ginebra with names of instruments and rhythms and now it has them. He envisioned economic development for the municipality and now it has it. But what he envisioned the most was that the Mono Núñez festival could not remain just a festival, but should embody, in his own words, a *cultural policy*. A cultural policy for Colombian music. And the key element of that policy was pedagogy, right? So, that came from the mind, tenacity, management skills and resources of Bernardo Jiménez. (G. Rengifo, personal interview, 19 Feb. 2021)

The purpose of generating a higher level of participation and community engagement with the festival through the creation of a music school had numerous underlying reasons. Many agree that the people of Ginebra never had sufficient ownership over the festival, neither as listeners or participants, beyond considering the event as an opportunity for business and economic activity. There are additional reasons inferred for this lack of participation. Hernando José Cobo,

who conducted an exhaustive musicological study on the festival, argues that it did not arise from the communities' clamour to have an event where their music and cultural expressions could take place. On the contrary, it emerged from the need to "preserve and rescue" certain music associated with traditions and social practices promoted by patriarchal hereditary families of the region (Cobo, 2010).

According to the co-founder and manager of Canto por la Vida, the popular communities of Ginebra were distant from the festival because it was created with a music that seemed elitist: Andean Colombian music.

It is the music of the salons, of the gatherings in the estates. It is the music of the estate owners and not the music of the workers, you know? (...) In that sense, these music genres are not liked by the popular communities, it is the least of their interests. So, the local community did not attend the festival, instead, it was attended by landowners' families of Ginebra, who were passionate about it. (Personal interview, 2009)

According to some interviews, the fact that the perception of the festival was associated with a particular social class and lacked relevance to the broader community might have contributed to the disconnection between the festival and the people of Ginebra.

Indeed, there has been considerable debate throughout the country's history surrounding Colombian Andean music. Indeed, there has been considerable debate throughout the country's history regarding Colombian Andean music. As several studies have shown, Andean music was appropriated by nationalist governments in the nineteenth century to construct an idea of nationhood, progress, and development rooted in conservative values and the notion of a literate and "cultured" citizenship. Some of these studies highlight that while these governments preserved and valued their rural "past" with bucolic sentiment, they simultaneously denied their African and indigenous roots. Meticulous analyses have revealed why Andean Colombian genres (such as *bambuco* and *contradanza*) and typical instruments (such as *tiple* and *bandola*) were the ideal symbols and exponents for these purposes (Ochoa, 1997; Rodríguez, 2011).<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Approaches to the subject can be found in Hernández (2007), Wade (2002), Ochoa (2003) and Cragnoli, (2002).



Critical works on the Mono Núñez festival (Cobo, 2010; Cayer, 2010) have examined how these nationalist discourses and ideologies reinforced elitist, classist and sometimes racist perspectives that were expressed in musical, poetic, performative, and instrumental aesthetic canons. The studies argue that these canons were intended to preserve the musical tradition favoured by the more conservative organisers of the competition, thereby sustaining an “invented” musical heritage (Cobo, 2010).

In summary, according to the interviews, the popular sectors of Ginebra perceived the festival as a foreign and elitist event, associated with the upper classes and with which they did not fully identify. They stated that the festival not only excluded their musical aesthetics, modes of listening, and patterns of participation and consumption—more closely aligned with their everyday socialisation—but was also organised with the support of influential individuals and those of higher socioeconomic status, further reinforcing the aforementioned perception. Some of these individuals belonged to renowned families who, in their inherited estates, hosted gatherings attended by acclaimed musicians, artists and famous personalities at the regional and national level. This greatly stimulated the musical and cultural activity in the Valle del Cauca region during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century (see Annex 2).

Other festival promoters were individuals holding influential positions in companies, who made various efforts to secure the support of sugar mills, politicians and local foundations. There were also individuals from religious backgrounds involved. In fact, it was Sor María Lahidalga, Sor Aura María Chávez and music educator Luis Mario Medina who initially created the vernacular music competition in 1994, which later evolved into the festival. Officials from national government sectors also showed their support, allowing the event to gain significant regional and national visibility.

All of these individuals, who were enthusiasts of the so-called Colombian Andean national music, were instrumental in the establishment and development of the National ProMusic Foundation of Ginebra, FUNMÚSICA, in 1976. They shared a common interest, affection and nostalgia for a music they grew up with in the early part of the 20th century, much like many other Colombians of their generation. The festival was received positively because by the 1970s,

Colombian Andean national music was experiencing a decline due to limitations in performance spaces and radio promotion (see Annex 2).

During certain conducted interviews it became evident that another possible additional reason for the lack of connection between the local community and the festival was the associated cost. The continual annual increase in ticket prices to enter the Coliseum where the competition takes place, imposed by Funmúsica, has been a consistent and significant barrier for numerous communities in Ginebra to participate. An interviewee describes it as follows:

The audience that supports the festival comes from the high economic class, traditionalists, landowners, or businesspeople. People who have the means to spend a significant amount of money can stay there all the time and have their estates in that area. (Interviewee A, personal interview, Feb 19, 2021).

The aforementioned issues, together with other challenges identified by Jiménez in Ginebra—such as the lack of educational opportunities to support youth entrepreneurship and employability—further reinforced his decision to initiate the music education project.

The initial dream was to establish a music-oriented high school, integrating the project into the heart of the educational sector. Jiménez and his team developed a preliminary proposal and reached out to local educational institutions to form an alliance. The idea was for the music education programme to operate within the formal education system, starting at the high school level and as an extracurricular activity. After knocking on several doors, Jiménez succeeded in getting the support of the rector of La Salle school for the project in 1993. Musician and guitarist Jhon Jairo Cardona, who had developed the academic programme for the project, would be in charge of directing and assembling the pedagogical team.

Cardona invited Dalia Conde, who is now the manager of Canto por la Vida, to join the team of teachers. Dalia, originally from Ginebra and returning from Cali at that time, also got involved in aspects of academic management at La Salle educational institution, voluntarily leading the certification process for preschool education with the aim of contributing to the strengthening of the institution and the educational processes for the children in the municipality. According

to Julián Solano (2017), the programme started with 120 students in primary education after pilot tests were conducted starting in February of that year. With the positive reception of the project, it quickly expanded to include the high school level. Dalia Conde, José Fredy Gutiérrez, Honorato Castrillón and Silvio Ortega formed the teaching team.

In 1994, Bernardo Jiménez invited Gustavo Adolfo Rengifo to work as the Executive Director of Funmúsica. Jiménez entrusted Rengifo with the direction of the music school, with Jairo Cardona as the academic coordinator and the projection of the Mono Núñez Festival. Rengifo, a professional environmental engineer, has been considered one of the most interesting and prominent singer-songwriters and tiple players in the Colombian Andean music movement. He had won the Mono Núñez competition and had formed the iconic trio *Tres Generaciones* with Benigno “Mono” Núñez himself and the renowned guitarist and composer from Valle del Cauca, Álvaro Romero. Rengifo, born in the mid-20th century, was part of a generation that, in the 1970s, proposed a break and renewal of Colombian Andean music through poetics that narrated the political and social struggles of the time, the dynamics of an urban country, the recent history of violence and more egalitarian gender relations (Cobo, 2010). His voice, compositions and unique style of tiple playing, characterized by a timbre reminiscent of a harpsichord – as he himself describes it – and a melodic almost lyrical approach, have positioned him as an essential reference in Colombian Andean music.

According to interviews, the shifts proposed by Rengifo’s executive direction would give rise to the internal tensions, confrontations, and ruptures within Funmúsica that would later become the breeding ground for the emergence of Canto por la Vida, as will be seen later on.

Indeed, Bernardo Jiménez’s presidency during the 1990s, along with his accompanying team, marked a stage of openness, risk-taking, expansion and diversification in Funmúsica’s initiatives and management. Jiménez envisioned the festival as an internationally acclaimed event and wanted it to become technified, professionalized, dynamic and positioned as a future hub for musical and cultural development in the country and the region, alongside the consolidation of the musical educational project. Jiménez also valued knowledge production and research, which

is why he also sought advice from Octavio Marulanda, a folklorist who played a central role in his team. Jiménez describes it as follows:

I brought Maestro Gustavo Adolfo Rengifo to work with me for several years, along with Gladys González, Octavio Marulanda, Margarita Becerra, Marta Elena Hoyos... There was a time when we had an administrative director and a music technical director. Octavio was the folklorist and served as our main advisor, along with Gladys González, who was his assistant. Margarita Becerra was also very talented. We had an extraordinary team! We accomplished so many things, let me tell you... We organized workshops... I would say to Octavio, “Octavio, let’s do this or that,” and he would type it up... and with that, we would present a project. “Octavio, let’s gather the local veteran musicians from Ginebra and have them share their stories, play music, and interact on Saturdays...”. When Ginebra was about to celebrate its hundredth anniversary, they gathered them again and from there emerged La Rondalla de Ginebra. (B. Jimenez, personal interview, Dec 10, 2019)

In 1995, a year after Rengifo joined, musician, artist, and music researcher Hernando José Cobo “Cobito” became part of the teaching team, invited by Bernardo Jiménez. Cobito, who had recently completed a specialization in recorders with the Dolmetsch family in England, would later become a key player in the consolidation of Canto por la Vida. Cobito had noticed the limited progress of children and adolescents in playing the recorder and embarked on designing a music education programme for the recorder that significantly improved the musical development of the children and youth through listening, orality, and expressiveness, as many interviewees recorded. This was evident in the formation of the first generation of the school, which included Samuel Ibarra Conde, Julián Solano, Diego Gómez and Rodrigo Solano, who are now prominent musicians from Ginebra and the region, as well as teachers at the school.

The interviewees agree that in its early stages, the music school was shaped through trial and error, with natural mistakes in the process. Tensions, differences and confrontations arose due to the organisational management approach proposed by executive direction and academic coordination, which clashed with the working methods the teachers had been using in their daily activities and presented different logics of pedagogical, academic and organisational management. The executive director of that time explains that conflicts arose from his desire

and pressure to formalize the school's processes, which he thinks caused discomfort among the team:

I had conflicts with them because I had an engineering background and I wanted things to be done with strategic planning and a quality system. (...) So, I started pressuring them with a different culture and we had strong differences. (...) Today, we are good friends, and we don't have those differences anymore. (...) There was a cultural difference, they had their own way of working and I brought a different work system. I wanted things to be formalized, to define the programmes: their mission, vision, objectives, strategies and have everything written down. Because I was involved with ISO standards and quality, and I wanted the school's programmes to be written and formalized as well. They have achieved a lot without needing many of those things. I know that now they have many things formalized, many of them! (Personal interview, Feb 19, 2021)

According to information collected during certain interviews with some members of the school, this desire for formalization created an atmosphere of pressure, control, supervision, and a top-down approach that they interpreted as a lack of trust towards the teaching team, a lack of understanding of pedagogical processes and a patronizing working style. The team of teachers strongly criticized the management and academic coordination for making decisions that, in their view, disregarded the nature of the educational processes that were taking place and aligned more with rigid approaches typical of music conservatories. These factors and confrontations ultimately led to the resignation of the academic coordinator.

In 1995, Dalia Conde and Hernando José Cobo led the leadership of the project, while Jiménez, in mid-July, invited Jairo Rincón to join the music school as the new academic director. Rincón had a degree in music education from the Universidad Pedagógica Nacional and was a musician from the Conservatorio of Universidad Nacional and the Academia Folclórica Distrital Luis A. Calvo. He had been working with the National Batuta Foundation, leading training processes in symphony orchestras and supporting the creation and organisation of academic programmes. As an interpreter of the Colombian Andean bandola, he was part of the ensemble Cuatro Palos in the 1990s. He had also formed the iconic string orchestra El Nogal, which embraced the

tradition of Pedro Morales Pino and had won the Mono Núñez competition in 1987. He had performed with musicians such as Jorge Velosa, a central figure in Colombian *carranga* music.

**Figure 4**

*On the left, we see El Nogal Ensemble, and on the right, Jorge Velosa's Ensemble.*



In both photographs, Jairo Rincón can be seen in the left corner. Published on Rincon's Facebook page.

Just as Rengifo's involvement represented an angle of openness and innovation for the festival, Jiménez demonstrated his willingness to embrace criticism by bringing Rincón on board. Rincón had not only participated, won, and even collaborated in the competition, but he was also a fierce critic of it. "El Mono Núñez is the biggest pub in Colombia, with the best music and it's free," he recalled saying during the First Meeting of Organizers of Colombian Andean Music Festivals that Jiménez had promoted to encourage sector association in the 90s. "I ended up being an outcast," Rincón said. His statement was considered an abomination by all those who saw Mono Núñez as "the altar" of Colombian Andean music and therefore the "cradle of patriotic values and the nation". Rincón criticized Funmúsica for not considering the festival participants as musicians who made a living from their profession and who should be taken care of and considered by the organisation. He criticized the noisy environment created by glass bottles and benches in the coliseum, "it was terrible, people drank, they still do, but it was worse before, it was double the amount"; also, the participation and accommodation conditions for musicians, who in his opinion were attracted by an economic reward that they would not find elsewhere due to the lack of incentives in the field. Years later, he recalls, it was Jiménez himself

who invited him to be part of Funmúsica. “I want you, who spoke so badly about Funmúsica, to be here, to see if you can change things from the inside”, he told him (J. Rincón, personal interview, Jun 21, 2022).

Rincón arrived in Ginebra with the idea of turning the music school into a conservatory, but his vision soon began to change as he became familiar with the pedagogical musical work carried out by Dalia Conde and Cobito, who placed a greater emphasis on *the process*, the enjoyment of collective work and the participation of children and adolescents. These approaches were not commonly seen in conservatories. Rincón admitted that he initially dismissed processes like La Cantoría, a workshop focused on vocal work with children, but it sparked in him a greater sensitivity and clarity about the type of musical experience that was unfolding:

At that time, they sang out of tune. As an educator, I would say: “That’s no good!” But then I started going to La Cantoría and immersed myself in that energy and saw that it was also a fundamental part of the process. (J. Rincón, personal interview, Jun 21, 2022)

Despite the significant progress made by the teachers, tensions and problems with the official teachers at La Salle school arose in 1996, leading the music programme to become unviable in the school.

The union teachers always believed that Funmúsica was going to take over the school. They... they saw Funmúsica as a big threat. I don’t know, but they always opposed us being there. So, Cobito and I, who were always here, were the ones who fought the battle. (D. Conde, personal interview, 2019)

We had problems at the school run by the priests of La Salle and we moved to La Inmaculada. We even went to Medellín to talk to the leader of the Salesians in the eastern area, but we couldn’t reach an agreement to be there. We were kicked out of the school. Dalia resigned from her position as coordinator and we started teaching in another place, but since we had the support of the head of the nucleus, the idea came up to go and cover the schools. (J. Rincón, personal interview, June 21, 2022)

The music programme left La Salle educational institution and moved to the house where Funmúsica academy was located, which at that time provided training in Colombian music to amateur adults in the evenings. In this way, the music school started working in an extracurricular fashion, extending its offerings to the entire municipality. It was there that the seed of what would later become the Ginebra Music School was sown, “and the programme began to function as a *process*” (J. Rincón, personal interview, June 21, 2022). The programme started in the afternoons with a flute and guitar ensemble with teenagers who had been working with Dalia Conde at La Salle school and had a slightly higher level.

Jiménez managed to secure significant financial support from the national government for the entire project’s equipment. With these resources, which were exclusively for the educational sector, a full set of symphonic band instruments, plucked strings (*estudiantina*), a recording studio and equipment for musical initiation (Orff instruments, tonettes, and percussion) were acquired. This funding also facilitated the hiring of more teachers.

By 1997, the teaching team had already settled and consolidated. Rincón sought out qualified professionals from various backgrounds to help strengthen the music programme. In that year, Dalia Pazos joined the project. She was a music graduate from the Universidad del Valle and would end up becoming a central figure in the pedagogical and educational work of Canto por la Vida. An interesting, diverse, and dynamic team was formed, which engaged in key discussions for the project (D. Pazos, personal interview, Feb 7, 2020). “It was a fantastic team”, also recalls Dalia Conde. The selection of the team members was not a coincidence. The school had musicians and educators of great pedagogical and artistic quality, as well as experience in Colombian Andean music. The team consisted of Jairo Rincón (director), Dalia Conde, Paulo Andrés Olarte, Roberto Ceballos, Dalia Pazos, Hernando José Cobo and Cristian Lara.

Also, Jiménez envisioned that the school could formally certify the young students to avoid any subsequent validation processes and he projected that the programme would provide them with tools for learning the craft of instrument making as a future entrepreneurial opportunity. To achieve this, Rincón invited Master Tobías Bastidas to join the project. They purchased a workshop for instrument construction and with the designs provided by Master Bastidas, they



began creating the machinery for building the instruments. According to Rincón, Jiménez believed that the music school should be equipped with wood supplies for a long time, so they set off to Buga to buy “a truckload of wood for making and undoing. (...). After that, it was marvellous.” From this process, the *guitarrillo* emerged as the emblematic instrument of the Ginebra School of Music.

**Figure 5**

*School of Music of Funmúsica (Ginebra, Valle del Cauca)*



In the photograph, a portion of the teaching staff from that time can be seen. Year: 1997. Photograph published on Foundation’s public Facebook page (used with permission).

With the purchase of the Symphonic Band instruments, Rincón sought to create conditions to stimulate what he believed had historically been “the largest school for musical training of youth and children in the country: the symphonic bands”. He knew that Ginebra had a tradition of bands within families, and he supported the process by inviting some amateur musicians. The

children who were already undergoing training in the music school began to form the band and the *estudiantina* (a type of small string ensemble).

Under Rincón's academic direction, not only was the training programme designed, but it was also formalized through certification, which provided support for the work of the music school. "As an educator, I knew I could create a programme, go to a departmental education office and have it certified. That was the idea I pitched to him (Jiménez)," he recalls. Later, with the support of the municipal core leader in education, he would fulfill the dream of certifying the Music Programme of Ginebra, which provided greater institutional support and foundation to the project.

I was responsible for the delivery and certification of the programme. I had to go to Palmira to have the Department of Education certify the programme. And that programme was the base, it contained the levels with their names: *seedbed*, *initiation* and all that. (J. Rincón, personal interview, June 21, 2022)

With the challenge of creating a new programme that would make use of all available resources, Rincón proposed to the team to allocate working hours for the design and preparation of new classes, as well as for planning and evaluation meetings. However, this was not fully understood by the management, which, according to Rincón, did not perceive the results of the training process. Although tensions with the executive management continued due to disagreements over teachers' working hours, the school was making significant progress in the musical development of children and young people.

In the following year, it was our turn to showcase our work at the Mono Núñez Festival and we did it in a very significant way. When we finally had funding and instruments... I told Bernardo, "Schedule a performance." He would ask me, "What are we going to show?" Because they would come and see us teaching children who seemed to do nothing... I convinced Bernardo and said, "I'm going to show the process. I need you to see the children without rhythm, out of tune, with a few well-prepared songs and then in the second performance, you'll see, wow, how much progress they've made". I remember we did it right in front of the house, we closed the street and everything. We gathered the entire school's music group, removed the chairs and it was a

spectacle. The children sang three or four things, but people were moved to tears. I made an effort for us to showcase the processes... not so much with the conservatory in mind. When I created the programme, I did it with a different perspective... (J. Rincón, personal interview, June 21, 2022)

By 1998, the school had already released its first recorded production called *Cantoría*, which documented the *villancicos ginebrinos* (Ginebran carols) created by Dalia Conde and Cobito. The purpose was to foster a sense of identity during the Christmas season through Colombian musical rhythms sung during that time. The school had also organized two annual editions of *Cantoría de Duendes*, a camp for the exchange of musical and artistic knowledge and playful experiences with other non-formal music schools in the region.

According to some teachers, by the years 1999–2000, the school was already showing instrumental and vocal musical progress (Solano, 2017). Training programmes for typical Colombian string instruments, wind instruments, the flute programme, the work of the *cantoria* (singing group) and the *guitarrillo* (a small guitar) were the foundation for an engaging learning process. Additionally, the inclusion of musical initiation ensembles and percussion groups specializing in music from the southern Pacific region further enriched the students' learning experience.

The school's participation in the Mono Núñez Festival also had a significant impact on the musical growth of the students, as they were able to develop their skills alongside the festival, adapting repertoire and musical formats for their performances. The guidance and support from musicians who had previously participated in and won the festival played a crucial role in the students' educational journey. Among them were Pablo Olarte (from Trío Palo Santo), Jairo Rincón (winner with 4Palos), Cobito (winner as a soloist) and Gustavo López, among others. However, the impact of the festival on the students went beyond that. The experience of listening to many of the country's great artists and musicians proved to be influential in shaping the life goals of many students at the school. Some notable examples include Samuel Ibarra Conde, Julián Solano, Sandra Rayo, Diego Gómez and Rodrigo Solano, who have become accomplished musicians in Ginebra and are currently teachers and leaders in the music school. So, the Mono Núñez Festival not only provided an opportunity for students to showcase their

aptitudes but also served as an inspiration and catalyst for their personal and professional musical journeys.

Thus, the Ginebra Music School was born as a project that aimed to strengthen local identity, cultural roots and expand educational opportunities for children and young people through music and its potential for artistic and productive development. It was a project rooted in practice, knowledge, and the enjoyment of music. The school envisioned itself as the seed of a cultural, educational, and social transformation that Bernardo Jiménez dreamt of for Ginebra. It sought to reclaim the cultural heritage that connected with values, practices and ways of projection and development, which would serve as the foundation for a policy aimed at the development of Ginebra and the region.

**Figure 6**

*Estudiantina ensemble of Ginebra music school*



Year 1999. Photograph published on the foundation's public Facebook page (used with permission).

Thus, the Ginebra Music School was born as a project that aimed to strengthen local identity, cultural roots and expand educational opportunities for children and young people through

music and its potential for artistic and productive development. It was a project rooted in practice, knowledge, and the enjoyment of music. The school envisioned itself as the seed of a cultural, educational, and social transformation that Bernardo Jiménez dreamt of for Ginebra. It sought to reclaim the cultural heritage that connected with values, practices and ways of projection and development, which would serve as the foundation for a policy aimed at the development of Ginebra and the region.

The Ginebra Music School aimed to not only provide musical education but also to foster a sense of pride and belonging in the community. Its creator recognized the power of music to shape individuals and contribute to the overall development of the region. The school's vision went beyond individual growth; it aspired to be a catalyst for cultural and social transformation, utilizing Colombian Andean music to empower and uplift the community.

**Figure 7**

*Part of Funmúsica music school team (1998-1999 aprox.)*



From left to right: Luis Fernando Rivera, Octavio Orozco, Cristian Lara, Dalia Conde, Fernando Sarmiento, Hernando José Cobo, Carlos Fernando Roldán, Dalia Pazos and Raquel Ibarra Conde. Photo published on the Foundation's public facebook page (used with permission).



By embracing and building upon the local traditions and cultural capital, the Ginebra Music School aimed to create a vibrant and inclusive environment where children, young people and the broader community could explore their artistic capacities, enhance their educational opportunities and contribute to the overall development and transformation of Ginebra and its surrounding region.

### **The Breakup (2001)**

The following describes the events and factors that led to the internal crisis of Funmúsica, the resignation of Bernardo Jiménez as the organisation's president and the subsequent rupture between the organisation and the music school. The internal conflicts and tensions experienced by the Mono Núñez Festival and Funmúsica during the 1990s help to understand the foundation and aspirations of Canto por la Vida, as well as the tensions, disruptions and continuities that shaped its organisational, community, musical and artistic project and identity. Considering the analytical angles that this doctoral study addresses regarding the cycles of conflict transformation in SIMM field programmes, some of these preceding tensions are described as key dimensions of this doctoral study.

#### *The festival's turns: tensions between innovation and tradition*

While Funmúsica's music school was growing stronger in its organisational, pedagogical, musical and community aspects, the festival was consolidating a team and diversifying its performance spaces and musical and cultural activities to bring different communities and populations closer together. They created Conciertos Dialogados, musical gatherings aimed at establishing direct communication between the audience and the artists. They also organized the Octavio Marulanda Vélez encounter of indigenous expressions, where musical groups from peasants, Afro-Colombian communities and indigenous communities from different regions of the country performed. Additionally, there was the Mateo Ibarra Conde children's encounter, where young performers of Colombian Andean music took the spotlight and the plaza festival, which offered free admission for all audiences.

There was a very solid and interesting team. Martha Elena Hoyos was there and there were many other fascinating individuals from whom we learned a great deal. Bernardo Jiménez was involved in managing the Plaza Festival and he also began to incorporate crafts into the festival. We organized special concerts, involving educational institutions and all the school venues, to present women's concerts, composer concerts, concerts featuring young talents and dialogued concerts with the participants themselves, aiming to engage the local community. (D. Conde, personal interview, Feb 11, 2020)

However, the festival was moving towards a stage of aesthetic, musical, performative and sociocultural experimentation and innovation that generated internal tensions and conflicts within Funmúsica.

As the new executive director of Funmúsica and with the support of Jiménez, Rengifo had managed to change the logic and concept of the Mono Núñez festival by proposing a radical shift. It was an innovative proposal where contestants had to present an artistic programme under a thematic and narrative premise.<sup>18</sup> Rengifo wanted to put an end to the internal discussion that Funmúsica had been having regarding the categories of “traditional”, “new expressions” and “academic” in Colombian Andean music, as well as the issue of standardizing instrumental and vocal formats. The new directive aimed to recognize the dynamics of transformation in Colombian Andean music and stimulate the creative capacity of musicians and groups to propose new poetics and aesthetics that aligned with their interests, references and diverse practice contexts. The competition sought to move away from establishing strict guidelines for direct comparison that would restrict the mobility of music and creativity. Jiménez believed that this shift could contribute to projecting the festival onto international platforms. The intention was for the festival to connect with the global scene through a more diverse, visually striking and high-quality stage production.

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<sup>18</sup> The proposal of creating programmes could be enriched with non-musical elements in a functional way on stage. This shift also aimed, according to Bernardo Jiménez, to project the festival onto international platforms. The intention was for the festival to connect with the global scene through a more diverse, visually appealing and high-quality scenic and artistic production. Although the change generated doubts and fears, it was embraced by musicians, groups and selection committees from different departments of the Andean region that the competition summoned, resulting in the participation of over 30 groups from across the country.

During this four-year period (1994 to 1997), the festival underwent an aesthetic opening by allowing the inclusion of new instrumental formats, musical expressions and poetics that were permeating Colombian Andean music. Genres such as jazz, rock, opera, contemporary music and academic music were embraced and, in some cases, they deconstructed the musical genres of the Colombian Andean tradition.<sup>19</sup> The competition even welcomed politically tinted narratives in songs and performances, something never seen before in a festival that preserved more conservative and bucolic poetics, evoking a rural past and idyllic love.

An example of this was the work of the group Música para el Pie Izquierdo, which presented a humorous programme that “subverted discursive and sonic codes” of the musical tradition “with a raw critique of the political moment the country was going through at that time” (Cobo, 2010, p. 89). With this work, the group won the top prize at the Gran Mono Núñez competition in 1998. This event, categorized by some as a “profanation” of the festival, promoted a type of polarization and radicalization among the more traditionalist and conservative factions. The conceptual change of the festival caused discomfort among certain segments of the audience, the organisation and the musicians who felt the fading away of the “traditional” elements.

The internal struggle and radicalization of positions within Funmúsica led to the end of Rengifo and Jiménez’s endeavor in 1997. From that point onwards, the festival would return to the musical, aesthetic, poetic and scenic parameters aligned with the traditional version of the music. Bernardo Mejía, the current executive president of Funmúsica and who has held the presidency of the organisation since 1997, narrates it as follows:

When I took over the festival, from my point of view, (...) it had a scheme that was not popular and, in my opinion, had no future. For them, it did. The festival (...) went from being a programme for interpreters of Colombian music to being a project of ‘musical programmes’. What does that mean? It meant that what mattered was not the interpretation, but the content. Of

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<sup>19</sup> During the award ceremony, groups with highly developed instrumental works and contemporary languages were appreciated. This was the case with Héctor Fabio Torres’ work, such as the *Suite Modal* or the *Danza del Cuervo*, which featured an academic language with influences from rock, Bartok and Ginastera. These compositions delved into a profound exploration of timbre and expression within the Andean string format, as well as a deconstruction of Andean genres like bambuco, danza, pasillo and torbellino. (See Cobo, 2010 for more information.)



course, well performed. (...) During that period, “*Música para el pie izquierdo*” won, which was a political musical parody, humorous, if you will, (...) they did a good thing, although I didn’t believe that should be what represented Colombian Andean music, but they won. And I asked Bernardo Jiménez, who was the president at the time and whom I replaced, many times: “Do you really think this was the best? What should have won?” “Yes”, he would answer. “Well, okay”. And they were the ones. And that’s how the jury decided. (...) You look at the history of the festival, 49 years, it’s completely clean. No one can say ‘the juries made mistakes.’ (...) So when I became president, I called Gustavo, who had presented the project to the board and I told him: “I prefer, from now on, to abandon this project of musical programmes and go back to the popular repertoire, to what the artist feels is heard better and what the audience receives better”. (B. Mejía, personal interview, Feb 19, 2020)

The crisis also affected the continuation of the music school in late 2000. According to members of the Funmúsica organisation, the school was affecting its financial situation. However, others recount that, on the contrary, the project was sustained with resources specifically managed for the musical educational process. According to one of the interviewees, in the mid-1990s, there were even two assemblies to liquidate Funmúsica due to a lack of resources to carry out the Mono Núñez festival, while the music school had a budget of approximately \$480 million pesos, managed by Jiménez through the public sector and specifically allocated to the project (J. Rincón, personal interview, Jun 21, 2022).

Some interviewees conclude that there were indeed other motivations to end the music school, including the ideological confrontation that took place within Funmúsica.

In August ‘97, the board of directors had already changed. People with an extreme right-wing ideology had entered, with their entire ideological package that is classist, racist, homophobic, traditionalist and suppresses the expression of political ideology in music (...). In that board from that time until today, the oligarchic class of Valle del Cauca is represented, right? They have an ideology that has hindered the evolution that was taking place in the festival and in Funmúsica. (...) And the festival, after having an innovative and revolutionary proposal, returned to its traditional format and remained in that status quo that has persisted for years and years, presenting a rigid format that dictates how soloists, duets, trios... should sing. (Interviewee A, personal interview, Feb 19, 2021)

According to the interviews, the festival's shift under Rengifo's direction not only generated aesthetic and performative rejection but also expressions of racism. During this stage of the festival, Afro-descendant, peasant and indigenous communities that could perform at the Coliseo Cubierto, a venue previously dedicated to presenting music and groups considered more representative of traditional Andean culture and Colombian identity, were sometimes discriminated against by upper-class social groups attending as spectators.

And then I called Gustavo de Roux (...) thanks to him, I went there, (...) to Dominguito and I met the Cauca violins (...) and then I won them over so that they would come with their workshops and violins to the festival. We sent a bus to bring 20 people and about 50 came... They didn't fit on the bus. (...) The truth is that when they started performing in the coliseum, more than half of the audience left. They said, "This can't be the Mono Núñez," "Who said there would be black people here?" "This isn't a black festival," all those ladies said (...) They left! When I left, all the indigenous expressions stopped appearing in the coliseum. The albums used to include indigenous expressions. Today, indigenous expressions are not included in the albums... (G. Rengifo, personal interview, Feb 19, 2021)

Finally, the perceived classist expressions and, at times, disrespectful treatment towards the organisation's collaborators (music teachers) added to the crisis. Also, friction and differences regarding principles and working methods contributed to the rupture.

We were called to a meeting, all the teachers, but in those meetings, you felt like... they were categorizing, discriminatory meetings, where "I am the boss, and you are my workers or slaves". And it reached a point where they started counting our hours. "Let me see, lend me your schedule. Okay... if you're teaching classes of 45 minutes, then you owe 15 minutes here," so I don't know how many hours we were indebted each day. And they would tell us, "How are we going to pay the foundation for that?" We were very responsible with our work, but the board of directors always looked down on us. It was a very class-oriented thing, you know? Very elitist. (Interviewee B, personal interview, Dec 18, 2019)

In this way, the team of music teachers, who were actively involved in the organisation of the festival, made the difficult decision to step aside, as the new board of directors had hinted on

different occasions about dispensing with the team of teachers. Initially, the music school was going to dissolve. The teachers started looking for new places of work and projection, but quickly, the questioning from the children and young people prompted and motivated some members of the team to continue with the music education project. Dalia Conde, who had already studied educational administration and showed important leadership skills in her work with La Salle and the music school, was the one who drove the decision-making process and took the reins at that crucial moment. The Funmúsica assembly agreed with the decision. In a way, separating the music school from the foundation freed them from the responsibility of financially supporting the project and would definitively end internal tensions. Funmúsica gladly handed over the houses and musical instruments to the teachers. Dalia Conde led the creation of the new foundation, inviting her colleagues to formally constitute themselves and counting on the support of Jiménez, who joined as the president of the organisation.

“And we continue happily with this new situation. The foundation is now 17 years old...”. (D. Conde, personal interview, Dec 17, 2019)

### **Figure 8**

*Team of Canto por la vida. Year: 2019*



Published on the Foundation's public Facebook page (used with permission).

This chapter has described the organisational, pedagogical, musical, and community processes that led to the creation of the Canto por la Vida music school. As initially stated, the aim of tracing this historical journey was not to provide a detailed historical portrait of the events but to highlight the factors and phenomena that brought the Canto por la Vida project to light. In particular, two key aspects were emphasised in this history: the various processes required at the institutional, pedagogical, musical, and community levels for the creation and consolidation of a project like this, and the tensions that arise when an organisation seeks to preserve a tradition while simultaneously exploring disruptive and innovative forms and trends aimed at expanding its social impact. As will be explored later in this study, the nature of these tensions raises questions about whether they are specific to this case or whether they can shed light on and reaffirm constitutive aspects of the SIMM field. These issues will be explored further in Chapters 7 and 8.

## Chapter Four

### Organisational and community dimensions: continuities, disruptions and quests

To inform the reader about how the Canto por la Vida music school developed as an educational, cultural, and social project, this chapter analyses the continuities, disruptions, and efforts of the school's team in relation to Funmúsica, focusing on its community, organisational, musical pedagogical, artistic, and social aspects.

This chapter particularly explores the forms of relationships at the organisational and community levels, aiming to shed light on the ideas, principles, and positions that the team, either explicitly or implicitly, holds regarding how everyday life and communal living are woven together, and how the organisation of the music school is managed. These ideas, principles, and positions are identified in contrast to the work and social relationships developed with Funmúsica. Consequently, the chapter analyses the organisational structures, alongside eight aspects that the researcher identified as characteristic of the project and, therefore, valuable for the analysis.

The chapter and the categories presented within were primarily constructed from the analysis of material gathered through field observations of community and organisational practices and relationships, as well as from conversations and interviews conducted with the project's members.

As will be concluded at the end of the chapter, it is the invisible threads of these everyday relational practices that also shape the school's pedagogical project, even if they are not formally named or outlined in institutional programmes and curricula. Likewise, these "invisible" aspects also influence the organisational nature of the project, and thus, its potential for development and outreach.

The break with Funmúsica generated a moment of crisis for the music school. This is one of the most interesting moments to analyse within the framework of this study because it allows us to understand how the factors that led to the rupture ended up shaping the identity and developmental processes of the project. The crisis presented itself as an opportunity. They not only had to resolve how the school would be financially sustained but also had to propose their own vision and approach to the project, one that was no longer aligned with Funmúsica. The collective was the offspring of an organisation that represented a whole musical tradition and at the same time was distancing itself from it.

As detailed in this chapter, as well as in Chapters 5 and 6, since its establishment in 2002, Canto por la Vida has been actively shaping its educational, social, artistic, and cultural project by preserving the elements it deems valuable from its collaboration with Funmúsica. At the same time, the team has distanced itself from ideologies, values, and methodologies that no longer align with their vision. These ongoing continuities and disruptions, spanning community, organisational, pedagogical, and musical dimensions, have significantly influenced the logics, dynamics, and practices of the music school over the past two decades. However, this evolution has not been uniform or static; rather, Canto por la Vida has developed through a complex interplay of diverse and sometimes conflicting perspectives and approaches, creating various tensions. These aspects will be explored in greater depth in Chapter 7.

In the following section, I will describe how, considering these disruptions and continuities, the team of Canto por la Vida has been developing some of its organisational and community processes, which have been key in shaping the project's identity. I will describe some of the aspects that form the “founding myth” of the organisation.

### **Organisational structure**

The break with Funmúsica posed a new question for this group of teachers regarding how they would organize themselves. The team knew that the type of organisational structure would be crucial for their functioning and development. Considering their previous experience with

Funmúsica, under the leadership of Dalia Conde and with the support of Bernardo Jiménez, the team determined that the best option was to establish a *foundation*.<sup>20</sup>

**Figure 9**

*Canto por la Vida foundation's logo*



Available in the official website.

The name that would give them an identity would be Canto por la Vida (Song for Life). They wanted to make two things clear that they believed in: firstly, the power of collective singing and secondly, the role that music could play in reaffirming life. Like Funmúsica, Canto por la Vida was legally established as a non-profit legal entity that, according to Colombian regulations, is aimed at “social improvement and common benefit”. To achieve this, they structured statutes, drawing on those created in 1995 by the Circo para Todos Foundation, a Cali-based project with a significant social impact in the circus field.<sup>21</sup>

Canto por la Vida established administrative bodies for its functioning, including an administrative board and an executive director. The administrative board is considered the

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<sup>20</sup> A foundation is a non-profit legal entity that arises from the will of one or several natural or legal persons, with the aim of promoting the common welfare, either for a specific sector of society or for the entire population in general. The foundation is created through the allocation of assets or pre-existing funds by its founder(s), for the purpose of carrying out activities that, in their view, can generate social well-being (Gaitán, 2014, p. 7).

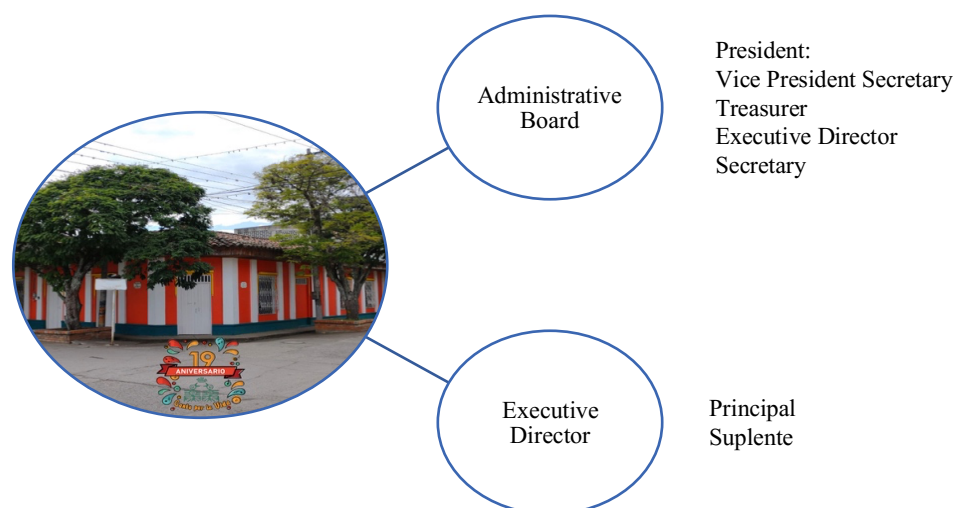
<sup>21</sup> Circo para Todos was the first school in the world dedicated to training young people in theater and circus arts in contexts of social vulnerability. Today, the foundation is one of the most impactful social projects of its kind internationally. The artists from Valle del Cauca and founders of the project, Héctor Fabio Cobo and Felicity Simpson, collaborated actively in the 1990s with the music school in Ginebra, particularly for the realization of “Ginebra Canta la Navidad,” an event led by “Cobito” and Dalia Conde from the music school. This event achieved a high level of social appropriation in the municipality.

supreme body of Canto por la Vida.<sup>22</sup> Annually, the foundation is required to hold a general assembly of members, which includes all founding members, honorary members and active members.<sup>23</sup> According to Colombian law, the assembly is the highest governing and administrative body of organisations of this kind. The assembly holds the ultimate powers regarding the existence and functioning of such entities. Additionally, the foundation has an administrative coordinator, an accountant and an auditor.

From its inception until 2022, the five founding members continue to hold the same positions on the board of directors and at the same time play key roles in the music school. As will be seen in Chapter 8, this is crucial for the stability of the project but also affects the possibility of creating distance in internal discussions within the organisation.<sup>24</sup>

**Table 3**

*Administrative structure*



Made by the author.

<sup>22</sup> Co-manages, along with the legal representative, the development of the organisation's objectives, its functioning and control.

<sup>23</sup> Active members are natural or legal persons, both national and foreign, who, through their services and/or contributions to the development of the foundation's social objectives, request to be incorporated into it and are accepted by the Board of Directors. Honorary members are natural or legal persons, both national and foreign, who make significant contributions to the development of the foundation's social objectives. The qualification of these members is granted by the General Assembly based on a presentation made by the Board of Directors. Their acceptance must be unanimous.

<sup>24</sup> Although "Cobito" has been a key player in the creation, development and projection of the music school and the Canto por la Vida Foundation, he chose not to be registered as a founding member of the organisation.



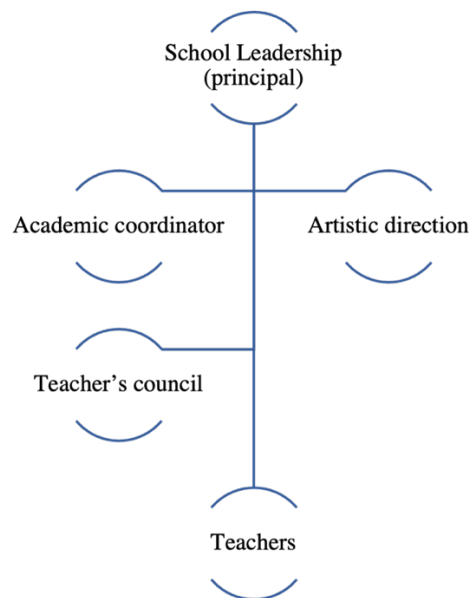
In contrast to the organisational structure of Funmúsica, which had a Board of Directors that did not include the school's teachers, in Canto por la Vida, the same musician-teachers have been the ones making administrative, artistic, pedagogical and community decisions - with the sole exception of President Bernardo Jiménez, who is a businessman and benefactor of the organisation. By fulfilling this dual role, decisions regarding the school have been weighed by the teachers with a foundational understanding of the school's own needs, logic and realities. Another differentiating aspect from Funmúsica is that the assembly of members and the board of administration have a closed structure, meaning there is no rotation in their positions. According to its members, this provides several advantages to the organisation, including strengthening the sense of ownership, qualification of roles and alignment in purposes:

What happens is that this organisation is managed by a few people in the administrative part, which makes it functional and allows us to progress year after year in creating expertise that enables us to be hired for projects (...) for several years; it has been the same people who believe in this project. So, we all strive for the same thing... there is synchrony and commitment to the things done in this school. (C. Navarro, personal interview, Dec 11, 2019).

In parallel to these administrative bodies of the foundation, the music school establishes an organisational structure composed of the school director, academic coordinator, artistic director, a council of teachers and the teachers themselves. According to the school's manager, the council of teachers is equally important or even more important than the board of directors and administration: "It is in the council where evaluation exercises are conducted, improvement actions are proposed, and new projects are determined". This council is something that Funmúsica did not include in its structure.

In that council we have many people and different perspectives... from the teacher with X experience, to the new one, to the one who has been here for two years... all the freshness of the newcomers is evident in this wonderful council of teachers. (D. Conde, in MinCultura, 2010)

**Table 4**  
*Academic structure*



Made by the author.

### **Community and organisational principles**

In contrast to the experience with Funmúsica, since its creation the team at Canto por la Vida established much more horizontal forms of relationship and work, aiming to establish new organisational forms that empowered their role as teachers and opened up the epistemological and axiological horizons of a music education project. Through analysis of my observations of the organisational and community dynamics and the narratives of members of staff's interviews, I identified a number of guiding intentions or values that favoured the configuration of these forms of work of Canto por la Vida:

*Towards a more democratic model:* the teachers aimed to create a new organisation that was more democratic and sensitive to shared convictions about an educational, musical and social approach. As evidenced in several interview excerpts, the teachers who worked at Funmúsica rejected the way in which the members of the board of directors exercised their power. They disagreed with their management style, which they considered hierarchical, controlling, and

mistrustful. The type of treatment and forms of control were interpreted as reminiscent of a “boss-worker” or “boss-slave” relationship. This way of perceiving or expressing it makes sense in the context of a history of conflict in the Valle del Cauca region related to social hierarchies resulting from the *latifundista*<sup>25</sup> economic model<sup>26</sup>. Considering that Funmúsica was born under the auspices of people linked to families of landowners and landholders in the region and to a certain lineage and social class, such forms of labour treatment could not be interpreted outside of this historical burden.

*From the “populace”<sup>27</sup> (pueblo) to fellow citizens:* Another aspect that distanced the group of teachers from Funmúsica and its last board of directors was their conception of the people from the popular context, the *pueblo* of Ginebra. According to the perspective of some interviewees, Funmúsica stratified performance spaces and music, as well as its audiences. The central stage where most of the competition took place and where the music and groups representing the tradition of Colombian Andean music “par excellence” were programmed, had the highest cost of access: the Coliseo Cubierto. Those who can afford the package of tickets for the Coliseo during the five days of the festival are usually outsiders from Ginebra, from the middle upper-middle, or upper class, directly excluding a sector of the local population.

For Funmúsica, the way to involve the people in the festival was through the creation of the Plaza Festival. In this setting, other Afro-Colombian, indigenous, or peasant-rooted music that was not presented in the Coliseo was performed. The popular communities and economically disadvantaged classes in Ginebra do not have access to the main competition. Although the Plaza Festival has sought to integrate the people of Ginebra by recognizing other expressions of Andean music that are closer to their aesthetics and musical identities, this separation has been

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<sup>25</sup> The term “latifundist” which refers to those who practice latifundio, is often associated in Latin America with large landowners who are heirs to the elites that held landownership during colonial or post-independence periods.

<sup>26</sup> According to the report from the National Center for Historical Memory (2018), titled “*Patrones*” and *Campesinos: Land, Power and Violence in Valle del Cauca* (1960-2012), the latifundista economic model established in Valle del Cauca during the colonial period positioned the landowner at the top of the social pyramid, granting them prestige and power. This situation had a decisive influence on the social hierarchy of Valle del Cauca society and its subsequent conflicts (Colmenares, 1980 in Machado and Rincón, 2014).

<sup>27</sup> The word “pueblo” is sometimes used in a derogatory and classist sense in Colombia.

interpreted as the expression of an aesthetic and social categorization and exclusion, limiting opportunities for integration, participation and critical development of all audiences.

Some teachers and other interviewees close to Canto por la Vida agree that Afro-Colombian, indigenous and rural musical practices and communities have ultimately been stratified, folklorised and treated with condescension in the festival. In this way, critics have argued that the festival has seen the people, or the popular stratum, as objects of tradition rather than active subjects capable of critical thinking, appreciation and critical listening of all types of music.<sup>28</sup> The festival values popular, peasant, indigenous and Afro-descendant music from a folkloric and static perspective, rather than as living practices that, within their own epistemological paradigms, can be thought about with greater rigor and depth. These practices are not only constantly transforming but also contribute to the critical formation of audiences and citizenship.

Going further, teachers who were part of the production and logistics during that time witnessed behaviours demonstrating the lack of equal treatment of communities. While certain artists were received well by the organizers, other groups from these communities were neglected or treated as having lower status. As a result, some of the teachers distrusted the nationalist ideologies and conservative and moralistic values promoted by the members of Funmúsica, which created a certain distance and discontent among them.<sup>29</sup>

*Trust.* Despite not having optimal levels of funding and formalization, the trust in the team's strong work ethic and capabilities outweighed the risk. Even though it was a leap into the

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<sup>28</sup> The above reflects what the communication theorist Jesús Martín Barbero referred to as “abstract inclusion and concrete exclusion”. The people and their musical expressions rooted in Afro, indigenous and rural traditions are included as folklore from a romanticized perspective that not only excludes and relegates them but also categorizes them as lacking development, evolution and enlightenment. Martín Barbero shows that the romantics rescue from the popular realm what comes from its originality, purity and lack of contamination and in doing so, “by denying cultural circulation, what is truly denied is the historical process of popular formation and the social meaning of cultural differences” (1998, p. 11). In other words, by idealizing the popular and turning it into an archive, a relic of the past, a museum piece, the romantics end up also denying the living, real, everyday popular culture. In this operation, they relegate the people to an ancestral past (Marroquín, 2019, p. 57).

<sup>29</sup> According to Machado and Rincón (2014), in Valle del Cauca, these conservative and moralistic values are precisely the cultural expression of the *paisa* legacy, which resulted from the late Antioquian colonization of the 19th century in the Valle del Cauca. The Antioquians reinforced values based on property, family, ethnic identity (mixed-white) and religiosity. Ginebra (1909) is one of the towns that emerged from this late influence, settled in the central zone of the department and with Tulúa as its epicenter (p. 39).

unknown, they were together and believed it was possible to stay afloat with the skills developed and the strength of the collective work based on their previous experience with Funmúsica. Each founding member brought their own knowledge and expertise and dedicated additional time, energy and efforts to improve the collective conditions that would enable the continuation of the project. Above the difficulties of finding the optimal form of institutionalization, they were motivated by the conviction and desire to pursue an endeavour that encompassed musical and artistic development, care for pedagogy and human relationships and a political, cultural and educational vision regarding the value of community music practices.

*Casa Caracola: from functional space to poetic space.* After the break, the team needed to give new meaning to the space where Funmúsica's school operated and fill the building with new content. Thus, the concept of Casa Caracola was born, a metaphor coined by Cobito to narrate the music school.

The metaphor was a seashell. The spiraling nature of the Caracola. It's all about walking in a spiral and discovering everything along the way. The seashell that, when you blow into it - a marine seashell - produces a spectacular sound that travels through the mountains, travels through the rivers. The Caracola that is also filled with spirits, the spirits of music, of voices. That building that starts to fill with voices, accumulating and accumulating... it is no longer empty but filled with the energy of music, of thought, of knowledge. That is La Casa Caracola. (H. Cobo, personal interview, Nov 20, 2020)

The metaphor of *Casa Caracola* represents a form of disruption from the more functionalist and limited perspective of some members of Funmúsica regarding musical education, opening up space for artistic, poetic and symbolic thinking. During fieldwork, it was possible to identify that the approach of some teachers to create narratives, stories, and performances to enhance and expand ways of conceiving, interpreting and recreating the world of children and young people using the tools offered by the arts themselves. These teachers aimed to break away from the literal to establish the imaginary and open up possibilities, transforming the notion of the school from a physical space to a symbolic one.

**Figure 10**

*Casa Caracola, the current campus of the foundation*



Published on the Foundation's Facebook page.

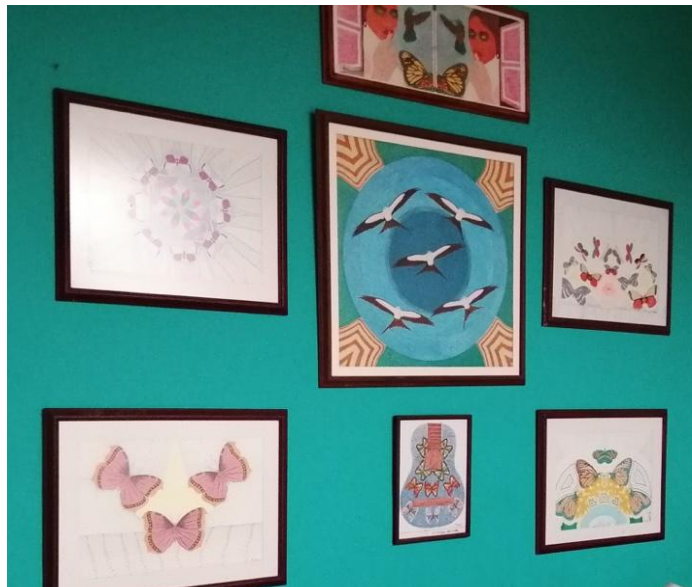
In their concern to broaden the worldview of children and young people beyond the horizon of Ginebra, certain teachers suggest delving into the realms of poetry, aesthetics, and imagination. The concept of the Caracola House holds a central place in the official discourses and narratives of the Canto por la Vida school. During celebratory occasions, such as the annual graduation ceremonies of the students, the meaning attributed to the school is emphasized, reinforcing the concept of a home. As can be seen in the narratives and metaphors from the attached texts, the school, as the Caracola House, is defined as “the home for everyone,” the “nest,” the space of welcome. It is described as a magical space for imagination, poetry, wonder and the celebration of the everyday, the landscape and the inhabited territory. The Caracola House is defined as a place of memory, a “living heritage,” a space for knowledge and reflection about the future. It is portrayed as a commitment to life, dignity and hope.

The poetry surrounding the Caracola House broke away from the definitions of an “academy” or “music school” that Funmúsica brought with it. The autonomy gained through the separation from Funmúsica allowed the team to take ownership of the house, fill it with new content and find new ways to inhabit and give meaning to it. Visual arts, literature and architectural design

criteria demonstrate an awareness of space that goes beyond its physical functionality and embraces its aesthetic role, enriching the experience within the house.

**Figure 11**

*Example of visual arts in Casa Caracola*



Photograph by the author.

Dalia Conde, the foundation's manager with a background in visual arts, has been interested in proposing an aesthetic direction. The vibrant colour palette both inside and outside the building, the visual artwork, the paintings that highlight the region's biological diversity, the design models of the *guitarillos* and the use of *molas*<sup>30</sup> in the stage and costumes are all part of the vision that Conde has contributed to the project's identity through visual aesthetics.

This presents an interesting angle regarding the configuration of community life. According to Colombian anthropologist Arturo Escobar (2000), the ways in which humans occupy, represent, signify and use space define who they are, how they think and the ways in which they relate to

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<sup>30</sup> *Molas* are a traditional textile art form created by women from the Gunadule indigenous ethnic group (also known as Kuna, Cuna, or Tule) of Panama and Colombia. *Molas* depicts the cosmology, culture and identity of the indigenous community. In Colombia, the Kuna people live in two indigenous reserves located in Chocó and Urabá Antioquia.



each other. In this sense, it was interesting to observe the ways in which the community inhabited the house, the “territory-place” that constitutes a space imbued with meaning, lived and integrated into the daily life of the school.

**Figure 12**

*The design of Canto por la Vida’s stage*



It is based on the *molas* of the Kuna indigenous ethnic group. The cat in the photograph is “Bandola”, the mascot of the house. Photograph by the author.

The metaphor of Casa Caracola House not only holds a metaphorical sense but also a literal one. With an architecture that still retains some of the design elements of typical houses in Ginebra, my perception of the environment in the school is that of a family home. This reinforces the emotional bonds described. It is not perceived as a formal, uniform, sterile, closed, regulated, or controlled space, but rather as an organic space where everything moves with a certain naturalness. Children and young people navigate and inhabit the spaces with a sense of freedom, ease and ownership. The way the community inhabits the house, uses the kitchen and even some of the rooms – which are used as lodging for teachers who live outside Ginebra– gives the space a communal and familiar sense. In this sense, the school has not only functioned as a physical and social space but primarily as a cultural one, understanding “culture” as the forms of the everyday, what is interactively and inter-subjectively constructed in social relationships and ways of life within the community.



*The “ágape”, playfulness and welcoming rituals.* One of the aspects that were reaffirmed with the creation of the Canto por la Vida foundation was the care and promotion of time for enjoyment, celebration and gathering. Even in the previous process with Funmúsica, the school’s team promoted spaces of coexistence, playfulness and recreation around the artistic musical training processes, such as the Cantoría de Duendes (Choir of Elves): an event conceived by the teachers Dalia Pazos and Cobito that exemplifies the team’s commitment.

The Cantoría de Duendes was a gathering, in the form of a camp, aimed at promoting exchange between the children and young people of the Ginebra school and other sister projects such as the Casa de Cultura de Sevilla (Sevilla Cultural Center) in Valle, the Juvenilia school in Cali and the Circo para Todos foundation in Cali. Over the course of two days, in a camp-style setting, the team designed a programme that aimed to stimulate the exchange of musical and artistic knowledge through a meaningful experience centered around sharing, playing, recreating, storytelling, sports and enjoying food as a central part of the collective experience. Workshops on composition, circus arts, clay modelling and other activities provided children with the opportunity to learn and experiment in different areas than they were accustomed to and to build friendships with children and young people from diverse cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds in the region.

Celebration, playing, outdoor hikes, bike rides, outings and enjoying free time have been activities that the Canto por la Vida Foundation has promoted since its inception in relation to musical artistic training. This is noteworthy for its significance in the educational and community development process of the project. The aim is to create spaces that value alternative ways of building community and encourage other practices and experiences that are important for well-being and life balance. This includes prioritizing play, leisure, sharing, exploration, physical and spiritual well-being, among other aspects.

According to the experience of colleagues who have attended events organized by the Canto por la Vida Foundation, the hospitality and warm welcoming atmosphere created by the team stand out. Attention to detail, treatment of guests, care for operational aspects and intentional use of playfulness characterize the experience surrounding academic exercises. It is not uncommon,

for example, for Canto por la Vida to inaugurate one of its national conferences on Colombian Andean music research (MAC) with the organisation of scavenger hunts around the town of Ginebra. The team knows from experience and conviction that play, the body, playfulness and recreation as a prelude to academic work generate a different bodily disposition that allows for the creation of connections based on relaxation, camaraderie, tranquility and affection. These elements are not mere ornaments of the academic agenda but rather the creation of a bodily and affective disposition for work and the building of a community bond.

Another aspect that stands out in the practices of the foundation is the importance of sharing meals or moments of “ágape” (communal sharing of food). During celebrations, training activities, or artistic work, the foundation allocates resources for the organisation of refreshments, dinners, or lunches where the community comes together and strengthens bonds. Much of these tasks were entrusted to teacher Dalia Pazos, who prepared menus and food with dedication and care for their nutritional value. The act of sharing food, cakes, typical dishes, cooking and the complicity in enjoying them has been a prominent aspect of everyday life in Ginebra and, therefore, in the Canto por la Vida community. It has contributed to the strengthening of community ties.

*Emotional bonds.* By the time the Canto por la Vida foundation was formalized in 2002, the group had already created and deepened collegial bonds for seven years. The coexistence had been intense, both in the house where the music school operated and outside of it. The intensity of collective work for the development of processes and projects with Funmúsica, combined with informal socialization in the daily life of the town, facilitated the community, teachers, support staff and participants to establish close and proximate relationships. Due to Ginebra’s size, the community encounters each other daily and becomes involved -sometimes inevitably- in each other’s family environments and personal situations. Thus, during the creation of Canto por la Vida and in the years to come, the school ended up integrating the families of its members into the service of the project. This has resulted in the team not only weaving relationships of a professional nature but also sharing, participating, or intervening in crucial moments of each member’s personal history, such as mourning, anxieties and supporting personal achievements, among other circumstances. These experiences have forged strong emotional bonds and deep

solidarity over time, serving as an important support for the sustainability and continuation of the project.

*Familiarity and institutionalism: a work-family culture.* The members of Canto por la Vida have formed community bonds as an expression of shared subjectivity, based on a critical understanding of their sociocultural context. As detailed previously, the teachers' break with the last board of directors of Funmúsica was rooted in their disapproval of the organisation's exercise of power and its relationships with teachers and collaborators. They interpreted it as a manifestation of a patronizing and classist logic associated with the attitudes of the landowning class in the region.

Consciousness of this led to a reflection, perhaps not explicitly collective, on how they would build their relationship with the new organisation, institutionalism and its natural hierarchies. One of the most significant aspects revealed by the fieldwork in sustaining the project for over two decades has been the way the team has balanced and managed their collegial, friendship and familial relationships within the work and institutional environment. Living and working together for an average of 6 to 8 hours per day, the group has become a "work-family" (Rodríguez, 2012),<sup>31</sup> developing mechanisms for a positive integration of work and family life. Thompson, Beauvais and Lyness (1999) define this as a "work-family culture", an organisation that supports and values the integration of employees' work and family lives.

In Canto por la Vida, the sensitivity of the management team and leadership towards the family responsibilities of its members demonstrates aspects of this type of organisational culture.<sup>32</sup> The bonds of solidarity and generosity from the presidency of Jiménez, the management of Conde and among the members, along with the employment of family members in the organisation, have generated a relationship of interdependence between the work and family domains of the members.

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<sup>31</sup> Óscar Rodríguez González (2012) has coined the term 'work-family' as a form of organisational culture that can contribute to the prosperity and consolidation of the organisation.

<sup>32</sup> Thompson, Beauvais and Lyness propose three components that define the concept of work-family culture: a) the time demands of the organisation, which involve prioritizing work over family; b) the perceived consequences for workers regarding the use of work-family benefits and c) the managerial support and sensitivity shown by leaders towards employees' family responsibilities (Vesga, 2019, p. 132).

However, according to various perspectives and theoretical models, the relationship between work and family can be understood in organisations as: 1) conflict, 2) balance, or 3) interaction. In this latter approach, the domains mutually affect each other, “with both positive and negative effects in both directions, depending on how each dimension contributes to the enrichment of the other or generates counterproductive effects” (Vesga, 2019, p. 133).<sup>33</sup> In the case of Canto por la Vida, it has been identified that what has been a potentiality for the project in this interaction has also led to profound tensions that have affected the individual and collective critical capacity and the ultimate decision-making processes central to the project. This will be further studied in chapter 7 and 8.

*Care, guidance and commitment.* The support provided to students was an observed aspect in the daily life of the school during the fieldwork. Some teachers in particular were approached by students seeking advice or guidance on aspects of their emotional life or vocational orientation. The role of the academic coordinator as a counsellor for students and other members of the community stands out. Through conversations with some members and students’ perceptions of her role, a sense of trust, care and reassurance provided by the teacher is identified. The lengthy conversations that facilitated active listening were crucial for many students and colleagues. In situations that required professional treatment, students were referred to the nearest psychologist who would provide individual consultations. It was also possible to observe how individual processes were monitored through a comprehensive understanding of the child or young person. The approach to families and their circumstances allowed for a more nuanced understanding of the situations that could be affecting the students. The absence of a child or young person did not go unnoticed in the school. Teachers, management, and the pedagogical coordinator would call the students’ homes to inquire about the reasons for their absence, even providing training and support to parents. Management has been critical of this aspect, even emphasizing the importance of transforming family educational dynamics within the municipality:

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<sup>33</sup> As conflict, the relationship between family and work implies that these two areas are incompatible, antagonistic, of different nature and that their mutual effects are always negative regardless of the direction in which the relationship is considered. As balance, the areas of personal or family life and work can be effectively managed through the development of strategies or practices that allow for balancing or reconciling the demands of each area.

If a child stays home watching television, the mother doesn't care... because we ourselves call and ask, "Why didn't the child come?" "Oh, he fell asleep". "No, he had too much homework." There's always an excuse and the mothers cover up for those excuses. So, we need to work with the child and their discipline and all that discipline that comes from this musical work... (D. Conde, personal interview, 2019)

In particular, the manager and some teachers at the school suggest that due to economic, emotional, or educational challenges faced by some families in the municipality, certain parents are not sufficiently involved or committed to their children's development processes. This is within a local culture that is perceived as lax, where young people have few role models for building a life plan beyond what the context offers: minimal effort, easy money, alcohol, and partying. However, due to the limitations of the research itself, it was not possible to explore the families' perceptions regarding the school's monitoring.

Additionally, practices of sponsorship and mentoring were observed among some students. For example, if young students or graduates lived in other municipalities, teachers would offer their homes as accommodation to facilitate their continued participation in the project. In some cases, teachers would become so deeply committed to the progress of certain participants that they took on a parental role. Some voluntarily became academic and artistic mentors and there was even a case where one of the teachers in the organisation acted as a mentor to a student who lived outside the municipality for years, to the point of adopting the young person into her family. Likewise, stories are shared of direct intervention by some project members in resolving problematic situations in the family or school contexts of certain participants. One of the former students and leaders of the school's pedagogical project, in his own postgraduate research, describes the significance of the music school and the emotional bonds as determinants in shaping his identity and defining his life project. This could be an aspect that merits further study and exploration in future research.

### *Final notes*

The political stances regarding the social dimension, the working methods, the types of emotional connections, and relational practices surrounding the "family-work" culture, as well

as the spaces for fellowship, care, and enjoyment, are not incidental or peripheral aspects in the configuration of *Canto por la Vida*. On the contrary, they are structural elements of its community and organisational project. However, the ways in which communal life is woven together are not formally articulated within the foundation's pedagogical and educational framework. Instead, these eight described aspects can only be recognised through the daily experiences at the school and the analysis of narratives concerning the experienced moments of disruption.

According to Samper (2017), the relational dynamics and the way individuals are shaped within a music education project are often influenced by what occurs invisibly, beyond the formal music curriculum. This pertains to the intricacies woven into relationships and taking place in the affective realm, which is an integral part of the pedagogical process. In this light, as Montaña (2004) cautions, the genuine essence of an organisation exists on a latent plane and doesn't manifest in visible aspects like objectives, formal structures, regulations, organograms, and organisational plans. However, these dynamics, albeit tacit, play a role in generating and perpetuating patterns and hidden rituals of behaviour. They can be positive and nurturing at times, while at other times, they may involve mistreatment and daily exclusions that go unnoticed by the formal system's logics, making them challenging to detect and address (Samper, 2017).

As will be explored in Chapter 7, the benefits associated with the dynamics described—such as the “work-family” relationship and strong emotional bonds—also give rise to conflicts and tensions within both public and private spheres. These dynamics impact the “instituted and instituting” processes essential for the project's management and sustainability. Thus, relational fabrics are far from homogeneous, static, or straightforward. Instead, they are dynamic, diverse, and intrinsically complex and conflicting.

As Montaña (2004) articulates, an organisation is a “complex social space in which various logics of action and diverse actors with differing interests and interpretations of institutional meaning intersect, accompanied by illusions, fantasies, and anxieties” (p. 5). Therefore, he advocates for academic efforts to acknowledge these imperceptible aspects as essential to

understand the nature of organisations. On the other hand, if those imperceptible aspects are determinants of organisation, the study of these forms of everyday relationships in social action programmes through music ends up being crucial for deepening the understanding of the SIMM field, as shown by important research (Baker, 2014, 2022). In short, affective dimensions, everyday practices and rituals, values in cohabitation, the way of inhabiting and giving meaning to space, are an essential part of the pedagogical and formative process and constitute the framework of meaning of the school as a micro-political project.

## Chapter Five

### Educational and pedagogical dimensions: continuities, discontinuities and quests,

In Chapter Three, the factors, processes and circumstances that led to the creation and growth of the Ginebra School of Music and its deep connection to the developments and debates of the Mono Núñez Festival were described. In particular, the tensions and conflicts that emerged at the pedagogical, aesthetic-musical, community and organisational levels, which resulted in the creation of Canto por la Vida, were discussed. Chapter Four describes the ruptures and continuities of Canto por la Vida in relation to Funmúsica, which characterize the project at an organisational and community level.

The current chapter continues this characterization, focusing on the pedagogical level and analysing the decisions and approaches of the Canto por la Vida music school team regarding educative processes and musical training. These decisions, expressed in the text as ruptures, continuities and approaches, show the contributions of the project in its educational, artistic and cultural dimensions. In particular, the chapter will analyse: 1) how the team's critical readings of the education system have determined the axes of development of the training programme and 2) how they relate to the debates on Colombian Andean music and the Mono Núñez Festival, in the pursuit of consolidating a music training school that engages with its cultural and territorial musical identity but at the same time, taking distance from some of the more problematic aspects of such musical "tradition".

It is important to note that, although tensions and internal conflicts were found throughout the research regarding the dimensions analysed in this section, they will be further studied in Chapter Seven in order to make key conceptual distinctions for the outcomes of the study in the SIMM field.



## **Educational dimension and the pedagogical mediation**

The independence of Funmúsica and the management capacity of Bernardo Jiménez and Conde facilitated the team's ability to make administrative decisions in a more organic and effective manner, based on the pedagogical and technical criteria of the music teachers. This allowed them to overcome the dissatisfaction they experienced when the organisation made decisions without understanding the logic of the educational processes and the work of the team. One of the aspects they were able to define with greater autonomy was the structuring of a music education programme that recognized the learning and developmental stages of children and young people.

### *Respecting Time: flexibility, subjectivity and sequentiality*

Within certain social music programmes in Colombia, the pressure that teachers and organisations experience to demonstrate musical and artistic results to their sponsors can affect the educational processes of children and young people. This pressure, whether direct or indirect, leads teachers to work towards meeting the institutional agendas for artistic projection under conditions that make it difficult to carry out more comprehensive and gradual music processes<sup>34</sup>. Even if teachers or directors of these organisations want to favour the natural rhythms of the educational processes and promote a holistic and even experimental, experience within the processes, they know that the artistic results on stage will ultimately be a measure of their work and capability. In some sociomusical programmes, this has been a focal point of debate to the extent that the pursuit of artistic quality is no longer a concern, which has generated

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<sup>34</sup> This can be evidenced, for example, in the case of the Colombian band context. Although the band movement has established a system of national competitions that has strengthened, energized and positively enriched social integration, association and the development of music practice in the country, it has, in certain cases, led directors of ensembles to tackle repertoire of technical levels and aesthetic languages that are beyond the technical and educational capabilities of the participants, or even their own; then, these performances are achieved through mere repetition. Some fellow directors in the same sector have criticized that, in certain programmes, the annual work focuses on preparing the repertoire for competitions, without any foundational pedagogical work that allows for more comprehensive training. The pressure exerted externally or self-imposed makes sense. Winning or losing competitions is the measure through which mayors and communities evaluate the performance of professionals who gamble their job stability in contexts of contracting for services for periods of up to 8 months at most, without other labor guarantees.

conflict within some of these programmes.<sup>35</sup> In any case, the critical point that is evident is that when, due to pressure or lack of knowledge, teachers select repertoires that are not suitable for the groups or employ methodological approaches that hinder the gradual and integral development of the participants, this, thereby, affects the quality of the experience and the processes.<sup>36</sup>

Dalia Pazos, who served as a pedagogical advisor for the music schools of the National Music Plan for Coexistence (PNMC), problematizes it in the following way:

In my work with the Ministry of Culture, visiting and supporting music schools, or in those processes in the Andean regions where we had to visit schools and listen to the teachers, it was like feeling that... no, this is not how it should be, no! They won't achieve what they want to achieve this way because in those schools what I see is that "we have to play no matter what," right? They don't consider the process they need, but instead they go to the yuca festival and there a chirimía played something very nice and they say, "that's what we have to play because look how much the people liked it," but... do I have the process to play that?... because, of course, I know that if you don't take care of yourself and don't make an effort, this is a very competitive and judgmental society, where there are good and bad. And music is also biased towards the good and the bad. (D.Pazos, personal interview, May 14, 2020)

By separating from Funmúsica, Canto por la Vida was able to autonomously establish a music education programme that allowed participants to develop their processes of work with greater tranquillity and flexibility, without the pressure of a sponsoring organisation.

We had terrible discussions with them (Funmúsica) regarding pedagogy when the band instruments arrived. The board was like, "What is this band? How is it possible that it

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<sup>35</sup> Indeed, these types of issues are recognized in programmes like the Red de Escuelas de Música de Medellín in Colombia. Both the external and internal community felt that the social focus of the network had affected the aesthetic and artistic quality of the ensembles. This created pressure and a wave of criticism that even resulted in the resignation of managers and the placement of musicians in leadership positions within the programme.

<sup>36</sup> The researcher is familiar with these issues in the context of her work with organisations such as the Red de Escuelas de Música de Medellín (2021-2023) or programmes like "Vamos a la filarmónica" by the Bogotá Philharmonic Orchestra (2013).

won't be ready in two months? What are we going to show?" It was their lack of understanding of the processes... (D. Pazos, personal interview, May 14, 2020)

To generate educational processes, Canto por la Vida has structured a musical educational programme based on "age and level of psycho-biological development" (Conde, 2009), recognizing the gradual nature of musical and human processes. Based on fieldwork observations, it can be said that the school's curriculum is sequential, flexible, comprehensive and cross-cutting. Regarding the sequencing, the curriculum is structured into three components: 1) sensitization, commonly called *semillero* (seedbed), with a duration of three years; 2) foundation, with a duration of six years and 3) deepening, with a duration of six years. These components will be described further ahead.

**Table 5**

*Programme structure*

Components	Addressed to	Term	Where
Sensibilización - Semillero	Children in 3rd, 4th and 5th grade of primary school	3 years	Public schools in Ginebra, Valle (in agreement with the local municipality)
Foundation	Children in 3rd, 4th and 5th grade of primary school	6 years	Canto por la Vida Music school
	Pre-adolescents and teenagers in 6th, 7th and 8th grade		Canto por la Vida Music school
Deepening	Youth in 10th and 11th grade 6 years	6 years	Canto por la Vida Music school

Made by the author.

On the other hand, the school has created a flexible curriculum that recognizes human diversity and the heterogeneity of levels of development and learning rhythms of children and young people. In this way, each participant progresses through the educational programme according to their abilities, skills and musical performances.

We all have different learning rhythms and ways of being some are too spontaneous, and others are too timid, but that does not imply a rule or condition for them to participate with us. If the student is skilled and requests material, it is provided to them, as much as their learning rhythm allows. And if the student is not as skilled and is not as committed, we also work with that rhythm. The important thing is that at some point they realize that they are part of this; it is their responsibility to be part of this, to fulfill the commitments they have voluntarily made. (L. Rivera, personal interview, Dec 11, 2020)

During interviews, some teachers emphasize the importance of recognizing and valuing the diversity of conditions, subjectivities and identities of the participants in guiding the pedagogical and educational processes of the school:

What we have been very careful about is considering that we all have different conditions; we all have different learning rhythms and different ways of being. (L. Rivera, personal interview, Dec 11, 2020)

Daniela Dorado, a former student of the school and now a music graduate, highlights this flexibility as something positive. The student describes how, based on her abilities, she moved through the different levels of the programme, acquiring new roles, challenges and commitments that motivated her in her musical practice and learning process. She recalls, for example, being entrusted with the percussion section in the string orchestra when she was still in the early stages of her basic training, or how she quickly moved to the specialization component (four years ahead of her group). She emphasizes how she was invited to be part of the *De ida y Vuelta* group, a professional ensemble formed by teachers at the school even before she had completed the programme (D. Dorado, personal communication, Jan 6, 2023).

Furthermore, the school addresses this flexibility in the work of the ensembles. In the school, collective music practices or ensembles are the guiding principles of the programme. They are the central formative spaces from which the sense of the school's musical education is managed and realized. In light of this, according to teacher's interviews, the school has found ways for different students to participate, even considering the heterogeneity of their training levels and performances.

That's why when our backbone is the collective, collectives work because we think of each one of those individuals and the collective is designed so that it can sound with all of them. Right now, and almost always in our collectives, there are people who have been here for one year and people who have been here for four years, but everyone participates in the collective, everyone works, and everyone contributes and most of the time, everyone can showcase their work. (L. Rivera, personal interview, Dec 11, 2020)

For example, in those Christmas performances where anyone can join, I find that marvellous. That's where I see the evaluation level of the school. And how we all fit in here. Or in the orchestral groups, everyone plays. What do they play? Well, each one plays what they can play. But no, it's that you don't have the level yet, no, they passed the beginner level, and everyone has to be in the children's orchestra. Playing? Yes. What are they going to play? Well, we'll see what each one is going to play. It's the same when they move to the string orchestra, then it's the same, Lucho looks at them, he knows the levels and he says, well, this is the first, second, third bandola. And I feel that, for example, now I feel a sense of tranquillity with that qualitative perspective, the school's evaluation. (D. Pazos, personal interview, July 2, 2020)

To achieve this, the director of the ensembles says that he composes new pieces or makes appropriate musical arrangements or adaptations based on the participants' technical musical abilities, allowing their inclusion in the musical ensemble regardless of their level of knowledge or performance in their personal process, ensuring that no student is left without playing an instrument and becoming part of a musical ensemble.

According to his statements, this also enables dialogue among children and young people at different levels of training:

Students from the Basic Level I integrated with those from Initial Levels II and III are grouped in the Typical String Children's Orchestra and instrumental responsibilities are assigned to achieve a balanced group in terms of format and stimulate progress achieved in instrument classes. (Rivera, 2022, p. 66)

As I observed in different organisations of the field, the variety and disparity of training levels have posed pedagogical challenges for teachers in music schools and projects in Colombia. The constant influx of new students, as a natural dynamic in these non-formal educational programmes, has presented a pedagogical challenge in integrating children and young people into ensembles and collective music practices that are the core of their training.

The band-school movement in Colombia has been a pioneering example in this regard. The directors of these student ensembles adopted the practice of “tailor-made” writing as a methodological strategy to manage the ongoing superposition of levels of technical development among members who continually join the process. This way of working is now referenced by publishers and pedagogues of collective practice as “multilevel writing”, enabling the collective musical experience at different levels of development without forcing disproportionate leaps for new members and without hindering the performances of the most advanced members.<sup>37</sup> However, these pedagogical, methodological and creative practices have not yet been sufficiently capitalized on by higher education music programmes in the country. As a result, instrumental performers and conductors who join these programmes without prior training find it difficult to manage the disparity in levels, often forcing or limiting the participants’ processes, possibly affecting enjoyment and motivation. This is a central aspect to be analysed in SATM programmes focused on collective musical practices of symphonic tradition, where repertoire selection and artistic projects do not necessarily follow these methodological practices. Recognized programmes such as the Network of Music Schools in Medellín are retrieving this practice through its “Repertoire”<sup>38</sup> project, which promotes the creation and renewal of repertoires based on pedagogical criteria rooted in the technical musical content of different levels of musical performance, facilitating a gradual process for children and young people between different stages of their training. Similarly, programmes like Batuta have sought to

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<sup>37</sup> To learn more about it, you can consult Valencia, V. (2011)

<sup>38</sup> The Network of Music of Medellín, formerly known as the Network of Music Schools of Medellín (REMM), has been retrieving the concept of “levels of difficulty” for the symphonic band and string orchestra ensembles in the schools. These parameters, inspired by North American methods of collective music practice, were adapted to the Colombian context for la Red by composer and music educator Victoriano Valencia and musician and teacher Wilson Berrío. These parameters aimed to gradually introduce the rhythmic elements inherent in Colombian and Latin American music into the ensembles, helping to structure the musical educational process based on the diverse musical reality of the context. They also provided methodological considerations for music and instrumental initiation processes.

address this issue by distinguishing “pedagogical repertoires” from “artistic repertoires”, a categorisation that may reinforce a false dichotomy regarding what is or isn't pedagogical or artistic, or that could be separating both dimensions of the educational process.

According to interviews, Canto por la Vida has also been flexible in periodically adjusting the school curriculum based on their observations of the educational processes. It is “a programme in constant construction and adaptation to the needs and particularities of the students and their environment” (Conde, 2009).

Over time, we have made a series of proposals and adjustments that have generated tentative programmes and as they produce results or not, we make changes. We work with established programmes but with flexibility within those frameworks. This has allowed the students to self-discover, take responsibility, get excited and for all of us to participate. (L. Rivera, personal interview, Nov 12, 2020)

Since its inception in the 1990s, the school has debated the relevance of implementing pedagogical and educational models and approaches typical of conservatories and higher music education institutions. Some members of the school believed that these approaches were excessively focused on technical instrumental training, being exclusive and neglecting other processes of human development.

Each one came from a different school. So, there were two streams. One current was focused on forming instrumentalists, with a rigid and rigorous approach. And then there was the other side, where we said, “Well, why don't we think that music should be accessible to everyone?” And that should be looked at more from the individual processes of the students and not thinking about who has the level, who has the talent. This generated discussions, with some taking a stance from the perspective of instrumentalists and the final product, while others questioned ¿where is *the process*? (D. Pazos, personal interview, May 14, 2020)

Therefore, the team of Canto por la Vida say that the school does not engage in selection processes or define specific standards for children and young people who want to join the music programme. However, this does not mean that they do not promote sequential and structured

training processes that ensure the expected musical development. On the contrary, as a ‘music technical’ programme within the framework of non-formal education,<sup>39</sup> Canto por la Vida promotes conditions for the development of technical musical domains, competencies, skills and demonstrable musical knowledge. This allows young people to obtain certification<sup>40</sup> and provides them with “vocational and/or employment alternatives parallel to the eleven years of basic studies as a music artist graduate” (Conde, 2009). This is significant for a department like Valle del Cauca, where youth unemployment stands at 25.6% (DANE, 2022).<sup>41</sup>

This is a sensitive issue for the SIMM field. Currently, many programmes with a critical perspective, such as the Network of Music in Medellin, question whether these types of efforts should lead to the professionalization of musicians in the future. In a context of profound labour vulnerability, both in the musical and cultural field and both in the Colombian and wider Latin American social context, many argue that these programmes should not orient their training towards such an objective. On the other hand, there has been a long-standing and not-so-new discussion about how the challenges posed by the contemporary world should alert professional training institutions to the new human and technical skills that musicians and artists today require. The Canto por la Vida Music School is not immune to these debates and in the fieldwork, contrasting views were identified on this matter, which will be presented in Chapter 8, particularly regarding creativity, critical thinking, music production and interdisciplinarity. In this way, the programme took on the challenge of creating a technical-level training programme with a pedagogical approach that is sensitive to individual learning rhythms, developmental processes, enjoyment, and motivation.

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<sup>39</sup> According to Article 2.6.2.2 of the Unique Regulatory Decree of the Education Sector 1075 of May 26, 2015, non-formal education for work and human development is part of the public education service and aligns with the purposes of education established in Article 5 of Law 115 of 1994. It is offered with the aim of complementing, updating and providing knowledge and training in academic or work-related aspects, leading to the attainment of occupational aptitude certificates. It encompasses lifelong, personal, social and cultural education, based on an integral conception of the individual, which an institution organizes within an institutional educational project and structures through flexible curricula that are not subject to the levels and grades system of formal education. It is offered to complement, update, provide knowledge and provide training in academic or work-related aspects without adhering to the levels and grades system specific to formal education. It is organized within an Institutional Educational Project (PEI) in order to offer flexible and coherent vocational or academic training programmes that meet the needs and expectations of individuals, society, labor market demands and the productive sector.

<sup>40</sup> According to Resolution 1192 of 2004 issued by the Departmental Education Secretariat, Canto por la Vida has the authority to grant certificates at the technical level as non-formal education.

<sup>41</sup> Aggravated figures in recent years due to the socio-economic effects of COVID-19, the impact of the social unrest and migratory and settlement phenomena.



### *Learning music by making music: the collective as the core*

In addition to the flexibility and sequential nature of the curriculum, Canto por la Vida adopted the methodological approach of “learning and teaching music by making music” (Conde, 2009 p.12). Although it may seem obvious, what this methodological strategy and motto demonstrate is the explicit departure from conservative pedagogical and methodological models that prioritize theoretical and technical training as a prerequisite for musical practice.

Regarding the programmes, there has been a history of initially trying to replicate conservatory models or school models that were heavily focused on theory, starting with reading sheet music and obtaining an accepted foundation before engaging in performance. However, based on experience, it became necessary to make adjustments along the way because in a training programme like this, delaying the student’s direct experience with musical practice is not conducive. (L. Rivera, personal interview, Dec 11, 2020)

Here, we learn music by making music. That is the secret of the school. With the younger ones, singing is very important to us, the act of singing and singing... everything that is sung is played, everything that is played is read, everything that is read is written. So, for us, the most important thing is for a child who comes here to enjoy that musical experience... so yes, there is grammar and musical language, but it is very much connected to what he/she sings, to what he/she is playing on the little guitar... when he/she starts making the connection from practice to theory and begins to understand that those signs written on the board, he/she has been doing them for a while through practice, he/she starts connecting many things. I think that is a strength of the school. (D. Pazos, personal interview, May 14, 2020)

Considering the above, Canto por la Vida places significant importance to musical experience and collective musical practice as the heart of its musical educational approach and as a place for integration and generation of key knowledge, skills and performances in the development of musicality. Consequently, the school promotes the creation of various musical groups: typical string orchestras (*estudiantina*), a symphonic band, dance groups, choirs, chamber groups and ensembles in popular music. It also promotes “theory-practice” spaces with collective methodologies for the development of specific technical, instrumental, conceptual and bodily expressive knowledge and skills that converge in musical and artistic creation.

This becomes relevant in the context of pedagogical and curricular models of higher music education programmes in the country. My broader observations of the educational field in Colombia suggest that traditional curricula for professional training present excessive fragmentation and a considerable number of subjects that are sometimes poorly connected. Moreover, these programmes give considerable importance and weight to theoretical and conceptual training as a *sine qua non* condition for the development of desirable musical practice in the fields of musical practice, creation, conducting and even instrumental performance. Musicians who are trained under these epistemological frameworks, when they enter the pedagogical field in non-formal and formal educational spaces, start the training processes by replicating these theoretical and conceptual models and frameworks, leaving aside other key processes in the development of musicality, such as movement, bodily expression, singing and collective musical practice. Furthermore, the way they approach the theoretical and conceptual dimension is distant from an aesthetic experience in tackling musical exercises, which can lead to boredom, dropout and inefficiency in the early development of musicality.

In this way, the epistemological, pedagogical and methodological advances of these types of schools and policies such as the National Plan for Music for Coexistence (PNMC) by the Ministry of Culture become relevant not only in the musical education field but also for ASPM programmes in the country. These programmes require thinking about the design of training plans aligned with their social objectives and considering the epistemic and philosophical frameworks of musicians and instrumentalists to be employed, in a context where not everyone has received pedagogical training, or worse, they have been taught to despise or undervalue the profession of being a teacher.

Canto por la Vida school has developed its own pedagogical musical model because of trial and error, internal team debates that have taken place since the 1990s and the curriculum renewal processes carried out around 2004. Additionally, according to the document of the school's basic music programme (Conde, 2009), this pedagogical musical project has been developed in dialogue with "the current state of musical knowledge and pedagogy" (p. 6). This can be evidenced by initiatives held by the organisation such as the national music education meeting

held in the 1990s,<sup>42</sup> the National Congress of Colombian Andean Music (MAC), or the participation of school members in national events, including the national music training meetings led by the National Plan for Music for Coexistence, which brought together music schools from across the country.

*Towards comprehensive education and human development: reflecting on public schooling*

In addition to the flexible and sequential aspect of the curriculum, the Canto por la Vida foundation has focused on comprehensive education as part of its educational, cultural and social project. According to its pedagogical principles, the music school operates under the postulates of “conceptual pedagogy”,<sup>43</sup> which aims to educate children and young people for life. This pedagogical approach goes beyond the acquisition of scientific or intellectual information and works on human affective (intrapersonal and interpersonal) and vocational-labour competencies that develop participants’ potential (Zubiría, 2007).

The purpose of the music school is not merely to transmit knowledge, but rather the promotion of critical thinking and the development of skills and abilities. The school is “a space for thinking, valuing and developing skills”. (Conde, 2009, p.7)

The first formative moment where this pedagogical approach can be observed is in the “sensitization component” and the *semilleros* (seedbeds). In the seedlings, Canto por la Vida visits public schools in the municipality once a week to offer music classes to third, fourth and fifth-grade students. Those children or families who wish to continue with the musical process with greater intensity enrol in the foundation and enter the sensitization component, which currently and gradually also begins to provide attention to early childhood.

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<sup>42</sup> Under the leadership of Bernardo Jiménez, the school organized the national music education meeting with the aim of learning about national trends, debates and other music educational processes to contribute to the development of the school’s curriculum. This event was attended by Tita Amaya from the Canto Alegre project in Medellín, choral and orchestral director Cecilia Espinoza and members of the Conservatory of Tolima, among others.

<sup>43</sup> The conceptual pedagogy is an original theory formulated and developed by Colombian psychologist, pedagogue and researcher Miguel de Zubiría (1998). Its purpose is to educate individuals who are emotionally fulfilled (passionate, joyful, loving), cognitively adept (brilliant) and expressive (talented).

The *semilleros* are processes carried out through an agreement with the Municipal Mayor's Office of Ginebra, benefiting over 700 girls and boys in the municipality. This strategy was born in 1997 when the music school belonged to Funmúsica and was presided over by Bernardo Jiménez, with Jairo Rincón as the academic director. After the "music school" was expelled from La Salle school, Rincón sought to maintain the connection with educational institutions because he considered the seedbeds to be the "heart" of the project. "Let's go to the schools!" he suggested to the teachers at the time. The initiative was realized with the support of the municipal core head at the time.

(...) We started going to the schools. The idea was auditory prophylaxis. We wanted to prevent the children from shouting in school because you would enter a public school and the teacher would be shouting and the children too and it would be noisy all the time. After a week, we did many things. I told them, "Let's whisper to them, let's not shout, let's whisper, 'Good morning, children, how are you?' "to calm things down. Beautiful things happened in several schools; it was seeing the teachers behind the door, looking and wondering, "Why aren't they shouting if they're in music class?" We did exercises by Edgar Willems, recognizing which sound was higher or lower in closed glasses, things that required attention. We got into it and started teaching them songs. And that's how "*Ginebra Canta la Navidad*" came about, recording that first album and that also took us to another dimension. It was very significant. (J. Rincón, personal interview, Jan 15, 2022)

Through the sensitization component and the seedbeds, the Canto por la Vida Foundation has sought to influence what they consider a problem in elementary schools and the model of the public educational system. According to Dalia Conde and Dalia Pazos, the precarious conditions of the public educational system have limited comprehensive and human child development. Inadequate infrastructure, high student-to-teacher ratios, lack of personnel, teacher fatigue, excessive bureaucracy, difficulties in updating programmes and processes, neglect of artistic and humanistic areas, among other issues, have undermined the holistic development of boys and girls, causing concern for the foundation, and particularly generating deep frustration within the team.

According to interviews, these issues have manifested in a lack of fine and gross motor skills, cognitive and language problems, writing and comprehension difficulties, poor posture, lack of laterality, spatial awareness and attention, as well as disrespectful behaviours. Luis Fernando Rivera suggests that the lack of time and knowledge among families to stimulate motor development in early childhood also contributes to this problem (F. Rivera, personal interview, 12/11/2020). Dalia Pazos points out that the schools of the educational system lack of understanding of child development processes is affecting the children.

The school [referring to the Colombian educational system] made a division between kindergarten, transition and first grade. Even the transition teachers have now fallen into the trap that children must go to first grade almost reading, if not reading and that they must count, I don't know, up to a certain number. What good does it do for a child to count to 100 when they haven't developed their cognitive processes? (...) Amidst those achievements, other things are lost. (D. Pazos, personal interview, Dec 17, 2019)

Initially, the seedbeds focused on providing a type of “music workshop” focused on singing, rhythmic work, body expression, play, round dances and initiation on the *guitarrillo* (a small guitar-like instrument). It has even led to the creation of vocal music ensembles that integrate the different processes of elementary schools to showcase their work to the municipality, which has been well-received. This has been one of the significant pedagogical achievements of the school in terms of musical initiation. However, the aforementioned issues prompted them to expand their educational work towards other types of artistic and educational processes that promote the holistic development of children and facilitate their musical and instrumental initiation.

All these reflections led us to ask ourselves, well, what are we going to do in the seedbed? Are we going to teach music as such? Or are we going to develop and accompany their skill development? And that this also starts to benefit their educative process in their schools. From there, we started looking at the need to work on body expression, gross and fine motor skills, laterality, attention exercises, where songs were always present because songs provided them with memory, verbal fluency, vocabulary. Songs brought them together as a group. I feel that this discourse and practice were strengthened and that is something we started to think and feel that we all needed to have clear. (D. Pazos, personal interview, Dec 17, 2019)

When they arrive here in third grade to learn the *guitarrillo*, they have difficulty differentiating their right hand from their left, knowing the names of their fingers; their motor skills are terrible. So, we must play with playdough, tear paper, things that should have been done in “transition” grade. We did this because we found children who held the *guitarrillo* incorrectly, with their fingers pointing upwards, meaning they had poor posture because it was difficult for them. (D. Pazos, personal interview, Dec 17, 2019)

**Figure 13**

*Musical “semilleros”(seedbeds)*



Yidis López teacher. Year 2023. Source: Canto por la Vida (used with permission)..

### *Critical reading*

In the component of sensitization and the seedbed, work is done on the development of language and critical reading. The orientation has a purpose beyond mere functionality. It is about children developing critical and imaginative thinking through reading, song and stories. Teachers such as Dalia Pazos, Julián Solano and Cobito have a particular interest and vision regarding the role that language, stories and critical interpretation play as key competencies in the education of children and youth. Dalia Pazos, who has worked with organisations dedicated to improving the cognitive and language development of children using music and arts education, argues:

That's why we read stories to them, that's why we learn tongue twisters, riddles, that's why we play a lot with them; we sing as well, the song is always present, but most of the time we try to contextualize the song, right? What does that mean? We are always asking them: Do you know all those words? Do you know what they mean? We also question and motivate them to ask questions; that asking is learning, that asking is not because one doesn't know or is a "fool," because in school, asking questions is stigmatized; the one who asks is the one who didn't understand and is a fool, right? (D. Pazos, personal interview, Dec 17, 2019)

Dalia Pazos has criticized the public school system for its reductionist approach to reading and the concept of childhood as "lacking". Indeed, other educators like Julián de Zubiría question that the language area in Colombian schools focuses, for example, on teaching grammar, spelling and verb conjugations, devoting little time to developing communication skills and critical reading (Zubiría, 2021).

Another thing I also notice is that the teachers don't listen to the children, so because they don't listen, they don't realize that these children have a lot to say to them. And they have a lot to learn. They believe that reading is about reading letters. So, it's difficult for them to understand that a one-year-old child reads, they read with their eyes and with what they tell you as if it is considered that reading learning is significant only when they decipher these grammar signs. (D. Pazos, personal interview, Dec 17, 2019)

Indeed, contextualization, questioning and interpretation are central aspects of the pedagogical approach in the seedbed and the sensitization component. Julián Solano, a former student from the first cohort of the music school, a graduate and master's degree holder in popular and community education and teacher at the music school, believes that in the sensitization component, storytelling, songs and movies are key elements to "expand the world" of the children and youth of Ginebra, helping them interpret it to gain autonomy in their own learning process.

Teachers need to know that... as Umberto Eco said (...) What is the use of a teacher today? The teacher is a provocateur. What is the use if everything is on the internet? (...) No, sir! It is useful. The teacher is useful because not everything on the internet is valid and we cannot believe everything we find there. How can we be critical of what is there? About that material? The

teacher is a provoker of discussion, argumentation, of reading the world. But right now, this idea of “I’ll teach you this way” is difficult. How does a person learn to play the guitar? Alone. We will have to develop autonomous learning a lot. (J. Solano, personal interview, April 24, 2020)

Interpretation and critical reading are aspects that also concern other teachers like Cobito. He believes that literature, words and semiotics applied to musical and artistic processes will allow children and youth to be more creative in solving everyday life problems.

Interpretation... all of this is interpretation. (...) Of course, I would say: “You have to be good interpreters because from being interpreters, you can not only create but also solve problems; if you interpret architecture, all this business of structures, if you understand, you can significantly disrupt something and have creative responses to it, no matter what it is.” And then we would get into the subject of biology, mathematics, well, I’m neither a biologist nor a mathematician, but it applies to all of that. I would tell them: “If you are an emergency doctor and someone comes in with a fracture, in university, you don’t learn everything about fractures. You don’t learn everything about music, but you can reinterpret, gather information from different parts and have a creative response to something; or if you are firefighters and a house is on fire.” (...) All of this goes to show them that it’s not a problem of music, it’s a problem of context and at many levels. (H. Cobo, personal interview, Jan 15, 2022)

Finally, literature and critical interpretation are aspects that some teachers consider can be further strengthened in schools from early ages, not only by integrating literature into music classes but also by working on interpretation from the sign “so that the kids interpret, write, describe, play with words (...) there we have a huge gap”, suggests Cobito. He, in collaboration with his colleagues, has taken risks to generate experimental processes for the development of critical thinking and reading among youth through aesthetic, musical and artistic practices in school, such as the *Taller Nuclear* and a new approach to the “Cantoría” of young people. Chapter 8 will delve into the tensions that have arisen in the process.

The educators at Canto por la Vida put forth proposals in acknowledgment of a concerning issue within the Colombian educational system: the inadequate reading proficiency among the nation's youth. This deficiency extends to reading rates, comprehension, and the critical reading



skills, with only 1% of the population achieving proficiency in this area.<sup>44</sup> According to education expert Julián de Zubiría (2021), most schools and students remain at the fragmented reading level, the first level out of six according to PISA. As a result, young people never reach the point of inferring underlying ideas, refining their understanding, relating texts to contexts, or including diverse perspectives to access critical reading. De Zubiría suggests that we have been reiterating this problem for centuries. “Tradition gives us security and we defend it at the expense of freedom and democracy”. In other words, the lack of critical reading in Colombia may be affecting its democracy.

Through literature, the school has also sought to work on the emotional management of children and young people. For example, the work that Professor Pazos does with workshops based on the book “Ramón Preocupón” by Anthony Browne, which addresses the theme of worries. In the story, the grandmother of the main character creates “quita-pesares” (weightlifter dolls) to alleviate his constant worries by placing them under his pillow, helping him sleep better. Through the reading of this story, Professor Pazos aims to help manage the worries of the children and young people, who often have difficulty expressing their concerns in their daily lives (see figure 14).

### *Punishment and affection*

In addition to cognitive, physical, language and reading comprehension development, through the seedbed and the awareness component, some teachers at the school seek to transform other relational and affective dynamics present in educational systems, such as shouting, punishment, mistreatment, categorization systems of “good-bad” and the “normalization” of the body<sup>45</sup>.

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<sup>44</sup> According to the PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) tests conducted in 2012 on 15-year-old students from various countries around the world, 47 percent of Colombian high school students are below the minimum level in the reading test. In the same exam, only 3 out of every 1,000 students reached the level of critical reading, which means that very few take an argumentative stance towards the texts they read. In the PIRLS (Progress in International Reading Literacy Study) exam conducted in 2011 with students aged 9 to 10 from 48 countries, Colombian students (3,966 children) performed at a low level compared to participants from other countries (p. s/n). (Revista Semana, 2016)

<sup>45</sup> Body normalisation in education refers to the process of establishing and reinforcing certain physical and behavioural standards considered "normal" within the educational setting. This includes expectations regarding appearance, physical abilities, and behaviours that align with cultural and social norms.

According to the study by Díaz and Legizamón (2019), punishment, in its essence, “has not changed in the Colombian educational system, it has not disappeared; on the contrary, it has been reconfigured, at certain times, according to political, social and cultural circumstances”.

**Figure 14**

*Elaboration of “quita-pesares” dolls (remove regrets dolls) with the students at the music school.*



Source: Canto por la Vida’s photo archive (used with permission).

Physical punishment, for example, is still prevalent in Colombian households and its use as a corrective method for children and young people is even seen as acceptable. It is not surprising

that the Congress of the Republic passed a law in 2021 to prohibit humiliating treatment and physical punishment of children in households.

We were physically punished, with a paddle, I received as much as I could (...) If you didn't do your homework, you would get a paddle on your hand or your bottom. Back then, the teacher was like a second father, so there was a lot of respect for that figure and if your father used physical discipline, the teacher could do it too. (P. Cañizales, personal interview, Mar 3, 2020)

In schools and it still is the case, classrooms have 30 to 40 children, in spaces where they can't even move, and you would arrive and think... 'Here comes the one who will save me, who will free me from these four walls, from this desk, from this prison'. (...) Sometimes we would bring paper so that they could draw whatever they wanted while singing, so they could scribble, so they could trace, as a way to set them free, to help them liberate themselves. The spaces are harsh and that hasn't changed. (D. Pazos, personal interview, Feb 7, 2020)

**Figure 15**

*Reading activities within the framework of the seedbeds carried out in the public schools of Ginebra*



Source: Canto por la Vida documentary archive (used with permission).

The negative experiences of some teachers from Canto por la Vida regarding their own schooling have led to reflections on education and the role of teachers. These considerations have been integrated into the work with Canto por la Vida.

I am an advocate for pleasant education... It doesn't mean that there is no demand, but if I find a space where I am respected, treated well, motivated and shown that I am capable, that I can... people will be here, we will have a captive population and we will have a motivated population that will begin to generate success in the processes (...) And when they have gone through this collective process with us and they have experienced it and they have been educated and sensitized... they leave here... and they come back. (L. Rivera, personal interview, Nov 12, 2020)

In terms of group management, we could also rely on other methods where they feel that they are truly important and occupy the space that every human being occupies in the universe and not just the teacher. (...) So, we also started to adopt an approach that wasn't based on shouting, but rather on hand gestures, on attention, where they could relax and always reflecting on mistreatment among themselves, physical mistreatment (...) We have been careful and if we see that a group is difficult, then we start working on that. (D. Pazos, personal interview, Feb 7, 2020)

Another problem that some teachers criticize in educational systems is the use of classification models that create “reward-punishment” structures that are exclusive. For example, the use of “honor rolls”, “flag-raising ceremonies” and other subtle and explicit forms of public praise for certain students over others. According to Díaz and Legizamón (2019), these practices originate from the Lancasterian school of the 19th century<sup>46</sup> and which generate competition among students, persisting in Colombian educational models. This type of school is based on the idea of ranking, which creates a system of honorary grading distributed by classes: the very good, the good, the mediocre and the bad. In an interview with Professor Pablo Cañizales, in charge of children's choirs and the Rondalla Ginebrina adult choir of Canto por la Vida, the impact of being classified as “bad” in a system that did not recognize his artistic vocation is identified.

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<sup>46</sup> According to Díaz and Legizamón (2019), in the face of economic difficulties for the establishment of schools during the time when Nueva Granada (now Colombia) was initiating its political organisation (between 1821 and 1822), the government implemented a system that was highly popular in Europe at that time: the Pedagogical Model of Mutual Instruction, also known as the Lancasterian Model. According to this method, older students acted as monitors, which allowed reaching a large number of students at a very low cost. One of the important functions of the monitors was to keep accurate records of students who made progress without difficulty, as well as those who struggled with their lessons or displayed indiscipline. This was because the model included a classification system in order to grant rewards and punishments.

Back then, the issue was that the children who were good at math were considered good and the rest were considered bad. (...) The school, I mean, the institution never offered me the possibility to develop myself with my abilities. Also, it seemed tough to me to be compared and put in the group of bad students because I was not good at math. (...)

The thing is, I never fit into school because I never found what I needed for what I believed would be my life. I have always been a musician, always been an artist. I explored painting and drawing, but the school didn't provide me with those opportunities. I mean, the school was all about copying, memorizing lessons, memorizing multiplication tables. (...) At that time, there were no "arts" classes (...) the closest thing to humanities was a subject called civics. But no, we had natural sciences, math, Spanish, physical education and that was it. (P. Cañizales, personal interview, Mar 3, 2020)

In addition to the mentioned issues, there are two additional challenges: 1) the lack of artistic and humanistic education in public schools as a dimension of children and young people's development and as a possibility for vocational and/or professional projection; and 2) the resistance of teachers towards "traditional" pedagogies<sup>47</sup>. In this regard, teachers from Canto por la Vida, such as Dalia Pazos, have conducted workshops for primary school teachers aiming to transform pedagogical practices through play, singing, movement and storytelling. However, the interviews reveal frustration regarding the difficulty teachers face in making changes. "Teachers establish power relations and work under pressure and frameworks that limit their ability to do more..." (H. Cobito, personal interview, Dec 21, 2021).

Canto por la Vida has sought to contribute to the educational and holistic development of children and young people by harnessing the potential of artistic and playful languages to stimulate capacities they deem necessary for life.

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<sup>47</sup> Traditional education, also known as the traditional educational model or traditional teaching, is a training model characterized by having the teacher as the main provider of information and knowledge. In this model, the teacher is considered the center of education and the possessor of truth and knowledge, with little room for knowledge construction, debate on absolute ideas and decentralization. The teacher-student relationship in traditional education is authoritarian, based on the conception of the student as a passive recipient of information. The traditional educator is analytical, synthetic and logical in their approach. In the classroom, individuality and creativity of students are limited as they tend to be passive subjects with little initiative, insecurity and little interest in the learning process.

In this chapter, the elements identified by the researcher as characteristic of the Canto por la Vida educational project are described, highlighting their potential impact on the educational transformation that benefits the human and social development of the children and young people in Geneva participating in the project. On one hand, distinctive elements responding to key musical pedagogical and educational reflections have been outlined, such as respect for time, flexibility, subjectivity, and sequentiality in the formative process; learning through making music; the integral relationship between theory and practice; and collective musical practice as the core of musical development and social integration. All these aspects were discussed in relation to specific challenges identified within the field of non-formal music education and higher education.

Additionally, the chapter has described how the school, through its grassroots work, has been intervening in the educational processes of children in Ginebra's schools, aiming to fill the gaps left by the Colombian public education system in basic and secondary education, particularly with regard to the holistic and human development of the population. In particular, the focus is on intentionally strengthening motor, cognitive, emotional, linguistic, and critical reading comprehension skills, with the latter being emphasised as essential for "critical interpretation" both musically and in context. According to several teachers, developing this capacity in children and young people is crucial as a life skill and as a key element for informed political decision-making. In this regard, the school is making progress with experimental laboratories, which will be described in the next chapter.

Overall, the chapter has shown that Canto por la Vida music school has sought to build a pedagogical project sensitive to individual and collective development processes, viewed reflectively within the musical, educational, and social context. Although this process of configuration has not been homogeneous or harmonious -instead, it continues to reveal tensions regarding different conceptions of the pedagogical process, as will be seen in chapters 6 and 7- this chapter aimed to appreciate the efforts made by the school and the foundation to contribute to the educational transformation of children and young people in Ginebra through musical and artistic experience.



## Chapter 6

A musical “tradition”: cultural identity, diversity and alterity.

Continuities, disruptions and quests.

*“In this way [through the music school], the legacy of the musical tradition in the municipality is carried forward”. (Conde, 2009)*

**Figure 16**

*Benigno “El Mono” Núñez.*



Source: Funmúsica website.

The following chapter presents the continuities, disruptions and endeavours related to a musical “tradition” that has sparked critical debates around the construction of local and national identity: the Colombian Andean music. Particularly, this chapter narrates how the Canto por la Vida music school has woven and consolidated its artistic and pedagogical project, valuing the aesthetic, technical, methodological and social outcomes of these musical practices with a rich history at the regional and national levels. Simultaneously, the chapter showcases how the team has been expanding, diversifying, enriching and questioning what Funmúsica, as a closer reference, has represented: excessive ideological, aesthetic, performative and poetic conservatism, the difficulty in embracing more innovative and contemporary vocal proposals and the folklorisation of musical expressions of Afro, rural and indigenous communities. Amidst this process, the chapter narrates and details pedagogical, creative and performative practices within the school that illustrate the various facets through which music can weave and impact the social sphere.

As discussed in chapter 3, the music school of Ginebra was born with the purpose of stimulating educational processes that the Mono Núñez festival couldn’t promote within the framework of an event lasting four or five days. Jiménez envisioned in these more extended pedagogical processes the foundations of a social and cultural transformation that would lead to the construction of a cultural policy for Colombian music, centered in Ginebra, Valle del Cauca. His vision was that Colombian music and its related values, along with far-reaching educational processes, would broaden the conditions and opportunities for the new local generations, establish the foundations for Ginebra’s development and contribute to the formation of “good people” for a country like Colombia (B. Jiménez, personal interview, 15 Jan, 2022).

Consequently, the music school of Ginebra was deeply connected to the music that the Mono Núñez festival has promoted and encouraged as a crucial cultural and social heritage of the country. By being established under the wing of this organisation, the music school has worked to educate in what the Mono Núñez represented, promoted and valued. In this context, the school recognizes itself as the offspring of a musical “tradition” shaped by important musical figures,



composers and performers of the Colombian “Andean” music; among them: Pedro Morales Pino<sup>48</sup>, Luis Antonio Calvo, Luis Uribe Bueno, Antonio María Valencia<sup>49</sup>, Benigno “el Mono” Núñez<sup>50</sup>, Fulgencio García<sup>51</sup>, Antonio María Valencia<sup>52</sup>, Álvaro Romero<sup>53</sup>, Diego Estrada<sup>54</sup>, Hernando Sinisterra Gómez, José Antonio Morales, Adolfo Mejía, Jaime M. Echavarría, Oriol

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<sup>48</sup> Pedro Morales Pino (Cartago, Valle del Cauca, 22 of February of 1863-Bogotá, 4 of march of 1926) was a composer, director and music teacher. His work as a musician allowed him to discover and expand Colombian musical genres such as the *bambuco*, the *pasillo* and *danza* to other territories, in addition to incorporating European music into the typical ensembles. Also, he perfected some instruments such as the Colombian Andean *bandola* (or mandolina) in which he incorporated five more strings, creating a variant of 16 strings of such instrument. He participated in the creation of several trios and *estudiantinas*, for what he is believed to be the trainer of the next generation of Colombian musicians on this type of music. In his facet as a music teacher, he also stood out for doing presentations before each recital, about the structure and history of music, the instruments used and their origins. He owns more than 100 compositions, mainly instrumentals. Such was the influence of this artist in later generations, that several instrumental groups publicize his compositions today. In his honor, the guitarist Álvaro Romero Sánchez, the bandola player Diego Estrada Montoya and the Colombian tiple player Peregrino Galindo created the renowned trio Morales Pino.

<sup>49</sup> Antonio María Valencia Zamorano (Cali, Valle del Cauca 10 November 1902 f. Cali, 22 July 1952) was a Colombian musician and composer, considered one of the most enterprising figures in the musical activity of the first mid of the XX century; he was one of the first Colombian musicians who completed his formation in Europe and one of the precursors of the institutionalization of musical education in the country. Outstanding concert performer at the Schola Cantorum in Paris, he returned to his hometown to be with his mother. He was the founder of the Cali music Conservatory (now Conservatorio Antonio María Valencia) as well as the main promoter of the Instituto Departamental de Bellas Artes, university institution of the city.

<sup>50</sup> Benigno “Mono” Núñez Maya (1897-1991) was a musician and virtuoso performer of the bandola and guitar from Ginebra; ‘symbol of the music and bohemia of the Valle del Cauca region, who became a national legend over the years’ (Funmúsica). He was part of the musical dynamic of the first part of the XIX century of the central zone of Valle del Cauca that was nurtured by recitals of piano of ‘great masters’ and ‘tertulias’ in large ‘haciendas’ that are ‘parties of *tiple*, guitar and *bandola* where soloists, duets and ‘groups’ conveyed to play *pasillos*, *bambucos*, *guabinas* and *danzas* of finisecular character’ (Marulanda, 1990, p. 60).

<sup>51</sup> Fulgencio García (born on May 10, 1880, in Purificación, Tolima and died on March 4, 1945, in Bogotá) was an outstanding bandola player and composer. In addition, he was a magnificent composer of instrumental pieces. He studied under the guidance of Pedro Morales Pino and left a legacy of numerous instrumental pieces and songs. Some of his works include: *Qué nos importa bien mío* (What do we care, my dear), *Requiebro* (Flattery), *Del Mar la Ola* (The Ocean’s Wave), *Humo* (Smoke), *El Vagabundo* (The Vagabond), *Diciembre* (December), *Zeppelin*, *Vino Tinto* (Red Wine) and *La Gata* (The Cat). His talent and dedication have made a significant impact on Colombian music. (Universidad Eafit, n.d.)

<sup>52</sup> Antonio María Valencia ODB (born in Cali, Valle del Cauca, on November 10, 1902 and died in Cali on July 22, 1952) was a Colombian musician and composer, considered one of the most pioneering figures in the musical scene of the first half of the 20th century in Colombia. He was among the first Colombian musicians to complete his training in Europe and one of the pioneers in the institutionalization of music education in the country. As a distinguished performer at the Schola Cantorum in Paris, he later returned to his hometown to be with his mother. He founded the Conservatorio de Cali (now Conservatorio Antonio María Valencia) and was a leading advocate for the establishment of the Instituto Departamental de Bellas Artes, a university-level institution in the city.

<sup>53</sup> Álvaro Romero Sánchez (1909 – 1999) was one of the most outstanding composers and violinists of the 20th century in the popular music from the Colombian Andean region. Composer of hundreds of works, such as “Los doce”, “Humorismo” or “Honores a Popayán”, considered classic in the Colombian Andean repertoire and, in many cases, unpublished until now (Ibarra Conde, 2017).

<sup>54</sup> Diego Estrada Montoya is a key figure in the tradition of Andean Colombian music, cataloged as one of the best bandola performers in the country in its time. He was born in Buga, Valle in 1936. He started in a bandola studio in 1947 with Professor Miguel J. Barbosa, with whom he formed his first musical group Los Gavilanes covering the whole country and performing on the important broadcasters of the time. He integrated several groups such as the renowned trio Morales Pino, with which he recorded 25 long-lasting musical productions. He was director of the musical ‘estudiantina’ of the Instituto Popular de Cultura de Cali (IPC) and professor at the Music School of the same institution. (El País, 2011)

Rangel and more recently, figures like León Cardona<sup>55</sup>, Gentil Montaña, “El Chino” León, among many other musicians and groups who became renowned for their creative and interpretive contributions. The recognition and appreciation of the contributions of these icons and the musical history they were part of have been crucial for the pedagogical, aesthetic and artistic project of the music school of Ginebra.

**Figure 17**

A picture of Trio Morales Pino displayed in the management office of the foundation.



Photograph by the author in 2020.

The music school of Ginebra not only identifies itself as part of this musical movement of “Colombian Andean music” but it also finds meaning and purpose in relation to a tradition that, according to one of its members, “was left orphaned in the department” (S. Ibarra, personal interview, Dec 19, 2019). The school represents the recovery of a tradition stemming from the musician Pedro Morales Pino (1863-1926).

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<sup>55</sup> León Cardona García (Yolombó, Antioquia, Colombia; August 10, 1927) is a Colombian master, composer and performer. He has written and published 127 musical works and 40 of them have been recorded and performed by various Colombian artists, mainly during the Mono Núñez Festival, the National Pasillo Festival and the Hatoviejo COTRAFA Festival. As an Andean music composer, his work has been extensive. His compositions have been performed by the most prominent national musicians. For 60 years, he has dedicated himself to music creation as a singer-songwriter and this is reflected in his valuable contributions to Andean music.

This land, the Valle del Cauca, is a land of string music. Pedro Morales Pino was born here, and he is the visible leader of this movement. He's like the father of Colombian music here. There was a generational gap, and the Valle was left without a father figure, without direction, but in the past, this movement was incredibly strong. There were many musicians in Buga, in Guacarí and here, in Ginebra, Benigno "El Mono" Nuñez. So, this is a land of rich tradition. Let's say that since Pedro Morales Pino passed away... he was a great performer, but he wasn't a great educator. There wasn't a "school" left behind him... he had many students around, but they played more or less, regular and had disagreements with him (...). He didn't establish a school that one would say, wow! like the school of Diego Estrada with so many bandola (mandolin) players. So, this school here helps to reignite that strong string movement that has been lost. While in other departments, it has been maintained or started strongly. But that's due to public policies or strong determination, or as is the case here, this school isn't public, but it's all hard work. (S. Ibarra, personal interview, Dec 19, 2019)

**Figure 18**

*Pedro Morales Pino, portrayed in the management office of the foundation*



Photograph taken by the author in 2020.

The way Pedro Morales Pino crafted and unfolded his musical and artistic project helps us to understand the nature of his contribution to these hybrids and particular type of music. Born in Cartago (Valle del Cauca), this musician, composer, conductor, educator and painter has been considered a key figure in the early stages of music in Valle del Cauca in the 20th century. In addition to his more than 100 compositions, he was the most influential in transcribing genres

like *pasillo* and *bambuco*, improved the bandola by adding six strings, highlighted the importance of the rural *tiple* and spread these musical styles at a continental level. Morales Pino played music by great masters on national instruments like the bandola and he absorbed certain Andean musical traditions to create original works, crafting them into intelligent arrangements for string ensembles and performing them flawlessly, alongside the concert repertoire of his time. Morales Pino represents the origin myth and the origin of the myth of national music (Arenas, 2009).

Two types of achievement underscore the mythical significance of Morales Pino. One is physical, wherein the hero undertakes the courageous act of leaving the province, systematically notating national music, performing “erudite” music on par with his own creations based on Andean tradition and later embarking on a journey filled with risks and difficulties to carry that music through Central and South America, as well as the United States. (Arenas, 2009, p. 23)

**Figure 19**

*The Lira Colombiana ensemble, 1912.*



At top, from left to right: José María Forero, Carlos Escamilla “El Ciego” andrés Avelino Montañés, Jorge Añez y Manuel Salazar. Bottom, from left to right: Luis A. Calvo, Ignacio Afanador, Pedro Morales Pino, Blas Forero, José María Pinto y Cerbeleón Romero. Archive of the Photographic and Film Heritage of Valle del Cauca

It's no wonder that Pedro Morales Pino has been regarded by many as the “father” of Colombian Andean music. Being a faithful representative of the so-called “national” music, the work of Pedro Morales Pino has served as an obligatory reference for numerous generations of Colombians, musicians, ensembles and organisations connected to Colombian Andean music all of whom highly value his contributions. His music holds a central position in the endeavours of Fummúsica and the Canto por la Vida music school in Ginebra.

### **Delving into a Tradition: Colombian Andean Music at the heart of the school project**

From the above, it is possible to observe the hybrid nature of these music forms can be observed, bridging the gap between the academic and the popular. This is a key element in understanding the foundational music of the Ginebra School of Music. According to Eliécer Arenas (Personal interviewed 27 Feb, 2020), one of the most knowledgeable scholars of these music styles in Colombia, Colombian Andean music is the result of a constant hybridization between the assimilation of European legacies and empirical rural and urban practices that are still alive and present. This unique fusion gives rise to a logic that makes these musical forms profoundly fascinating because they are “music that is too basic to be considered academic and too sophisticated and academic-minded to be classified as popular music in the same sense as other genres”. With over a century of technical, stylistic and poetic developments, Arenas describes this music as “Colombian popular classical music”.

The oxymoron is well-founded. Music is considered classical when its intrinsic qualities, historical significance and cultural importance make it a reference for later generations, influencing various aspects such as aesthetics, technical procedures, form and rhythm, structure and style. Beyond being classical in the aforementioned sense, this music is rooted in urban and rural popular traditions. It is the product of cultural processes that involve the contributions of numerous musicians, composers, instrumentalists, arrangers, organizers and instrument makers who have, decade after decade, created a hybrid tradition. This tradition serves as a point of intersection between oral rural music and the literate tradition of Western classical music. It engages in a dialogue with the broader Latin American musical tradition and other popular music styles from around the world. (Arenas, 2022)

The Canto por la Vida School of Music is deeply embedded within this musical tradition, dating back to the great student ensembles *estudiantinas* (lyres) of the previous century and extending through innovative projects emerging from the late 20th and early 21st centuries. These music styles encompass genres such as *bambuco*, *pasillo*, *dances*, *gavottes*, *fox*, *torbellino* and *guabina*, among others. They have evolved through representative instrumental formats like the typical trio of tiple, bandola and guitar, as well as *estudiantinas*. Various other formats, prominently featuring the piano, bowed strings and wind instruments, have also contributed to their development.

**Figure 20**

*Trio Morales Pino*



From left to right: Álvaro Romero Sánchez (guitar), Diego Estrada Montoya (bandola) and Peregrino Galindo (tiple). Canto por la vida, documentary archive.

In its 27 years of existence, the school has honoured and enriched this tradition and musical history, fostering connections with knowledgeable musicians and notable figures within these genres. As early as the 1990s, Bernardo Jiménez, as president of Funmúsica, invited prominent performers, composers and musicians of these music styles to collaborate with the school and be part of the project. Among them were Diego Estrada, Gustavo Sierra, Gustavo Adolfo

Rengifo, Pablo Olarte, Jairo Rincón and Gustavo López, among others. Samuel Ibarra highlights how this strengthened the plucked string work of the school:

So, things got serious when we moved to this location and brought in other teachers, like Jairo Rincón, a distinguished bandola player, to lead and emphasize the strings and Pablo Olarte... these were musicians who were very active and relevant at the time and because of the proximity to the festival (...) a team was formed, and the path was paved for teaching the programme. Not only with the flute with Cobito. (...) Later came Octavio, Diego Estrada and maestro Gustavo Sierra. Let's say we had several figures there in the string section. Professor Gustavo López has been with the string initiation section and Lucho has always been in the Band. (S. Ibarra, personal interview, Dec 19, 2019)

These musicians have had a deep and rich trajectory as interpreters of this regional musical tradition, which had been crucial in enriching the educational, aesthetic and artistic project of the school from its beginnings. For instance, one of the founding members and current teacher of the plucked string ensembles, Gustavo López, has cultivated sensitivity, artistry and a musical journey by learning from great masters like Álvaro Romero, Benigno “Mono” Núñez and Gustavo Sierra. He has built connections and navigated the challenge of consolidating artistic projects within the realms of production, circulation and social appropriation of these musical forms. Gustavo has been part of groups such as the “Perfil Colombiano” trio, the “Gran Orquesta” (the Cali *estudiantina*), the “Renacer Colombiano” trio and the “3G26” trio formed with Álvaro and Arnoldo Romero.

Professor Gustavo carries a popular musical heritage that also had a deep-rooted presence within Valle del Cauca and Colombian families. He was influenced by his father and grandfather, who played these music styles on the tiple and guitar. These were tunes that were likely passed down through renowned radio programmes of the first half of the 20th century.<sup>56</sup> The amateur performance of these music styles within families during “tertulias” (gatherings) was a musical

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<sup>56</sup> The radio stations such as Radio Santafé that sought to exalt ‘*the most authentic expressions of Colombian popular art*’ with the ‘*voices and melodies of the homeland*’ promoted groups such as the *Granadino Ensemble* of Hernando Rico Velandia, the *Estudiantina Santafé* and the *Nocturnal Colombiano* orchestra directed by the great Colombian pianist Oriol Rangel.

practice that has dwindled over time due to changing relationships with music and its consumption.

The first time I saw my grandfather play, he took out his tiple and positioned it here behind him. He began to play a pasillo and whistled along. My grandfather had an incredible tuning with his whistling, and he played those pasillos from the Conjunto Granadino, which nobody plays if it's not them, those *pasillos* and *bambucos*, my grandfather played them, whistled and accompanied himself with the tiple. So, when I saw my grandfather, I was left astounded, speechless and I said, "someday, I have to play like that." And I learned that, I teach it to the kids, I do the same thing with the kids, I find it very beautiful, it's really cool, it's an impression, it's something that leaves a mark on them. (G. López, personal interview, Dec 12, 2020)

Through classes observations during fieldwork, it was evident in his musical pedagogical practices that he imparts that oral and musical essence while teaching the children how to play the strings. This is an example of how popular heritage is expressed in the way the professor approaches the music in an organic and natural manner.

The deeper exploration of these music styles has led some graduates to continue their dedication to them through professional music studies, research and creative endeavours. One noteworthy example is the work of Diego Germán Gómez and Samuel Ibarra Conde "Sai Conde", both alumni of the school's first generation. Diego has delved into the study of the bandola, displaying a strong commitment through his involvement with the Instituto Popular de Cultura (IPC), where he teaches the instrument, directs the student ensemble and engages in research and pedagogical systematization of these music styles. He is particularly interested in exploring the oral aspect of this tradition. Diego has been making technological innovations applied to the construction of plucked string instruments, aiming to expand their timbral, aesthetic and performance capabilities.

On the other hand, Samuel Ibarra, son of Dalia Conde, the founder of Canto Por la Vida, has undertaken research and creative work. He has studied the contributions of significant figures in Colombian Andean music, investigating and documenting the creative, aesthetic, technical and stylistic contributions of musicians from Valle del Cauca, such as Álvaro Romero Sánchez,



Diego Estrada Montoya, Peregrino Galindo and others. His dedication to studying and deepening these music styles is evident in his 2022 album *Bambuqueando con Sai Conde*, where he compiled and selected 12 *bambucos*, including compositions by prominent figures like Álvaro Romero, Aristides Romero, Lisandro Varela, Peregrino Galindo, Gentil Montaña, Benigno “Mono” Núñez, León Cardona, Fulgencio García, Ignacio Tovar and Luis Uribe Bueno, alongside his own creations (Conde, S., et al., 2022). The project also incorporated a pedagogical approach, providing scores with melodic guides and tracks to help students play the melodies and practice with musical accompaniment. This compilation of his discographic work showcases the array of influences that constitute the musical history in which the school is situated.

**Figure 21**

*“De Ida y Vuelta” Trio receiving the Grand Mono Núñez Instrumental Award in 2011*



From left to right: Bernardo Jiménez (President of the Canto por la Vida Foundation), Diego Gómez (bandola player), Julián Solano (tiplista) and Samuel Ibarra Conde (guitarist and bandola player). Published on the foundation’s Facebook page (used with permission).

Diego and Samuel, along with Julián Solano, have formed the trio “De Ida y Vuelta”, which has already established a strong artistic trajectory. Julián Solano is a tiplista, tubist and graduate of the first generation. He now serves as a teacher at the music school. Julián has pursued

postgraduate studies investigating the community educational contributions of Canto por la Vida. This trio of graduates, along with others like Sandra Rayo and Valentina Castaño, are playing a significant role in nurturing these music styles and fostering their development.

In order to promote knowledge, practice and enjoyment of these regional music styles among the new generations, the school has structured teaching and learning processes that, on a technical, conceptual, musical aesthetic and performance level, allow children and young people to immerse themselves in Colombian Andean music and gradually navigate through it. The consolidation of this endeavour is evident in how hundreds of children and young people interpret and recreate these music styles, incorporating their technical, expressive and interpretive elements, delving into their aesthetics and participating in their forms of social appropriation.

Their programme structure and pedagogical, artistic and community practices demonstrate a formative process that favours collective instrumental initiation for learning typical plucked string instruments such as the bandola, tiple and guitar. This is reinforced through collective musical practice in orchestral ensembles (*estudiantinas*) at two levels: beginner's groups and youth orchestra. The approach is also strengthened through collective instrument classes and finally chamber groups that can be vocal-instrumental or purely instrumental. Participants choose their instrument after rotating through all of them.

Another aspect to enhance the appropriation of these music styles is the work of artistic projection through concerts, festivals and competitions of Colombian Andean music. Students also take part in other spaces of social appropriation of these music styles, such as *tertulias*, which will be detailed later. In summary, like any tradition, these music styles encompass values, pedagogies, ways of listening and social participation, appropriation, musical production and circulation in which the school is embedded through its pedagogical, artistic and community initiatives.

### *The “guitarrillo”: exploring musical and Instrumental initiation*

To achieve this, the school structures a sequential process for learning the representative plucked string instruments of this tradition, namely the tiple, bandola and guitar. From the initial levels, the school promotes motor development processes that enable children to play a fretted instrument in a gentle, musical and ergonomic manner. With the availability of a luthier workshop, the music school created the *guitarrillo*, an instrument designed by the team to facilitate the process of musical initiation and the transition to the typical instruments, which are more challenging to play due to the pressure of the metal strings on the *bandola* (16 strings) and the *tiple* (12 strings), as well as the positions and size of the instruments.

**Figure 22**

*The Youth Orchestra of Typical Strings from the Music School of Canto por la Vida*



Published on the foundation’s Facebook page (used with permission).

At its inception, the school’s team decided not to base the initiation process on the recorder, as, according to the interviewees, the recorders had very poor sound quality. At the initiative of Gustavo Adolfo Rengifo, Jairo Rincón, Dalia Conde and luthier Pablo Olarte, the *guitarrillo* was created, which essentially retains the tuning of the guitar but without the first and sixth

strings. The *guitarrillo*, with its warm sound and ergonomic design tailored for children aged 4 to 9, has allowed the school to conduct instrumental initiation processes with large groups. Children prepare themselves physically for learning the guitar, *bandola* and *tiple* by playing simple melodies and accompaniments on the *guitarrillo*. The team also suggested adorning the instrument's soundboard with paintings, also created by the children. This not only enhanced the instrument's "warm" sound but also fostered the participants' identification with their instruments. The *guitarrillo* has become a cornerstone of the school's musical pedagogical work.<sup>57</sup> With this instrument, the school has not only established a musical pedagogical approach that has gained national recognition for the Canto por la Vida Foundation but also a brand (Fundación Canto por la Vida, 2022) that has driven the foundation's lutherie line called Athelier, which has successfully engaged in the creation and commercialization of guitars, *tiples* and *bandolas*.

**Figure 23**

*Group of luthiers from Athelier*



In order, Rodrigo Duque Valenzuela anderson Castillo (luthiers) and Lina Santa (visual artist). Photographs extracted from the Guitarrillo-Ginebra Valle website (used with permission).

We loved that 'guitarrillo' from the beginning. It was the best birth we witnessed. The best child of the foundation because it was loved by everyone. Starting to teach with it was a joy. (D. Conde, personal interview, Feb 11, 2020)

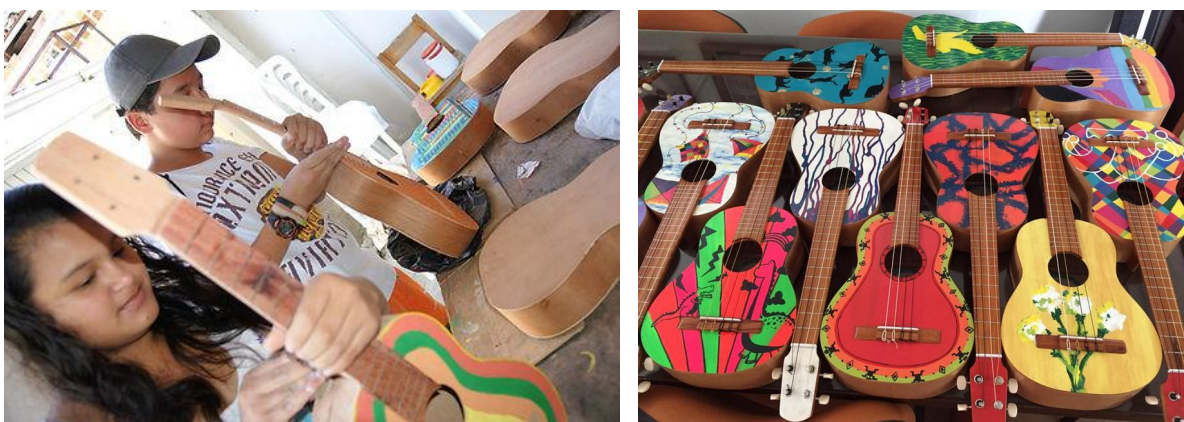
<sup>57</sup> When the idea of lutherie becoming a technical training line for the youth of Ginebra was being considered, students actively participated in the technical crafting process of the instruments. However, due to safety concerns related to machine operation, participants now only engage in the pictorial creation process.



(...) my idea was very simple: if there are 1/4, 2/4, 3/4, 4/4 families in violins, why not in tiples and bandolas? Because the *guitarrillo* was not just a “*guitarrillo*”. We also thought of the “*tiplillo*” and the “*bandolilla*”. But the *guitarrillo* remained and it was easy to create. (...) At that time, the ukulele wasn’t as popular as it is now, but people said “no, that’s a *cuatro*”. “That’s not a *cuatro*, it’s a guitar. It’s tuned like a guitar, but it’s for children”, because that had never existed. The guitars for children are smaller thirds, they are tuned differently. So, you teach a child a position like “this is A Major,” but when they move on to the guitar, it’s no longer A Major. Not with the piano, nor anything else. (...) We did the same with the strings. Cobito did the same with the flutes. (J. Rincón, personal interview, Jan 15, 2022)

**Figure 24**

*Students participating in the making of the Guitarrillo.*



Photographs taken from the foundation’s website (used with permission).<sup>58</sup>

While the school has focused on initiating musical processes with the *guitarrillo*, vocal work and other percussion and plate instruments, the interviews reference the flute work done by Hernando José Cobo with the early generations. He aimed to develop much more qualified instrumental initiation processes with these instruments. In the 90s, the teacher had identified the very weak progress of children and adolescents in playing the recorder and embarked on designing a musical training programme for the flute that significantly enhanced the musical development of the children and youth through listening, oral skills and expressiveness. Despite

<sup>58</sup> “Initially, the school involved students in the construction of the instruments, as it was envisioned as a technical training pathway. However, due to potential accidents related to the handling of machinery, the exercise was limited to creating the tops (of the instruments).”

the demanding repertoire that included Bach and other Baroque music, which was the teacher's specialty, the flute paved the way for some students to become interested in Colombian Andean music.

The first Colombian piece that I learned on the flute was around when I was 13 or 14 years old. I was already quite grown up. I started playing the flute when I was around 6. I didn't like Colombian music when I was little. I used to listen to Baroque music and I felt like... I looked down on Colombian music. And the first time I liked it was after hearing it about three times from Cobito, it was "El Cucarrón". It was back in Medellín, at the house of some relatives and Cobito played it and I said, "Maestro, teach me that one". (S. Ibarra, personal interview, Dec 19, 2019)

### *Ensembles and chamber groups: towards technical instrumental performance*

Another key aspect of the foundation's musical and artistic pedagogical project has been the formation of ensembles and chamber groups. Chamber groups have been supported by teachers like Gustavo López, Cobito, Samuel Ibarra Conde, the bandola instructor. Samuel explains the importance of students developing their individual musical skills and not being confined to playing only 'their part' in an ensemble arrangement. Instead, they should have technical and musical tools that allow them to navigate different contexts beyond the artistic performances of a student ensemble. For example, they should be able to engage in social settings playing melodies, accompanying without sheet music, improvising and singing are key skills (S. Ibarra, personal interview, Dec 19, 2019). This highlights a concern for strengthening the oral tradition present in popular performance spaces, considering that the learning of these music genres is now often mediated by sheet music and academic school processes.

As a bandola instructor, I really work on their individuality, because something I've seen a lot in student ensembles is that the kids play, but they play their part. If someone knows how to play the bandola part three, they have it down and then they go to a gathering and someone says, "Oh, you're a bandola player? Then play something, and...", "oh, no, I don't know," they say. If there are two from the same group, they play, but when it's time for the tiple, they stay silent, never individually developing their capacity. That's why in individual lessons, I have them work on building repertoire and we handle the technical aspects based on that repertoire. Each one should

do their own work. If they complete two pieces in a semester, that's fine; there was one girl who did six or seven. (S. Conde, personal interview, Dec 19, 2019)

The emphasis on developing instrumental proficiency as one of the objectives of such social and musical projects is something that has been highly debated in the field of SIMM. The high value placed on instrumental musical performance has been a point of criticism and tension among members of SATM programmes, as it is sometimes believed that these developments are privileged over other equally important dimensions of human development. However, it is interesting to observe in this case how limitations in instrumental musical progress can also affect participants' motivation, emotional experience and perception of the process.

In an interview, a graduate of the school recounts how he felt stuck in his musical development on the guitar and baritone saxophone for a while. He remembers that the guitar teacher at the school only gave a one-hour group class and "couldn't cover such specific topics". He also describes how, while playing the baritone saxophone parts in the band, he only played bass lines that were easily covered by the tuba. He would become tired of the weight of the instrument and wouldn't put much effort into studying it. His self-esteem and perception of his instrumental level were so low that he felt insecure and didn't participate in the group's performances, he said. Although he recalls that the teachers encouraged him to attend and had "faith in him", he remembers that "I didn't go because I was embarrassed. I felt like I wouldn't perform well and that I would cause the band to fail". This experience changed positively when he began playing the baritone saxophone in the Litoral Ensemble, the school's ensemble for popular and traditional music from the Pacific region. His experience also improved on the guitar with the arrival of teacher Samuel Ibarra from Brazil and his fellow student Diego Paredes Gómez from Cerrito, Valle, who was highly skilled and helped him as a stand partner in the string orchestra.

The sheet music we had in the band... since I played the baritone saxophone and it's a bass instrument, it's all accompaniment, whole and half notes, until you get tired. On the other hand, I get to Litoral and there I am a baritone saxophone player. It's not that I'm one of the bass players, but I'm the baritone saxophone! So, I have to have a completely solo line... if I made a mistake, there was no one to cover for me and the parts were really tough! (...) I struggled with those sheet music pieces, full of eighth and sixteenth notes. And my lips, those first weeks at

Litoral were horrible, I couldn't feel my lips anymore from playing so much. We only had rehearsals with Litoral once a week, but after the first rehearsal, I started coming every day from 6 to 7 pm, from 6 to 8 pm, to practice on my own. And that led me to something else, last year I became part of the Youth Departmental Band of Valle. (D. Reyes, personal interview, Feb 6, 2020)

In an effort to enhance the students' instrumental skills, the school proposed the creation of chamber groups. From this initiative, groups like Colorín Colorado, Cuatro Lunas, Cantoiris, Las Buenas Nuevas, among others, have emerged. These groups prepare to participate in various renowned national festivals and competitions for Colombian Andean music, such as the Cacique Tundama Artistic and Cultural Knowledge Festival (Duitama, Boyacá), the Cuyabrito de Oro National Children's Festival of Colombian Andean Music (Armenia, Quindío) and the Hato Viejo Cotrafa Festival (Bello, Antioquia), among many others. This artistic projection work, along with the preceding pedagogical efforts, has positioned the Canto por la Vida music school as one of the most renowned children's and youth programmes at the national level, focusing on these music traditions of the regional heritage. However, not all teachers share the view of student participation and preparation for contests as part of the school's work. For instance, other groups like the Symphonic Band do not participate in these activities, leading to divergence and tension, which will be addressed in the following chapters.

**Figure 25**

*Prizes awarded by the 'Cacique Tundama' in Boyacá to the various chamber groups of the Canto por la Vida music school.*



Photograph by the author.



Festivals and competitions serve as annual spaces for the gathering and convergence of new performers, composers and groups in Colombian “Andean” music, as well as recognized and established musicians. These events have strengthened the musical movement and nurtured the social connections with enthusiasts, communities and generations of listeners who enjoy, embrace and aesthetically develop through the process of these music genres. These experiences of artistic projection and circulation by the school and foundation are highly valued by teachers and participants. According to Luis Fernando Rivera, these artistic projections are important not only for consolidating the groups in their developmental processes but for shaping the behaviour of the participants also. Some school alumni recall these trips and musical experiences:

Back then, we used to travel a lot with those singing groups. We’d go to places like Armenia, Popayán, Cali; there was even a project once at the Plaza de Toros with a teacher, Julián Rodríguez. He had a big choir, so they joined the choirs, I’m not sure if it was from Valle or at what level, I was very young, I barely remember. But the whole Plaza de Toros was full of children performing about ten songs. So, there were over a thousand kids gathered there, singing these songs, wearing colorful shirts. That’s the biggest concert I attended when I was little. What struck me was the number of kids, there were so many children. (Member of Colorín Colorado, personal interview, Dec 21, 2020)

The best part of the trip was the bus. We played a lot on the bus. (Member of Colorín Colorado, personal interview, Dec 21, 2020)

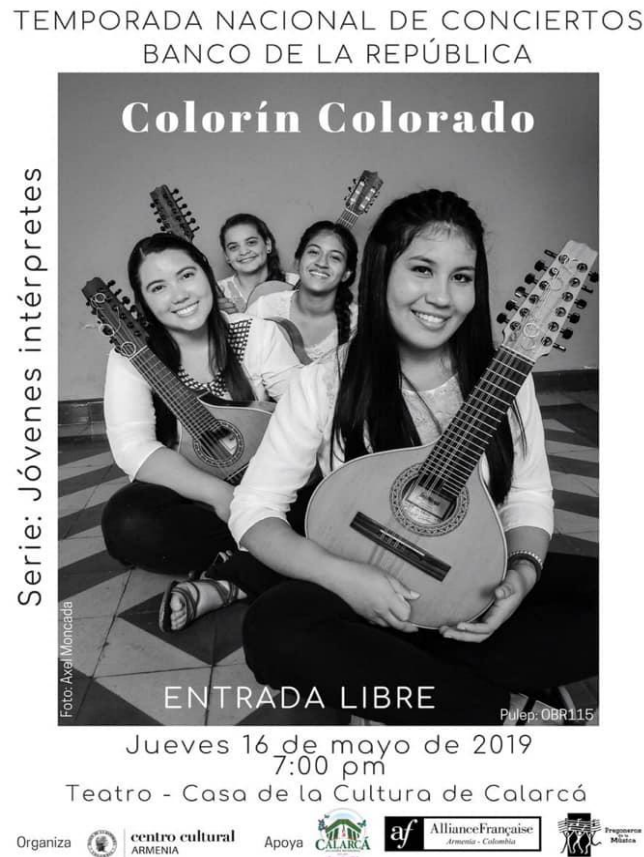
Contests, concerts and festivals have also influenced many students from the early and later generations of the school to delve into the artistic world and see it as a potential field for professional projection.

I think the Mono Núñez Festival had an influence (in my decision to study music); when I was around 13 or 14 and I used to always go to the Coliseum. Ever since we became a music school, we’ve always opened the coliseum: we perform the anthems or put on a show. I have a group of friends who are really curious about music. We used to stay and watch the competition... see other musicians, different repertoire. We started exploring different music and it became more exciting. Among them were Julián Solano and José Fernando; he’s a trumpeter who now lives in Miami. Especially with the two of them. We formed a wind ensemble to work on projects and

performances. We got into it, and we all became passionate about music. (S. Ibarra, personal interview, Dec 19, 2019)

**Figure 26**

*Colorín Colorado chamber ensemble*



Picture of one of the chamber groups with the most experience. This is an invitation to their concert as part of Jóvenes intérpretes series. Public document by Banco de la República.

In addition to the work of artistic projection through groups such as typical string orchestras and chamber ensembles, the Canto por la Vida Foundation has supported the establishment of the Municipal String Orchestra of Ginebra as a space for professional and artistic projection for the school's students and alumni. In this way, Ginebra has three ensembles (seed, youth and professional), which contribute to the process of musical and artistic development. The artistic projection of these groups, taking place at regional, national and even international levels, includes traditional and Latin American repertoire, as well as projects with performers and

singer-songwriters who represent both traditional trends and more contemporary works of Colombian Andean music.

**Figure 27**

*Municipal String Orchestra of Ginebra*



Source: Canto por la Vida's Facebook (used with permission).

Furthermore, the school has sought to engage more deeply with the community of Ginebra, not only by promoting the enjoyment of music as listeners but also as active participants. The Rondalla Ginebrina is an example of one of the oldest groups within the project. It has served as a space for integrating community members and older adults interested in Colombian music. Currently, with a focus on early childhood education, the music school at the Canto por la Vida Foundation offers programmes that encompass the entire lifespan, addressing different age groups.

**Figure 28**

*The 'Rondalla Ginebrina.' Directed by Professor Pablo Andrés Cañizales*



Photograph: Canto por la Vida (used with permission).

In an effort to preserve the social function of these music genres, which were practiced in many Colombian households in the Andean region as a form of recreation – where it was common to find guitars, tiples, or bandolas – some teachers at the school have emphasized the importance of recreating tertulias as part of the students' educational experiences. These teachers highlight the significance of students engaging with the oral tradition inherent in popular musical practices within these contexts. Tertulias are open community spaces for singing, playing and listening, where students can learn while playing alongside older, more experienced individuals skilled in these music genres. In these settings of social enjoyment, traditional and popular repertoires, as well as songs by emerging artists, are performed. These newer generations are introduced to these songs through festivals, gatherings and the consumption of recordings by groups and singer-songwriters. However, there are differing opinions within the school about the appropriateness of these spaces due to the presence of alcohol and the social dynamics that it may bring. This generates internal tensions within the organisation, as seen in Chapter 7.



### *Strengthening identity and memory*

Moreover, the creation of a school centred around regional and Colombian musical traditions also aligns with a commitment to strengthen local and regional musical and cultural identity. This is tied to Jiménez's vision of forging deeper connections with local communities through educational processes and social engagement that lay the groundwork for the development of a cultural and musical policy for Ginebra, which has not yet been fully realized. In this regard, various initiatives have emerged from the foundation to imbue elements of this musical tradition with significance as symbols of local identity in the public spaces of the municipality, reinforcing Ginebra's national recognition as a pivotal location for Colombian Andean music due to the Mono Núñez Festival. Among these strategies is a project to name streets in the municipality after genres and instruments typical of this tradition, the construction of a giant bandola (a traditional string instrument) at the entrance of the town and initiatives such as the declaration of Ginebra as a "Pueblo Mágico" (Magical Town), facilitated through the individual efforts of teachers like Julián Solano, who is invested in the public development processes of the municipality. This aims to enhance cultural tourism, envisioning the creation of a museum that has yet to materialize due to weak cultural sector infrastructure in the municipality.

**Figure 29**

*Corner of Ginebra. The street name 'Pasillo' (a traditional Colombian music genre) is visible.*



Next to it, the 'Mono Núñez Museum' is advertised, although it is not operational as of the date of this fieldwork. Photo: Natalia Puerta, November 2020."

**Figure 30**

*T-shirts featuring the sheet music of representative traditional repertoire as the Gavota 'María' by Benigno 'el Mono' Núñez, considered an anthem for the Canto por la Vida Foundation.*



Published on the Foundation's Facebook page (used with permission).

As part of these efforts, the foundation has also established the Centro de Documentación Musical de Ginebra' (CDMG), aiming to strengthen the historical and sonic memory surrounding the musical practices of the region. The centre comprises collections of sheet music, sound recordings, photographs, videos, historical documents and a library collection. Its coordinator, Hernando José Cobo, supports various research activities in the fields of musicology and education within the school and the foundation, such as the creation of the Colombian Music Congress M[A]C, which will be described later. This centre, which is connected to the Red de Documentación Musical del Valle del Cauca (Musical Documentation Network of Valle del Cauca), is available to the community and researchers who visit Ginebra. However, its operation appears to be weakened due to a lack of a permanent team to oversee its activities and possibly due to the unfortunate disappearance of the Centro de Documentación Nacional (National Documentation Center) of the Ministry of Culture. This national centre,

through the documentation and research policies of the National Music Plan for Coexistence, used to support strengthening actions for similar documentary centres across the country.

### **Diversity, otherness and critical perspectives**

As previously shown, it becomes evident how these teachers and colleagues align themselves with what some consider a tradition. They do not exist in a vacuum, nor within general music, but rather as products of a musical tradition, which entails specific representations: certain types of instruments privileged over others, specific aesthetics, artistic references, pedagogies, social uses and musical genres that form the core of their approach. However, due to the maturity of the discussions brought forth by these musicians and teachers, they realize that a music school like Canto por la Vida cannot isolate itself from the musical richness of the country and other realities within the musical, educational, social and cultural spheres.

In that sense, the school's project hasn't simply been about following a tradition in a literal sense; it has also sought to challenge it. These teachers and practitioners of these musical genres have also distanced themselves from certain problematic aspects of musical practice, especially when projected onto competitions like the Mono Núñez, for instance: excessive conservatism, difficulty in embracing more innovative and contemporary vocal proposals, challenges in accepting new poetic expressions, rejection of musical practices deemed marginal and other aspects outlined in the earlier chapters. Some teachers even question the notion that the school centres around a "tradition" that many musicologists consider to be an "invented tradition." Various contrasting views on this matter create tension, which will be discussed in Chapter 7 and 8.

Given the aforementioned, the team has sought to enrich the educational and artistic musical project by engaging in dialogue with the aesthetic, pedagogical and social diversity of other Colombian, Latin American and global musical practices. This approach proposes a vision of tradition while simultaneously providing resources for participants to connect with other musical expressions and navigate the musical field with a broader perspective. In this way, students at the school not only immerse themselves in the world of the Andean Colombian plucked-string musical tradition, but they also have the opportunity to learn a wind instrument,

participate in the realm of symphonic bands, explore repertoire from both symphonic and popular realms, engage in diverse vocal repertoires through Cantorías and be part of other ensembles and groups, such as Litoral Ensemble, which focuses on exploring the music of the Colombian Pacific coast.

**Figure 31**

*Youth Symphonic Band*



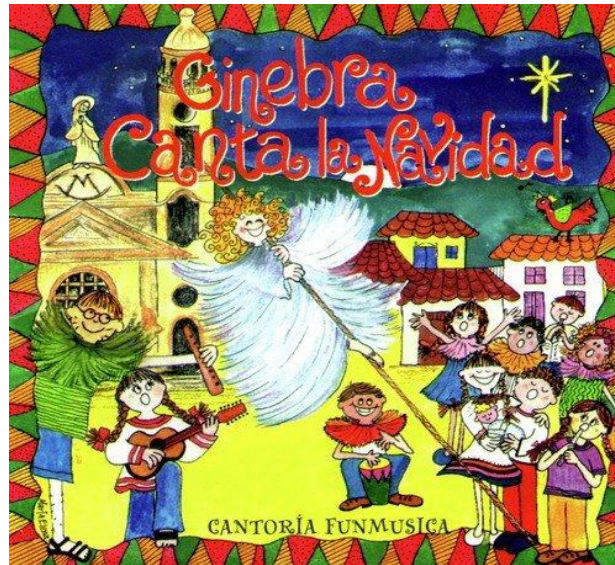
Photograph: Canto por la Vida (used with permission).

In the effort to broaden the aesthetic references by recognizing other Colombian regional music traditions, Dalia Conde and Hernando José Cobo created a Christmas repertoire in the 1990s, with the support of the music school. This repertoire was performed by the Children's Cantoría, aiming to generate a sense of identity within the population. These Christmas carols, known as *ginebrinos*, incorporate musical genres such as *bambuco*, *torbellino*, *guabina*, *merengue carranguero* (from the Andean region) and other Colombian musical traditions like *cumbia*, *chandé* (from the Atlantic coast), *arrullo* and *currulao* or *bambuco viejo* (from the Pacific South).



**Figure 32**

*Album cover of Ginebra Canta la Navidad (CD)*



Available on streaming platforms. Published by Cantoría Funmúsica. (1997)

After two decades, these carols have been embraced by the local community and the hundreds of young people who have been part of the foundation. This creative work was captured in the album: *Ginebra Canta la Navidad* (*Ginebra Sings Christmas*) (Cantoría funmúsica, 1997) which serves to broadcast the carols each December through “perifoneo”<sup>59</sup> (mobile loudspeakers) and by the public and private establishments. Annually, with support from the local government, the foundation organizes an artistic production to celebrate Christmas in Ginebra and records various segments in the different neighborhoods of the municipality to bring the Christmas songs performed by the Cantorías. In recent years, during the holiday season, the foundation has been producing ‘musicales criollos,’ or Creole musicals, which are created by children and young people, incorporating stories set to music using Ginebrino carols or other songs and repertoires. These Creole musicals address social, family, or personal themes of the children and young participants. More will be discussed about these Creole musicals later.

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<sup>59</sup> “Perifoneo” is the term used to describe the action of broadcasting a message or announcement of any kind through loudspeakers. It is a direct means of reaching the public; in streets and markets, messages and communications can be heard through a microphone. In nearly all cities in Central and South America, there are companies dedicated to this advertising system. Perifoneo is mobile and uses speakers or horns installed on a vehicle to travel through various locations while broadcasting the message.

*Estrangement and artistic creation:  
fostering critical reading and aesthetic diversity*

Similarly, the school has embraced the exploration of other less familiar sound, musical and artistic expressions and aesthetics, such as European classical music and the Baroque period. Hernando José Cobo, a professional flutist and expert in the study of these musical genres, recently initiated a project with graduated teachers from the school and the typical string orchestra, delving into these fewer familiar sounds and repertoires for the local Ginebrino communities. This artistic endeavour was presented during the Christmas season of 2021. The performance, held in the main church of Ginebra, featuring these formats and repertoires, resulted in a sonic experience that offered a new aesthetic dimension for the audience.

At the opening of this same concert, another artistic work was presented, a very experimental sound, visual and scenic performance led by the same professor and the students of the Youth Choir. This event was very interesting as it showcased the range of openness and aesthetic and pedagogical risk of the professor's proposals and thus, of the foundation. The work was disruptive. Even for some members of the audience, this performance was something strange or never seen in the town.

This work was the result of a previous creation lab that the professor facilitated with the young members of the Choir who were in their final year at the school. Using diverse expressive languages such as photography, soundscapes, cell phone technology, critical interpretation of pictorial works by artists like Salvador Dali and Hieronymus Bosch and poems like "Koenig of the River" by Derek Walcott<sup>60</sup>, the professor aimed to "provoke a permanent entropy" and address human themes that touch on the existential dimension of the youth, in a strange time marked by the pandemic, disappearances and social unrest.

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<sup>60</sup> Derek Walcott's "Koenig of the River" is "a lyrical and deeply moving poem that explores themes of identity, power and the relationship between man and nature. At its core, the poem is a meditation on what it means to be human in a world that is both beautiful and dangerous and the ways in which we seek to assert control over the natural world around us". (Walcott, 1987)

**Figure 33**

*Christmas concert (youth Cantoria ensemble)*



Photograph: Natalia Puerta.

So, there were two groups of young people. Some went with the gargoyles and others with Dali. The point was that it was going to be a score. They had to create sonority from this with whatever instruments they wanted. Of course, that requires a whole preparation because we did a workshop on how to use the instruments in a wild way, in different ways... to explore sounds. So, the idea was for them to create a sound interpretation. We're not looking for something figurative, which in music would be tonal, no, but sound blocks and colours. There's a preliminary work of telling them, 'Look, when you recall certain things, or when you see certain colours, it provokes in you...' which is all about synaesthesia...; so, they did that work.

(...) that was a prior exercise to the other one, which was based on the poem. They would read the poem and had to represent this poem in a painting; it wasn't a figurative painting but had to be in blocks of colours. With the visual arts teacher, Lina, since there were two groups, each group created a painting that was constantly changing because we had to take it out all the time to keep working on it. So, when they made those paintings, we flipped things around. One group took the other group's painting and from there, they had to start working on the music in sound blocks. Since we worked with Johncito, the professor of music production, he installed programmes on the students' cell phones and from there we worked on sound blocks. We found the simplest way to do it because it took them a bit of work to connect with the creative part...

well, of course! We also introduced them to concrete music before that. We showed them videos of John Cage. I showed them a piece of concrete music made with radios, objects, all that stuff. (...) I showed them a piece of ‘Koyaanisqatsi’ so they could see the music by Philip Glass set to this cinematic movement, always making them aware of signs, interpretation. All of this is interpretation!... (H. Cobo, personal interview, Dec 21, 2021)

Indeed, these kinds of experimental artistic endeavours stem from different questions and reflections that some teachers have about the social action of the music school and the political dimension of training these new generations. In this regard, the interest of the teachers is highlighted in having the children and youth of the school develop the ability to interpret or critically read their context and world, in order to creatively intervene in it; to have a greater social and collective consciousness and to discover and explore their subjectivity.

I used to say: you have to be good interpreters because by being good interpreters, you can not only create but also solve. And you solve when you interpret the architecture... all this stuff about structures, for example... And if you understand, you significantly break something down, you can have creative responses to that, no matter what... (H. Cobo, personal interview, Dec 21, 2021)

Cobito (Hernando José Cobo’s nickname) mentions that he found a lot of shyness and that the students took time to grasp the creative processes they were being invited into. Consequently, some of this work wasn’t completed due to a lack of time to carry out other preparatory exercises. Some colleagues questioned certain aspects of the formative process. Beyond this, tensions are perceived within the school regarding notions of creativity and their relationship with the social impact of the foundation, which will be addressed in future chapters.

Additionally, as part of this endeavour, in 2021, other experimental exercises were conducted, such as the “nuclear workshop.” This space, proposed to the school’s management by teachers like Julián Solano and Hernando José Cobo, aimed to recognize the subjectivity of young people through memory – both individual and familial – writing autobiographical exercises. According to Cobito, this kind of initiative emerged due to a series of triggers, such as the protests and demonstrations at the end of 2019 and the beginning of 2020, which culminated in Colombia’s

“social outbreak” in 2021. Many adolescents and youth from the foundation participated in these spaces of protest, demonstrating a sensitivity and awareness regarding human rights violations and the disappearance of social, environmental, peasant, indigenous, Afro-Colombian leaders and students. Some teachers sang with the children and adolescents in these spaces where indigenous communities were also demonstrating, among other actions and moments. Cobito mentions in his interview that the participation of these children, adolescents, and young people in these spaces of social protest was a trigger for the emergence of these experimental pedagogical proposals. “They were all greatly affected by the strike” (H. Cobo, personal interview, Dec 21, 2021), showing a sensitivity and political agency much deeper than suspected, even if the students weren’t expressing themselves explicitly in political terms.

**Figure 34**

*Candlelight vigil and artistic manifestation by the young students of the music school for the disappeared and deceased social leaders. November 2019*



Published in the Foundation’s Facebook page (used with permission).

As a result, the nuclear workshop aimed to provide elements for young people to recognize themselves in their collective, individual and familial history and engage in biographical and memory reconstruction exercises, allowing them to reinterpret and resignify it, according to Cobo. This workshop questioned the professor, who discovered an unsuspected world while working on the biographies of these students.

It's like when you learn about someone's history and re-signify him. For example, if you photograph graffiti on a wall, when someone tells you the story, it completely changes how you see it... The nuclear workshop personally helped me discover kids who were invisible to me... you saw them playing and all that, but you didn't know what was behind it. And beautiful, moving stories started to emerge, stories that brought tears... about where their parents came from... about their childhood... (H. Cobo, personal interview, Dec 21, 2021)

Cobo discovers how the effects of the social upheaval and the pedagogical and artistic exercises, described further below, allowed the “political agency” of these young people to be showcased, even though they did not explicitly express a political stance.

#### *The Creole Musicals: a critical social reflection*

This sensitivity and “agency” that Cobo suggests could be expressed in spaces like the “expressive movement” workshop led by Professor Andrés Holguín, a graduate in dramatic arts, a theatre teacher in community spaces and a “theatrical animator” as he defines himself. This extracurricular space, in which students can voluntarily participate, supports processes necessary for physical, bodily, expressive and creative development, both in terms of stage performance and other dimensions of their human development.

Over the last five years, the workshop has taken on a highly interesting approach where children and young people find a space for reflecting, expressing and reinterpreting their experiences, emotions and critical view of their reality. Since 2019, the workshop has culminated in the creation and staging of *musicales criollos* (Creole musicals) that began to address themes that directly or indirectly affected students, whether on a personal, family, school, neighbourhood, or at social level. According to Andrés Holguín, he began to detect this need among the young people based on his intuition and ended up developing a whole process of “symbolic construction” with them through an “exercise of analysis and critical reflection of their reality, transformed into a metaphor”:



We said, these kids are thinking and saying this... Not just the young people, but the little ones too! We did a writing exercise where we told them, ‘Write about what you feel.’ They wrote to the police, to the Uribe supporters, to their parents, saying... ‘Look, I know you think this, but...’ It was very moving, tearful. A very complicated catharsis. Personally, for me, I don’t know about the others, it was discovering that we weren’t dealing with lifeless kids who don’t think, but rather with quite profound kids. It changed my entire perspective on them. (H. Cobo, personal interview, Dec 21, 2021)

**Figure 35**

*Artistic manifestation by the young students at the school during the social uprising at the beginning of 2021*



Published in the Foundation’s Facebook page (used with permission).

For example, the impact of the social uprising and the tragic events of disappearances and murders of young people and leaders led to a project with children and young people in 2019 that resulted in the creation of the musical *El olvido que seremos* (The Oblivion We Will Be).<sup>61</sup>.

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<sup>61</sup> The musical takes its name from the novel by Héctor Abad Faciolince, “El olvido que seremos” (“The Oblivion We Will Be”). This biographical, heartrending and affectionate narrative about family reflects, simultaneously, the hellishness of the violence that has plagued Colombia over the past fifty years.

That was the year of the student strike, the year of Dylan Cruz and Yuliana Samboni's deaths. Initially, we were thinking of working on a somewhat lighter story, a bit more about princesses, kings, forests, you know? But it was very difficult. I mean, I felt the group was very disconnected, very far from that. So... I think it was also a matter of listening to intuition. In a way, I'm a living diagnosis of theatrical animation, I owe myself to theatrical animation. And to some extent, introducing the topic of disappearances, deaths, youth and student struggles there, in that context, was also an exercise in promoting other interpretations from them about what had happened, about what was happening. (A. Holguín, personal interview, Feb 10, 2020)

The creole musical *El olvido que seremos* (The Oblivion We Will Become) is about a gravedigger who has a plot of land that has been rented out to create a mass grave. In the grave that he administers, lie the mortal remains of children, adolescents and young people who have died in the war, in the conflict. The turning point of the story comes when they offer to buy the plot of land from the gravedigger and the ghosts of the children and young people appear, demanding the truth about their stories in order to have a proper burial and rest in peace. Ultimately, the stories of these children move him, transform him and he decides not to sell. In the end, everything seems to be a sort of dream. The ambiguity leaves the interpretation of what happened open to the audience.

This immediately generated a strong connection among the kids; I mean, the play itself, the fact of being there, playing the roles of the dead, placing themselves in the position of those who have already disappeared, those who are no longer on this plane for X or Y reason. Especially understanding that there was a State that didn't care and that, on the contrary, treated children and young people as cannon fodder... it was a war among young people and children, killing each other for interests that weren't their own... (A. Holguín, personal interview, Feb 10, 2020).

As a spectator of the play, one can appreciate the scenic and musical achievement and particularly, the finesse in handling such a sharp, heart-wrenching and controversial topic, without being literal or documentary-like, without politicizing the stance, but leaving a deep and impactful critical reflection, using humour, local customs and fiction to engage and connect the audience through aesthetic enjoyment. At the end of the musical, a sort of forum-theatre is



opened to facilitate dialogue and critical reflection with the community. Most of the Canto por la Vida foundation team participates in this production.

**Figure 36**

*Christmas performance of the creole musical “El olvido que seremos” (The Oblivion We Will Become)*



Photos: Natalia Puerta, December 2019.

It is worth mentioning that tackling the chosen theme was not easy. In an environment of national polarization, where young people and student movements have been stigmatized, associated negatively with insurgency, social disorder, illegality and criminality, the reception of the work was a significant risk, especially in Ginebra, a municipality considered by many to be conservative and right-wing.<sup>62</sup> There were even internal doubts about whether to proceed with the proposal, fearing the reaction of the foundation’s own benefactors.

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<sup>62</sup> According to Julián Solano (2017), Ginebra was a municipality legally established through the efforts of wealthy families who were members of the Conservative Party and later by the Liberal Party, which eventually gained support from the working classes. Since its establishment as a municipality, Ginebra has not had a significant presence of the middle class. Social differences are vast and are marked by land ownership and political power. The dynamics between settlers, farmers and landowners have shaped classism and social disparities in the municipality. (p. 61-62)

Well, I believe that was really important, very beautiful; it also allowed us to have a different reading of what was happening. Ginebra is a town that is very distant from all conflict situations and is generally quite conservative. So, here, Jacob Levy Moreno from psychodrama would tell us that through role-playing, they can assume a role that one has never played, right? But that we have always seen on television and with the bias of the media and sometimes with the bias of our families, who have always been on the side of the perpetrator and not the victim, also due to the influence of the media. So, well, that was quite interesting, and I think it also opened the doors to continue this exercise in the following years. (A. Holguín, personal interview, Feb 10, 2020).

Ginebra is a town of Goths, upstarts; they are still waiting for the viceroy, but with a somewhat narrow-minded, super-conservative mindset. And one of the things that one tries to do through education is to transmit the world. Right now, we are implementing a new course called “nuclear workshop” for that purpose, to carry out cultural transmission. Cobito and I will be managing it. An idea that I have been proposing for a while and that materialized in the recent evaluation processes. (J. Solano, personal interview, Feb 5, 2020)

**Figure 37**

*Creole musical “Diario de una navidad en pandemia” (Diary of a Christmas in Pandemic) year 2020*



Photo: Natalia Puerta

The “Oblivion We Will Become” musical set the tone for exercises in the following years. Through the expression body workshop and the *musicales criollos*, the children and young people process their emotions, experiences, imaginations and interpretations of their lives and the social reality. Themes such as the effects of the pandemic, corruption, family conflicts and their fears of the future and failure became sources of creation for subsequent stories and the creation of musical repertoires. These innovative processes allowed for a broader, more diverse and contrasting musical aesthetic range within the school and introduced new ways of working with the participants’ group.

According to Andrés Holguín, the concept of *criollo* is proposed to distance oneself from the currents of Broadway musical theatre, regarding its aesthetics, themes and ways of constructing dramaturgy. It aims for musicals to use cultural codes and values to “reaffirm identity,” also highlighting through humour those other aspects of culture that are subject to self-critique.

**Figure 38**

*Pictures of Canto por la Vida creole musicals of 2021 and 2022*



On the left, *Una Cena Inocente* (2021), and on the right, *La Navidad de Rita la Cantaora* (2022). Photo by Natalia Puerta.

Ultimately, Holguín emphasizes that this approach seeks to contribute to the education of children and young people who are aware of reality, assume a critical stance with an awareness

of what is happening and generate “political impact,” understood as recognizing reality and the responsibility we have to transform it.

I think these kids are privileged, anyway, they live in a very peaceful place, where nobody is really caught in the crossfire... And well, there are really levels of tranquility and passivity. I believe that I also did the task of telling them: look, horror exists. Let's stop thinking that we're in a paradise where nothing happens. Many things happen here and many horrible things. It was beautiful. I feel that some, a great majority, above all, became very conscious of the issue, they began to understand it and well, also showing them the news, that it wasn't something we were making up. (...)

So... I feel that was very accepted by them. And things started to appear from them as well, like little things they could say. Also, we didn't want to make a pamphlet. The idea was, how do we tell that? And we started improvising. How can we say that a child has been abused? What are the ways of abusing? And we improvised. Oh well, hands appeared. The hands thing came up as an improvisation. So, 'look: hands.' With hands, what can you do? Well, you can create, you can love, you can caress, you can build, you can... Well, but also the opposite of that. You can destroy, you can mistreat, you can kill, you can... So, from there, let's improvise with this. (A. Holguín, personal interview, Feb 10, 2022)

Finally, the pedagogical approach of the creative workshop is highlighted to support the process through “collective singing and body.” To reach creation, the workshop starts with recognizing the experiences of children and young people and their pre-expressive and expressive bodily possibilities. This exercise is enhanced through processes of training, practice and appropriation of specific techniques such as body percussion, mime, dance, clowning, acting, meditation, improvisation, among others. The professor comments that, after a process to identify a theme with the group, the next task is to search the universal repertoire, dramaturgy, literature, painting, cinema, music, related to the theme to structure the work.



**Figure 39**

*Body expression workshop with children and young people by Andrés Holguín*



Photo: Natalia Puerta, November 2020.

The *musicales criollos* are the result of a reflection on the role of the body within the school. In addition to the processes of expression and bodily movement addressed in the *semillero* (seedbed) cycle, students can attend classes in dance, yoga and the body expression workshop up to their advanced levels. However, this does not seem to be sufficient. Cobo presents the challenges that the new generations face in terms of their relationship with the world, particularly due to virtuality, technology and the impacts of the pandemic, within the context of the precariousness and “mediocrity” of public education in municipalities of this category.

They are children or victims of technology. Their bodies are transitioning or becoming virtual. This is a hypothetical thing. The kids don’t move much because they’re always on their phones. I mean, they are like ‘cybers,’ the phone is part of their hand. Their history, their life, their reality... they practically live on their phones. (H. Cobo, personal interview, Dec 21, 2021)

On the other hand, Andrés Holguín suggests that the academic, dogmatic and religious education within the school environment in Ginebra also contributes to unexpressive and “restricted” bodily behaviours. For this reason, he sought the assistance of dance teacher Armando Naranjo to work with him. Similarly, Professor Julián Solano agrees, questioning how the music education practices of the music school also favour this rigidity and lack of creativity. This generates a discussion and tension that will be further explored in upcoming chapters.

Lastly, in this quest to expand, enrich and recognize the diversity of music and delve into a critical perspective on the “tradition” of Colombian Andean music in relation to its epistemic, aesthetic and pedagogical debates with Funmúsica, the team at the Canto por la Vida foundation has created spaces for critical reflection through the sharing of academic, research and musical creation knowledge. Among these efforts, the Colombian Music Congress (M[A]C) and the Cantabailanta festival stand out.

### *The MAC Research congress*

The M[A]C congress is a space for academic, artistic and creative exchange, established since 2013, fostering conversation, reflection, knowledge generation and creation within the field of Colombian music. Initially, the event was called the Congress of Colombian Andean Music, which aimed to provide an open forum to showcase “searches, analyses, experiences, knowledge, questions, ideas and proposals” related to the different instances in which we engage with the territory and the Andean Colombian sonic imagination. However, in light of critical reflections on the concept and place of the “Andean”, the M[A]C transformed to encompass Colombian musics in their breadth, diversity and complexity.

Throughout its evolution, the M[A]C has continued to reshape and solidify its name, moving away from the concept of the “Andean” (it was initially called the Congress of Colombian Andean Musics), considering this definition as biased for understanding the country’s musical reality, limiting the possibilities of approaching, studying, analyzing, researching, interpreting and comprehending Colombia’s sonic and musical phenomena. Therefore, the [A] in M[A]C has been redefined today as: Acoustic, Artistic, Alternative, Aleatory, Ancient, Alien, Asphaltic, Atemporal, Amorphous, Afro-Indigenous-European-Asian-Oceanic, Anodyne, Hallucinogenic... All Colombian Music. (Congreso M[A]C, 2020)

With the support of organisations such as Sonidos Enraizados, Bandolitis, the Bellas Artes Departmental Institute and the Ministry of Culture, among others, the congress has been deepening its exploration every two years of the epistemic, aesthetic, pedagogical, social, artistic and production and management dimensions of musics from academic, research, creative and educational perspectives. The congress M[A]C has emphasized various themes since its

inception in 2013. However, to exemplify the point of critical openness and the political and social commitment to musics, it's worth mentioning the 2018–2020 versions dedicated to “border musics”, “limit music” and “resistance music”.

We are calling forth questions about the operability of the liminal, in a time when the grammars of sonic poetics are in constant mutation, unfolding in hypertexts, exacerbating and subverting symbolic status quos, opening significant rifts within ideological establishments and harboring resiliences and resistances, challenging wars and various forms of death. All of this takes place within the contemporary historical cadence, seeking to listen to the diverse narratives of a country; narratives woven over the contingent fabric and mist of continuously evolving alterities. (Congreso M[A]C, 2020)

**Figure 40**

*Publication of the 2020 M[A]C congress*

The figure consists of two side-by-side promotional posters for the 2020 M[A]C Congress.

**Left Poster: MÚSICAS EN ESTADO DE RESISTENCIA**  
 - Title: MÚSICAS EN ESTADO DE RESISTENCIA  
 - Website: WWW.CONGRESOMAC.COM  
 - Year: 2020  
 - Format: VIRTUAL  
 - Visuals: A raised fist holding a microphone, with a large stylized 'M[A]C' logo below it.  
 - Date/Time: JULIO 3 2 PM

**Right Poster: [A]GENDA ACADÉMICA**  
 - Title: [A]GENDA ACADÉMICA  
 - Subtitle: V CONGRESO DE MÚSICAS COLOMBIANAS  
 - Theme: Resistencia Musical  
 - Speaker: CARLOS MIÑANA COLOMBIA  
 - Topic: MÁS ALLÁ DE LA PROTESTA: MÚSICA Y MILITANCIA EN BOGOTÁ 1968-1982 Y LA TRANSFORMACIÓN DE LA "MÚSICA COLOMBIANA"  
 - Time: 2:00 PM A 3:15 PM  
 - Platform: zoom  
 - Session: SESION DE PREGUNTAS Y CONVERSATORIO (USUARIOS REGISTRADOS AL MAC2020)  
 - Break: COFFEE BREAK / 3:45 PM - 4:00 PM  
 - Section: FRANJA / PRESENTACIÓN DE PONENCIAS / EJE 1  
 - Platform: YouTube  
 - Agenda Items:  
 1. "Ritmos folclóricos musicales colombianos: La educación musical entre la corporalidad y la corporeidad". Jorge Rosas. 4:00 pm - 4:15 pm  
 2. "Adaptación de la guitarra eléctrica al porro chocoano". Juan Vargas. 4:15 pm - 4:30 pm  
 3. "Murga Uruguaya en Bogotá: Adaptaciones capitalinas de un fenómeno festivo foráneo". Sergio Triviño. 4:30 pm - 4:45 pm  
 4. Panel de preguntas con ponentes 4:45pm - 5:30 pm  
 - Break: COFFEE BREAK 5:30 pm - 6:00 pm  
 - Platform: f LIVE  
 - Concert: CONCIERTO / MUESTRAS MUSICALES 6:00 PM 7:00 PM /  
 - Logos: Various cultural and institutional logos at the bottom.

Retrieved from the Website (used with permission). (M[A]C Congress, 2020)

Within these themes, the congress worked on local musics as signs of generational, political, or ideological resistance (musics of indigenous peoples, the Rrom people, black communities, *raizales*, *palenqueros*, etc., diverse musics in the resistance and legitimization of LGBTI communities); the mediation and circulation/market of musics in territories of guerrilla organisations, paramilitary groups and armed forces; musics in states of revitalization; the street as a space for performance and mediation; alternatives and/or proposals for musical circulation in contemporaneity (underground), different from industrial/capitalist market and marketing systems.

This commitment to diversity, alternativeness, marginality and liminality embraces everything that the Mono Núñez festival of Colombian Andean music excludes. The aesthetic, pedagogical, communal and social openness of this event precisely represents everything that, at some point, some members of the team of teachers and directors who were part of Funmúsica criticized the organisation and the festival, specifically its closed, conservative, exclusionary and even classist vision.

### *Cantabailanta festival*

Similarly, Canto por la Vida has invested in the creation and organisation of the Cantabailanta festival as an alternative, festive and aesthetically innovative space that seeks to connect Ginebra with the diversity of musics that, for example, the Mono Núñez festival, by its nature, does not call upon, thus making visible the creative, mobile and dialogic vitality of urban, popular, rural, regional traditional and singer-songwriter musics, among others. The name Cantabailanta also represents those other forms of participation and listening that integrate the enjoyment of the body and dance, other forms of singing, their poetics and narratives. Even as an act of contestation, the festival is scheduled on the same days as the Mono Núñez festival takes place.

The commitment to expand, enrich and diversify the framework of musical aesthetic references and artistic and scenic projects is strengthened through the musical circulation exercises that the Canto por la Vida foundation manages through calls for submissions and/or with its own resources. This creates a flow of musicians and artistic projects visiting the music school in



Ginebra, which schedules concerts and open presentations for the community with a minimal contribution. This enriches the cultural and artistic offerings in the municipality. Similarly, the foundation supports the artistic projection of the school's chamber groups and ensembles, enabling their participation in concerts, festivals, competitions and other events at local, regional, national and international levels.

**Figure 41**

*Picture of Cantabailanta festival. Year 2023*



Source: Facebook page of “La tienda del Cantabailanta” (used with permission).

Based on the above, the contribution of Canto por la Vida in the revitalization and enrichment of the musical life, history and identity of Ginebra can be appreciated. As mentioned, this school doesn't position itself within the broad perspective of “universal music”, but rather as a project with a local anchor that has understood its strength lies in the development of its own cultural resources, in recognizing the aesthetic, pedagogical and social richness that the diversity of musical practices and expressions in the country offers and in having an open and critical view of the social, cultural and educational context. Canto por la Vida has strengthened the conditions and opportunities for a wider community of children, young people and adults to deepen their

connection with music through practice, knowledge and enjoyment, while also contributing to the qualification and professionalization of the field and profession of music in its various dimensions of development such as education, research, creation, production, provision, circulation and management. This has helped “demystify music as a bohemian practice, turning it into a life project” (Sanchez et al, 2022).<sup>63</sup>

However, as it will be described in the following chapter, the consolidation of the music school has not been harmonious, static, or homogeneous. As suggested throughout the chapters, various tensions have been identified concerning the aesthetic, pedagogical, organisational and community dimensions of the organisation, which have led to conflicts and even ruptures. The study of these tensions in this case allows for a broader understanding of the challenges within the SIMM field in contexts like Colombia.

**Figure 42**

*Exhibition “Ginebra Land of Musicians”, June 2022*



Result of the research-creation process by Universidad Autónoma de Occidente.

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<sup>63</sup> The Universidad Autónoma de Occidente conducted a research-creation project to analyse the narratives of representation about musicians in Ginebra, Valle. (Sanchez Et al, 2022)

This chapter has explored the continuities, ruptures, and commitments of Canto por la Vida in relation to the development of its musical pedagogical project, grounded in Colombian Andean music. It has illustrated how the team succeeded in consolidating a training process that prioritises specific repertoires, aesthetics, techniques, ensembles, historical references, and ways of engaging with social life as integral aspects of the school's identity. This approach also represents a deliberate commitment to fostering a sense of belonging and territorial cultural identity, which supports the social development objectives for Ginebra, as envisioned by the president of the foundation. The chapter has delved into several dimensions of these traditional musical practices- historical references, instrumental formats, and more -to help the reader grasp the aesthetic, pedagogical, artistic, and social commitments that define the school's work. In doing so, it highlighted the ambivalence embedded in the concept of "Colombian popular classical music" and examines how the school has structured its educational process around the creative logics of these musical forms, allowing it to assert a national presence.

Furthermore, the chapter critically addressed how Canto por la Vida has distanced itself from certain problematic dynamics in the treatment and representation of these musical forms, particularly in competitions like the "Mono Núñez". Key issues included conservatism in aesthetics and the stagnation of vocal poetics; the folklorisation and, at times, the condescension towards Afro-Colombian, indigenous, and rural musical expressions; fragmented sociability that emerges from different performance contexts and listening categories; and the lack of critical reflection on, and integration of, contemporary artistic practices, among other concerns. In this context, the chapter demonstrated how, through its musical pedagogical practices, research events, and new festivals, the school has cultivated a critical reading of its social reality. Central to this is the notion of the body as a core element in the experience, reflection, and creation processes, alongside alternative forms of sociability that Colombian Andean music can foster in the contemporary time.

The above provides an intriguing analytical lens for understanding this project, which has potential implications for the SIMM field. Specifically, it showcases the ability to embrace diverse and alternative approaches to working within the same musical tradition. The music school revives, values, and deepens these musical forms, striving to create rootedness, identity,

and both musical and artistic development, thereby giving the school a sense of projection and social relevance. On the other hand, it also creates new spaces to critically reimagine this tradition, integrating practices and processes that not only complement, challenge, or diversify it, but also respond to and give voice to contemporary concerns. This is achieved through ethical-political and aesthetic commitments that disrupt the status quo, fostering imagination, critical thought, and social engagement.

However, these pedagogical, aesthetic, and formative choices also give rise to tensions and conflicts within the organisation, as well as complexities that are crucial for understanding the field. These will be explored further in the next chapter.

## **Chapter 7**

### **Tensions and conflicts**

In the previous chapters, the pedagogical, artistic, community and organisational practices of the music school Canto por la Vida were detailed. This included the shaping of its educational, cultural and social project through Colombian Andean music. The chapters aim to make visible the continuities and ruptures of the founding members of Canto por la Vida with Funmúsica—their ideologies, practices, and values. This is done to illustrate to the reader how the project gradually formed an identity that was more aligned with the philosophies, positions and commitments of the teaching team regarding music, education and its potential role in the educational, cultural and social improvement of Ginebra.

The description covered how and under what criteria and circumstances the school decided to preserve, distance itself, enrich and even challenge certain elements at the aesthetic-musical, pedagogical, artistic, community and organisational levels projected by Funmúsica through the festival and its forms of organisation and social engagement. This included the treatment of traditional regional music.

However, over the course of the school's 30 years of existence the configuration and consolidation of the music school project in Ginebra has not been static, harmonious, or homogeneous. During fieldwork, internal tensions and conflicts were identified—some daily and others more circumstantial—revealing the challenges that music-based social action projects face in diverse cultural contexts.

This chapter describes the tensions identified during fieldwork and distinguishes them in sections solely to highlight discussions from certain focal points. In order to explore the nature of these tensions, the following categorisation was made: 1) tensions on tradition and creation, which explores the different and contrasting ways in which tradition is seen by diverse members

and their implications to creation and social construction; 2) tensions around decolonial critical discourses, subjectivity and territoriality, which explores different and contrasting views on how this musical tradition is or should be embraced socially, exploring both the critical lenses and the musicians' identities; and 3) the organisational tensions which explores to sociocultural challenges of the organisation and its implications to human and work relationships. However, as will be seen in the concluding chapter 8, these points of tension become more complex, allowing for the elucidation of other factors that intervene on conceptualizing the vision of a musical educational programme that seeks to enhance its social action.

In order to triangulate the discussions and perspectives underlying the tensions identified and described in this chapter, external interviews were conducted with experts in Colombian Andean music. These individuals possess extensive experience in artistic training processes and are widely recognised for their in-depth reflections on musical development in the country. Although the reader may encounter predominant voices throughout this text, it is important to emphasise that the intention was to extrapolate the discussions enriching angles, views and positions already identified within the programme.

### **Tensions of tradition and creation: notions of social construction**

To better understand how a music school like Canto por la Vida can play a possible role in social construction, it is crucial to address the dilemmas that arise when centring a musical pedagogical project on a musical tradition. In culturally diverse countries such as Colombia, this analysis is relevant within the SIMM field when thinking about the construction of socio-musical projects that recognize, embrace and celebrate musical identity and the cultural and social richness of territories and communities as capital for defining social, educational and cultural community projects. For this reason, delving into the debates that Canto por la Vida presents about musical tradition and its approach to “Colombian Andean music” is key to understanding the challenges and opportunities that the field faces in contexts with diverse musical traditions and its implications for social action through the training processes of new generations of children and young people in music.

On the other hand, the definition of a music educational project centred on these types of musical practices connected to a cultural tradition is not isolated from the dynamics of the referred music and the diversity of ways in which they are signified, practiced, conceptualized and socially embraced. This will also be reflected in the discussions presented below, raising a question about the relationship and dialogue between the musical practices stimulated within the projects and the movement and social dynamics that correspond to these practices, including festivals, projection and circulation circuits, aesthetic and pedagogical trends and their development processes. Indeed, the project engages with a broader movement of actors, performance spaces, critical debates and dynamics of the field that contribute to the questions the school poses about its projection, training processes and forms of social impact.

This section explores the different and contrasting ways of understanding the commitment to music and its relationship with social construction, from very different, ambivalent and complex angles.

As described in Chapter 3, the critical discussions that some founding members of the music school had with Funmúsica regarding its treatment and conception of Colombian Andean music, which in the 1990s generated significant tensions and conflicts internally, still persist in the current context of Canto por la Vida. This observation is interesting within the framework of the study and a broader temporal context because this continuity suggests that these tensions and debates may not be exclusive to a particular critical moment in Funmúsica's history. Instead, they might be indicating something about the inherent challenges faced by community music projects that place specific musical traditions at the center of their proposals.

During the particular stage of Canto por la Vida covered in the fieldwork (2019 to 2022), a tension related to the notion of "tradition" was identified. When some teachers assert that the music school educates in the "tradition" of Colombian Andean music, other members of the school find this highly debatable. Analyzing the interviews, the criticism revolves around three aspects: 1) the idea that "Colombian Andean music" is a genre invented by the Mono Núñez festival, portraying and continuing a "tradition" also invented by Colombian nationalism in the 19th century; 2) the idea that there is an attempt to educate in a musical aesthetic as if it were

the representation of a fixed past time, without a “semiotic analysis” accounting for the processes of creation, hybridization, transformation, rupture and transformation of these music genres; and 3) the idea that performers are studied from a deterministic perspective or conceiving their contribution as fixed schools of interpretation.

These debates surrounding the treatment of “Colombian Andean music,” which once caused tensions with Funmúsica in the 1990s, persist today within the Canto por la Vida project when criticisms are expressed in interviews about the school’s formative and aesthetic approach to these musical genres.

Some members believe that what was debated in the past is now being reinforced with the strengthening of certain conservative educational and aesthetic proposals in the school. For example, one of the teachers criticizes the closed treatment of the music and the understanding of tradition as a “doxa” that institutionalizes and canonizes the aesthetic, poetic, interpretative and performative elements of the music. In their opinion, this closed vision once limited the possibility for the Mono Núñez festival to continue opening up and diversifying according to the nature of the music and its possibilities. In other words, it is interpreted as if the school is returning to a closed view of tradition, which had already been debated by the team 20 years ago.

Some teachers reiterate social and organisational criticisms, as they believe that, at that time, these approaches were determined by a private and institutionalized vision and from positions of power, social class, taste and ideological positions about “Colombianness.” They argue that this negated and relegated internal conceptual, aesthetic and pedagogical debates about the music excluded and folklorized the intercultural dimension of indigenous, Afro, rural, popular and urban elements. This closed the door to new languages, contemporary poetics and forms of expression and development more closely aligned with the life of Colombian Andean music and its dialogue with other sonic aesthetics and musical practices. According to some members, the Colombian Andean music, treated as a closed genre, canon and dogma, is being reinforced in the school’s educational context, even as an exercise of power.



For example, some teachers criticize the interpretative dimension around this “tradition” and its implications for education. They point out that there is no reading and study of tradition as a living, dynamic and unfixed process in time. Although these teachers recognize how musical transmission processes impact the instrumental technical dimension and how they constitute certain instrumental interpretative “schools,” they note a lack of critical and creative thinking in the study of music due to the lack of semiotic analysis of its transformations and the factors that have influenced the development of its grammars. This, they consider, has generated a static quality in the aesthetic, interpretative and performative aspects, similar to the Mono Núñez festival. One professor describes this posture:

The criticism is that they stick to the *doxa* and there is no historical envisioning of Colombian music and that music. I can say... my flute school has this tradition and has transformed in this way and my teachers have a direction... but for some, tradition is... it’s the same thing that happens to the conservatory. When I tell the conservatory to rethink all this about interpretation, it’s because even if we play Western classical music, we are playing it from a local information standpoint here. (...) Some people say: “I studied with the one who studied with Czerny”, but that doesn’t mean that they play the same as Czerny or that if my teacher was a student of the student of the student of Liszt, I play like Liszt. Of course, there is a technical foundation, but I don’t play like Liszt. (...)

It’s the same distortion as folklorists. I don’t want to diminish the work of people like Abadía Morales, but if you go to Guapi and record, you can’t take for granted that the tradition is “this way”. You can hear ten marimba players and all ten play differently. They may have the same strike, but they have the added element when one plays and says... “Look! This sounded good to me”, and that integrates (...) because it’s an evolutionary thing. (...) For example, the tradition that was forged with practically the entire interpretative school that comes from Nogal and what Diego Estrada did. Diego Estrada made a significant technical contribution and in the management of languages as well. But we can’t say that Diego Estrada “does” or “did” ... there were many ways Diego interpreted. (H. Cobo, personal interview, Nov 11, 2020)

As described in Chapter 6, this critical perspective on the approach and treatment of Colombian Andean music as a tradition has prompted the creation of academic and research spaces within the Canto por la Vida school, such as the M[A]C congress. This congress has aimed to provide

a platform for reflection, thought and critical research on these topics and many others related to Colombian music. However, it has also generated tensions among members of the school and even misunderstandings and conflicts.

Of course! People always tell me that I hate the Mono Núñez; that I organized a congress because I hated the Mono Núñez. (...)

In a talk by Gustavo where he was discussing Pedro Morales Pino, I managed to ask him: “Do you think poetic approaches have advanced after Pedro Morales Pino?” (...) because there, it becomes another mix-up. I mean, they put in the same basket Pedro Morales Pino, who died in 1925, with Luis A. Calvo, León Cardona, Uribe Bueno... who, for me, are like the milestones (ruptures)... but from then on, there have been very few advances in poetic approaches, or they have not been heard enough... For example, there is one that is not heard and here (at the festival) it was taken for granted: Héctor Fabio Torres. (...) I mean... Of course! I am not talking about the technical contribution, of course! There has been immense evolution in interpretation. I find it incredibly beautiful and interesting... but if you sustain this other discussion in public, everyone thinks you hate the music... (H. Cobo, personal interview, Nov 11, 2020)

During my fieldwork, I observed how some members of the organisation link these critical stances to the lingering effects of the rift with Funmúsica that occurred in the 2000s. Some believe that these ongoing critical reactions are rooted in a past conflict that no longer holds relevance in the current trajectory of the project or for the newer generations involved. They argue that perpetuating such discussions only serves to hinder efforts to engage students with the festival and to view traditional elements as opportunities for further development within the school’s work. This creates a palpable tension, as the issue is not framed in the same way by everyone. Some members interpret the problem through an epistemic lens, focusing on differing approaches to music and education, while others emphasise the emotional dimensions tied to a “past” conflict that they feel still resonates.

In an effort to better understand this critical perspective on “tradition” and its potential implications for building a project like Canto por la Vida focused on the approach to regionally traditional music, I interviewed other experts in the country. Alejandro Mantilla, a proponent of

the policy of creating music schools with an emphasis on regional traditions, raises a similar issue about the definition of tradition. Mantilla problematizes that the evaluation and conceptualization of what we call “tradition” are risky or “dangerous” in the sense that, when there is a local approach or treatment of tradition, a long historical trajectory is fragmented and certain features, processes and periods are privileged over others. He believes that this “linear and mechanistic approach to historical processes” does not allow for an appreciation of the intercultural nature of Colombian and Latin American music, nor does it recognize how their long paths were shaped over time in the historical flow. In other words, he considers that traditions are not homogeneous but deeply intercultural. Consequently, he argues that it is entirely contradictory that we identify ourselves as “pluricultural” and orient ourselves toward interculturality as an ideal when, in essence, we are profoundly intercultural by definition. He exemplifies his argument as follows:

We, even in the pre-Colombian context, operated with pure interculturality because, beyond the geographical and physical limitations of contact between Mesoamerican cultures, some tropical South American cultures and some Andean South American cultures, what prevailed were flows of exchange. In some cases, there were live conflicts, armed conflicts, hegemonies and domination as well. Paradoxically, due to our location and characteristics, we found ourselves in a “sandwich” between very strong hegemonic cultures of Mesoamerica and South America. In the last pre-Colombian stage, our “sandwich” was very potent between expanded Inca cultures, also reaching our territory and Mayan and Aztec cultures also extended to our territory and we were in the middle. But notice that these were intercultural processes, not homogeneous processes, as is sometimes thought. Moreover, if we had the scientific tools to properly and fluidly manage how those territories in the American land were populated in pre-Colombian origins, most likely, as far as I remember, there were pure Asian and African migratory currents, long-term, long-distance, that is, pure interculturality. Imagine! (A. Mantilla, personal interview, Dec 10, 2019)

Some members of the school agree with this perspective and that is why they consider it crucial to investigate analytical tools to understand the processes of transformation in music. According to some interviewees, this raises questions for the creative and formative processes of the music school. Indeed, they believe that the lack of this semiotic exercise in the study, practice and

training of music as tradition has not only limited the development of music but also the critical and creative thinking of students who should have greater agency and critical tools to make aesthetic, creative and artistic decisions in their formative and creative musical process.

For example, some consider that the performance and the artistic and aesthetic musical commitment of certain chamber groups in the school are “worn out”, referring to their preferences for the “traditional” way of interpreting the repertoire without investigating more creative ways of approaching musical tradition. They also believe that contests and festivals of Colombian Andean music in the country have incurred this aesthetic exhaustion due to excessive repetition, possibly influenced by the aesthetic impact of the Mono Núñez festival as a significant national reference for such music. In summary, some teachers believe that the school's chamber groups end up entrenched in this logic without asking critical questions about the language.

My question is, well, they’re almost finishing their music degree and then what? I still see them playing the same things, without asking themselves... without asking questions about the language... (H. Cobo, personal interview, Nov 11, 2020)

On the contrary, other teaching members of the music school have a quite different assessment. These members believe that the traditionalist turn of the festival is not a problem because they consider that it has contributed to the historical study and knowledge of the music, which they value positively and deem necessary in the training of new generations and creative processes in this music.

It doesn’t seem bad to me that it takes a turn; it seems normal. Now it’s very traditional, there are very traditional proposals that in other times wouldn’t have won. Before, the new proposals won. But then we come back to what we were talking about before, knowing the music. For example, young people from one era only knew the composer of “Estrellita de Bogotá,” Maestro Ríos, but they wouldn’t play a single piece by Pedro Morales Pino or Romero (...). So, if the competition takes a turn and returns to the roots of a traditional repertoire, not badly played - because there hasn’t been a decrease in interpretative level - it’s more like a style of proposal that becomes very traditional. It would have seemed horrible to me in the university days. Now

it doesn't seem bad to me because of what I was telling you before, that many people don't know the whole history, don't know the beauty in traditional music. (S. Ibarra, personal interview, Dec 19, 2019)

However, there is a consensus that the Mono Núñez festival has not only played a central role in the aesthetic orientation and definition of the rules of Andean Colombian music festivals and competitions in the country but has also defined “tradition” based on the aesthetic and generational tastes of its directors, pigeonholing into the same canon what they considered representative and significant for them. Some teachers who do not consider this conservative shift problematic see it as crucial for the musical training of the school to focus on children and young people knowing and delving rigorously into this musical “tradition.” In other words, they should appropriate specific musical forms, techniques and aesthetics, have a comprehensive understanding of the contributions of certain musical references from a certain historical moment and be proficient enough in the social spaces where these music forms are popularly consumed, such as gatherings, festivals, competitions and concerts.

Some of these teachers have even sought to strengthen the social function of these music forms by taking them out of the school and proposing the recovery of community spaces where these forms have been socially present, such as *tertulias*. This has meant that some former students, now teachers at the school, explore the “popular” nature of these music forms, investigating their improvisational dimensions and oral character. *Tertulias*, held in neighbours' houses, serve as spaces for people to gather and listen to live music. Musicians, amateurs, lovers of these music forms and lately, children and young people from the school, join these gatherings. However, around *tertulias*, social criticisms also emerge, such as the consumption of alcohol as a social practice, as will be seen later in this chapter.

One of the school's former students and teachers from the new generation, who pursued his undergraduate studies in musical composition with a strong theoretical and contemporary composition tendency, decided to do his postgraduate studies in Brazil to precisely reconnect with the popular essence and freedom of improvisation. This journey immersed him in the world of traditional Brazilian *Choro* music, an experience that made him reflect on the importance of

the Canto por la Vida music school in learning and valuing these traditions and their popular nature.

In an interview, he describes the traditionalism of *Choro* musicians and how this has prompted reflections for the context of Andean Colombian music:

No, they are super traditional there. That's what I was telling you. Not here; here the academic world is open to new options, new trends, new styles. Not there. There, classical is classical. For example, an incredibly good musician like Milton de Holanda who plays music from everywhere, they don't consider him a "chorão," "chorão" being those who play Choro. He plays very well, but he's not a chorão. They are super traditional. And ultimately, that's fine; I don't see a problem with that because music is so rich and vast, it's too extensive. That's what happens here in Colombia. Many people, especially the youth, want to come and do new things, but they don't know what already exists. They (in Brazil) know their musical essence. To learn to improvise, you have to have a language of a hundred choros in your head. (S. Ibarra, personal interview, Dec 19, 2019)

This raises an interesting discussion about the creative dimension in traditional music. For this teacher, the creative process in traditional music starts with a sufficient appropriation of the language. In other words, the creative and compositional process, even improvisation, closely interacts with the ability to have sufficiently internalized the codes of the language, following the rules of that collective musical practice. He clarifies this further:

Regarding the language... it doesn't mean you can't compose, but if you want to compose *bambucos*, you have to explore bambucos, you have to have bambucos in your mind. Many people who create bambucos... I've heard some pieces... and if I were a judge coming from the past, I would say, "that's not a *bambuco*". (S. Ibarra, personal interview, Dec 19, 2019)

Similarly, the professor acknowledges that improvisation in the *bambuco*, for example, is strange and is met with some resistance because, in the realm of collective musical practice or the movement of Colombian Andean music, improvisation must be framed within the language of the *bambuco*.

Starting to improvise here with the *bambuco* is very striking; nowadays, I've accepted it. So, the variations and improvisations I make are with the language. Like I was saying: you have to know 200 *bambucos* to be able to go and improvise without it being foreign. The other day I was listening to a virtuoso saxophonist, a jazz player, playing *bambucos*. Of course, he improvises very well, but he doesn't know anything about the *bambuco*, he doesn't have the language. (S. Ibarra, personal interview, Dec 19, 2019)

This view or approach to learning a tradition as acquiring a language with which one can later create matches with the perception of another interviewee, a scholar of Colombian Andean music and familiar with the Canto por la Vida project and the debates in the SIMM field. This professor also argues that the creative process begins in playing with language and understanding its own rules.

Being in a tradition means learning several things, including having a language. A language that you will then enrich. You can have a second language, but you need a first language and there is no bad first language. The first language will always be insufficient, but you cannot start recreating the language if you don't learn it well. You can make variations on the language after knowing its codes. One becomes a great writer by learning to write with the clichés of a language. James Joyce discovers that English has interesting focal points in *Ulysses* and then in *Finnegans Wake*, he changes the way of speaking English, but he does it because he was a profound connoisseur of normal grammar. That said, I believe that it is a great value for a music school to be so capable of delving into a tradition. (E. Arenas, personal interview, Feb 27, 2020)

The interviewee emphasizes the importance of traditions because he considers that through them, "human beings are inserted into the world," which is part of their socialization process. He argues that it is naive to think that humans are made out of nothing and that precisely, being inserted into a tradition means "commitment to the past and to the potential of encountering particular ways of seeing the world."

Becoming human musically, to make the analogy, is belonging to a tradition that is understanding the codes from which I realize that music does not originate with me, that I come to music. It's a message that I find very interesting: that music has human beings who value it and that there is an institutional framework around which certain things are consecrated as better

than others, certain instruments as more desired than others, certain ways of sounding as better than others. I believe that there is no way to enter music without that (...). (E. Arenas, personal interview, Feb 27, 2020)

In light of the above, the professor expresses appreciation for Canto por la Vida precisely for its effort to bring a community closer to the knowledge of a musical tradition. He clarifies in his interview that his appreciation is not because the focus is on the “Andean” Colombian tradition, as he considers it one of the many possibilities in a diverse country like Colombia. The point he emphasizes in the interview is that, in his opinion, making music “is not merely touring through musical themes” but involves the commitment to understanding a tradition, recognizing that there are codes, human relationships, forms of legitimation and that there are some references more consecrated than others.

Consequently, he believes that there is no field that does not have an evaluative inclination or beliefs and that such insertion is not an act of violence as it has been perceived.

It’s interesting because sometimes one wants to have a natural view of traditions. As soon as I name something as a tradition, I’m inventing it, I mean, I’m cutting it, privileging certain things and not others. (E. Arenas, personal interview, Feb 27, 2020)

In light of this, he argues that thanks to such “insertion,” it is possible to intervene or dispute the tradition and even emancipate oneself, if desired, from a critical and creative perspective:

When I come home and my dad tells me that I am free or not free to do something, the idea of freedom is not an idea that my dad invented and precisely because I insert myself into a tradition where freedom is discussed, I can later tell my father, “but dad, I think your notion of freedom is short or has problems or is biased,” but from there I build my thinking. In other words, when you gradually immerse yourself in a musical tradition, you acquire the richness that later allows you to say: how interesting! With this tradition, I have some tools and I am going to jazz, for example, to enrich this tradition or pursue a more academic formation, or something more rural, but I have a platform from which to announce something. This contact surface seems valuable to me. I don’t mean to say that this should be the only way to view tradition. I believe that all traditions have multiple interpretations. (E. Arenas, personal interview, Feb 27, 2020)



In this sense, he argues that every school is dogmatic to some extent, and this should not call into question the possibility of advocating for a school project:

The fact that it may seem dogmatic to advocate for a “school” from a distance seems absurd to me. Because I believe it overlooks the fact that every school is dogmatic in a sense. Even, there is nothing more dogmatic than traditional musicians (...) and there are dogmas that are talked about less. (E. Arenas, personal interview, Feb 27, 2020)

All of the above reveals a tension within the educational project. On one hand, there is an understanding of the importance of immersing children and young people in a tradition that, like any tradition, is biased, involves certain references, techniques and privileged aesthetics. This is the foundation to continue with the creative and formative process and to generate the breaking of rules, if desired. Therefore, according to this logic, a more “prescriptive” process is required, in the sense of training based on the “rules” of the language and specific aesthetic and technical references. On the other hand, criticism of this approach arises when creativity is considered as the capacity for agency in the process itself from its inception. Some teachers question participants are trained in what they consider a musical practice that does not allow for creativity as an essential dimension of a critical and comprehensive music education. In fact, some teachers argue that creativity should be conceived as the possibility for children and young people to be “agents of their processes” from the beginning. One teacher describes it in this way:

“It is challenging for us to understand-defend this as an educational approach. For example, we criticize the educational system and talk about how rigid it is, but in the music school, there is nothing that fosters creativity, everything is “sit down and play like this”, and “do it like this”. But there is nothing that fosters creativity. (...) So, we haven’t moved beyond creative classes”.

They even compare what happens with musical training within the school to the world of symphony orchestras. An interviewee, an alumnus and now a teacher at Canto por la Vida School, points out that his experience as an orchestra musician was “monotonous and boring” due to the repetition of programmes and the entirely prescriptive work of conductors with musicians. The teacher questions that many musicians consider reaching an orchestra as the

highest achievement of their education. In other words, the teacher believes that this type of training limits the possibility of developing the creativity of children and young people as a necessary dimension in the educational transformation of Ginebra.

Additionally, the teacher criticizes that musical creativity in the school is often conceived as an exercise or knowledge specialized and exclusive to the “composer” or the “improvising instrumentalist” expert in these music genres. Although the teacher recognizes that musical creativity in education is a significant challenge, as it often requires a minimum knowledge of the language to “be creative,” he argues that participants should be allowed to develop their own intuitions critically during the appropriation process. He points out that composition classes offered to more advanced students at the school do not truly explore creative capacities but focus on learning applied harmony. However, this contrasts with an interview with a former student who appreciated the strategies used by one of the composition teachers. By focusing on teaching applied harmony to string instruments, this teacher helped her better understand the functioning of musical language and become more autonomous in the music-making process.

On the other hand, another teacher suggests that the notion of conceiving creativity as a dimension of later development, even as a specialized and exclusive exercise for composition students, is not only problematic but has also generated “power struggles” within the school. He believes that this has limited the advancement of didactics and creativity. He also thinks that this has contributed to maintaining a “status quo” in the school. The teacher goes further, stating that creative capacity is not stimulated precisely because it would “decentralize” power within the organisation, contributing to maintaining an “essentialist,” “conservative,” and “instrumentalist” discourse in music education. He expresses:

“And those are the powers. So, it’s like the government; why do you educate people? If you educate them, you’ll decentralize power”.

Regarding these power struggles, one interview brought up a criticism of how this traditionalist perspective has closed the doors in the school to other ways of approaching, studying and experimenting with these music genres and their typical instruments. For example, the

interviewee believes that the possibility for other former students with a significant trajectory in aesthetic, pedagogical, creative, performative and research exploration to work and lead training processes in the school has been closed. According to the interviewee, these musicians have proposed works for systematization for the production of pedagogical material, dialogues with other music genres like jazz and other disciplinary fields such as developmental psychology, as well as technological innovations for the construction of typical instruments like the *bandola*.

The tensions surrounding the creative dimension even extend to the academic-administrative, organisational and human management realm. According to the teacher, besides these power struggles, there are other aspects that hinder internal transformation within the school, such as paternalism and fear of change. The teacher notes that paternalism in the organisation has created a certain comfort in that the school's management not only provides for and satisfies all the needs of the community but also concentrates decision-making in pedagogy, art, community and management, limiting the agency and resourcefulness of the members. As one professor stated:

“We are very paternalistic, paternalism in the school is enormous. (...) For example, oh! we need the students to start using Finale, to make their own arrangements, their own things. We need a room... and the room costs 50 million and if there aren't 50 million, there's no other way... so, what I said to the teacher is: ‘professor, see if the students can bring laptops, let's work with that TV, HDMI cable and get started’; but waiting for the resource to be available... that happens when we are used to having everything. We, at the school, create very few needs for ourselves. That state of comfort is enormous”.

The teacher also questions the limitation that exists regarding the budget when proposing new ideas and experimentation projects within the training processes and the academic structure, perceived as a fear from management to eliminate what has traditionally been done. In this regard, he notes that power struggles and even prejudices regarding these initiatives in aesthetic and training terms appear. To contribute to this issue, some teachers have carried out exercises in collective creation and have sought to teach young people technological tools such as MIDI and Finale to stimulate the creation of songs for collective groups like the Cantoría. Additionally, other exercises such as the Nuclear Workshop, the *musicales criollos* and the new

approaches of the *Cantoría* with adolescent and young students in the upper levels have emerged. These proposals were described in chapter 5.

“And there, they are the *agents*. If we are not creative within our pedagogical discourse, neither will the thinking be”.

However, this is compounded by the aspect of the project's sustainability. During the fieldwork, it was possible to see how the ability to culturally and economically sustain the project is mediated by being a non-formal project with recognition of its musical development around Colombian Andean music and the quality of its artistic creation and production processes. In the fieldwork, I observed that management The management has nurtured and valued what has been consolidated at the pedagogical and artistic level in the school, focusing on Colombian Andean music as the key element of its identity, regional and national recognition, and its contribution to the value chain of musical development. Thus, I observed that management takes care of and intervenes in decisions of stylistic, pedagogical and creative nature, which is criticized by some members of the organisation.

This section shows two contrasting understandings of the creative dimension in musical education. On one side, creativity is seen within the framework of composition and improvisation as a later stage of language appropriation. On the other side, creativity is viewed as an exercise of expression, experimentation, *agency* and critical thinking that can be pedagogically stimulated at any point in the formative process. These notions create tension as they imply different ways of understanding the educational and social commitment of the school, revealing a significant axis of tension: the creative dimension and its relationship with the project's social impact.

These tensions are also evident in other projects within the SIMM field in Colombia, particularly when such approaches are linked to specific musical traditions or practices. For instance, in my role as an advisor for initiatives like the Red de Músicas de Medellín, I observed how some members of the organisation argued that musical practices rooted in orchestral or symphonic traditions did not foster creativity. As a result, they believed the programme should shift towards

other musical practices that would better encourage exploration and thereby facilitate the achievement of its social objectives. They advocated for the integration of practices drawn from oral, popular, traditional, or urban contexts, arguing that these practices -due to their learning methodologies- could inspire greater creative freedom and experimentation from the early stages of training. They felt that such approaches were more likely to promote active participation and support the development of both individual and collective expressive and subjective dimensions. In contrast, other members held that creativity could not emerge from nothing; it required a foundation in musical language and basic instrumental skills. Even, I have observed, how some musicians viewed the emphasis on creativity in training, without a grounding in fundamental musical language, as speculative and problematic. At various stages of the programme, this duality of perspectives, and their connection to particular musical practices, led to reductionist thinking and internal pedagogical and organisational conflicts. What is particularly interesting is that these opposing positions left unresolved crucial questions: How can creativity be integrated into a training process that is inherently sequential due to its technical and instrumental development? How can participants' subjectivity be expressed within the learning process of academic musical traditions? Is it possible, through the study of symphonic and orchestral traditions, to foster the kind of pedagogical renewal that encourages experimentation, expressive freedom, and creativity?

However, interviews introduce another interesting perspective that establishes another axis of evaluation in the formative process, which is the teacher-student relationship and the pedagogical 'mediation'. Eliécer Arenas and Jorge Arbeláez, profound connoisseurs of these musical traditions, argue that within the same pedagogical process, tradition and experimentation coexist without contradiction. They believe that studying a tradition is an exercise in exploration, research and creation. Indeed, Arenas suggests that in the process of innovation there is a search within references and musical traditions upon which subjectivity and musical identity are woven. He goes further, proposing that tradition and innovation coexist without conflict in pedagogical practice if *subjectivity* is emphasized:

For example, if we are going to work on Oriol Rangel. He is a reference, a language builder, but beware! He took elements from his past and made the tradition his own. It's different. Tradition

is not just a starting point but a horizon of exploration. If I say, “I need you to study Oriol and what he did with the piano”, I'm essentially asking: What does Natalia have that is important to say, and how can she express it better? (E. Arenas, personal interview, Feb 27, 2020)

In this sense, the interviewee suggests that studying the references of a musical tradition serves as didactic devices and metaphors that allow for a greater and richer understanding of human nature and a realm of possibilities that connects with our individual and existential needs. This approach can help foster an “engaged pedagogy” (Hooks, 1994), creating a space where students feel valued and are encouraged to critically examine both their identities and the world around them. Such an environment has the potential to empower students, offering them the opportunity to explore and express their identities through music. Possibly, this approach enables them to develop a greater sense of autonomy, cultivate their artistic growth, and engage in the creative process with confidence, curiosity, and a sense of purpose, something that is commonly lost in professional academic environments where the student’s subjectivity is invisible to the process.

Additionally, Arenas proposes that engaging with a tradition is not simply an obligation, but rather an act of genuine affection and connection:

The tradition is an exercise of commitment to a previous history; it is an exercise of affection but not an obligation. It sounds strong, but there is no way for trees to reach the sky without roots. We need grass, soil, and nutrients that nourish to see *other* flowers. Those we call references today did the same. Culture is mobile. Although we say, “today we are going to play like Oriol” that is a didactic and metaphorical device. We are trying to reference that there were ideas about the world, a room in intimate listening, but what will that character serve for today's listening? This not only characterizes the era but also the unique features of each music and musician that allow us to make visible forms of expression of human nature in the world. For example, I intend to see Ravi Shankar as a human being speaking to me, and his way of playing is part of my needs. Music opens life; it shows that Ravi Shankar's sitar configures a dimension of the human that I claim as my own, first through affection and then through intellect. (E. Arenas, personal interview, Feb 27, 2020)

This discussion raises interesting points regarding the necessary dialectics in musical pedagogical work, acknowledging the importance of different logics coexisting and being available to the student's subjectivity. The pedagogical field is presented as a mobile, complex, and conflictive space, responding to the emergent searches, expectations and particular needs of participants and their process. In this light, pedagogical wisdom lies in recognizing when to work from a stricter, conservative perspective or from more experimental, investigative and creative logics. This suggests that subscribing to a single logic in pedagogy, whether as a teacher focusing on “tradition” or advocating for “innovation”, being “structuring” or self-proclaimed “libertarian” can be problematic.

These implications are relevant for the field as music pedagogies that work through sequential, structured and normed musical processes are sometimes criticized for being considered conservative, dogmatic, rigid and disabling for fulfilling a social function in SATM programmes in Colombia. However, interviews suggest that playing by the rules does not always mean dehumanization but an opportunity for education towards democracy. The key distinction here is explaining the norm to play with it versus being arbitrary:

Pedagogies that claim freedom without reference points are deceptive because they do not exist. In music classes, there is room for manoeuvre but respecting the sequentiality that shapes a musical discourse is crucial for meaningful conversation. This does not imply subordination. In music, working with statements like “let's do it as I taught you” or “let's do it as you would like to do it with that reference in mind” is essential. Differentiating between those possibilities is important. It is concerning that social studies on power sometimes fail to recognize the importance of this game. One does not feel less free by being Mozart because being other is also libertarian. The ability to play with the rules is essential for democracy, and musicians have the potential based on making explicitly the rules and the game. In music, everything is possible as long as it is not arbitrary. The teacher can apply the rule, dismantle it, and create a new one. (E. Arenas, personal interview, Feb 27, 2020)

I found that this idea holds significant power in the context of education for critical thinking and democracy. In today's increasingly polarized societies, we witness a clear distortion and erosion of democratic principles. The weakening of civic values and the disregard for collective

agreements -encompassing fundamental principles, norms, and democratic mechanisms designed to uphold social justice, the common good, and equity- have paved the way for demagoguery and a “tyranny of the majority,” where individual interests take precedence over collective well-being. Furthermore, the erosion of respect for institutions, rules, and mechanisms for dialogue and dissent, coupled with a lack of knowledge and appreciation for democratic processes, has contributed to an ethical and moral decline within our democracies.

In this context, a musical pedagogy that, through the study of a tradition, explicitly fosters an interplay between understanding and appreciating rules while also exploring their transgression as a space for freedom and critical thinking, could possibly serve as a powerful metaphor for the practice of responsible democratic citizenship. If one were to extrapolate this idea, such an approach could illustrate the balance between structure and creative dissent that underpins a healthy democracy. Consequently, a libertarian musical pedagogy (Freire, 1998) not only encourages individual and collective agency but also demands an ethical responsibility and commitment to a perspective centered on the collective good.

### **Tensions around identity: decolonial critical discourses, subjectivity and territoriality**

Another aspect identified as a tension within the Canto por la Vida project relates to critical studies and debates surrounding “Colombian Andean music”, its role in the construction of musical identities and its various forms of representation and social valuation. On one hand, critical debates from a musicological perspective were distinguished and on the other hand, the experiences and ways of evaluation and significance by other musicians and scholars of these musical practices. The following addresses such musicological critiques within the context of the Mono Núñez festival, given its implications for the tensions generated within the educational musical project of Canto por la Vida in its later years.

The first identified critique is related to the narrative that these music forms are the expression of a local musical tradition and identity. Indeed, according to musicological analyses (Cobo, 2010; Cayer, 2010), these music forms have not been representative of the musical expressions and identities of the people of Ginebra. Instead, they correspond to the traditions and social practices of the upper classes, specifically the families inheriting land from haciendas settled in



the Ginebra territories. According to the studies, these families and social and economic sectors are precisely those who have supported the creation of the Mono Núñez festival and have determined what has become a tradition.

As described in Chapter 3, these musicological studies examine and determine that “Colombian Andean music” as a musical *genre* was an invention of the festival itself, shaping a doxa through the competition. In particular, they analyse how this doxa reinforced questioned social practices and imaginaries—racist, classist and colonial—characteristic of the Colombian nationalist project of the 19th century, driven by enlightened elites and their ideals of “citizenship”<sup>64</sup>. Specifically, musicological studies analyse how, in this nationalist project, elites who disliked popular and peasant music sought the unification of the country by establishing the bambuco as representative of Colombian identity while “whitewashing” it.

In his work *Coloniality and Postcoloniality of Music in Colombia* (2007), Óscar Hernández suggests that the bambuco, of tri-ethnic origin and with roots in the countryside and popular culture, was aesthetically “whitewashed” as a strategy of the literate elites to establish a national music, endowing it with a sound less black and indigenous and more linked to European musical tradition. Hernandez argues that, indeed, race and its position on a social classification scale continue to determine power relations in the Euro-centric world. This, according to Hernandez, occurred in European nationalisms as well as in the construction of Colombian national music from Andean musical genres in the second half of the 19th century.<sup>65</sup>

Race can only appear if it is whitened and universalized, meaning it adopts characteristics like those of the hegemonic centre of power. (p. 252)

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<sup>64</sup> According to Rodríguez (2012), ‘the liberal government of the nation in the second half of the 19th century frequently used the category of citizen, associating their identification with someone committed to the progress and updating of the country. The metaphor of the family associated with people and homeland was used especially during the first half of the 19th century as an equivalent of a *nation*. (p. 2)

<sup>65</sup> According to Hernández (2007), during the early years of the 19th century, there was a surge in discourses attempting to explain racial differences based on geographical and climatic determinism. The general idea was that races inhabiting warm and jungle-like climates could not develop the same intellect as races inhabiting cold climates. This contributed to consolidating a geographical imaginary of the country, suggesting that at higher altitudes above sea level, there would be greater possibilities for cultural and economic development. In this sense, music produced in lower-altitude regions was considered more primitive and wilder than the mestizo music of the Andes. This partially explains why the preferred genres for creating national music were two Andean genres: the bambuco and the pasillo. (p. 251)

María Enna Rodríguez (2012) describes it as follows:

The *bambuco* was pertinent and functional in the discourses of the nation of the literate and political elites disseminated through the institutions provided for it, in such a way that they constituted a basic corpus and a memory of facts, which (...) contributed to the configuration of the imagined community of meaning, characteristic of the profile of a nation. (p. 2)

Musicological studies show how in this nationalist project, the emphasis was placed on academicization and written musical culture as a sign of enlightenment and progress. Simultaneously, more solemn forms of consumption, practice and listening were instituted, sidelining bodily enjoyment, dance and festivity. The “national music,” which achieved considerable development by incorporating Andean rhythms and genres, worked through academic languages and European compositional techniques, began to enter concert halls and contributed to the professionalization of musicians of that time. During nationalism, patriotic values, love for the land and family were exalted.

According to studies, the “national music”, based on Colombian Andean rhythms, with bambuco as the quintessential musical genre, represented the citizenship that progressed, projected itself as enlightened, modern and advancing in its socio-economic development. At the same time, it acknowledged its rural roots but as a “past” to be remembered and evoked with nostalgia and bucolic sentiment. For this reason, musicological studies criticize how this national music and the “whitening” of *bambuco*, symbolically, aesthetically and socially, marginalized and excluded Afro-Colombian, indigenous, popular and rural communities. These were seen as backward, undeveloped and confined to orality and a lack of aesthetic refinement that was consolidated through the conceived national music. Studies have also analysed how instruments like the *bandola* and *tiple* were defined as national instruments and how operatic aesthetics in vocal music reflected the same logic of aesthetic evolution. Poetics were also subject to musicological criticism, debating how narratives proposed an imbalance in gender by portraying women as idyllic figures without agency. They also discussed how the role of the body and festivity was modified in the purposes of constructing more academic imaginaries, synonymous with development, in terms of listening and consumption.

The *Bambuco* and its relationship with Colombian identity, as well as the issues raised by nationalism in Colombian musical identity, have been studied by numerous academics in Colombia and abroad. Scholars such as Peter Wade (2002), Carlos Miñana Blasco (1997), Ana María Ochoa (2003; 2002), Carolina Santamaría (2007), Oscar Hernández (2007; 2003), Nelson Cayer (2010), Hernando José Cobo (2010) and Martha Enna Rodríguez (2012) have approached it from a decolonial and postcolonial perspective to highlight its underlying problems.

As a result, musicological studies on the Mono Núñez festival argue that the invented genre of “Colombian Andean music” not only carries a symbolic and ideological burden of exclusionary, racist and classist national imaginaries within the festival but also expresses forms of social relationships that embody such ideologies. Those who enjoy the contest music amid the festival do not integrate with the “people” who cannot access these scenarios, not as spectators due to the expensive ticket prices but also not to the Coliseum stages. Only those music groups, called “autochthonous,” perform in the free festival at the central square of the town. This is why, some interviewees criticized the discourses on values of nationality, Colombian identity and patriotic love proclaimed at the festival.

The debates touched upon in Chapter 3 are revisited precisely because some members of the music school question whether the musical training project around Colombian Andean music, as a genre, is heavily focused on aesthetic-musical and performative proposals and the references defined by the Mono Núñez festival’s doxa. Criticism is directed at the educational project being subject to the dynamics, parameters and orientations proposed by the festival, with the intention of repositioning itself within the festival framework from an educational perspective. This reinforcement of problematic identity imaginaries is criticized for its essentialist and reductionist approaches to the possibilities of Colombian Andean music and the treatment of traditions, as well as for its heritage and nationalist discourses.

However, other interviewed professors both within and outside the project, practitioners and scholars of Colombian Andean music, confess that the motivations behind their musical endeavours do not align with the discourses and criticisms regarding the nationalist aspects of Andean music. Some former students even state that they engaged in the practice, knowledge

and enjoyment of these music genres without being aware of these critical discussions on nationalism. Other experienced individuals in the field express their bewilderment at such discourses today. In particular, one of them suggests that, while recognizing the valuable insights from musicological studies on how “the Andean” was politicized and even “exploited” in favour of the nationalist project and how that remains problematic in contexts like Mono Núñez, he also asserts that the discussion about Andean music is much more complex.

These interviewees propose that the approach and study of these music genres are motivated by an aesthetic pursuit and an expressive need around their musical identities, the creative processes and their integration into a musical practice and movement that constitutes an entire sonic world. One former student even mentions that he entered and became passionate about this musical “genre,” admiring the artists promoted by the Mono Núñez festival and learning about their musical proposals. All of this was made possible by his proximity to the musicians, who would dine at his mother’s restaurant during the festival.

Some musicians argue that this integration into this musical practice and the pursuit of aesthetics and expression bring much more richness, complexity and interculturality than one might imagine. In particular, some interviewed musicians highlight how, in their study and creative process, they have embraced Latin American influences and connected with other territorial musical resources through a dialogue of knowledge that does not oppose the decolonization efforts mentioned by musicological critics. An interviewed musician expresses it in this way:

“(...) we never thought of anything overly patriotic. We thought that there were some absolutely interesting musical resources and that our perspective should be Latin American. We sought our sources in the tradition of Oriol Rangel and Pedro Morales Pino, but at the same time, we were always looking in Brazil for the harmonies we wanted to incorporate into the group’s music. For example, Gentil Montaña was exploring the resources of classical guitar music and Fernando León delved into the cultural heritage of orchestras, languages, while also delving into tradition, creating a type of hybrid music that, in my opinion, has important elements that should not be opposed to other decolonization efforts.”

Indeed, one of the interviewees suggests that the approach to Colombian Andean music as an educational project is also part of the decolonization effort. He believes that the critical stance emerging from the field of musicology tends to view “Colombian Andean music” as part of the problem rather than as part of the alternative solutions to decolonize the musical thinking of the continent. He argues that, while the marginalization of Colombian Andean music cannot be compared to the side-lining of Afro, Indigenous, peasant, or orally derived music, it still contributes to decolonization efforts in music education.

I think the enemy is not the Andean. Precisely, what we must understand is that we will only decolonize and emancipate musical thinking when we understand that, proportionally speaking, it is the same struggle. (...) We must try to make the musical practices of the *gaiteros* de San Jacinto, indigenous music, or the *chirimías* from Chocó, for example, more visible, undoubtedly; we need to recognize the forms of knowledge derived from these oral traditions; some of us are also trying to construct a theoretical discourse for that. However, it must be understood that, in this quest, discrimination in conservatories towards the Andean and Llanero music exists. Still, these genres are seen as exoticizing effects of a supposed plurality that we have, but in practice, it is not plurality but a single hegemonic thought with adornments, with tourist postcards that are sometimes brought to us. This blurs, let’s say, the possibility of having a more complete vision of ourselves. (E. Arenas, personal interview, Feb 27, 2020)

Additionally, the interviewee considers that working with Colombian Andean music is also a countercultural exercise and an act of resistance in contexts where the mainstream does not consider them viable and certain conservatories still maintain a reserved attitude about integrating them prominently as key practices for the production of aesthetic, artistic, pedagogical and research knowledge. In this sense, he sees it as respectable and even emancipatory to approach these music genres as a cultural and educational project. He understands it as an opportunity to explore the aesthetics, formats and sounds that have had a certain characterization and social appropriation in Valle del Cauca. These musical developments have been part of the life project of many musicians in the region:

... Being able to say that studying the *bandola* is not just about learning two songs, as we were always told. No! Studying the tradition is understanding that in Valle del Cauca, the *tiple* is played differently, that there are rhythmic and melodic phrasings in the ways Vallecaucan

composers compose that are different from those in Paisa. In other words, understanding a tradition is understanding that it is not a matter of repertoires, as it may be seen from the outside as a matter of “playing *bambucos*.” But there is the prejudice; the *bambuco* is not a rhythm. *The bambuco is a way of life*; it is a way of representing feelings that are embodied, configured with abysmal differences between departments of the country, in the form of an expected sonority and so on. (E. Arenas, personal interview, Feb 27, 2020)

Here, the subjective dimension emerges as another factor to consider when critically analysing a musical practice in context and within the framework of an educational project. In this sense, some interviewees value the commitment that certain musicians have to Colombian Andean music as the reaffirmation of an undertaking they consider political in the broad sense of the term, although many may not explicitly name it as such. They appreciate the decision of musicians to invest in an artistic and vital project, individually and/or collectively, where these musical genres are also valued as a constitutive part of what Colombians are musically. This is even from the complex and ambivalent identity that the Andean represents, as will be described later.

Why do I find it so important, the defence of a *torbellino* musician from Vélez Santander who, with the elements he has, makes his Colombian music, records it, defends it, teaches it? (...) What I find very respectable is people who take it seriously, with the margin they have, with the beliefs they have. First, that they are united to something bigger, which is to make music that is worth for a reaffirmation of what we are as human beings in this country. Where you can make music and be an authority. Not as we have always experienced, that burden of feeling like... what can you expect from a musician from Vélez playing Bach?... Playing music that comes from here but with authority, with a vital commitment, with the effort to do it well, of course! Linked to notions of virtuosity that have to do with the connection not only in music but also with the places where one has been, for example, abroad. But not seeing it as a negative thing but as part of the complex imaginary of the possibilities of being what we are. Because the question is, why do we criticize a musician who wants to be virtuous, but we don't criticize someone wanting to do a Ph.D. abroad, for example? (E. Arenas, personal interview, Feb 27, 2020)

Other tensions identified around these traditional music genres are related to the territorial dimension. One of the interviewees believes that there is a natural tension within “Colombian

Andean music” when it is defined as regional musical practices. He considers that the tension arises because these musical genres are precisely deterritorialized, meaning they are understood more from a symbolic territory rather than a geographical one.

According to the interviewee, Colombian Andean music differs from other genres, such as indigenous or Afro-Colombian music, which have a defined territoriality and respond to specific cultural and community expressions. He believes that Colombian Andean music operates more with the logic of rock or jazz, unable to be delimited to a geographical location, as it functions based on more complex and heterogeneous flows and exchanges:

At times, one would like to have a romantic vision of musical practice linked to that idea, for example, to the music of fishermen who, after fishing, sing. And then, we think that this practice is more legitimate than the other (Andean), because it seems all artificial. No! Colombian Andean music is a musical practice as legitimate as the others, but it responds to the heterogeneity and multiplicity of ways in which humans have had to confront the modernization of a country that still thinks in agricultural terms. (...) And it’s very interesting, but it’s very nice. I mean, that a person in Vélez Santander, who is involved in agriculture and has the tradition of the requinto, feels connected to someone like Germán Darío Pérez, who has never set foot in the countryside and got to know this music after immersing himself in a more academic tradition, obtained a record by Oriol Rangel and had uncles who sang *bambucos*. (E. Arenas, personal interview, Feb 27, 2020)

For him, these music genres represent a hybrid terrain, not in terms of ethnicity but between the rural and European legacies.

Colombian Andean music is fascinating because it is both too basic to be considered “academic” and too elaborate and academic to be seen as “popular” music in the same vein as other genres. It is a type of music unknown on two fronts. It doesn’t quite fit into the category of “serious” music, as adherents of dogmatic views of academic music might say, but it also isn’t rural, oral, peasant and marginal enough to be considered part of the search for new trends in contemporary research and discussion. In the midst of this hybridization, these constant contradictions that this music lives, in that ambiguous and ambivalent relationship, in that “enlightened peasant”

condition, this music represents extremely interesting features to understand why this commitment remains crucial. (E. Arenas, Personal interview, Feb 27, 2020)

This is an interesting point to consider in the SIMM context. The case of Canto por la Vida and “Colombian Andean music” can exemplify the kinds of issues to consider when addressing decolonial critiques in musical practices that arise from much more complex intercultural and mestizo processes in their senses of social appropriation. In Colombia, this can be exemplified when certain sectors criticize and vehemently object to how public resources benefit symphonic musical practices, such as the band movement. Some consider these traditions to have colonial roots and challenge their legitimacy compared to the necessary investment in other musical practices of regional, cultural and community traditions, such as those of indigenous peoples, Afro-descendants and rural communities. This makes sense when discussing equity in resource allocation for historically marginalized, excluded and invisible music and communities. However, it becomes problematic when these criticisms question the legitimacy of these symphonic band practices, which have developed in Colombia through long-term socio-historical processes, establishing strong community roots and a sense of local creative and expressive development linked to local musical identities, closely tied to the social and cultural life of communities. Similar to the case study, this lack of nuance and complex treatment generates tensions and confusion when musicians and young people in the band world are bewildered by these criticisms because they don’t resonate or align with their lived and affective experience. As will be seen later, this lack of nuance and complex treatment leads to polarization and conflicts within the musical field.

In this logic, the musician Jorge Arbelaez finally suggests:

“In any case, these are representations, ways of being, musical and cultural practices that have been invisibilized in favour of unique logics. I believe that losing sight of the entire panorama impoverishes the discussion; it’s a bit of my major concern. I think there are many ways to resist, many ways to colonize. We shouldn’t equate them all. But we should understand that there are very interesting connections going in the same direction of valuing the musical histories, the musical poetics, the existential narratives that we have created around many ways of sounding”.



## **Organisational tensions: sociocultural and human challenges**

Finally, another form of tension has been identified, relating to the challenges the organisation faces at the social and cultural levels, and the impact these challenges have on human relationships.

During the last phase of the fieldwork (2021-2022), I identified a profound crisis in the organisation that seemed to have several facets. To better understand the nature of this conflict, I consulted two internal documents (Cobo 2016, 2021) that reflected on the importance of promoting experimental pedagogical proposals that respond to the challenges posed by culture, society, and generational change. The most recent document describes pedagogical and artistic experiences such as the Nuclear Workshop, sound and audiovisual experimentation for the *Cantoría*, and Creole musicals, among others. These experiences are discussed in Chapter 6.

These documents show the political and conceptual commitments of these creative and pedagogical laboratory projects that sought disruption and the development of critical and creative thinking in children and young people to enable them to better interpret and intervene in their social, political, cultural, and disciplinary realities. The documents draw attention to the need for a reassessment of the epistemic foundations of pedagogical processes that embrace novel ways of addressing contemporary challenges through artistic exercise and its possibilities for aesthetic, cognitive, and moral transgression. It suggests that the school has a great advantage over other organisations, and that is its autonomy to generate these deep creative disruptions that expand social achievements and break ideological frameworks that “crystallize and doze off in the relative laurels of local spectacles, in what the public imagines as aesthetic correctness, and in behaviours over nationalist discourses and political correctness” (Cobo, 2021, p. 2).

Additionally, the documents draw attention to the lack of systematization of training processes, recognizing that within the school, individual teachers develop interesting pedagogical and artistic practices and create innovative didactic devices with profound impacts that cannot be reflected upon or arranged as collective capital. It points out that this lack of theoretical knowledge production about the achievements does not allow an internal and external reading of the diversity and potentiality of the school. For instance, the last document (Cobo, 2021)

indicates how institutionalized processes eliminate “creative entropy” and how “the mechanism of sustaining creativity begins to phagocytize” amid the “mirage of productivity” and project management that begins to “erode the fundamental”. The 2016 Manifesto describes it as follows:

As our programme grows, not only does the infrastructure grow, but we are forced to fill increasingly larger spaces with content and meaning while trying to keep up with radically different generations in short time frames, with life stories that turn us into distant others, into past voices, into vital projects that pale like a palimpsest, and into archaic entities that do not survive unless they overcome the successive layers of overlapping narratives. We run the risk of burying ourselves in a sea of information and technology that is difficult to update diachronically. (p. 1)

In particular, these documents highlight problematic descriptions that, at the level of community and organisational relationships, affect the flourishing of the mentioned initiatives and undermine the possible social work of the school. For example, the 2016 Manifesto begins by valuing how Canto por la Vida, from its inception, has bet on the well-being and professional dignification of its members, highlighting the permanent attitudes of solidarity and generous support for projects and dreams of the members and their support in difficult life situations at a personal level. However, it discusses how the levels of familiarity have led the group to avoid conflict and address issues or situations that could break an “apparent harmony”. It draws attention to the importance of separating the positive bond of friendship and community and affective life from the forms of construction that the missionary commitment that the school demands from them and which requires “both affection and discipline of thought”. All of this touches on aspects of human, organisational, and pedagogical order.

For example, the Manifesto (Cobo, 2016) emphasizes the importance of establishing a “code of ethics” regarding the moral and ethical behaviour of teachers towards students. The document points out that the collective awareness of the structural pathological problems that the municipality and the Valle del Cauca region harbour (such as pedophilia and sexual abuse) should mark a radical difference for the school, especially due to its proximity to vulnerable audiences and work with minors: “Our students must feel that we are a space of protection and positive intervention in the face of this type of actions”.

The narratives about this must be prescriptive and clear and require an opening for internal work and information from the regulations and punishable behaviours that cover educational institutions. It has been proven in practice that tacit codes do not work, that we must demand and demand ourselves to evaluate and assess, and if possible, timely address any anomalous behaviour of oneself or a peer. Needless to say, everyone at Canto por la Vida is a public figure, and for this reason, all individual actions in the public sphere project positively or negatively to the entire internal community of the school depending on their contents. (Cobo, 2016)

Some members of the school warn about how certain behaviours can reinforce, to a greater or lesser extent, these problematic social and cultural structures, undermining credibility and prestige within the community. For example, Canto por la Vida has sought, from its inception, to distance itself from behaviours that have delegitimized the profession of musicians due to their association with alcoholism. They have consciously worked to renew the social perception of musicians towards their dignification and appreciation. For example, interviews with other musicians and researchers in the country show how, during the Mono Núñez festival, high alcohol consumption generates problematic dynamics that not only diminish the event's prestige but also send ambiguous social messages about the valuation of the profession. In the Colombian cultural context, Andean Colombian music is strengthened in spaces of socializing that are accompanied by bohemianism and alcohol consumption. Some teachers at the school, in their quest to contribute to the revitalization of practice in everyday and popular contexts and to strengthen musical performances linked to orality and the social function of music, have encouraged the creation of social gatherings attended by school participants. This initiative, which was crucial for strengthening spaces for meeting and exchanging musical knowledge, had to be suppressed due to the alcohol consumption promoted in these spaces.

Likewise, differentiated forms of understanding the teacher-student relationship are observed. Some members believe that the creation of strong bonds of friendship and closeness promotes participants who do not have strong parental or family structures to find familiarity and a friendship bond that allows them not to get lost amid their problems. They argue that this form of relationship can help young participants from vulnerable backgrounds with a conflicted relationship with authority develop significant connections that can guide their lives. Other

teachers, on the contrary, believe that this support can be provided without losing sight of the limits implied by the teacher-student relationship, considering it necessary to be aware of existing power dynamics and the importance of not confusing closeness and trust with the type of friendship bonds that a peer offers.

Staff turnovers in the school, which substantially shortens the age gap between teachers and participants, have also generated tensions in the organisation regarding the possibility of romantic affective relationships emerging. Some members critically point out how these dynamics cannot be admitted for obvious reasons but should not be normalized either in the context. They warn about the imbalance in existing power relations and the impacts that may affect the affective maturation processes of participants, especially when micro-machismo abounds in the context, which, although it may seem insignificant in everyday life, contributes to maintaining unequal power structures between men and women. At the same time, the foundation has sought to encourage the participation of girls and young women as leaders in musical, artistic, and even pedagogical processes when they begin to take on teaching roles for the school.

All of the above are reflections that arise from a critique expressed in internal working documents since 2016. This means that to some extent, the organisation allows internal criticism, but I observed that it lacks platforms and tools for the management and transformation of these problems, especially when affectionate relationships, personal and family life are mixed with work, and the need to regulate the relationships woven in community life. Indeed, the documents point out problems of internal communication and how the transformation from a horizontal work structure to vertical and even authoritarian administrative models generates group coexistence dynamics that were always criticized in other organisations.

Finally, one of the documents indicate how internal conflicts and tensions end up taking a personal turn that, according to some, generates “silences, censorship, and the symbolic elimination of the other”.

(...). Silences of opinion are accentuated because the levels of discussion detach from categories inherent in disciplines and work practices, making use of categories of knowledge and ignorance of each person's personal life. With this, differences are delegitimized, ending up turned into personal problems that pathologically deviate from disciplinary divergences, turning censorship into an instrumental element to symbolically invisibilize and erase the other. (Cobo, 2021, p. 4).

However, it should be noted that the ways of processing these conflicts among members can be complicated not only because of the intertwining of family-work relationships but also because of the character that the ways in which each member assumes and relates to conflicts impart. As analysed in the next chapter, this entails much more complexity.

This chapter explored the nature of some of the key tensions I encountered in this research, which relate to: 1) the various and contradictory ways in which a musical tradition is understood and approached as the core of an educational project, and how these relate to the creative dimension of training; 2) the divergent ways in which these forms of musical tradition are validated in social life, from critical studies to the identities and quests of the musicians themselves; and 3) the ways of weaving human and work relationships within the framework of the structural social and cultural issues in the context, which affect the organisation.

Regarding the first tension, two differing approaches to the musical tradition in question are presented, along with their implications for the development of creativity as a key dimension for the realisation of the project's social aspect. One perspective focuses on deepening the knowledge of aesthetics, techniques, and repertoires through the legacy of certain historical figures considered the 'fathers' of this musical tradition. This view adopts a more literal, direction-oriented approach to education, which aims for the acquisition of a language through its study and development. In this perspective, creativity and improvisation are seen as achievable only when there has been sufficient appropriation and exploration of the languages in context. This approach is emphasised as a necessary social action to integrate individuals into the life of a musical culture. On the other hand, critical perspectives are presented, arguing that this approach establishes a doxa and excludes a view of tradition as a living, mobile, and dynamic process in history. This view advocates for the introduction of semiotic tools to enable participants to study the factors influencing these transformations in musical languages,

providing them with interpretive and critical reading skills that can foster autonomy in their creative pursuits at the aesthetic, musical, performative, and poetic levels. Finally, an integrative perspective is introduced regarding the relationship between tradition and creation, suggesting that these are dimensions of the same phenomenon. The key in the musical training process is to position tradition as a metaphor, allowing space for subjectivity and the development of pedagogical mediation skills to navigate the rules of language.

The chapter also explored the tension between critical discourses on Colombian Andean music as being 'whitened' and politically instrumentalised to deny the mestizo, Afro-descendant, peasant, and indigenous roots under nationalist movements, and their problematic representation in competitions that critics claim established classist, exclusionary, and racist dynamics. On the other hand, there is the lack of identification from the musicians with these critical discourses, who describe their involvement with and connection to the music based on the experience of aesthetic enjoyment and their own creative, aesthetic, and expressive quests.

Finally, the chapter addressed the tensions that arise in the organisational dimension when the 'work-family' relationship becomes more complex within the context of conflicts related to how the conflict is managed and self-criticism concerning the possible reproduction of harmful sociocultural structures that go against the collective aims of the project. Some paradoxes are described regarding the interdependence of emotional bonds, with ethical implications, while at the same time, the organisation must continue to grow, develop, and sustain itself—creating pressure, dispersion, and limited clarity. Ultimately, these tensions, though at times seemingly dichotomous, also reveal underlying ambiguities and sustain intricate complexities that drive the evolution of teams and organisations, propelling them forward even in the face of crisis. The next chapter will analyse how these tensions are not only the product of the encounter between facets representing divergent and contrasting ways of understanding social construction from the musical experience, but also how managing these dynamic tensions can be key to the sustainability of organisations in the SIMM field that embrace alterity and recognise conflict as an inherent aspect of social life.

## **Chapter 8**

### **Findings and Implications**

The case of the music school of the Canto por la Vida foundation illustrates in a very interesting way many of the challenges that any other musical project presents in our field. The first is that, clearly, one cannot intervene with a unilateral or linear vision of what music is and what it produces socially. The case of Canto por la Vida shows how, within the framework of the configuration of the same musical project, diverse forms of understanding the social role of music converge, collide, and coexist, and can even be contrary, ambivalent, and conflictive. Precisely, the study shows how the identity and educational, cultural, and social project of Canto por la Vida has not been configured in a homogeneous, harmonic, or static way, but rather through 'dynamic tensions' that -at the cost of certain internal conflict- have dynamized, mobilized, and enriched the human, musical, educational, and artistic project of an organisation that questions its meaning, relevance, and social validity, in one of the richest but also challenging musical contexts like Colombia.

These dynamic tensions explored throughout the chapters, with special emphasis on chapters 3 and 7, are characterized by what I consider a first finding or contribution of this research: the characterization of 4 facets that reflect diverse angles and affect the way these tensions are expressed. These facets are: 1) tradition, 2) alternativivity, 3) subjectivity, and 4) sustainability. As will be made explicit later, these four facets are not mutually exclusive, but they are conceptually distinguished in order to make visible the multiplicity of possible angles that configure the intrinsic complexity of the SIMM field, and that can illuminate the challenges faced by social action organisations through music in contexts with as diverse cultural and musical traditions as Latin America. This is exemplified through the kaleidoscope as a metaphor. The artifact symbolizes what the researcher considers key to observe in understanding the challenges that projects of this nature have and their complexity. From this, a necessary

review of pedagogical and organisational management approaches and mechanisms is suggested to deal with the complex and conflicting nature of the projects.

Consequently, in this chapter, the role of conflict and tension is analysed as part of the life and social nature of organisations that understand otherness and diversity. Conflict is presented here as an opportunity and condition of 'dialectic' around the complex, diverse, and contradictory ways in which the role of music can be conceived in social construction, in a particular time territory. Indeed, another factor identified in the case of Canto por la Vida and that can be extrapolated to other SIMM organisations in Colombia is the cyclical recurrence of certain conflicts. That is, it is observed how tensions are not dissolved but, being constitutive of organisations of this nature - which is what is proposed -, they remain and are expressed at different times with certain weights, forces, and inclinations. However, what could be interpreted as a recurrence could be valued as cycles of learning that, under new conditions and political, social, and economic circumstances, and with the appearance of new actors, could generate new collective learning, if framed in pedagogical, investigative, and collective experimentation exercises that allow the reflection of the organisation's action.

Finally, the importance of otherness or alterity of organisations within the SIMM field from an ecosystemic logic where conflict is not suppressed but transformed is concluded. In this sense, the importance is emphasized that social action organisations through music recognize that their balance and potential to influence society are mediated by the ability to manage the complex and conflicting nature that involves embracing human and cultural diversity. Therefore, it is suggested that organisations acquire tools and create spaces and mechanisms for managing these tensions and conflicts at the musical and organisational pedagogical level. From this, it is proposed how this approach could enhance the capacity that social action organisations through music have to prepare communities for experiencing otherness and conflict as a necessary dimension of social life and the construction of musical educational projects that recognize the aesthetic, epistemological, social, and pedagogical diversity of musical and artistic practices, their diverse and complex systems of social valuation and representation, and their diverse ways of constructing the social, towards the possible construction of more just and balanced societies.



## Dynamic Tensions

Next, the facets that configure the dynamic tensions present in the case are described below, alongside the proposal of what can be intrinsic to SIMM field organisations.

### *First facet: tradition*

As described throughout the chapters, the music school of Canto por la Vida is part of a tradition that has occupied a central chapter in the country's musical history: *Colombian Andean music*. The school identifies itself as the 'daughter' of this musical history with what it means in very specific aspects: music that is at the centre of the proposal, a type of instrument privileged over others, aesthetic, creative and interpretative references and ways of valuing this music for social life. Although these musics have been the subject of critical debate, this position is not trivial. Canto por la Vida is not inscribed in the void or in the generality of music. For the school, working around a musical tradition anchors them, gives them a root and a certain identity. In our Latin American countries, this is important insofar as music education has been the abstraction of a so-called "universal music", paradoxically based on the local central-western European musical tradition. Therefore, the project is committed to the knowledge, practice, and deep enjoyment of this music as a form of anchoring and construction of identity, which gives it a meaning and a characterization. In other words, Canto por la Vida is not just another music school, this project built an identity, and that identity is as interesting as it is complex.

Nevertheless, Canto por la Vida does not define itself as the literal continuation of a tradition but has sought to challenge it. The members and teachers of Canto por la Vida, who are profound practitioners and connoisseurs of these musics, have acquired a type of maturity that has allowed them to distance themselves from issues that they have considered problematic in that specific musical practice. Particularly when they have seen themselves projected in a contest such as the Mono Núñez festival. For example, its enclosure and excessive conservatism; their difficulty in assimilating more contemporary languages; its imbalance between the acceptance of new instrumental contributions compared to the aesthetic and poetic conservatism of vocal proposals; or the condescension and, in a certain way, segregation of the aesthetics, poetics,

performances and communities of practice of other Andean expressions with indigenous, Afro-descendant, popular or peasant roots. It is precisely because of the maturity of the discussion that these professors have woven, that they have worked so that the school of *Canto por la Vida* broadens and enriches the approach to Colombian Andean music as dynamic, diverse practices that dialogue with new poetic and contemporary trends. That is why, based on musical, artistic, investigative, and creative pedagogical work, the project has sought to enrich the musical, aesthetic, poetic and performative references around the Andean, exploring ways in which the participants not only know and deeply appropriate a tradition, but also can contrast it with other musical references that allow the participants to move in music from a broader and richer structure.

However, as shown in Chapter 7, the configuration of this endeavour shows complex and tensioning dynamics, since in the history of the project there have been different and contrary ways of approaching this tradition, which include conservative tendencies as approaches more linked to the transformability and contemporaneity of music itself. The generational changes in the organisation have led some members to consider an entrenchment of formative approaches described as conservative, rigid, dogmatic, and uncreative. Others consider that without these formative bases it is unlikely to advance in the creative development of these musical languages that are also contemporary insofar as they can pose proposals transgressive in the aesthetic, the poetic, and the performative. That is to say, in the same tradition there are ways of understanding the creative and the formative. However, as observed, within these tendencies there is much more complexity insofar as in conservative approaches there are searches that encourage orality and connection with the popular and festive dimension of these musics, recognizing the importance of improvisation and its social functionality. On the other hand, other forms of approach raise the importance of not making the study of tradition literal but approaching it from the question of subjectivity. In all these approaches, pedagogical mediation appears as a differential dimension.

During the study it was also identified how the approach to a tradition raises conflict and tension due to its inherent contradiction.

The interviews reveal how tradition is change and conservation at the same time, they are two sides of the same coin. Tradition expresses the necessary tension and interplay between what remains and what is renewed, it is all at once. This is expressed and even made more complex when one approaches a tradition; the Colombian Andean music tradition when in its justified oxymoron of “Colombian popular classical music”, as Eliécer Arenas called them, contradictions, ambivalences and complexities are presented. Colombian Andean music, as a musical genre, is too much of an oral practice to be considered academic, and too academic to be considered and valued in the same spectrum as music of indigenous, Afro-descendant, peasant tradition, etc.; they have the ambivalence of being music criticized for having been the object of political manipulation but also deeply loved by wide levels of diffusion in various sectors of the population and different generations; they are music that show the complexity of our processes of historical and identity configuration and the living and contemporary nature of their processes of development and social appropriation in which new generations participate.

*Second facet: alternativity*

In the case of Canto por la Vida, there is also a recognition of the need for some teachers to acknowledge what is alternative to tradition. These teachers question the importance of integrating urban, contemporary, and other musical expressions and artistic practices. They ponder the implications for the project of living in a territory like Valle del Cauca where indigenous and Afro-Colombian musics are present. They reflect on the practices of resistance linked to social movements and the importance of participants having the capacity to critically analyse their reality and territory. These questions arise from the teachers' concern to have an impact on society.

As described in chapters 5 and 6, these questions generate their own dynamisms within the project. A group of teachers begins to experiment with students with new pedagogies, languages, and artistic practices, towards the promotion of critical thinking, critical interpretation of the context, creativity from the symbolic and semiotic work, individual and collective memory, social and political awareness, among others. Based on the above, these professors propose other ways of working with sound, with the body, including photography,

writing, develop new narratives and repertoires for musical and scenic work, include new technologies, among other practices. These searches lead students to take aesthetic risks by giving a historical component, but also a contemporary component to the creative exercises, which is not easy. Behind this search, these professors wonder about contemporaneity and generational change as a social urgency; they question how to generate permanent and systematic openings to the world but recognize themselves in a story.

These approaches generate tension and conflict. On the one hand, these proposals are based on epistemological, cognitive and moral questions that take a critical distance from certain conservative approaches to tradition and musical work as practices considered rigid, normative, uncritical and little connected with the needs and urgencies of contemporary challenges. This characterization generates conflict with those subjectivities that are identified in these tendencies and vice versa, but also with the management of the organisation, since some members express that these exercises are still marginal in the project and do not have sufficient support because they require larger and more determined times and spaces within the programme and the training process. They even argue that power over the aesthetic canon and conservative tendencies limit the possibility of these daring proposals being developed in school. Consequently, at the same time, there is a tension over the balance of time and space in the curricular programmatic structure, since these experimental proposals require more space, time, and resources to be deepened and reflected. Also, they are deployed from the previous musical formative capital that students acquire in their transit through the musical formative structure that demands high amounts of time, such as instrumental and vocal performances. Even, for example, the disruptive stagings are also configured from artistic montages that integrate musical practices and baroque repertoires, so that there is evidence of a coexistence of contrasting tendencies that do not exclude each other but are integrated achieving aesthetic, cognitive and symbolic dislocation. In this regard, it is evident how these tendencies are not opposed to traditions, but precisely recognize them as contemporary when approached from non-essentialist or folklorist perspectives, according to the interviews.

In the midst of the tensions, the management allows the realization of these experimental and alternative works, but there is a slight predisposition towards the results regarding content,

orientation and aesthetic production. Some members see this as a tendency of the project to maintain a *status quo* that generates an imbalance of contemporary and experimental tendencies in the project. However, upon observing during fieldwork, several underlying reasons begin to emerge. What some consider to be prejudice or immobility may be a matter of caution, for example, the management takes care that the artistic exercises of critical social and political reflection do not generate McCarthyism in contexts of polarization and that the project does not end up being related to political trends or parties. It is also evident that the management is keen to preserve the distinctive identity of the project, ensuring that it remains clearly defined within the realms of its educational, musical, and artistic recognition. In fact, the musical aesthetic work of the Canto por la Vida project, centred around Colombian music, has become a significant cultural asset -one that the organisation not only takes pride in, but also uses to assert its position and distinguish itself within the broader landscape. The awards and recognitions at the musical artistic level, but also its ability to diversify in the development of productive, educational, and cultural projects, position it as a fundamental actor. This symbolic and social capital that the organisation has cemented are key assets for the management of opportunities and the processes of consensus, negotiation and obtaining resources that revert to the improvement of working conditions and the achievement of collective goals.

Even so, these experimental exercises have the resources and the necessary organisational and stage production support to be carried out in optimal conditions. At the same time, the management promotes other exercises that also aim at the diversification of the internal musical ecosystem and expand the aesthetic references in the school, such as the organisation of internships, itinerant concerts, alternative festivals, and research congresses where critical thinking and collective creation are encouraged under new trends. As seen in chapters 5 and 6, the organisation understands the importance of the aesthetic, poetic, scenic and social diversity of music and facilitates the school as a node for its experience and exhibition. The tension, then, lies between the ability to open experimental spaces while not blurring the identity of the project, which allows its sustainability, and, paradoxically, the resources with which such initiatives can be developed within the project.

### *Third Facet: subjectivity*

In addition to the two previous facets, another facet is identified that has to do with the subjective dimension of individuals: their needs, desires, identities, histories, and their ways of experiencing the project. In this facet, both the pedagogical stakes that seek to recognize this subjective dimension are identified, as well as the tensions and conflicts that emerge in the encounter of such subjectivities with institutional and community dynamics.

In the analysis of the interviews, a nuance beyond purely musical or social concerns became apparent: the question of what it means to engage with the human dimension. In other words, a concern emerged among a group of teachers regarding how best to support the individuals who arrive at the music school, guiding them through the process of educational transformation while respecting their personal identities. This perspective raises important questions related to human development and the pedagogical and didactic dimensions: How can we teach in a way that nurtures more than just musical knowledge? How can we refine our pedagogical mediation to go beyond the musical content? How can we integrate these individual life journeys into the project? What role can the school play in relation to the life projects of its students? What space do education and the arts occupy in supporting the growth and individuality of each person? This sensitivity gives rise to another pivotal issue, one that adds both complexity and richness to the musical pedagogical project.

As described in Chapter 5, this question delves deeper into the reflection on pedagogical practice to focus on the processes of emotional, affective, physical, cognitive, and psychological development of children and young people around music and other artistic languages. Some of these teachers explore the playing, the reading, the imagination, and the corporality to contribute to the development of integral skills and skills for life. It is observed how repertoires are adapted to embrace the heterogeneity of levels of musical development; flexibility is encouraged throughout the training cycle to accommodate interests and recognize individual developments; new spaces for collective musical creation and composition are available; and the musical aesthetic diversity is made visible through itinerant concerts, international guests, etc. On other occasions, the care for subjectivity is manifested in spaces of listening, counselling, musical

tutoring and affective and material accompaniment in critical vital moments of the participants. This facet also transcends the community. It is expressed in the conscious care of the forms of human and work relationships that give value to the word, to the *agape*, the ritual, the game, the sharing of food and the ethical and moral commitment that comes with working with minors in training. As Higgins, (2020) points out, that hospitality is an ethical practice in community music. It's not just about welcoming people physically into a space, but also about creating a sense of ethical responsibility to care for and nurture the relationships within the group. This approach underlines the relational and social dimensions of community music, where music-making becomes a means of building trust, empathy, and connection. Chapters 4 and 5 show how this search is part of the organisation's *ethos* and how it seeks to impact education.

On the other hand, the subjective dimension also encompasses the complex nature of the participants' musical identities and interests, which cannot be reduced or confined to the specific aesthetic, social, educational, and cultural orientations of the organisation. Notably, some teachers have actively encouraged certain young people, particularly those with a musical background, to critically reassess their aesthetic and artistic commitments, stressing the importance of breaking away from established norms and forging their own unique paths. However, it is evident that young people are often more willing to pose these questions after leaving school, once they have gained a broader perspective. Meanwhile, others who continue their musical training at a professional level remain drawn to the tradition of Colombian Andean music, often by personal choice. In this regard, the organisation's understanding of the relationship between music and social construction becomes more intricate when it engages with the individual subjectivities at play, recognising that these identities and life projects are fluid, evolving, and not homogeneous.

However, this nodal point also includes tension and conflict, since the subjective expresses the complexity of the human and the nature of its relational world. Aspects such as the psychological and affective dimension, the personal history and the professional life project are factors that intervene in the complex relational system and at the same time give a particular identity to the project. Although this dimension presents a complex framework of possibility for the analysis and observation of community life using social and organisational psychology, here we can

distinguish some points of tension around the relationship “family-work”, “the instituted and the instituting”, and the public-private. As seen in Chapter 4, the project has been built over the basis of strong affective bonds between members around friendship and family. However, these relationships are neither harmonious nor static; On the contrary, they are conflictive since the deep bond on a personal level, friendship and familiarity blurs the boundaries between the public and the private, and the family and work. The blurring of these boundaries generates conflicts when decisions at the institutional level affect personal and family life, and vice versa. They also present paradoxes, contradictions, and ambivalences for the organisation. These close affective ties not only strengthen the *instituting* dimension of the project, that is, the dynamic and transformative forces that are erected from the will, passion and desire to be in a collective project with which its members identify, but also allow the difficulty and conflict to be sustained. The acceptance and knowledge of the other's history, their potentialities, defects, neuroses, and more human needs, makes the members able to weigh with greater understanding the difficulty and navigate the adversity. However, at the same time, when these bonds are broken, what has *been instituted* is affected, understood as the norms, agreements and structures that order life in common from an institutional and organisational point of view. Private issues and relational problems then intervene in decision-making at the institutional level, which can even lead to the departure of members from the project. This is much more accentuated in the case of organisations such as Canto por la Vida, which maintain the ambivalence of being projects with a deep community nature, but at the same time are configured as legally constituted organisations, with certain levels of structuring and sustained growth.

#### *Fourth facet: sustainability*

In light of the above, another key facet emerges that configures the dynamic tensions identified: sustainability. This nodal point does not refer to the environmental issue, but to the ability of projects to sustain their processes over time. This facet touches on aspects of human, pedagogical, administrative, financial, cultural, and community management. In contexts such as Colombia, where cultural institutions are weak and the cultural and artistic sector is fragile, the possible social impact of a musical training project depends to a large extent on the ways in which it can face the challenges of sustainability in the cultural field, the project's management



capacities and its impact on nature, its community dimensions, pedagogical, artistic, and organisational.

The case of Canto por la Vida shows an interesting panorama in the framework of music schools at the national level. As can be seen in Chapter 4, the foundation was born with the technical and financial support of one of its board members, a successful businessman who has deeply believed in the role of education and culture in social development and saw in the music school and Colombian Andean music powerful possibilities to leverage this process at the local level. At the same time, the foundation was growing its management capacity with leadership and the experience of one of the professors, today manager of the organisation and who has leveraged the growth of the project from her work as a cultural manager. In this exercise, strong links have been forged with local, departmental, and national state institutions, which has made it possible to attract public resources and implement valuable public policy programmes and projects. This management model has not only allowed the school to have the autonomy to define its training project and internal ways of working since its inception, but also to gain a certain stability that has allowed them to grow in their productive, pedagogical, research, creative, artistic projection, infrastructure and administrative dimensions. However, this has led to tensions and problems. For some, this dizzying pace of the activity has eroded the fundamentals:

The mechanism of sustaining creativity begins to be engulfed. Under the mirage of productivity, management, and agency, foundational projects are eroded; Expectations of profound developments are cut short by the immediacy of surviving, while the market makes us believe that we live off the impact of our work. To remain in the fishbowl of the system forces us to model marketable content, real or symbolic, to sustain bureaucratic structures. (Cobo, 2021, p. 2)

Indeed, time ends up being a substantial factor in this problem. It is observed that the spaces for encounter, reflection, training, evaluation and collective construction are substantially reduced. The sustainability and growth of the organisation requires a high level of management. Every year, management faces the challenge of finding new sources of funding, cooperation, and execution agreements, and calls for proposals. All this in the context of a highly changing, fragile, and unpredictable political, socio-cultural and economic context.

Thus, sustainability in the case of Canto por la Vida consumes a significant capacity of time, energy, and technical and human resources of the organisation itself. Many of the professors who are members of the board of directors are part of the technical, advisory or execution team of these activities, which, in addition, have a high social value for the region and provide invaluable knowledge for the team itself. Many of these projects constitute substantial chapters of the foundation's social action, such as, for example, agreements for the strengthening of reading and children's literature; processes of social reparation through music in areas of armed conflict; instrumental endowment programmes for different areas and municipalities with fragile institutions; the development of the department's music policy plans; or the advice and training of teachers at the pedagogical, musical and management levels for the strengthening of public music schools throughout the Colombian southwest, among other projects. In this logic, the spaces for collective planning, consultation, monitoring, and evaluation are reduced and decision-making ends up being centralized in management.

This has effects on members of the collective. Some people point out that what began as a collegial project, built from a horizontal work structure, fell into vertical administrative models and 'authoritarian' ways of working that go against the initial wishes of the collective regarding the project. In this regard, it is evident that organisational management structures are not sufficient or have not been transformed at the same time or with the required rapidness by the project. Although the annual meetings of members touch on central and sensitive issues about the execution and reports on the annual execution of the project, do not contemplate additional spaces that evaluate in a deeper, structural, systematic and qualitative way the internal processes in pedagogical, artistic, community and organisational terms. The general consensus on the needs of systematization and documentation of the school's musical pedagogical project has been entrusted to one of its members, but this does not end up being a collective exercise and systematic work, which ends up being interpreted as an unfulfilled responsibility. Likewise, the spaces for formulation and pedagogical thinking are small. It is observed that generational renewal does not systematically connect with the social and pedagogical capital accumulated by the school, generating a waste of collective knowledge. Paradoxically, the lack of a structured plan has allowed new teachers to freely orient their musical and artistic pedagogical proposals

and to create new foci of development in the project, such as the approach to technologies, production tools and composition.

On the other hand, it is also evident how the diversification of musical, aesthetic, artistic and experimental pedagogical proposals depend on the management capacity and financial resources of the organisation. Experimental, creative, and investigative exercises of a socially critical nature such as the MAC congress, the Creole musicals, the nuclear workshop, the Cantabailanta festival or even the outings and community agape events, require additional resources to those of regular operation of the school. This poses a substantial challenge for social action projects through music, since it is perceived that the capacity for experimentation and methodological, artistic, aesthetic, or pedagogical transgression is mediated by the resources available to the organisation, including the evaluation of the generated processes.

For example, this can be extrapolated to organisations such as the Medellín Music Network. Currently the organisation has fewer resources to sustain its project based on processes of formation and artistic projection of collective musical practices of bands, orchestras, choirs, popular music and tango. The researcher's knowledge of the internal processes of the project makes it possible to show how the insertion of new experimental trends or change processes require additional funding, human and financial resources, time, endowment, and a management capacity that the organisational conditions do not have; especially when the times of artistic and community maturation of these experimental processes are slower and more unpredictable.

## **Complexity and conflict**

The four factors described above show the level of complexity that exists in the case of Canto por la Vida. As shown in this and previous chapters, the different, contrasting, and at times ambivalent and conflicting ways of understanding the music-society relationship show that there is no univocal, true, and linear way of influencing a community. The diversity and divergence of the philosophical, aesthetic, pedagogical, methodological, and relational stakes around musical and artistic processes show complexities at the ideological, epistemological, and axiological levels that not only generate conflicts, but also richness and complementarity. Indeed, tradition, alternatividad, subjectivity and sustainability make up faces of the same

phenomenon that, depending on the context, the situation, and the historical moment, manifest heterogeneous and changing ways of understanding the relationship between music and social construction. To exemplify the above, the image of a polyhedral "kaleidoscope" is proposed.<sup>66</sup> The metaphor seeks to describe the complexity and mutability of phenomena when the angle of observation is changed. Thus, the expression and reflection of the 4 factors at play offers alternative and complementary readings of the same phenomenon.

### Figure 43

*Polyhedral kaleidoscope*



Image of the Museum of Mathematics of Catalonia (mmaca). Source: institutional website

At the beginning of the field work, these four factors were personified by certain teachers or members of the school, depending on their role in the organisation. These members showed positions, proposals and critical visions that aligned, distanced, or disagreed with other positions and emphases, which evidenced tensions within the project. However, over time it was

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<sup>66</sup> The kaleidoscope is an optical instrument that consists of a tube with several mirrors and colourful elements such as pieces of glass or precious stones, inside. These elements are arranged symmetrically and form patterns that change when the tube is rotated, generating a prism. The word kaleidoscope comes from three Greek terms: kalos, which means beautiful; eidos, which means form, and scopeo, which means to observe. Therefore, "kaleidoscope" means "instrument for observing beautiful shapes", which etymologically describes the specific meaning of the object (Sierra, 2008, p. 8 in Vicent, 2016, p. 208).

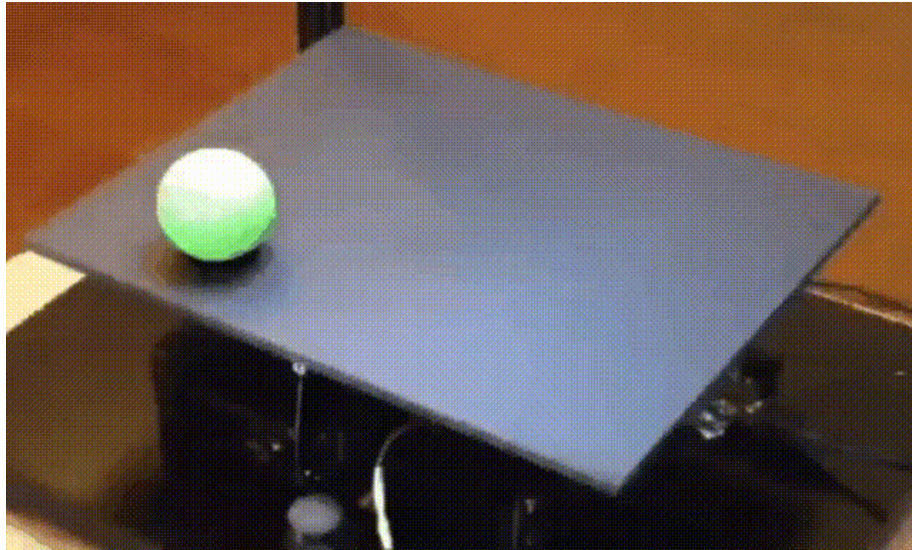
identified that these facets were not ascribed to specific people, but precisely represented faces of the same phenomenon that, depending on the contexts, moments, and discussions, acquired differentiated weights and nuances. It was even possible to identify internal contradictions in each of these factors and how even each factor contained the other factors in themselves. For example, tradition contains in itself alternativity, subjectivity and sustainability in the interplay and tension between what survives, what is transformed, the subjective imprint of the one who transforms and its functional reading for a social context; or, for example, alternative, experimental or disruptive processes make use of tradition, its languages and codes to create cognitive, aesthetic or moral dislocation, and this intervention, which is subjective, dialogues critically and functionally with a social context. Although the metaphor helps to understand the complexity and mobility of perspective, it could pose a superfluous relativism or a simplified idea of diversity. On the contrary, what I want to highlight here is the nature of the factors that generate conflict and tension in social action organisations for music.

Precisely, the case of Canto por la Vida shows how the dynamic tensions of the factors that make up this musical, pedagogical and human diversity is what has substantially enriched the project. In fact, what has made it possible to sustain diversity is not the mirage of a harmonious coexistence in plurality, but precisely the experience of otherness and conflict as dimensions that generate dynamism and mobility. In this regard, there is a certain dynamic balance between these tensions that has allowed both the survival of the organisation and its growth and diversification. The animated figure shown in 46 figure tries to reflect this phenomenon (Double click on the video).

The four points of the table symbolize the four factors described, namely: tradition, alternativity, subjectivity and sustainability. The mobility of the ball symbolizes the changing dynamics and the weight of factors according to the circumstances and needs demanded by the context, which demarcates certain tendencies that generate tension. However, the metaphor presents an additional element which is the mechanism that holds the board and detects the movement of the ball providing mechanisms for dynamic balance.

**Figure 44**

*Balancing system of dynamic tensions*



Video by Nathanael Wingerd and Isaac Saeed. Controls Class Final Project for the Mechanical Engineering Department. California Polytechnic University of Pomona.

Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Jw8m4pbTYI>

In the case of Canto por la Vida, the basis that sustains this dynamic balance lies in the mediations and mechanisms that the members of the organisation have found to process conflict and tension. In the observation of the case, it is intuited that these mechanisms are intrinsically related to the capacity of the founding members to reaffirm their bonds in daily life. This reaffirmation has taken place from the spaces of institutional consultation to the sharing of family life. In fact, it is observed that tensions and conflicts are not resolved, but remain active, expressing themselves in different ways according to the times and circumstances. They are even accentuated or nuanced in the interplay between collective dynamics and the personal psychic dimension. This is a point that needs to be studied in greater depth in future research in the field of SIMM, and it is the role of the individual psyche in the relational system of organisations, in the configuration of the collective unconscious and how this influences the ability of organisations to manage their possible social impact. This is a dimension that I believe touches the nerve of many of the issues, problems, and challenges of the SIMM field.

Considering the scale of the case studied, this aspect is not presented within the analyses of this research for ethical issues.

Despite the above, it is possible to analyse how this complex and conflictive exercise of human nature, in the case of Canto por la Vida, is expressed in the relational family/institutionality dynamics, already mentioned. In fact, it is identified that one of the axes of sustainability and balance of the organisation has been precisely this intricate relationship that has allowed conflicts to be weighed from the recognition and acceptance of the human nature of the other in all its dimensions: the character, neurosis, personal history, qualities, basic needs, vices, and defects. Their understanding as a complementary and diverse group has mediated the collective capacity to sustain tension.

Observing how the collective has sustained this dynamic tension, some underlying motivations can be identified: the preservation of the affective bond; the preservation of the labour and professional link; and not less important, the illusion around what Canto por la Vida represents and means for each one, that is, the ability of its members to *identify* with a collective project that transcends them. This last aspect can even weigh much more heavily in sustaining the tension and the experience of the conflict. This was not easy to deduce but could be intuited as a result of the crisis that I was able to experience during the fieldwork; A crisis that even led to the withdrawal of three key members of the foundation, including two of its founders. For ethical reasons, the sensitive aspects that triggered the crisis will not be explored. However, it is possible to discuss the interpretations that some members gave to the event and their own observations of the phenomenon.

Paradoxically, the crisis showed how the close affective bond and levels of familiarity meant that certain highly conflictive situations at the personal and institutional level were not effectively managed. This, according to some members, affected the principles and foundations of the project and the breaking of implicit collective agreements. On the one hand, the reading of the conflict was diverse. Some people minimized the problem while others criticized the lack of self-criticism generated by an "apparent self-image of harmony." Others made use of available institutional means but expressed experiencing vulnerability by openly raising the

issue. The deep levels of involvement of certain roles with decision-making power affected the objective management of the conflict, which caused the crisis to worsen, generating a deep organisational rift and an intense and painful breakdown of relationships. Some people felt censorship and what they considered the "symbolic elimination of the other"; others experienced feelings of betrayal and deep distrust; others felt themselves subject to slander and persecution. Finally, although the collective made decisions for the immediate intervention of the conflictive situation, the management of the conflict generated a rupture of the implicit agreements built and a crumbling of the illusion that each one had regarding the project.

What is presented here is the expression of what Kaës (1998) called "institutional suffering". According to the author, this suffering is associated with the psychic configuration of the subjects and can be caused by the lack of "intermediate formations", which are the ways in which an institution links heterogeneity through pacts, alliances, agreements, and unconscious collective contracts. Indeed, illusion is a central aspect of the institutional bond, according to Kaës. The illusion gives rise to a summoning and transcendent idea of everyday life that allows the members to cope with the otherness and diversity of logics. In his words,

(...) the lack of institutional illusion deprives the subjects of an important satisfaction and weakens the common psychic space of the imaginary burdens that have to sustain the realization of the institution's project, to arrange narcissistic identification and the feeling of belonging in a sufficiently idealized whole to face internal and external needs (Kaës, 1989, p. 60).

But what is it that generates this rupture of unconscious contracts and loss of illusion? When we look back and with a greater temporal perspective, we can see how the nature of this crisis resembles the crisis that in the early 2000s caused the breakup with Funmúsica. This raises interesting issues when similar phenomena are detected, although with different actors. In this regard, some situations can be identified that show distortions of our political culture. It is observed that when an individual or a group dissent, contradicts or makes a complaint, criticism or fair demand of a hierarchical role, a disqualification is generated, and it is dismissed. The interpellation is taken as a personal attack and is qualified as subversive or anarchist. In this process, the other is "demonized", stereotyped and stigmatized, nullifying the legitimacy of their complaint and casting doubt on their judgment. This can lead to the symbolic or actual



elimination of the other in the organisation; the banishment of what is considered to be the “source of all evil”, as Duschatzky and Skliar (2000) called it. For this reason, those who denounce, dissent, or contradict each other are marginalized and vulnerable, learning silence as a protection mechanism. Thus, the deep fear of personal retaliation eliminates the possibility of collectively addressing the conflict and its necessary confrontation.

This is a great vice that corresponds to a long historical memory of the way in which power has been exercised in the country. The second point of distortion is that actors who achieve certain degrees of visibility, empowerment and self-leadership usually end up, sooner or later, being co-opted and diluted by the exercise of hegemony and control, without the ability to mature their political project. This detaches leadership from the instituting force of the collective and from the construction of alternative and consistent bargaining powers. From the above, hopelessness, frustration and disbelief are born when autonomy is sacrificed; over time, this turns into passivity, conformism, and distrust in leadership and the institution. Finally, all the above shows something even more serious, and that is the lack of awareness about political education for participation and the renewal of the mechanisms and systems of representativeness and deliberative democracy.

The above phenomena show the implications of the relationship between culture and conflict. The aforementioned crises show what the final report of the Commission for the Clarification of the Truth (CEV) pointed out in its chapter dedicated to the role of culture in the Colombian conflict (Vol. 1, Ch. 10). Based on a diagnosis with a historical perspective, the report shows how in the country the other has been stigmatized to the point of being considered an enemy for being or thinking differently. This imaginary has been systematically incorporated into culture, expressing itself in biases, prejudices, ideas, and Manichean visions of the other and the other that can be transmitted between generations. In this way, culture is not only defined as the set of distinctive, spiritual, material, intellectual and affective traits, that characterize a society or a social group, but also:

(...) as incorporating experiences and learning, biases, prejudices, ideas, visions of the other. In it, stories, myths, and imaginaries are constructed; Norms, laws, institutions, politics, and

relations of production are conditioned. Therefore, it gives rise to the essential issues that allow us to live or not to live in community. (CEV, 2022, p. 538).

The culture, in addition to being a substantial dimension for the design of intervention projects that seek the transformation of conflicts through music, also intervenes in the ways in which actors and organisations in the field relate to and project themselves. Culture configures the matrix of meaning from which the actors and organisations of the SIMM field evaluate, understand, judge, behave and make decisions.

This intrinsic relationship between conflict and political culture has important implications for the SIMM field in a country like Colombia. Indeed, fixed ideologies have generated binary logics and radicalisms that eliminate nuances and complexity, as well as the possibility of weaving bridges of dialogue and understanding in difference.

The mechanism reduces the other as a subject of homogeneous identity, as a “subject full of a cultural mark” (Duschatzky & Skliar, 2000). The other is pigeonholed within a determined, fixed, univocal, and homogeneous group of beliefs, values, ways of being, thinking and acting, which de facto eliminates the complexity of their subjectivity. In this musical ideological essentialism rests the assumption that differences are absolute, full and that identities are constructed in unique referents. Under this logic, the violinist who performs Beethoven’s music or the indigenous musician Nasa will be represented under a single ideology, identity, beliefs and stereotyped forms of social relation. In short, from unique, full and consistent identification marks the subject is stripped of all complexity. These ways of naming otherness are neither neutral nor opaque and generate consequences in the daily lives of those others. Indeed

Representation is a system of signification that gives intelligibility to the world and is produced within power relations through mechanisms of delegation (who has the right to represent whom) and description (how different cultural groups are presented). The problem of representation is not limited to a question of naming otherness. Above all, there is a regulation and control of the gaze that defines who others are and how they are. Visibility and invisibility constitute mechanisms for the production of otherness in this epoch and act simultaneously with naming and/or not naming. (Duschatzky & Skliar, 2000, p. 3)

These forms of representation that exaggerate otherness to enclose it in pure difference through stereotyped binary logics also fulfill the function of attributing the social failure to the other. This serves to reaffirm one's own identity from a sphere of moral superiority and therefore its survival, since the other becomes a threat. In this sense, Larrosa and Perez de Lara (1998) consider that the otherness of the other remains reabsorbed in our identity and reinforces it even more; "It makes her, if possible, more arrogant, more confident, and more self-satisfied. From this point of view, the madman confirms our reason; the child, our maturity; the savage, our civilization; the marginalized, our integration; abroad, our country; the deficient, our normality". Finally, the simple evocation of a "culprit" provides a sense of orientation as it reduces the complexity of the processes of social constitution and human experiences (Duschatzky and Skliar, 2000).

### **Implications for the SIMM field: other experiences from the Colombian context**

The tensions and conflicts surrounding the factors described can also be seen in two cases of the Colombian case: The Medellín Music Network "La Red" and<sup>67</sup> public policy for music in Colombia.

La Red is a socio-musical project primarily based on musical traditions of a symphonic, orchestral, band, and choral nature. Over time, La Red has incorporated proposals that aim to diversify musical aesthetics, epistemology, pedagogy, and community engagement. These efforts serve as alternatives to broaden and enrich the programme's social objectives and transform the musical educational paradigms that critical studies of SIMM have highlighted, particularly concerning social action through music (Baker, 2022, 2014). As a result of these efforts, La Red now understands that music, in isolation, cannot achieve the social miracles often attributed to it. On the contrary, in the context of such programmes, exclusion, oppression, and indoctrination can easily take root. The programme acknowledges how certain musical traditions, particularly orchestral music, can perpetuate a pedagogy characterised by

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<sup>67</sup> A Colombian project of almost thirty years that is structured from a system of integrated musical groups and music schools in 27 communes of the city of Medellín, oriented to the musical practices of symphonic bands, orchestras rubbed, and later, Colombian music, popular music and tango.

authoritarianism, abuse of power, and humiliation. This pedagogy reinforces an ideology that privileges a hierarchical system, in which so-called geniuses or gifted individuals are promoted, while those deemed "backward" or "mediocre" are excluded. It fosters a worldview in which success in individual musical competition as the key to survival in a difficult and hostile world. Furthermore, it exalts classical music as the "high" culture, the path to excellence and perfectibility, while dismissing and devaluing local and community-based cultural expressions, which are often seen as inferior or lacking cognitive value.

La Red also critiques a musical pedagogy that, in its pursuit of spectacularisation, undermines the necessary formative processes that require patience for healthy technical development and a more holistic experience of music. Such a pedagogy offers little recognition of individual subjectivity or the unique identities at play. The programme even acknowledges the darker side of social action programmes for music, highlighting instances of corruption where public resources are misappropriated under the guise of social rhetoric, as well as cases of sexual harassment and abuse.

The work on these understandings has meant deep tensions inside La Red, that have mobilized change, but it has also produced polarizations and internal conflicts between members and groups of the organisation. In my participation as a consultant of the processes of pedagogical renewal of the Network, I have been able to show how the way in which the necessary critical studies are interpreted around musical practices of symphonic tradition (such as orchestras) lead to ideological dogmatisms, radicalisms and conceptual distortions that reduce the central issues that critical studies themselves seek to evidence. For example, the role of the conductor is directly and without any nuance equated as dictatorial and patriarchal. The correlation makes sense in the context of problematic hegemonic models related to such traditions. However, the generalization and "demonization" of the role is not only misguided, but also eliminates the possibility of imagining alternative scenarios for the profession, since what will be at stake is not the elimination of conductors but the reflection on the ways in which power is exercised in musical practices.

In the same way, this binary logic to enunciate difference has led to simplifications about the musical and the social, disintegrating these dimensions and generating polarizations through which one or the other is identified or represented as "in favour of the social" or "in favour of the musical". This distinction and separation of dimensions has had diverse effects on the ways in which musicians and professionals who are dedicated to strengthening the social dimension of the programme, including psychologists, anthropologists, and sociologists, are represented, described, and related. For example, at many times, teaching musicians, ensemble directors or instrument teachers have criticized the approaches and discourses that describe them as agents incapable of realising the social objectives of the programme. In addition, some musicians consider that strategies that are isolated from musical processes (socio-emotional workshops, self-esteem, care, the insertion of new learning methodologies from the social sciences, among others) make the musical and artistic pedagogical process dispersed, which requires ample time for its development. Some of these musicians consider that it is the aesthetic and artistic dimension and the creation of musical community projects that make the social projection of the programme possible. On the other hand, the teams destined to dynamize or attend to the social dimension have been underestimated in their knowledge, while highlighting the problem of the training of musicians who come from conservatories and pedagogical traditions with conservative and dogmatic ideologies, also disregard the technical and mechanistic vision of the training processes based on the enjoyment and experience of children and young people. These distinctions are not wrong, in fact, they are complementary, but their pigeonholing in a binary logic causes generalizations and reactions that do not allow us to see the nuances that are expressed in the daily life of pedagogical, musical and organisational practices and the diversity of trajectories and logics of work. Again, the problem is not who owns the truth about how the social dimension of the programme is realized, since the different positions, although contradictory, reveal legitimate realities of the project. However, what stands out is how the establishment of difference by means of binary logic not only limits the complexity and nuances of the problem but also the possibility of recognition and mutual work when groups have previously been disqualified by the others.

This binary logic between the social and the musical also generates conceptual distortions when the processes of sequential and progressive structuring of technical training – which requires the

learning of a musical instrument – are equated with the loss of exploration, creativity, and holistic and integral learning. The former is assigned to the "musical" category, the latter to the "social" category. That is to say, they are presented as opposite dimensions and not as complementary dimensions of the same process of musical development. The confusion lies in the ideologization through which anything that is structured is equated with the rigid and then with the authoritarian. In this same logic, other conceptual confusions are generated, such as equating rigor with mistreatment, stigmatizing technical development as contrary to enjoyment, and rebuking the search for aesthetic and artistic results as it is considered against the training process. Again, these correlations are not gratuitous. The distortion makes sense in the context of the problematic effects that certain musical educational paradigms and ideologies of music have reinforced in conservatories and social action programmes for music with profoundly negative effects on people's lives. Indeed, in these experiences and models it has been identified how rigor is equated with mistreatment, enjoyment is eliminated at the expense of excessive technicality and the process is bypassed, privileging the aesthetic product and artistic projection as the sole end. However, what may at some point feel like necessary radicalism removes issues that matter to us.

For example, as a reaction to the above, the project changed its name from “Network of Music Schools of Medellín” to “Network of Music of Medellín”. Although the change sought to recognize how the programme gave way to musical diversity, it also sought to eliminate de facto the notion of "school" qualified as a model contrary to the free expression of creativity, experimentation and exploration as working principles of the Secretary of Citizen Culture of the Mayor's Office. That is to say, the *school*, according to my observation of the speeches of some official members, is conceived as a normative institution that “indoctrinates and restricts creative freedom, promoting the status quo through education”. Hence, these members sought to position methodologies such as creative laboratories. For this reason, they considered that in the context of these programmes it was not possible to speak of “training”. Paradoxically, the change of name of the programme has not solved in practice the challenges of the Network to think about creative development in a field that requires sequential and gradual processes of technical, cognitive, and social development such as music. The decision, the result of a radicalism that eliminates the concept in the abstract, does not allow us to reflect on the school

as a social institution and as an expression of other possible ways of constructing and signifying it from the social richness of the diversity of musical and sound practices in a country like Colombia.

These ways of seeing the goal of musical training have also been reflected in the latest discussions on Colombia's public music policy. The reaction generated in the country by President Gustavo Petro's announcement of his intention to create the orchestra system in Colombia based on *El Sistema System* of Venezuela generated alarms and a wave of criticism as well as tensions and polarizations between various sectors of the musical field. The presidential project, which was called *Sonidos para la construcción de paz*, alluding to the speeches about how orchestral music would contribute to the human and social development of a country in conflict, suggested a setback of more than 30 years in Colombia's musical and cultural policy. The country had already made progress in a musical policy that embraced the principles of the 1991 Constitution and the 1997 General Law on Culture, aimed at promoting multiculturalism, autonomy, territorial decentralization, and the political participation of excluded sectors. It was not the first time that the Venezuelan Orchestra System wanted to be adopted in the country and the Ministry of Culture had already gone through debates in the past that justified its inconvenience as a public policy for music in one of the most diverse musical countries. In contrast, since 2003 the ministry had developed the National Music Plan for Coexistence (PNMC). This policy had been structured from the epistemological, aesthetic, pedagogical and methodological diversity of the richness of musical and sound practices, their forms of sociability, community roots and territorial identity, betting on the development of regional and sectoral autonomy and the construction of politics from the grassroots processes.

The announcement generated a stir and concern in the sector of the musical and cultural field in Colombia. Days later, more than 2,500 musicians, researchers, cultural managers and teachers in the country signed a letter addressed to the president himself, expressing their bewilderment and offering alternatives to redirect the proposal; Another 1,500 band directors demonstrated asking the president to build on the needs, potentialities and developments of symphonic practices and the diversity of the country's musical ecosystem; Agents from more than a thousand municipalities nationwide, 50 organisations and sectors had mobilized with working

documents, rights of petition and the development of more than 13 events that included academic reflection panels, sectoral meetings and opinion columns in the national and international press. Musicians, teachers and music researchers made visible the balances of the critical research around this model, showing its shortcomings in at least 4 aspects: 1) as a musical educational project; 2) as a social project; 3) as an ideology; and 4) as an institution (Baker, 2014, 2019, 2023).

The concern was that outdated, dogmatic and limited disciplinary pedagogical models would be imported and recycled; Eurocentric and colonialist ideologies that, disguised with the language of inclusion and diversity, installed salvationist discourses of a poor, ignorant, insensitive and deviant childhood and youth; that it sought the democratization of a 'high' culture as the goal of politics and training in a "single epistemological statute" to achieve "human perfectibility" as the Deputy Minister of Creativity proposed; to install a unique model of musical excellence with a pyramidal and professionalizing system of talent selection that generates favouritism and forms of social exclusion; to prioritize the spectacle disconnected from the socio-cultural and educational realities of the territories; and hide the possible harmful effects of these projects on culture through huge budgets and propaganda apparatuses such as cases of corruption, sexual abuse, gender inequality and non-transparent functioning.

The music, artistic and cultural sector was reluctant to believe that the first progressive government in Colombia's history went against its own principles. The president had been elected for raising the banner of protecting the country's cultural, social, and ecological diversity; for recognizing the struggles of the excluded, the oppressed and the social movements of Afro-descendant, peasant, indigenous, feminist, student, LGBTQ+ groups, teachers, victims of violence, workers and artists and cultural managers. His discourse on social justice, based on epistemological struggle, was contradictory to a colonial view of music and its education. However, at the same time, the enthusiasm of a sector of the musical field that claimed the project as an invaluable opportunity for the consolidation of the orchestral sector, the solution to the labour problem of music and the basis for a real strengthening of musical education in the country was growing. Some members of this sector began to question the criticisms of the system, highlighting its benefits.



However, the music sector that mobilized made it clear that the problem was not against a very valuable practice in the cultural history of the world: orchestral symphonic music, but with an ideology, pedagogy and way of understanding human and musical development that by imposition could violate and undermine the richness of the cultural processes of the communities. Even those most affected by the conflict in the country and who have been resilient thanks to their musical and sound practices. The historical lack of budgetary equity to these communities of practice and policy coherence was pointed out.

Although the reasons and facts about the project's inadvisability were clear as they were based on rigorous critical research on the model and had resonated strongly in the country, the government continued with its purpose. The music sector asked the government to open a binding technical roundtable and submitted to the ministry a document with more than 28 lines of music policy for Colombia in the 21st century, seeking to unblock the debate and offer alternatives for the future. After an internal secrecy of the ministry that lasted almost 5 months, the government opened a process of consultation and welcomed the creation of sectoral tables for the renewal of the PNMC and the reformulation of the presidential project. At this table, with a group of colleagues, we proposed that an initiative that articulated music and peacebuilding should embrace the problem of otherness. That is, to stimulate processes of interculturality. We proposed that a democracy did not consist in eradicating difference, but in building the conditions so that differences – even the most unfathomable and radical – could coexist in a society, and that the decentralization of musical practices through their tension with others was fundamental to contribute to the construction of a democratic citizenship. While we were working on that design, part of the industry remained sceptical and vigilant. In his speeches, the president continued to support the vision of a massive project focused on the orchestra, classical music theory, which would allow teamwork, mental abstraction and sensitization of children and young people.

Despite that, in the process, the discourses were radicalized, generating a polarizing reaction that divided the music sector in two: musicians of a popular, urban, or regional community tradition and musicians of classical orchestral training. While one sector expressed itself

frustrated, betrayed, and made invisible by colonial and reductive proposals, other sectors felt stigmatized, delegitimized, and denigrated by being identified under the parameters of critical discourses.

In my work of coordinating the mobilization process, but especially in my role as a bridge of dialogue between ministry officials and various sectors of the musical field, during the development I was able to observe that the capital of our academic and research knowledge and the wealth of experiences of our formation did not exempt us from sectarianism, radicalism, polarisation, arrogance and the disqualification of the other in the name of diversity, equity and social justice. I was able to observe how difficult it was to see what was common in what was diverse, to reach agreements on the fundamentals, and to understand that the other positions were not personal delusions, but a corpus of beliefs rooted in the culture that had to be skillfully questioned. Also, how certain distortions of our political culture manifested themselves in the ways of exercising power and participating in public affairs, and how tyranny could also be exercised in the name of change regardless of the shore. Despite the above, the Colombian musical field took on the conflict, generating interesting and tense processes of participation and consensus whose analysis on the way conflict was transformed is beyond the scope of this doctoral work.

The meaning of mentioning this case in this chapter of findings has to do with the questions and reflections that arose during this process: how to establish a constructive and effective dialogue between ideologies, beliefs, and such dissimilar ways of understanding the role of music in society? Is the use of research evidence enough to permeate such deep-rooted cognitive and affective structures? Is it possible to manage or transform a conflict and overcome polarization with the tools of our field? In the reflection, I questioned myself about the power relations at stake and about the relativism that could represent recognizing the different imaginaries and points of view without disqualifying them. How can we ensure that the acceptance of the points of view of others does not mean the abandonment of an ethical and critical horizon?

According to the American anthropologist Geertz (1996), tolerance generates an aseptic relativism that eliminates the possibility of critically examining social conflict as a field of dispute towards the construction of justice and social equity.

(...) the idea that every judgement refers to a particular model of understanding things has unpleasant consequences: the fact that it limits the possibility of critically examining human works disarms us, dehumanizes us, incapacitates us to take part in a communicative interaction, makes it impossible to criticize culture by culture, and of culture or subculture within itself. (Geertz on Duschatzky & Skliar, 2000, p. 9)

This suggests that it is not a question of eliminating the conflict but of transforming it towards a possible change that poses a shared horizon. Indeed, the case of Canto por la Vida, the Medellín Music Network, and the process of mobilization of the Colombian musical field shows us not only that conflict happens, is normal and is present in human relationships, but also that change is possible. Conflict poses a field of possibility in which there can be interaction and agreement towards the broadening and transformation of points of view without losing critical judgment in concrete contexts and situations. This shows how community and human relationships are not static but always dynamic, changing, and adaptive. Conflict is a field of opportunity that impacts and can change “the personal, the relational, the structural and the cultural” (Lederach, 2014, p. 23).

In my participation in the aforementioned cases, I was able to observe how the capacity to transform some of these dimensions was not only focused on the content –the capacity for argumentation and demonstration of facts or truths– but on the form, that is, on the conditions in which the dialogue was established, the platforms, mediations, conceptual and methodological tools available. This is interesting for our SIMM field. The above raises critical questions about the importance of gaining a deeper understanding of the factors that impede the shift in perspectives, especially when those perspectives are built upon deeply ingrained premises and ideologies. These ideologies have been subtly, delicately, and persistently imposed on the role of music within social construction, shaping how it is perceived, valued, and practiced. Exploring these factors is crucial for unraveling the complexities of cultural

hegemony in music and the challenges involved in transforming entrenched ways of thinking that often go unquestioned due to their pervasive, long-standing influence.

### **Management platforms for SIMM conflict transformation**

In their review of music and the arts in the transformation of conflict, Berg & Sloboda (2010) raised the importance of delving into human relationships beyond the arts themselves. They concluded that the development of relationships is an important part in preventing violent conflict in the future (p. 11). The aforementioned cases from the Colombian context are proof of this. For example, although Canto por la Vida is not enunciated under discourses of instrumentalization of the arts for the resolution of conflicts or specific social problems, its community, pedagogical, artistic, and organisational dynamics show the daily challenges and relational conflicts that organisations and societies that embrace musical, social and human diversity with all its complexity and difference must experience. The case shows the importance of a collective awareness of the necessary transformation of the distortions of our political culture as a possibility for the maturation of projects and the human and social development of organisations, but at the same time it teaches us the ability to agree and build a collective project for more than 25 years from otherness and diversity as a power.

The case of Canto por la Vida refers to ways of structuring ways of working that prepare us to understand complexity and to assume that we live in a society full of moral, political, philosophical, and aesthetic contradictions. This case shows that if we do not have a sufficiently complex vision of music and social construction, we can end up caricaturing the aesthetic, the pedagogical and the forms of management, reducing the capacity for agency that we, as a society have to generate processes of transformation from the intrinsic tensions that indeed dynamize our musical field and that enrich social life.

In light of the above, the maturity and wisdom of a social action organisation for music will not be focused on the solution of its tensions and contradictions but on its ability to manage and transform conflicts, crises, moments of incoherence in different ways, while elucidating the importance of transforming structures that go against social justice and equity. Canto por la Vida

illustrates the challenges of organisations to accept the necessary convergence of the non-convergent, to accept the fact that there are contrary visions but that they are necessary for the balance of projects and the musical ecosystem, to assume that a project is not necessarily more interesting when it is radicalized towards a single type of solution, tendency or vision; That is to say, it teaches us to recognize complexity and conflict without the intention of dissolving or disappearing it, but of managing it by recognizing it as part of community life.

Nevertheless, to do so, we require the creation of sensitive, informed, and creative platforms for the management of transformation processes at the musical, community and organisational pedagogical levels that embrace the complexity posed by the various ways of approaching tradition, alternativity, subjectivity and sustainability and that stimulate the balance of the internal musical ecosystem. These management platforms should help us to build a collective horizon where divergent and conflicting readings can become visible and can be "translated" (Duschatzky & Skliar, 2000), making use of methodologies and tools that create the conditions for encounter, participation, research-creation, reflection on professional action, strengthening of links, and training for a transformation of the distortions of the political culture, especially in contexts where fragile working conditions limit free expression and criticism. In my experience, this requires not only good mediation, but also that organisations equip themselves with patience, time and human, technical and financial resources, in a context where fast results are demanded. In this sense, autonomy and collective appreciation of the importance of these processes are key aspects.

In light of the above, social action projects through music that embrace the otherness inherent in musical and human diversity require a 'moral imagination' that allows 4 things: 1) to maintain a paradoxical tension of reality where curiosity and complexity erode the basis of dualistic polarities; 2) imagine a network of relationships that includes 'enemies'; 3) accept the inherent risk of moving into unknown scenarios beyond backlash; and 4) promote creative acts that unleash potential alternatives for coexistence (Lederach, 2005).

In this sense, from the field of musical and organisational pedagogical management, we could resort to the conceptual and methodological tools offered by Jean Paul Lederach (2005; 2014)

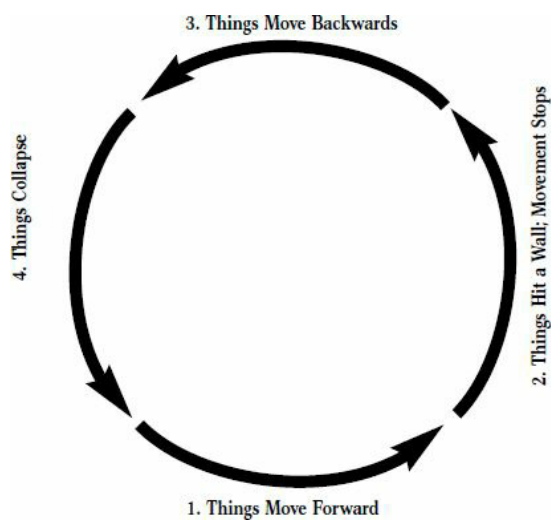
for the creation of “transformative platforms” that allow us to understand the factors that are at stake when addressing a “transformative” and not a “resolutive” approach to conflicts. Although the analysis of the implications and opportunities of applying these approaches goes beyond this document, some examples can be offered, such as the use of conceptual tools to help us understand why social action organisations for music experience cyclical dynamics of crisis. For example, the 3 cases of the Colombian context mentioned above show how institutions at certain times in their history tend towards more conservative, progressive, or pragmatic angles, generating crises and polarizing reactions.

Understanding of these factors could help organisations in the SIMM field to address and experience crisis not as setbacks but as the dynamic expression of the cyclical processes of change that generate the tensions of the musical ecosystem in a social context and as visible patterns that express the complexity of its relational context. Also, this could help organisations to “conflict naming” (Howell, 2024) as a way of making visible those ruptures, tensions, or gaps at the relational level that undermine internal trust and, as a result, fracture community life.

For example, Table 6 illustrates how, in a cycle of change, there are resistances (controversies, problems, conflicts) that cause things to either progress or be perceived as regressing. However, Lederach suggests that the ability to respond effectively to conflict begins with understanding, from a broader perspective, the relational context and the deeper patterns that emerge from recurring episodes over time. See table 7.

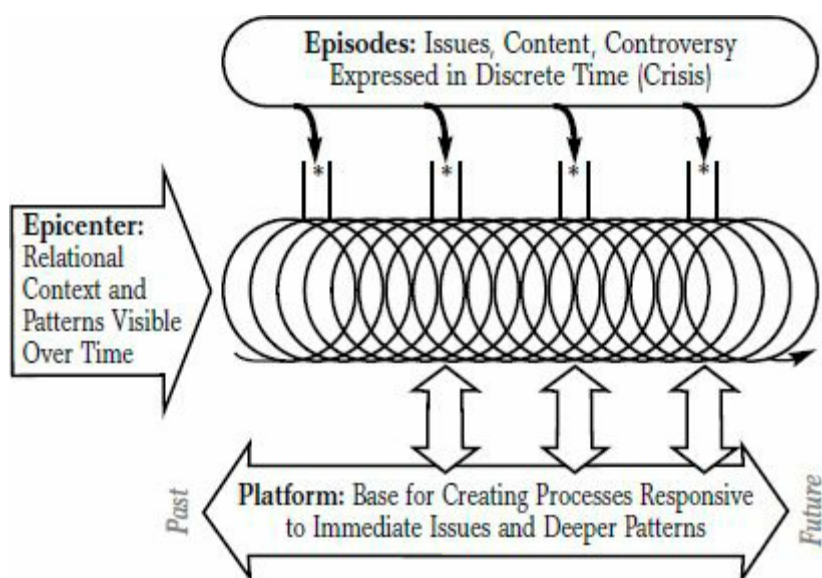
Other works, such as that of the linguist George Lakoff in his “moral politics” that explores the cognitive and moral dimensions behind conservative and progressive ideologies, or the work of Marshall Rosenberg with his proposal of Nonviolent Communication (NVC), could also help us in the task of building theoretical and methodological frameworks in the matter. The study on the application of these conceptual and methodological approaches in the management of organisations within the SIMM field is the next step of this research.

**Table 6**  
*Change circle*



Jean Paul Lederach, 2014, p. 42

**Table 7**  
*Transformational platform*



Jean Paul Lederach, 2014, p. 42

Finally, according to Lederach (2014), this allows us to see conflict as “an opportunity and a gift” rather than a threat. Conflict allows us to deepen our knowledge about ourselves, others and our social structures, key dimensions for the SIMM field. Through conflict we respond, innovate and change. Conflict can be understood as the motor of change, that which keeps relationships and social structures honest, alive, and dynamically responsive to human needs, aspirations, and growth. (Lederach, 2014, p. 19). Considering this, the SIMM field could help to understand the interstices of our humanity, to recognize the complexity of our emotions and relationships, and to make a more compassionate and comprehensive reading of the complexity of our histories and experiences in search of social action through music.

### **Some final thoughts and implications**

This case study demonstrates that, within the broad and often challenging discourse on music and social action, reductionist approaches and binary frameworks that oversimplify the field are neither feasible nor desirable. The capacity to sustain conflicting and converging factors enables organisations to counteract one-size-fits-all thinking, fostering mobility, transformation, and innovation, even at the expense of internal tensions. This social complexity necessitates an understanding that the four identified dimensions -tradition, alternativity, subjectivity, and sustainability- represent different perspectives on the same phenomenon. Their significance will vary depending on time and context, and they do not definitively determine an organisation’s identity, particularly when diversity is at stake.

In this regard, organisations seeking to contribute to social development while acknowledging musical, pedagogical, human, and social diversity must embrace tensions and conflicts as inherent, structural, and enduring aspects of social life phenomena that are not resolved but rather continuously transformed.

Furthermore, the study highlights that these tensions and conflicts are not merely abstract but manifest in the exercise of power, the representation of others, and participation in public life, revealing distortions within our political culture and oppressive social structures that must be transformed. In this regard, the study underscores the importance of developing complex



frameworks to address the multifaceted nature of our field, particularly in organisational, pedagogical, and human management. There is significant potential in identifying conceptual and methodological approaches that warrant further exploration. From this perspective, *management* -a dimension that, in my view, remains underestimated in our field- could gain greater relevance through research and the training of professionals committed to social action through music.

In particular, it is considered essential to establish training spaces for music educators, coordinators, and project managers within the SIMM field, focusing on conceptual and methodological tools for managing change and transforming conflicts at the organisational level. Social action projects through music that recognise and value the alterity inherent in musical and human diversity and engage with the field's transformations through a critical perspective on the musical and educational traditions they are rooted in, demand more comprehensive preparation. This preparation would enable clearer understanding and management of the tensions, processes of change, and the complexities and nuances that emerge in this dialogue. Such preparation is needed both at the programmatic-curricular level and in leadership, to facilitate the integration of human teams through strategic planning.

Furthermore, programme managers and coordinators require tools to create and develop processes and platforms for musical pedagogical renewal, ones that can nurture both the artistic and social dimensions of projects without fragmenting or dissociating their aims and objectives. These initiatives should create spaces and mechanisms for dialogue and the management of dissent. Achieving this requires the careful management of internal organisational conditions (time, space, resources) to foster a collaborative project of reflection on the programmes' guiding purpose and the professional action they aim to achieve, particularly from a pedagogical and, above all, a didactic standpoint. In this context, the exchange of experiences and pedagogical knowledge, alongside the co-creation of musical and didactic practices around critical and mobilising questions can stimulate participation, group autonomy, motivation, and a sense of collegiality.

On the other hand, in my experience supporting social action projects through music, I have observed a significant loss of accumulated experience and a limited social appropriation of the knowledge produced, particularly in projects rooted in symphonic musical traditions that have sought to recognise and integrate the diversity of community-based and regional music while critically transforming their educational paradigms. Many of these programmes, some of them on a large scale, fail to effectively align their transformative aims with the knowledge gained from these initiatives and with strategic planning efforts. The absence of sustained pedagogical and didactic exercises over time, the lack of collective appropriation and reflection on institutional memory, and the absence of critical research into key turning points and areas of debate -alongside the failure to implement continuous evaluation to assess both the successes and shortcomings of new pedagogical approaches and integrate them into planning- have resulted in a disconnect between grassroots learning and broader organisational change efforts.

I have observed that this issue often stems from a lack of expertise in project management with medium- and long-term objectives, time constraints in daily operations, insufficient human and institutional resources for managing change, team burnout, and a lack of specialised knowledge to facilitate fundamental exercises of reflection on action and transformation through musical practice in the classroom. In the context of publicly funded projects, where administrative changes create pressure to deliver artistic results and achieve wide-reaching impact, the processes of change -requiring patience and resources- necessitate alternative evaluative frameworks that prioritise qualitative dimensions within a well-defined developmental framework. However, this demands evaluation mechanisms and processes for assessing pedagogical and musical innovation initiatives, which many projects do not incorporate into their strategic planning in our contexts.

Furthermore, this gap can be attributed to the fact that funding and sustainability mechanisms for socio-musical projects and programmes in Colombia -and other Latin American regions- rarely mandate qualitative or systematic evaluations of project impact, particularly regarding the quality of the process. As a result, institutional evaluation cultures and systematic strategies for reflective practice remain nascent, discontinuous, and insufficiently integrated into the organisational structures, nor are they established as a foundation for strategic projection.

The lack of this reflective and evaluative process -both for new pedagogical proposals and for organisational strategies of transformation and change- results in incomplete collective learning cycles. This means that such knowledge is never fully appropriated by the teams. Even when an organisation has succeeded in systematising or documenting processes, these records are not used as a foundation for informed decision-making or collective planning. As a result, initiatives are either continued or abandoned without a thorough critical evaluation. This results in decisions being made based on individual, subjective perceptions rather than a more systematic understanding of the successes and challenges of new pedagogical proposals aimed at transforming artistic education paradigms and strengthening the programme's social impact.

These dynamics ultimately erode internal trust within organisations, particularly in the discourses and initiatives aimed at transforming programmes to fulfil their social objectives. I have witnessed how, in the midst of such experiences, teams end up distrusting new initiatives, feeling those critical discussions -or sensitive conversations about what is really happening in the organisation and what is affecting its members- are not handled with the necessary sensitivity, care, commitment, transparency, and effectiveness. This breeds greater internal tension, resistance, and conflict regarding the intentions behind change efforts within the organisation.

In this regard, it is crucial to promote spaces for training and dialogue for cultural managers and those responsible for shaping policies, addressing both the epistemological, aesthetic, pedagogical, and methodological complexities involved in creating and managing plans, programmes, and projects that recognise the available musical, social, and human diversity, as well as in defining strategies to encourage processes of participation, dialogue, and sectoral consultation. Furthermore, it is important to establish mechanisms of collaboration between sociomusical projects and researchers, research groups, and specialists interested in the co-construction of knowledge on the relationship between social action and organisational management. These collaborations could involve tools from various fields of knowledge including social and organisational psychology, project management, and conflict transformation to help manage the transformation of conflicts and tensions inherent in the SIMM

field. In this context, it is necessary to create research lines, research training hubs, networks, and knowledge communities within university training programmes, focused on the relationship between music and social action, that encourage open, dynamic, and systematic dialogue with knowledge generated in other contexts and hemispheres, as well as its cultural translation.

Pertaining to this, research into the organisational management of projects within the field of SIMM appears to be promising, particularly in relation to “conflict transformation” and “change management”. Notably, the majority of studies on music and conflict transformation have predominantly examined the -positive or negative- psychosocial effects of the use of music within social intervention projects and communities, as can be seen in different literature reviews (Bergh and Sloboda, 2010; Rodríguez, 2013; Urbain, 2008), while comparatively little attention has been afforded to the organisational structures and management dynamics at the human and pedagogical levels. The relevant and extensive research work of Geoffry Baker (2014, 2022) has critically and comprehensively examined the organisational structures of projects within the field, analysing the nature of the tensions and conflicts underlying pedagogical models, organisational management, and change processes aimed at strengthening the social impact of these programmes. However, there is a notable gap in the literature regarding studies that specifically explore these phenomena through the conceptual and methodological frameworks of organizational psychology, project management, and conflict transformation. Such an approach could offer valuable insights to facilitate effective change management within SIMM organizations.

In reviewing research on management and conflict transformation in socio-musical projects, a particularly relevant study found is the thesis by Figueroa et al. (2009), which focuses on understanding the dynamics of conflict within the Red de Escuelas de Formación Musical at the Ciudadela Pasto campus in Colombia. This research examines the origins, manifestations, and management strategies of conflict across the entire socio-musical project. It raises critical questions about how conflict is taught and learned within organisations and explores ways to shift its traditionally negative perception towards a more constructive approach. The study proposes alternatives that enhance participation and civic education by integrating conceptual and methodological tools for a pedagogy of conflict. Regarding management, the thesis

“Gestión humana: actualidad y futuro en la red de escuelas de música de Medellín” (Arias, 2013), focuses on understanding how human resource management operates within the Red de Escuelas de Música de Medellín and proposes potential improvements to enhance the well-being of its collaborators. The study highlights how social and economic instability impacts organisational management and analyses the governance model, sources of power, and the lack of continuity in psychosocial support, despite human resources being the programme’s most valuable asset. Arias argues that the absence of human resource management adversely affects agency, motivation, and participation in such projects. The study also describes how the Red has implemented conflict management mechanisms, such as a “coexistence manual”; however, it does not provide references regarding conflicts related to the pedagogical and musical dimensions. Meanwhile, Nicolás Ortiz, in his thesis “La gestión cultural en la Red de Músicas de Medellín: narrativas, prácticas y oportunidades para la configuración de un escenario de ciudadanías artísticas” (2025), examines the role of cultural management within the same programme, aiming to contribute to the development of a cultural management plan that facilitates the formation of artistic citizenship through music. The study engages with critical debates surrounding social action through music and explores the programme’s strategic shifts towards territorial and cultural management as a means of reinforcing its social dimension. Although it does not specifically address conflict transformation at the organisational level, it provides conceptual and operational foundations for a cultural management model that fosters the recognition and exercise of cultural rights and the construction of artistic and cultural citizenship. Emphasis is placed on integration with the broader cultural ecosystem, knowledge generation, the development of musical narratives connected to social realities, the systematisation of cultural processes, and their dissemination. However, the study does not explore the implications of these aspects in relation to pedagogical and musical management, where the direction of classroom-based training processes and their curricular impact are primarily established.

Drawing on my experience in diverse university settings, I have found that effective change management and conflict transformation are essential for institutions striving to develop convergent models of professional musical training. Such models must actively engage with cultural diversity and articulate a vision of professional development through the lens of social

construction. However, achieving this requires well-structured training processes that equip professionals with the necessary skills and frameworks to navigate these complexities at the organisational management level. As Bergh and Sloboda (2010) assert:

Unless music practitioners can talk the wider language of conflict resolution, and show a professional understanding of the larger toolkit, their efforts are likely to remain marginalised and largely ineffective. (p. 7)

In summary, the field of *management* can play a pivotal role in ensuring that diversity and otherness do not become burdens within our domain, but rather serve as transformative spaces to acknowledge the complexity of the musical field, its integration into an equally complex society, and the challenges faced by musicians who are fervently seeking meaning in their lives—utilising the resources available to them while critically reflecting on what needs to change. However, this cannot be achieved without cultivating an established and empathetic capacity that fosters safe environments, spaces, mediations, and strategies conducive to creativity, reflective practice, dialogue, and mutual listening. Such an approach must respect individual identities and trajectories while simultaneously encouraging a continuous, collective re-evaluation of the project's vision.

Finally, what the case of Canto por la Vida shows is the possibility of seeing ourselves from other, more complex lenses. As Vera Grabe puts it,

There are many clichés about the history of Colombia, some of the most well-known are: "There has never been a modern state", "There is no presence of the state in the regions", "The leaders and elites of the country have always been the same", "We are violent/corrupt by nature", "Poverty led to the emergence of all armed groups", What are the problems of promoting commonplaces without making the arguments more complex, nuanced? The first thing is that reducing history to these categories implies distorting, one fails to see the complexity of the situations. Fatalistic and deterministic attitudes are generated. When history is understood, you become aware that there is neither fatalism nor determinism that can be justified. Seeing such a reduced history takes away your hope of change, it leaves you with the feeling that there is nothing to be done. None of this is real, we are not determined to anything or for anything and

we do have the possibility of changing our reality. History is not one, there are many, and in them we can find mobility, transformations, desires for change. Therefore, we do have the possibility of living in a different way. (Vera Grabe in Pedraza, 2017)

To conclude, the case of *Canto por la Vida* showed that our history was not only the history of violence but also that of the efforts we had made to build collective projects that took on the challenge of embracing the otherness underlying the deep and rich diversity of a country like Colombia.

## Annex 1

### Plan Nacional de Música para la Convivencia – PNMCM: coexistence and values strengthening towards a “Community State”

By 2002, Colombia was experiencing a wave of violence that registered multiple kidnappings, massacres, murders of politicians, journalists and civilian population. These events were attributed to guerrillas and paramilitaries. The kidnapping of Colombian French presidential candidate Íngrid Betancourt and her vice-presidential candidate, Clara Rojas, by FARC; the assault on the Valle del Cauca Departmental Assembly in Cali and the kidnapping of twelve deputies; and the Bojayá Massacre (where 119 civilians died during armed confrontations between guerilla and paramilitaries) are part of the darkest and most remembered events by Colombians.

Thanks to his “harsh speech” against the peace process between President Andrés Pastrana and FARC guerrillas, Álvaro Uribe Vélez<sup>68</sup> won the 2002 Colombia’s presidential elections, with 54.51% of votes. He offered a mandate to frontally fight against subversion and right after the peace process with FARC failed, “proving to public opinion that he was right”.<sup>69</sup> As it was established in his National Development Plan “Towards a Community State” for 2002-2006:

The path of dialogue in the midst of conflict is finished. For this reason, the National Government will insist that the dialogues and the search for a political solution must take place within the framework of a decrease in violence, the cessation of hostilities and the abandonment of terrorism. These conditions respond to the need for tranquillity and peace of Colombians. Peace is not negotiated, it is built. Illegal armed actors who adhere to political and social reintegration will have the necessary guarantees to debate their political proposals and postulates on the

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<sup>68</sup> Colombian lawyer and politician. President of Colombia in the periods 2002-2006 and 2006-2010. Former senator of the republic (2014-2022) for the right-wing Democratic Center party and recognized opponent of the peace process with the FARC. Although his achievements in economic and “democratic security” were recognized at the time, his government has been criticized by various organisations for alleged human rights violations and alleged links to paramilitarism and drug trafficking.

<sup>69</sup> [https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elecciones\\_presidenciales\\_de\\_Colombia\\_de\\_2002](https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elecciones_presidenciales_de_Colombia_de_2002)



national democratic stage. Democratic Security will be decisive for them to carry out politics without weapons, without their lives being in danger and for political pluralism to expand. Similarly, the voluntary and individual abandonment of arms of those who want to re-join the law will be massively encouraged. (Colombia National Planning Department, 2002, p. 86)

The Uribe's national development plan government was focused on providing security through his 'Democratic Security' policy, which sought to promote sustainable economic growth and job creation, to build social equity and to increase transparency and efficiency of the state (Colombia National Planning Department, 2002). Within its Chapter 1 -dedicated to the Democratic Security (*Seguridad Democrática*)- the national development plan established a policy of *Strengthening Coexistence and Values*, which included: 1) a National Coexistence System; 2) Culture to build nation and citizenship; and 3) a National Broadcasting System. The strategy of coexistence and values sought "to strengthen the social fabric to regain citizen confidence in its institutions, by respecting human rights, promoting pluralism and citizen participation. In this way, it will facilitate the recovery of governance and legitimacy, for the consolidation of the Community State" (p. 85).

But the strategy of *Culture to build nation and citizenship* is what poses a particular interest for this research, since it includes a national music policy as one means to strengthen the Colombians' values and coexistence. The strategy of promoting culture as means to build nation and citizenship comprised four lines of action: 1) recognition and training in values; 2) the National Plan for Reading and Libraries; 3) the National Plan of Music for Living Together; and the Strengthening of cultural institutions.<sup>70</sup> From this perspective, culture was one of the axes of this policy as a means for social cohesion and the development of the country:

Culture is present in all our acts, it enriches our political, social, and economic rights and is the basis to stimulate and develop coexistence. Cultural processes reveal the ways in which people live together, the ways in which they build their memories, produce products, and establish bonds of trust that enable societies to function. In fact, cultural values are fundamental for development

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<sup>70</sup> Also, sports, understood as a cultural activity, was projected to be linked to the culture sector, insofar as "it fosters the consolidation of ties of solidarity, a sense of belonging and responsibility towards the collective and the public" (NDP, 2002, p. 87)

and contribute profoundly to social cohesion. (Colombia National Planning Department, 2002, p. 87)

**Figure 45**

PNMC Logo



Source: Plan Nacional de Música para la Convivencia (Website)

It is important to mention that the 2002 government had to face the challenges posed by a new National Constitution that established decentralization, social participation and ethnic and cultural plurality as the new fundamental constitutional principles for Colombia. Thanks to the importance that the Political Constitution of 1991 gave to culture and participation of citizens to the formulation of cultural policies, expressed, for example, in the National Plan for Culture 2001-2010 (*Towards a cultural democratic citizenship. A collective plan from and for a plural country*), the sector had in 2002 a growing autonomy and ability to convene (Ministry of Culture, 2001). Still, the process of decentralization of culture, that began in the 1990s, had not reached the expected levels at that time, due, in large part, to the weakness of cultural institutions in the territorial order and the absence of adequate channels of coordination between said institutions and the Nation. The cultural sector was suffering major sustainability challenges. This is why, ‘institutional strengthening’, was at the heart of the policy of coexistence and values

and consequently, the strategy of *Culture to build nation and citizenship*.<sup>71</sup> This is part of the panorama in which the National Plan of Music for Living Together emerged.

Under the 2002–2006 ‘National Development Plan Towards a community State’ and the 2001–2010 National Plan of Culture, the National Plan of Music for Living Together (PNMC)<sup>72</sup> was created in 2003, to ensure the people’s cultural and educational rights ‘to know, practice and enjoy all musical creation from the existent social appropriation processes and the vast musical richness of Colombia’. (Colombia Ministry of Culture, n.d.)

In 2005, Álvaro Uribe Vélez affirmed: “a child who wields an instrument is a child who will never wield a weapon”, (Colombia Presidential office, 2005) announcing that in August of the same year, the Ministry of Culture would complete the provision and promotion of 590 municipal music bands. This phrase, with great political effect, would have a huge impact on public investment strategies and therefore, it would continue to be used by journalists, musicians, politicians, managers, sustaining the benefits of music training programmes in the processes of social transformation; as the case of SIDOC Foundation of Cali-Colombia (El país, 2015) or the Plan Villa launched by the government of Chiguagua, Mexico in 2015 for the formation of a thousand orchestras. (Milenio, 2005) Paradoxically, it would be the same government, that had liquidated three years before, Colombian Symphony Orchestra and the National Band, on the grounds of economic shortages in the public administration. Apparently, Vélez’s music policy made sense when it was oriented towards social objectives, or in his own words: when it came to “guaranteeing Colombian children’s opportunities and coexistence”. (Colombia Presidential Office, 2005) Even so, it was in his government, when the PNMC would obtain the largest investments for the instrumental endowment throughout the country; strengthening particularly the musical practice of symphonic bands: one of the strongest and most deeply rooted musical traditions in the Colombian territory.

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<sup>71</sup> The ‘institutional strengthening’ aimed at improving the capacity of local or regional public entities, as well as territorial planning processes through the systematization and multiplication of successful experiences. Likewise, the promotion of the empowerment of communities and social organisations around productive initiatives or investments in infrastructure was proposed, so as to guarantee their sustainability. In this sense, at the regional level, the strategy sought to be articulated with the support to the Development and Peace programmes and Peace Laboratories.P

<sup>72</sup> From now PNMC, which is the Spanish acronym for *Plan Nacional de Música para la Convivencia*.

But it is worthwhile saying that despite the fact that the PNMC emerged under the Democratic Security policy of Álvaro Uribe Vélez, it had already its antecedents in the national policies for the promotion of music,<sup>73</sup> fostered by COLCULTURA<sup>74</sup> and continued by the Ministry of Culture since its creation in 1997, to 2003. In effect, according to the PNMC (n.d.) this policy “made possible to create a collective project that managed to articulate all the musical processes promoted throughout all the regions of the country” (Colombia Ministry of Culture, n.d.):

The reality of musical practices in the country showed that the efforts of the Ministry were not enough. There was no massive coverage in training and outreach projects. Attention in agreement projects (*proyectos de concertación*) only managed to respond to 45% of requests in 2001 and its trend was decreasing; the resources assigned to these projects were less than their needs and the Ministry did not have resources for the instrumental endowment, which was one of the sector’s greatest needs (p. 7).

In this light, the PNMC emerged as a necessary policy for the consolidation of the sectoral processes of music and was glimpsed as a state policy of a long-term projection, that transcended the governmental policy of Democratic Security in which it was created. In other words, the Plan was conceived and executed as a policy that “conceives music in terms of its intrinsic nature, rather than merely as an instrument to be exploited for specific social objectives” (Colombia Ministry of Culture, 2018, p. 16). In this way, the Plan was justified as “a public policy proposal that would contribute to the perceptual, cognitive and emotional development

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<sup>73</sup> After the creation of Colcultura, the first official policies to promote music in Colombia, emerged around the creation, strengthening and projection of national symphony groups (band and symphony orchestra), which were intended to favor performance and the dissemination of music. Subsequently, the focus was on musical dissemination; symphonic groups such as the national band, the symphony orchestra, the opera, the choir were strengthened and the concert schedule of the *Colón* Theater was revived. Later, it was sought to promote Colombian music, for which, among other actions, the *Musical Documentation Center* (CDM) was created in 1976. The CDM oriented its activity, on the one hand, to traditional popular music and, on the other, to the musical expression of the professional composer and interpreter. Additionally, it undertook outreach through radio, television, publications and music editions. From 1993, the focus of National Programmes of Bands, Choirs and Popular Music was structured, attending to the demand that various sectors of musicians linked to these practices were doing to the State. Simultaneously, Colcultura undertook the CREA Programme - An Expedition for Colombian Culture, seeking to make popular musical expressions, both traditional and urban, visible through meeting and disclosure scenarios from the local to the national level and for four consecutive years (PNMC, n.d. p. 5-7)

<sup>74</sup> Colombian Institute of Culture (Colcultura), created in 1968 and which functioned as a decentralized entity attached to the Ministry of National Education. The entity that preceded the Ministry of Culture of Colombia, created in 1997.

of individuals, to the deployment and cultivation of their creative and expressive abilities, as well as to the strengthening of their social values” (Colombia Ministry of Culture, 2018, p. 16); an aspect that was object of debate in relation to the social impact of music’s matters.

To fulfil its purpose, the PNMC has centred its action on the creation and consolidation of public music schools in all the municipalities of the country,<sup>75</sup> as well as on the strengthening and projection of the diversity of musical practices. In this light, the PNMC has sought “to promote the musical education of children and young people, the updating and professionalization of musicians, the community organisation, the intergenerational dialogue, the improvement of musical quality and productivity and the affirmation of creativity and cultural personality in each context” (Colombia Ministry of Culture, 2003, p. 7). Accordingly, the PNMC (2018) defines the following goals as the main criteria and principles to support its policies, programmes and processes:

- To guarantee the entire population the right to know, practice and enjoy music.
- To recognize, value and promote cultural diversity in the musical field.
- To implement a differential policy through music, at population and territorial level.
- To investigate and strengthen epistemological, methodological, technical and aesthetic pluralism in relation to creation, training and musical expression.
- To conceive and execute musical development as a social project and a productive project, without disassociating its purposes and actions.
- To offer and enable the population to have an integral and deep link with music, guaranteeing a general musical education and practice of collective access and a specialized musical education and practice of vocational and professional option.
- To build the musical field with a systemic approach through the diversification of its professional and specialized practice areas and through the articulation and interconnection of its actors, instances and processes of an open, horizontal, flexible and upgradeable nature.

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<sup>75</sup> According to the Colombian Ministry of Culture (2002), a school is “a space where various training processes take place and where teachers, students, parents and educational leaders or administrators interact, for common goals” (p. 43). These schools offer non-formal education and are sheltered by the municipal culture departments. That is, they differ or do not belong to the formal educational system.

- To understand and materialize the essential value of music and art as dimensions of construction and foundation of the citizen, society and culture and not as ornamental, utilitarian or recreational elements only.

The PNMC is structured into the following eight strategic components which develop specific policies, plans and actions related to particular dimensions of the musical sector (see figure 2). Throughout these years, this Plan has defined and deepened the scope of its ‘two main political challenges’, namely: on the one hand, 1) **the musicalization of citizenship** (*musicalización ciudadana*) (Unesco, 2013), ‘understood as the appropriation of the musical by each citizen, building a deep bond of understanding, practice and enjoyment, which in turn contributes to the sensible, creative and expressive growth of society as a whole’; and, on the other hand, 2) **the structuring of the professional field**, ‘in the sense of professionally developing and consolidating all the occupations and areas of action of the musical sector, deploying and diversifying multiple opportunities for productivity, income generation and employment, as a specialized sector that is projected at a high level inside and outside the country’ (Colombia Ministry of Culture, 2018, p. 7).

Faced with these challenges, the PNMC has been developed in stages, each one with different emphases and priorities, according to the identified demands of the musical sector and the PNMC needs of strengthening.

1. First Phase: Formulation and implementation (2003-2006).
2. Second Phase: Institutionalization and sustainability of music schools (2007-2010).
3. Third Phase: Diversification and coordination of the PNMC policy (2011-2014).
4. Fourth Phase: Diversification of actions around the professional development of the field (2015-2018). In this phase, the Plan focused on diversifying actions to strengthen infrastructure prototypes, production platforms and entrepreneurship, as well as implementing additional actions to advance the implementation of the 2018 peace agreement (see footnote).



**Figure 46**

*Student Symphonic Band of the music school of Neira, Caldas, Colombia*



Source: PNM.

**Table 8**  
*PNMC Components*



**Music training:** Promote continuous training processes to consolidate musical practice at school and foster a critical appreciation of music. 1) Consolidation of the pedagogical and musical project of the music schools; 2) Pedagogical, musical and technical strengthening of collective musical practices; 3) Diversification of the offer at all levels and areas.



**Research:** Promote the traditional folk music of the regions, local music research and academic music research and musical expressions immersed in creative practices of ethnic character in indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples and communities, taking into account principles such as respect for dignity, freedom and autonomy of all Colombian citizens.



**Creation:** Stimulates and recognizes the creative work of Colombian musicians through an annual offer, nationally and internationally, of special incentives to musical performers, creators, managers and researchers.



**Management:** Contribute to harmonize the activities of the different components of the Plan, promote sectoral and community participation as actors in the musical field and promote coordination with territorial entities, in order to coordinate the guidelines of the musical sector.



**Information:** It promotes the collection, systematization and analysis of information on the music sector, in order to generate an adequate compilation that allows measuring the progress and impacts of the implementation of public policies for music activity through diagnostic projects, characterization and evaluation in the framework of the National Cultural Information System



**Infrastructure and equipment:** Promotes and guarantees democratic access to the provision of musical instruments, pedagogical and musical materials; training for the maintenance and construction of instruments; as well as providing guidelines and resources to promote the adaptation and improvement of the infrastructure of the Municipal Schools of Music, according to territorial needs.



**Outreach and circulation:** Promote the development of mechanisms for the promotion and mobility of music and agents at national and international context. By promoting the circulation, promotion and appropriation of musical activity, generating a higher level of qualification of artistic proposals.



**Entrepreneurship and production:** It advise the design and orientation of policies and strategies for the strengthening, organisation and sustainability of projects; and the productive and organisational processes in the musical field.



**Coordination of Musical Practices:** It is a transversal axis to the entire PNMC that seeks to specifically support the strengthening of various collective musical practices. At the same time, it identifies and fosters other practices not prioritized so far, such as the different urban musics.

Source: Own elaboration based on the PNMC document work (2018).



## **The PNMC construction: articulation and funding**

The administrative, political and fiscal decentralization process of Colombia, as a result of the purposes set forth in the 1991 Constitution, has consisted of ‘consolidating Colombia as a unitary, decentralized Republic with autonomy from its territorial entities’ (Echeverry, 2002). This is expressed in a government structure in which the national level specializes in general orientation and coordination, in macroeconomic management and in creating conditions for the provision of goods and services with global impact; while the territorial entities assume the responsibility of guaranteeing the provision of local public services -with special emphasis on education and health-, thus recovering an important role at the local and regional level in the framework of public functions (Echeverry, 2002). In this light, the PNMC (Colombia Ministry of Culture, 2012) sustains that the main achievements of its implementation process are evidenced through ‘the advancement of a co-financing and co-responsibility scheme between the National Government and the territorial entities and the level of participation of civil society and the professional sector of music’ (p. 49). Accordingly, the Plan encourages alliances between the national, departmental, and municipal government, along with agents from the music sector, towards the agreement of ‘priority lines of action’ that contribute to the improvement of conditions of the musical field at local levels. From this perspective, the Plan identifies six central actors and entities that have an impact on its capability for being implemented, appropriated, and developed.

According to PNMC’s Primer for Mayors and Governors (2012), each of these actors and entities have a co-responsibility in the financing and implementation of the Plan, which also includes the creation, development and sustainability of municipal music schools at the local level, amongst other actions to strengthen the musical field. Said actions are described below in order to clarify the sources of financing and co-responsibilities:

- **Ministry of Culture of Colombia:** with investment resources from the General Budget of the Nation, the Ministry hires academic entities and cultural organisations to carry non-formal music training processes, to promote sectoral organisation and its participation in the design and implementation of the public policy. It fosters projects for musical research, creation, entrepreneurship, information and circulation; elaborates and distributes pedagogical and

musical materials; it aims at creating departmental information subsystems; it coordinates alliances with other instances of the nation and manages international cooperation to achieve the PNMC's objectives.

- **Departmental governments:** the departmental level is articulated to the national policy when it incorporates the musical field in its *Departmental Development Plans* which allows it to generate the appropriation of counterpart resources necessary to co-finance the actions of the Music Plan in its different components. The Departmental Secretariats of Culture (*Secretarías de Cultura Departamentales*) coordinate the cultural information system and carry out important follow-up and support for municipal processes, through a Departmental Music Coordination. In this sense and to strengthen the coordination that the department must assume with respect to the municipalities, the PNMC, from its Management Component, fosters the training and meeting of Secretaries of Culture and Municipal Music Coordinators, providing information that contributes to the projection of the musical and cultural activity in the national territory.
- **Municipal Mayor's Offices:** the municipalities respond to the investment of the National and Departmental Government, through the inclusion of the musical field in their Municipal Development Plans and the creation and maintenance of the Music School by a Municipal Council Agreement. In order to make the school a sustainable project, the municipal governments guarantee the employment of teachers who lead the training processes of children and youth, finance their transfer to the headquarters of training processes and the professionalization processes imparted by the academic entities hired by the Ministry; and promote a broad territorial and population coverage and co-finance the provision of instruments and infrastructure for the School of Music at local levels.<sup>76</sup>
- **Training entities and musicians:** the training entities promote the technical, theoretical and pedagogical musical qualification of teaching musicians, performers and trainers, through

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<sup>76</sup> The PNMC (2012) states that 'the municipal administrations must be proactive, stimulating the participation of citizens in the formulation of projects that benefit the sustainability of musical processes, based on their knowledge of the opportunities that exist for financing art and culture. Likewise, they must be willing to articulate with national purposes and projects of the Ministry of Culture to take advantage of and enhance their contributions' (p. 50).

continuous training and professionalization processes. Musicians engage in a dialogue of knowledge between academic and popular-traditional logics and the PNMC guidelines, in coordination with Universities and Cultural Institutions. The National Music Council, the expert committees, as well as the Inter-institutional Committee foreseen in CONPES 3409, form advisory and monitoring bodies for national policy.

- **Community:** they form community organisations that open spaces for concertation with territorial entities, carry out oversight actions and control of public spending and generate autonomous productive projects that contribute to the sustainability of the municipal music schools.
- **International (and other national) entities:** includes multilateral organisations and cooperating countries such as: Presidential Cooperation Agency – APC; Department for Social Prosperity (formerly Presidential Agency for Social Action); Inter-American Development Bank-IDB; British Council; Regional Centre for Book Promotion and the Latin American and Caribbean Reading of UNESCO-CERLALC; Andean Development Corporation -CAF-; Austrian Embassy; U.S. Embassy; France Embassy; Embassy of Japan; Swiss Embassy; Federation of Musical Societies of the Valencian Community; Swiss Cultural Fund; Valencian Institute of Music; Organisation of Ibero American States-OEI; Procasur – Chile; United Nations Programme for Development Programme-UNDP; Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela-State Foundation for the National System of Youth and Children’s Orchestras of Venezuela-FESNOJIV; Republic of South Korea; People’s Republic of China; Republic of El Salvador; Dominican Republic; Ibero-American General Secretariat SEGIB; Iber-orchestras; Iber-músicas.

On the other hand, governments and cultural entities can get access to the following public funding sources, to support their ongoing musical development projects: Plan Nacional de Concertación (PNC), Programmea Nacional de Estímulos (Ministry of Culture), General System of Participations (SGP), Pro Culture Stamp (Estampilla ProCultura),<sup>77</sup> Public Show Law

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<sup>77</sup> Its legal basis is the article 38 of Law 397 of 1997 and the General Law of Culture and Law 666 of 2001.

(Ley de Espectáculo Público), the General Royalties System (Sistema General de Regalías SGR) (Colombia Ministry of Culture, 2022).

**Table 9**

*Entities and actors that are part of the PNMC construction and implementation process.*



Source: Own elaboration based on the PNMC document work (2018).

Despite the co-responsibility mechanisms and the available public financing sources, the Plan, as regards the municipal music schools, has had heterogeneous levels of appropriation and development throughout the territory, due to diverse and differential factors and intervening variables at local levels that have impacted on the capability of the Plan to materialize. Among these factors we can find socio-economic ones (for example, the difficulties of municipalities that do not even manage to cover their basic needs for sanitation and education, or that have been directly hit by the armed conflict); issues of political, technical and conceptual training (which for instance, it can be expressed in the lack of sensibility and knowledge of officials around cultural and artistic matters and consequently, in their incapability of prioritise the policy); or the community-based processes (that for example affects leadership processes to face, engage and deal with the change of local governments that threaten the continuity of artistic and cultural projects); among others.

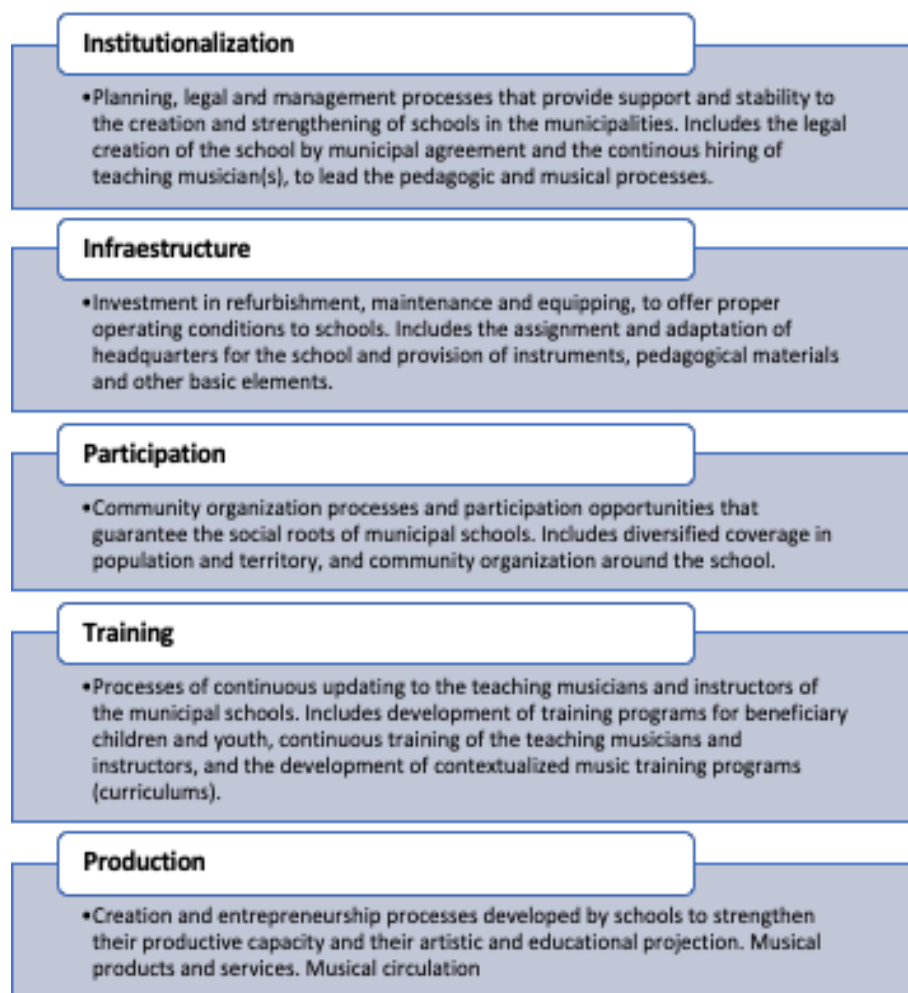
In order to identify and monitor the level of development of schools, the PNMC defined five sustainability factors, which allows the Ministry to know the level of consolidation of each municipal music school (See figure 5A). These factors were monitored and evaluated through policy indicators until 2018 (when the PNMC finished to be a governmental programme) and information was collected through different mechanisms of accompaniment, advice and strengthening on the site. Those mechanisms are:

- **Consensus and Follow-up visits:** visits made by the PNMC officials from the Ministry of Culture to department capitals and municipalities in order to advance the agreements of musical development processes and to monitor the sustainability factors of the Municipal Schools of Music.
- **Management visits:** they are carried out through two monitoring mechanisms: 1) visits by the Promoters of the Regional Development Strategy and visits by the PNMC Managing Musicians hired by the Ministry of Culture, in order to verify and evaluate the process of consolidation of music schools and promote the strengthening of local management in the institutional, musical, pedagogic and community areas. The municipalities visited annually are defined according to the criteria determined by the PNMC based on the information gathered about the situation of the school.
- **Pedagogical and Musical Advising:** direct consultancies to each of the prioritized municipalities aimed at teaching musicians who carry out training processes in the regions, with the purpose of qualifying the pedagogical and musical process of the school.
- **Acoustic Adequacy Advisory Visits:** Face-to-face advice to municipalities in order to strengthen their music schools, in order to raise awareness and inform about the importance of acoustic adaptation and soundproofing of work sites to protect hearing health of the participants, to improve the working conditions and the quality of the musical result and to guarantee the independence and well-being of the agents who participate in simultaneous activities.
- **Community organisation.** Training for community leaders, based on the municipal prioritization established annually by the PNMC. The training seeks to promote community organisation around music schools and contribute to their sustainability by carrying out productive projects.

According to the measurement of those factors, the schools were classified as follows: a) Hotbed; b) Basic; c) Strengthened; and d) Sustainable (Colombia Ministry of Culture, 2014, p. 34). Canto por la Vida was classified as “sustainable”.<sup>78</sup>

**Table 10**

*Sustainability factors of the municipal music schools*



Source: Own elaboration.

Own elaboration based on the PNMC document work (2018).

<sup>78</sup> By 2003–2012, the PNMC already formalised 754 municipal music schools and strengthened 184; provided 806 municipalities with musical instruments; promoted the professionalization of 682 musicians through its Colombia Creativa programme; sponsored the musical and pedagogical qualification processes of 3,832 teaching musicians in schools; covered 93,000 children and youth; produced 71 educational and musical materials; promoted the creation of 434 musical works in its *Virtual Bank of Musical Scores*; and promoted the creation of 28 Departmental Music Councils (Colombia Ministry of culture, 2014, p. 40).

## **The Ministry of Culture policy changes: from the democratic Security policy towards the politics of peace (2010-2018) and the Orange Economy (2018-2021)**

By 2016 the Colombian government, presided by Juan Manuel Santos<sup>79</sup>, was signing the Final agreement for the termination of the conflict and the construction of a stable and lasting peace with the FARC-EP. Santos was elected in 2010, as the candidate that Álvaro Uribe Vélez nominated to give continuity to his Democratic Security policy. Six years later, paradoxically, Uribe would become his great political opponent, rejecting the peace dialogues. Later on, the re-elected President Santos would focus his second government period (2014-2018) on advancing “towards the goal of making Colombia a country in peace, with more equity and better educated”, (Colombia Ministry of Culture, 2019) establishing the conditions to implement the peace agreements, articulating all its Offices and ministry departments in favour of said objectives and with important international support.

In April of 2018, during the accountability report *A Legacy in Culture for Colombians: 8 Years of Management*, (Colombia Ministry of Culture, 2018) Santos and the Ministry of Culture Mariana Garcés were reporting important advances for the cultural sector. The budget for culture almost doubled (92%) in comparison to the spending of public investment of the last government of Uribe Vélez (2006–2010). The figure, that rounded up to 2.6 million pesos -plus new funding sources created and gathered for the cultural sector-, made strengthening the Programa Nacional de Concertación, the national stimulus programme and the country’s cultural and artistic infrastructure ‘with unprecedented support’ possible, as Santos has underscored. (Colombia Ministry of culture, 2019) Among the Ministry’s major achievements, he highlighted the creation of three new structural laws for the cultural sector<sup>80</sup> and the important increase of a reading culture; which was one of the main challenges that his government posed to the Ministry of Culture and which was ‘successfully’ developed through *Leer es mi Cuento*,

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<sup>79</sup> Juan Manuel Santos Calderón (born August 10, 1951, Bogotá) is a Colombian politician and economist who served as President of Colombia from 2010 to 2018. He was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for negotiating a peace agreement with the FARC-EP, ending a 50-year conflict. Santos had previously been Defence Minister under Álvaro Uribe (2006-2009), during which he faced criticism for the "False Positives" scandal (extrajudicial killings by the military) and a controversial military raid in Ecuador that killed FARC leader Raúl Reyes. Despite his role in securing peace, Santos was criticised for his neoliberal economic policies, which critics argue exacerbated social inequality and conflicted with the principles of the territorial peace agreements negotiated in the Havana talks.

<sup>80</sup> The Law of Public Performances for the Performing Arts (LEP), the Colombia Filming Law and the Submerged Cultural Heritage Law.

a programme in agreement with the Ministry of Education and funded with international support.

The peace agreement had an impact on the Ministry of Culture's actions plans. In its Accountability report on the peace agreement implementation of 2018 and 2019, (Colombia Ministry of Culture, 2019) the Ministry reported a direct contribution to agreements *Towards a New Colombian Countryside: Comprehensive Rural Reform*, which seek “to overcome poverty and inequality to achieve the well-being of the rural population and integrate and close the gap between the countryside and the city”.

Among the activities -defined as rural educational actions for social development- are: 1) the installation of 20 Mobile Public Libraries in neighbouring communities of the Temporary Transitional Zones of Normalization (ZTVN) in which the ex-combatants concentrated to lay down their arms and re-join civilian life; and 2) the functioning and strengthening of public libraries as ‘peace scenarios’ in 170 post-conflict municipalities. As well, the entity reported diverse activities that contributed to the Development Programmes with a Territorial Focus – PDET including: the strengthening of the Workshop Schools National Programme of Colombia (Programme Nacional Escuelas Taller de Colombia)<sup>81</sup>; the creation of the Cultural Infrastructures for Peace programme; the creation of the Immaterial cultural heritage-as a basis for resilience, reconciliation and the construction of peace environments in post-agreements programme; and community communication strategies such as community radio stations for peace and coexistence; among other actions.<sup>82</sup>

In particular, the Minister Garcés highlighted actions that “contributed to re-establishing the social fabric and recovering cultural traditions that were about to be lost due to the effects that so many years of violence left behind”. One of them is the creation of the Expedición Sensorial

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<sup>81</sup> The National Workshop Schools Programme of Colombia, an entity created by the Ministry of Culture in 2009, strengthens the processes of the *Colombian Workshop Schools*, which are spaces for training in trades related to Colombian material and intangible heritage. For more than 20 years, young people and communities in a vulnerable social situation are provided with tools for work, human development, protection and safeguarding of traditions.

<sup>82</sup> For more information, please consult the 2018 and 2019 *Accountability report on the implementation of the peace agreement* of the Ministry of Culture.



project, “a model of public policy to directly serve the rural sectors that have been affected by the armed conflict”. The project -an initiative to revitalize the cultural community processes- was developed in 15 municipalities and 36 townships of Montes de María, 15 municipalities and 33 townships of Catatumbo, 11 municipalities of the South Pacific and the border of Nariño and 4 municipalities of the Middle of Pacific; all of them territories deeply affected by the armed conflict (Colombia Ministry of Culture, 2018).

Regarding arts processes, the Minister highlighted the strengthening of the National Plan of Music for Living together (PNMC):

We accompanied 1,022 public music schools created by municipal agreement in the country, through teacher training and instrument endowments. However, we developed a prototype of school of music that meets the necessary technical conditions, spaces and acoustic treatments required. In this way, the local Mayors can optimize their resources for these projects. We have built and equipped 6 music schools in Guatavita (Cundinamarca), Carmen de Bolívar (Bolívar), Yotoco and Candelaria (Valle del Cauca) and Tumaco (Nariño). At the end of 2018, a sixth school will be delivered in Miranda (Cauca). We reached 654 municipalities of the country with musical instruments, a figure that will increase to 862 in 2018. We also supported Batuta National Foundation<sup>83</sup> with significant financial resources of the *Music for Reconciliation Programme*, benefiting more than 18,000 students annually. (Colombia Ministry of Culture, 2018)

In effect, during 2010-2018, the PNMC developed “new strategies to improve the dialogue between actors of the musical field, territorial entities and state institutions; a period of extension and consolidation of the lines of action and projects that were outlined since the PNMC creation” (Colombia Ministry of Culture, 2018, p. 13).

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<sup>83</sup> The Batuta musical centers, with an orchestral and recently choral emphasis, are spaces operated by the National Batuta Foundation for the ‘training, practice, and enjoyment of music with a social perspective, for vulnerable children, adolescents and youth. armed conflict or disabled’. The Ministry of Culture finances its execution, through its *Music for Reconciliation Programme*. In 2019 it had an investment of \$ 6,319 million pesos, for 58 Batuta music centers located in 40 PDET municipalities.

**Table 11**

*Prototype of PNMC municipal music school*



Source: PNMC.

During those years, the PNMC training offer was diversified, seeking to impact, articulate and strengthen other levels, scopes and modalities of musical training under a systemic approach to the music education field.<sup>84</sup> This diversification – among the general cuts that the PNMC suffered in that period (see table 4A) – had an impact on the way in which the PNMC Training Component was working and naturally, that affected the budget of processes such as the training of trainers (*formación de formadores*) strategy: one of the main means of musical and pedagogical training of teachers musicians that did not have access to formal education but whom were in charge of the pedagogical processes of the schools. The budget cuts of this period impacted also the PNMC advisory team (renowned pedagogues, researchers and experts), which

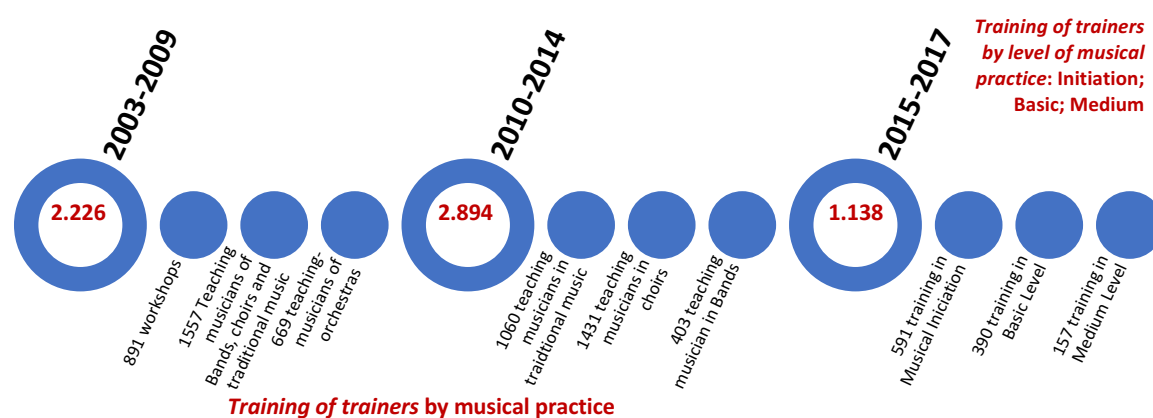
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<sup>84</sup> The PNMC designed a technical programme for academic and administrative coordination of music schools in agreement with the National Learning Service SENA and the professionalization project *Colombia Creativa* in agreement with 9 public universities, to strengthen the quality of the country's musical training and to improve the living conditions of teaching musicians. 172 musician-teachers were certified by SENA and 766 musicians were professionalized through universities. It also created the *School Sounds (Sonidos Escolares)* project, to strengthen the musical and pedagogic abilities of 245 primary teachers and the *Sound Corps (Cuerpo Sonoro)* project, to train 493 'community mothers' (*madres comunitarias*) to offer better artistic experiences to early childhood. Other training processes were carried out during that period, such as the musical research training of musicians-teachers of municipal schools of traditional music, training for community leaders of the schools, training for musical instruments constructors and training to qualify the realization of musical live events and the associative processes of the music sector (PNMC, 2018).

gradually decreased: going from 12 to 9 experts in 2016, to 6 in 2017; and the amount of on-site follow-up pedagogical visits (PNMC, 2018).

**Table 12**

*Decrease of number of musicians trained by the Trainer of Trainers strategy*



Source: PNMC

Own elaboration based on the PNMC document work (2018).

As well, the implementation of the peace accords and the programmes derived from the National Development Plan All for a New Country (2014–2018) (Colombia National Planning Department, 2014) had an impact on the PNMC action plan that naturally had to meet and harmonize its actions with the governmental goals and redistribute its budget to develop new and diverse projects and actions such as:

- The design and implementation of a pilot musical training project for Red Unidos families, in the municipality of Soacha and in La Macarena, between 2012 and 2014.<sup>85</sup>
- The implementation of ‘laboratories of collective creation’ for the Adolescent Criminal Liability System (SRPA), aimed at young people lodged in the Specialized Care Center (CAE) of the Buen Pastor prison in Cali (2014) and in the CAE’s of Bogotá, Medellín-Antioquia, Turbaco-Bolívar, Cali-Valle (2015). This project was carried out with the

<sup>85</sup> Red Unidos is a Colombian government strategy to respond to the multidimensionality of extreme poverty. Public sector entities that have a social offer -such as the Ministry of Culture- have a participation in it.

articulated participation of the Visual Arts department of the Ministry of Culture, and it led to a Diploma course that planned to be implemented in other SRPA contexts.

- The design and implementation of the Musical Creation and Psychosocial Care project (Proyecto de Creación Musical y Atención Psicosocial) for the Victims Unit (UV) in El Salado, El Carmen de Bolívar (2015 - present) and in the village of San Miguel, municipality of Buenos Aires, Cauca (2016-present). The apprenticeships that emerged from the implementation of this project allowed the development of a conceptual model to situate musical practice in post-conflict contexts. According to this model, it was proposed that musical practice was framed within the repair process, with a different criterion than its instrumentalization or its use as a resource for psychosocial care. It was suggested that it should be conceived from the importance of community artistic creation perspective.
- Technical advice and budget support (\$ 250 million pesos) to the Music School of the Nuevo Horizonte neighbourhood of commune 5 of Tumaco-Nariño, for musical training in bands, choirs, traditional and urban music, guitar and popular singing; benefiting 150 boys and girls from the urban area and from populated centres (Candelillas, Robledo and Llorente). It required the support of a psychosocial professional and an urban music teacher.
- Prioritisation of 21 municipalities – classified in the Development Programmes with a Territorial Focus (PDET) – to provide musical instruments in symphonic band and traditional music. Investment of \$ 367 million pesos.

However, the necessary attention to the new governmental objectives and the diversification of the PNMC lines of policy – naturally expanded in response to the growth of the music sector and the development of the municipal music school policy – did not bring an increase of the PNMC general budget, but paradoxically, its continuous reduction. In fact, in 2018 the PNMC was no longer considered a government programme (according to recent conversations with PNMC officials). This had an impact on the prioritization of budgetary resources and the monitoring of this policy performance since the PNMC lines of actions are no longer evaluated through management indicators; this represented a difficulty for my own consultation of consolidated information on the management of the PNMC in the last two years.

According to Figure 8A, the public investment for the Music for Reconciliation, a governmental programme created in 2001 as ‘a psychosocial care strategy for the care of the victim and most vulnerable population of the country’ (Colombia Department of Social Prosperity, 2014) and operated by the ‘mixed’ entity<sup>86</sup> *Fundación Nacional Batuta* dedicated to orchestral and choral training processes, almost doubled the PNMC’s investment for 2003 to 2017.<sup>87</sup>

It is interesting to see the difference of budget considering the level of coverage of both programmes and the diversification of the PNMC policy, which encompasses, on a broader spectrum, the development of public policy for the structuring and development of the music field in Colombia (see figure 5A and 6A). According to the SIMUS platform, by 2018 the PNMC supported the development of 1.074 public music schools of 1.101 municipalities (Colombia Ministry of Culture, n.d.) and was benefiting through them 161.236 students (Colombia Ministry of Culture, n.d.) meanwhile, by the same year Music for Reconciliation was operating in 181 orchestral centres, 84 municipalities and was benefiting 20.928 children, youth, and adults (Colombia Ministry of Culture, 2018). Although it is not a question here of making a light and crude comparison. It is important to highlight that Music for Reconciliation was created within a different government department focused on care and reparation for victims of violence and vulnerable groups and it has operated by a mixed foundation – among other interesting facts and variables that are not tackled in this section. This mention seeks to highlight the interesting tendency of its investment, in contrast to the declining trend of the PNMC’s investment budget.

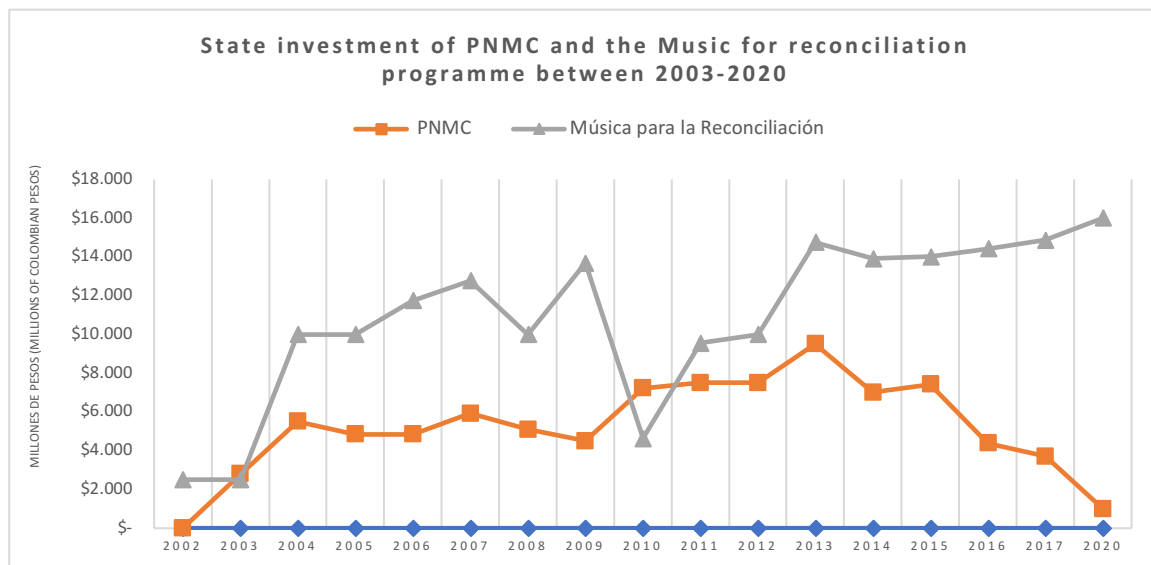
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<sup>86</sup> The term refers to the nature of funding. A mixed entity combines public and private funding sources.

<sup>87</sup> The *Music for Reconciliation* programme was created as part of the Directorate of Special Programmes of the *Department of Social Prosperity* of the Presidency of the Republic of Colombia, that is the organism of the National Government that seeks to establish policies, general plans, programmes and projects for the assistance, care and reparation for victims of violence, social inclusion, care for vulnerable groups and their social and economic reintegration. Its general objective is ‘guaranteeing the exercise of cultural rights and the comprehensive development of children, adolescents and adults who have been victims of the armed conflict or who are in a situation of extreme vulnerability, through a collective musical training of ensembles and choirs, with an outstanding component of psychosocial care’. By 2014, the programme was transferred to the Ministry of Culture and continues to be operated by Batuta National Foundation. (n.d.)

**Table 13**

*State investment of PNMC and the Music for Reconciliation programme between 2003–2020*



Source: own elaboration based on the figures of the PNMC Work Document (Colombia Ministry of Culture, 2008, p. 155–156)<sup>88</sup>

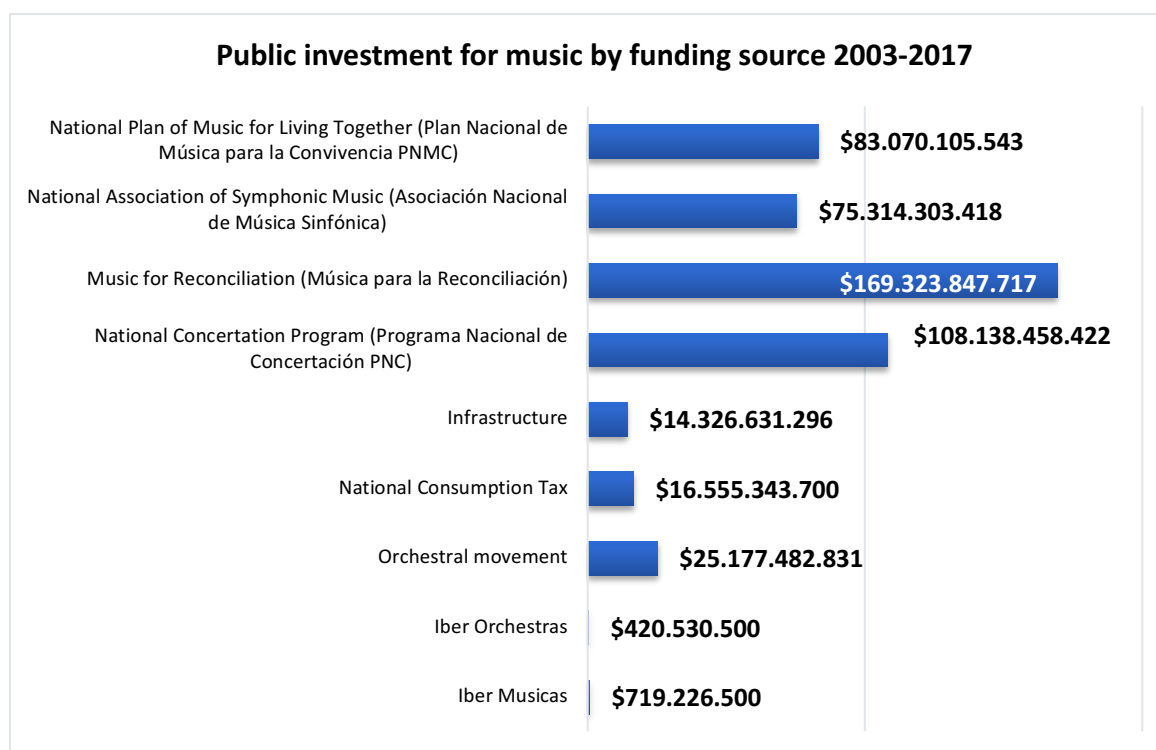
Another interesting fact is that PNMC serves 2,612 students with disabilities, 8,817 in a state of displacement and 289 in processes of disengagement from armed groups. For a total of 11,718 children and youth in conditions of extreme vulnerability. Data that is not widely publicized as an emphasis of PNMC policy and that had to be requested to the Ministry of Culture, through a formal letter to the Coordinator of the Plan's Information Component. Likewise, information about PNMC's 2020 budget was provided. Currently, the PNMC is operating with 1.000 millions of Colombian pesos, a dramatic and historical decrease, as shown in figure 8. Regarding the reasons of the cuts, there is information gathered from some conversations and interviews to PNMC officials, but this is something to be examined in a more profound way. Among suspected causes to investigate are: the general cuts that the Ministry of Culture suffered related to the funding needed by the national government for financing the peace process (which can explain the decreasing trend since 2014); the lack of knowledge of the PNMC achievements

<sup>88</sup> There is a gap of information between 2018-2020. This information was requested to the Arts Direction of the Ministry of Culture. The 2020 figure for Music for Reconciliation is based on information published in the above website of the Ministry of Culture. The 2020 figure for PNMC is based on conversations with two PNMC officials.

(according to latest interviews to PNMC officials, the management and evaluation indicators failed to account for the complexity, diversification of policies and extent of impact); lack of sector leadership in the face of national cuts; and possible micro-power dynamics inside the institution.

**Table 14**

*Public Investment for music by funding source 2003-2017*



Source: Information extracted from the internal PNMC Work Document (2018)

Despite that fact, the PNMC keeps supporting and developing several actions and projects towards the democratization of cultural and musical practice and the professional structuration of the music field in Colombia. By 2018 and since its creation, the PNMC (2018) reported the creation of 1,031 municipal music schools; the training of more than 2,899 teacher musicians in non-formal processes; the professionalization of 766 of them; the completion of 8,097 management visits to monitor and support the municipal music schools and the training of more than 1,111 community leaders for their sustainability; the promotion, structuring and legal approval of Departmental Music Plans (among them: Valle, Cesar, Huila, Risaralda, Meta,

Nariño, Quindío, Arauca); the creation of the National Music Council; the support on the creation of associations of musical researchers, directors of symphonic bands, choirs, of musical educators, community networks for cultural and musical heritage practices, traditional music festivals; the design and implementation of the Music Information System SIMUS; the creation and circulation of Colombian musicians through the Stimulus Programme; the creation of 8 sound territories for the consolidation of territorial development plans around cultural and musical traditional practices; the formulation and implementation of national policies for musical research and documentation; the consolidation of the Celebra la Música project - concerts throughout the country- as the main strategy to disseminate the work carried out by the municipal music schools (simultaneous participation of 1,000 municipalities and 80,000 musicians on stage); and the progress on its internationalisation (offering advice to El Salvador to design its national music policy; exchanging Knowledge in Traditional Popular Marimba Music between Guatemala and Colombia; and exchanging successful experiences of municipal music schools with seven countries in Central America and the Caribbean).

Currently, the PNMC is under evaluation. The process that was tendered by the National Planning Department of Colombia in 2020 is being carried out by the consulting firm IPSOS.

### **The Orange Economy: a controversial policy to culture and arts**

Iván Duque Márquez was elected President of Colombia on August 7, 2018, supported by the right-wing Centro Democrático party, led by Álvaro Uribe Vélez. Duque began his political life as an advisor to the then Minister of Finance Juan Manuel Santos, who appointed him as the representative of Colombia to the Inter-American Development Bank IDB (2001 to 2013) and got in charge of the Culture Division. Subsequently, he broke with the Government of Santos, right after the opening of ‘Peace Dialogues’, running to the Senate and being elected for the 2014–2018 period.

As Head of the IDB’s Division of Cultural Affairs, Creativity and Solidarity, Duque was in charge of promoting issues around cultural industry and creative economy for Latin America and the Caribbean. In 2013, Duque wrote *La Economía Naranja. Una oportunidad infinita* (The



orange economy. An infinite opportunity) with Felipe Buitrago, consultant for the same division (and current Vice-Minister of Culture for the Orange Economy in Colombia). In the publication launched by the IDB, the authors -supported by John Howkins' work (2007)- highlighted how creative economy was remaining 'invisible on the radar of economists' despite of contributing 6.1% to the global economy almost one decade ago<sup>89</sup> and how it could be a big opportunity to the growth and development of Latin America and the Caribbean. Consequently, in order to set the basis towards the designing of policies on this matter, the authors started by coining a concept to avoid misunderstandings between the different definitions and approaches used by diverse organisations (such as UNESCO<sup>90</sup>, UNCTAD<sup>91</sup>, OMPI<sup>92</sup>, DCMS<sup>93</sup> and CEPAL<sup>94</sup>). The "orange economy" would be then the term to attribute what they thought were the common grounds between a universe of lexicon and approaches and that focuses on: creativity, arts and culture as raw material; a relationship with intellectual property rights (in particular with copyright); and the direct function in a creative value chain (Duque and Buitrago, 2013, p. 36–37).<sup>95</sup>

Duque and Buitrago pointing out that the region could generate 'an interesting comparative advantage' by employing 'its massive resources of creative talent and cultural heritage' (which involves artists and curious creatives in experimentation and innovation processes, with new business models) in the generation of "symbolic content", which could play a central role in the ability of integrating "breakthrough technologies"<sup>96</sup> into people's daily lives; technologies that can substantially "transform life, business and the global economy" (Duque and Buitrago, 2013, p. 68–71). As they sustained "a growth dangerously dependent on the prices of non-renewable

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<sup>89</sup> 'Includes the sectors in which the value of its goods and services is based on intellectual property: architecture, visual and performing arts, crafts, cinema, design, publishing, research and development, games and toys, fashion, music, advertising, software, TV and radio and video games' (Duque & Buitrago, 2013, p. 15).

<sup>90</sup> Acronym for United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation.

<sup>91</sup> Acronym for United Nations Conference on Trade and Development.

<sup>92</sup> Acronym for World Intellectual Property Organisation.

<sup>93</sup> Acronym for UK Department of Culture, Media and Sports.

<sup>94</sup> Acronym for Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean.

<sup>95</sup> The set of activities that in a chained way allow ideas to be transformed into cultural goods and services, which value is determined by their content of intellectual property. The orange universe is made up of: i) the Cultural Economy and the Creative Industries, at the intersection of which are the Conventional Cultural Industries; and ii) the support areas for creativity.

<sup>96</sup> They include new forms of communication (mobile Internet); new forms of differentiation (Internet of things); new forms of exchange and accumulation (cloud technologies); new forms of portability (energy storage); new ways of doing (3D printing); and new materials (advanced materials) (IDB, 2013, p. 69)

raw materials, could expose the economies to the risks of the Dutch Disease (over-investment in non-tradable), while cultural goods and services are highly tradable and renewable” (p. 71).

Latin America and the Caribbean will have to be more creative: not only because competing for cheap labour with Asia is not feasible, but because the region’s levels of industrialization and urbanization are already relatively high and offer little room for growth. Taking the ‘demographic dividend’ in the region will require: a knowledge-based approach and an active participation in the digital revolution taking science, technology and culture seriously. (Duque and Buitrago, 2013, p. 75)

This is the antecedent of a government that has strongly and increasingly advertised the “Orange Economy” as the main sector that will generate wealth in Colombia<sup>97</sup> insofar it is inserted into the “fourth industrial revolution” and it becomes “the technological and entrepreneurial centre of Latin America” (Colombia Presidential Office, 2019). However, issues on creative industries and cultural economy are not new to the Colombian State scope, as it is perceived by sectors of society that are not aware of how creativity and culture can contribute to social and economic development. By 2010, the Ministry of Culture was already leading the formulation of a *National Policy for the Promotion of Cultural Industries in Colombia* (CONPES 3659 of 2010)<sup>98</sup> and had already created its Entrepreneurship Group. In fact, there is a first antecedent in 1993 -even before the Ministry of Culture creation- with the issuance of the Book Law (Law 98 of 1993), a regulation that focuses on the development of a sector that transforms cultural goods and symbolic goods into products for the market, according to the Coordinator of the PNMC’s component of Production and Entrepreneurship (M. Medina, personal interview 2020). Either way, Duque’s government has set the political, institutional and public environment to

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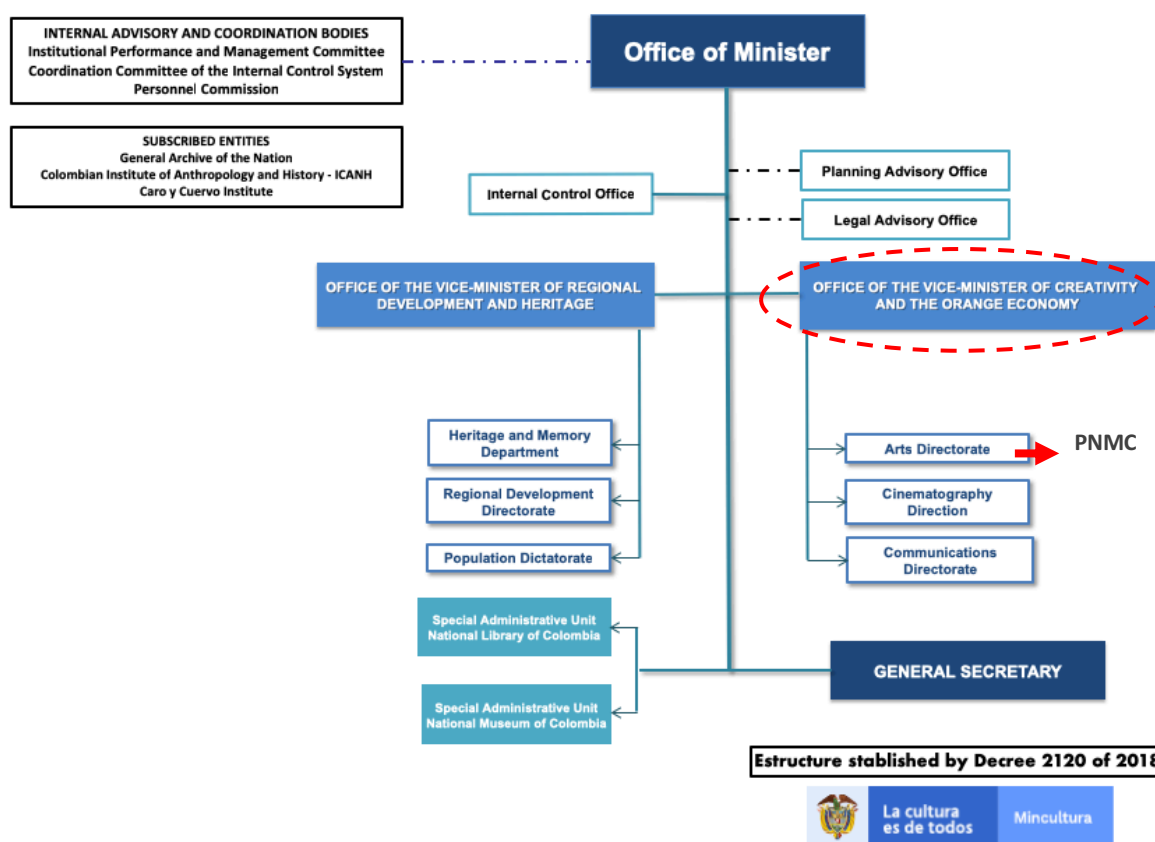
<sup>97</sup> The 2018-2022 National Development: Plan Pacto por Colombia, Pacto por la Equidad states that it will increase employment and the contribution of creative goods and services to 6 percent of the country’s GDP (Colombian National Planning Department, 2018).

<sup>98</sup> The central objective of this Policy is ‘to take advantage of the competitive potential of cultural industries, increase their participation in the generation of national income and employment and achieve high levels of productivity. It is structured in five strategic lines aimed at overcoming the obstacles identified in the sphere of the circulation of goods and services of the cultural industries -especially for the smallest companies in the sector- and expanding access to financing and public development instruments business. Emphasis is also placed on the component of human capital training in the industry and on the promotion of the use of new technologies. Finally, a strategic line is proposed to reduce the regional concentration of cultural industries, by taking advantage of local potential and pilot experiences that are currently being developed in different regions of the country’ (Colombia National Planning Department, 2010, p. 4)

strongly and widely positioned the orange economy as the hallmarks of his mandate. His government “adapted and modernized” the structure of the Ministry of Culture in order to establish sufficient institutional environments to consolidate the orange economy,’ creating a vice-ministerial office for Creativity and the Orange Economy (Table 7A) (Colombia Ministry of Justice, 2018), which has recently set plans, lines of action and tools to tackle the challenges related to the consecution of this development model.<sup>99</sup>

**Table 15**

*Organisation chart of Colombian Ministry of Culture in 2019*



Source: Ministry of culture website.

<sup>99</sup> According to the *ABC Economía Naranja* primer (Colombian Ministry of Culture, 2018), the Orange Economy is ‘a development model in which cultural diversity and creativity are pillars of social and economic transformation of the country, from the regions. This model has cultural, social and economic development tools. It is based on the creation, production and distribution of cultural and creative goods and services, which can be protected by intellectual property rights. The activities that make up the Orange Economy are those ‘that are part of the arts and the material and intangible cultural heritage, the cultural industries, and the creative industries’ (p. 3-4).

However, despite the undeniable opportunities that this vision and prioritisation could bring to the cultural sector, the creatives professionals and the development of the country, there is a perceived general malaise of the cultural and artistic sector with the national government. According to the consultant on issues related to law and technology Carolina Botero (2019), the Orange Economy “seems to be more like a slogan within a marketing strategy for the logics of entrepreneurship”. She highlights that it lacks of definition since “what is found are descriptions of the elements that compose it”. Botero sustains that for many it is above all “a mechanism for the commodification of culture that leaves aside a central aspect to it, the unprofitable”, described as the non-mercantile processes, such as *Casas de Cultura*, musical training initiatives for children and young people, hundreds of small festivals, processes of safeguarding the heritage or initiatives of indigenous peoples that, among many others, are initiatives that “with articulation allow to build territory, exalt knowledge and guide visions of territorial development”.

The perception is that, although the Ministry’s stimulus portfolio is maintained, the budget of its areas is low and what is growing for the sector are facilities to access credits -with Bancoldex or Findeter, for example- or to enter extensive processes of incubation where initiatives follow models based on monetization. This may be new in the cultural sector, but in the information and communication technologies (ICT) sector, they are old acquaintances, which evoke the bubble of digital entrepreneurship, the fever of mobile application development and the promises, for many unfulfilled, from “couching” and “start-ups”. It is an entrepreneurial discourse that also emphasizes exporting and intentionally forgets the rest. (Botero, 2019)

In effect, after two years in office, public investment in the cultural, science, technology and innovation sectors does not seem to reflect the same emphasis as the highly publicized impacts of this policy. María José Pizarro, artist and senator, has pointed out that, despite the high protagonism given to the Orange Economy, the budget for Culture keeps remaining one of the lowest of the national investment (Arevalo, 2020). Based on the figures published by the Ministry of Finance (2020), just a 0,13% of the national public budget goes to culture (\$ 395,000 million, from which only \$144.558 million goes to investment expenses) and just a 0,14% is invested in science, technology and innovation (\$ 393,000 million). “The situation is critical when it is observed that even adding the contributions directed to the Sports and Recreation

sector, (...) it is not possible to exceed a 1% of the total budget”, stresses Professor Ruiz from the Economic Department of Tadeo University (Ruiz, 2018). As Duque himself pointed out while serving as a senator. "It is unfortunate to see that four days of the budget of the Ministry of Defense is equivalent to the entire budget of the Ministry of Culture for one year” (Ruiz, 2018).

In the framework of a cultural and artistic sector that still struggles for the survival, consolidation and sustainability of its grassroots processes, the discourse of entrepreneurship in the orange economy is received with distrust, disbelief and annoyance as soon as it denotes a disconnection with realities of the territorial dynamics and the logics and needs of a sector that persists, amid the lack of guarantees of social protection, institutional fragility and the historical underfunding of the processes that precisely are what feed the production and generation of symbolic products and content called to market, among which are, the artistic and cultural training processes with a public character.

The present annex presents the context of this study, framed within music schools as central components of the national policy outlined in the *Plan Nacional de Música para la Convivencia* (National Music Plan for Coexistence). It particularly aims to inform the reader about the nature of this state policy as the field in which the research questions, motivations, and reflections underpinning this doctoral study were conceived. The central objective of this annex is not to provide an exhaustive exploration of this policy and its processes of transformation—described up until 2019—but rather to offer an overview of how, for over two decades, the country has developed a political, organisational, management, and territorial dialogue platform that positions non-formal music education (schools) as key pillars in the musical, human, social, and cultural development of the nation. It also outlines some of the challenges, tensions, and debates arising from this framework, which acknowledges social and cultural diversity, while adopting a broad perspective on the relationship between music and social construction. In particular, the annex seeks to illustrate the processes of management, organisation, and political maturation that contribute to and influence the scope and capacity of policies, plans, projects, and processes of musical education and creation in shaping the social fabric of a country as complex and culturally rich as Colombia.

## Annex 2

### The Mono Núñez festival and the Colombian Andean Music: tracing a musical “tradition”

The present appendix seeks to further inform the reader about the context of this study, specifically regarding the musical practices that underpin the educational project of *Canto por la Vida*: Colombian Andean Music. Additionally, it aims to expand on some of the debates raised by Colombian Andean music within the framework of a festival such as Mono Núñez. These debates provide an opportunity to delve deeper into the motivations, challenges, issues, and tensions inherent to the case study addressed in this thesis. The appendix does not aim to provide a conclusive resolution to a long-standing discussion in Colombia but instead seeks to explore the challenges posed by the complexity of this “popular classical music” (Arenas, 2009). These notes intend to offer further insight into the discussions presented in previous chapters, particularly in relation to their implications for the educational, artistic, and cultural dimensions of *Canto por la Vida*.

**Figure 47**

*‘Tres generaciones’ trio, 1978.*

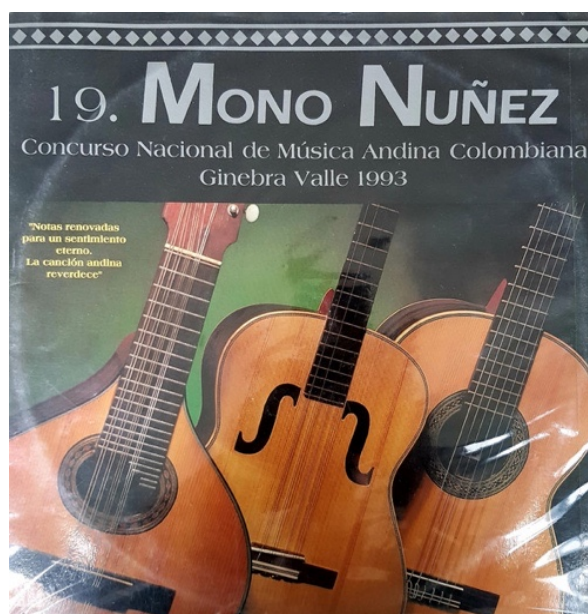


From the left to the right: Gustavo Adolfo Rengifo (tiple), Benigno Mono Núñez (Bandola) and Rafael Navarro (Guitar). *Canto por la vida*, documentary archive.

To understand Canto por la Vida's artistic, musical and educative project is indispensable to visit its origins: the Mono Núñez festival. Canto por la Vida was created in 2002 to continuing the musical training programme initiated by the *Fundación Promusica Nacional de Ginebra* FUNMÚSICA, an organisation created 'to preserve, promote and disseminate the Colombian Andean Music' (Funmúsica, 2023) through the most renown musical certamen in Colombia dedicated to this musical tradition today: the Mono Núñez festival; a musical event created in 1975 that "split the history of Colombian Andean music in two (Marulanda, 2020) and "undertook the dream of paying homage to all the rhythms that flowed from the tiple, the guitar and the bandola, in the very heart of Valle del Cauca" (Bohorquez, 2016).

**Figure 48**

*XIX Mono Núñez Festival LP.*



In this photo is shown the instruments that form the typical trio of the Andean Colombian music: bandola, tiple and guitar. Funmúsica official website

The current President of Canto por la Vida foundation, Bernardo Jiménez, who participated in the creation of FUNMÚSICA narrates the story:

...In 1974, I was working at *Carvajal*<sup>100</sup> and Hernando Toro -Mono Núñez's son-in-law- invited us to a cultural week organised by the nuns from *La Inmaculada Concepción* school of Ginebra. At that time no one knew 'Mono' Núñez from outside. Within that cultural week, two nuns, Sister Virginia Lahidalga and Sister Aura María Chávez and a music teacher named Luis Mario Medina started a music contest called '*vernacular*'. The older people still say: '*the vernacular is coming*', '*The festival is coming*' (...). So, I started to go from the first cultural week; I went to the second and so on. A group of people from Carvajal, Buga, Cali and Ginebra start to attend and other people different from Carvajal too. (Jimenez, personal interview, 2019)

The organisers invited important Colombian figures as juries, such as the distinguished composer José A. Morales (1914-1978)<sup>101</sup>, Graciela Arango de Tobón (1931-2000)<sup>102</sup>, Arturo de la Rosa (1940-2020)<sup>103</sup> and Helena Benítez de Zapata (1915-2009)<sup>104</sup>; prolific composers of Colombian popular songs. In its beginnings, the festival was called the Ginebra Vernacular Music Contest, but later, it was named the '*Mono Núñez*' festival, to tribute one of the most renowned musicians of the Valle del Cauca region at that time: Benigno "Mono" Núñez Maya (1897-1991), musician and virtuoso performer of the *bandola* and guitar from Ginebra; '*symbol of the music and bohemia of the Valle del Cauca region, who became a national legend over*

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<sup>100</sup> Carvajal is one of the most renown organisations of Colombia. It is a family-owned company of Cali, with 116 years of history. The business of 'Organización Carvajal' focuses on the industrial sector (packaging, pulp, paper, school supplies and office furniture), technology and the real estate sector. It has presence in 12 countries and develops social impact programmes in Cali and Buenaventura its Foundation. Carvajal foundation has historically supported the Mono Núñez festival, according to Octavio Marulanda.

<sup>101</sup> One of the greatest composers of 'Colombian Andean music'. His prolific work includes 213 compositions, considered 'true jewels' of Colombian Andean folklore. According to the Colombian musicologist Egberto Bermudez, the songs of Morales constitute 'the quintessential repertoire of Colombian popular song of the mid-century, close in its theme and language to the immediate peasant ancestor of the great majority of the increased immigrant population'. (Bermudez, 2017)

<sup>102</sup> Graciela Arango was the first Colombian composer to bring a winning piece from the Chilean *Viña del Mar Festival*, in 1973. Three years later she received the *Composer of the Americas* award, a contest in which she competed with Colombian music masters, such as Jorge Villamil and Arnulfo Briceño. In 1982 she was distinguished as 'the best composer' at the Mono Núñez Festival and that same year Sayco awarded her *the Lira de Oro* as the most prolific and versatile composer in the country. (Radio nacional de Colombia, 2021)

<sup>103</sup> Famous composer, singer, presenter and entrepreneur of television. Author of several key pieces in the history of the *Carnival of Blacks and Whites* of Pasto, Colombia, such as "La culebra", "Sindamanoy" and "La guandera".

<sup>104</sup> Renown composer and journalist. The first woman to reach the dignity of Mayor in Colombia in 1958. From 1955 she settled in Cali from where she led movements in defense of women's rights and reached her greatest inspiration as a composer. She worked in local radio stations and in newspapers such as *El Pais*, *Occidente* and *El Pueblo*. She composed one of the famous musical themes for Cali called 'pasodoble' and for many Colombian artists such as Claudia de Colombia, Billy Pontoni, Lucho y Nilhen, Isadora y Fausto.



*the years*'. (Funmúsica, 2023) The Colombian music researcher and folklorist Octavio Marulanda (2020) narrated that...

(...) one of the biggest concerns of the board of founders of the FUNMÚSICA institution was naming the contest so that it reflected not only its national content but also the authenticity concept inherent in its objectives. There was unanimity in choosing the name of Benigno Núñez -El Mono Núñez-, born in Ginebra, who at that time reached his 79th birthday. His merits went beyond the role he had played as a *bandola* and guitar player, placing him as an exceptional figure of the musical movement of Valle del Cauca.<sup>105</sup>

Benigno “Mono” Núñez was part of the musical dynamic of the first part of the XIX century of the central zone of Valle del Cauca that was nurtured by piano recitals of ‘great masters’ and *tertulias* in large *haciendas*<sup>106</sup> that are ‘parties of *tiple*, guitar and *bandola* where soloists, duets and ‘groups’ conveyed to play *pasillos*, *bambucos*, *guabinas* and *danzas* of finisecular character’ (Marulanda, 1990, p. 60). These *tertulias* are well described by Marulanda in his work ‘*Un concierto que dura 20 años*’ (1994). Marulanda narrated that *haciendas* such as La Brisa, played a fundamental role on the permanence of the typical musical tradition of the central zone of Valle del Cauca since the 18th century. Núñez evoked his memories on how the musical activity in *haciendas* such as La Brisa inspired him and nurtured and strengthened his musical training:

...My life is tied to La Brisa... Don Rafael Saavedra Saavedra used to go for me to La Betulia (*hacienda*), to hold musical gatherings. There, we began to put together pieces of some musical dedication, especially, works by Pedro Morales Pino such as the waltzes *Mar y Cielo* and *Alicia*, which are beautiful and a Spanish-style march or *pasodoble* called *Pastor Imperio*. I played the pieces with great ease because Don Rafael taught me the accompaniments on the guitar to make a better harmonization of the pieces. He knew how to teach me and transmitted his knowledge to me very well. La Brisa was, in a certain way, an inexhaustible source for our musical productions. In that house everyone (...) stimulated those who played instruments or sang. There,

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<sup>105</sup> ‘Music for Colombia’ programme’ by Javeriana Stereo (radio station of the Pontificia Universidad Javeriana). Special on the History of the Mono Nuñez Festival. Production: FUNMÚSICA - Ginebra National Pro-Music Foundation. Scripts: Octavio Marulanda. Uploaded on the 11 of April of 2020. Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n9pir2RboxY>

<sup>106</sup> A large portion of agricultural land of the upper or patrician classes of the population.

we were inspired with joy and freedom. I believe that without atmosphere there can be no good music. (p. 64)

**Figure 49**

*El Paraíso hacienda (Cerrito, Valle del Cauca) from which the renown Colombian writer Jorge Isaacs took inspiration to create La María, the classic novel of Latin American romanticism.*



El Paraíso is a cultural material heritage of Colombia and an excellent example of the traditional architecture of large farms of the Valle del Cauca region. Governorate of Valle del Cauca official website.

According to Marulanda (1994), the musical and cultural activity of La Brisa lasted more than 100 years and it was preserved by the descendants of the Saavedra's family and other nodes linked by different bonds, such as the Rengifo, Cabal, Soto and Núñez families. Rafael Saavedra Saavedra, member of the family that owned the house, played an important role in the evolution of the musical environment that surrounded it. As a composer, teacher and musician with “an exquisite vocation”, Saavedra “concentrated all the trends that were fashionable at the beginning of the XX century” (p. 64–65):

He taught musical pieces by Valle del Cauca composers of the time, such as Pedro Morales Pino, Enrique Umaña, Luís Carlos Álvarez, Manuel Salazar, Jesús Antonio Vélez, Samuel Herrera, Pedro Mario Becerra, as well as other national authors. His favorites: Luis A. Calvo, Emilio Murillo, Diógenes Chaves Pinzón, Carlos Escamilla, Jerónimo Velasco and Joaquín Arias. He also performed as transcriptionist of carefully crafted and rich imagination, making adaptations for piano, guitar, bandola, banjo and accordion of themes from a brilliant repertoire that figured

in his music notebooks such as: *the Blue Danube* (J. Strauss); *Serenade* (Shubert); *Los enamorados* (Aria de la zarzuela *La del Soto del Parral*); *La Piscina de Buda* (Soutullo y Vert); *Un baile de Máscaras* (Giuseppe Verdi); *Aurora* (Otto Roeder); *Amorosa* (Rudolph Bergert); *Acclamations Waltz* (Emile Waldteufel); *Minuet in G* (Beethoven); *Funeral March* (Chopin), etc. (Marulanda, 1994)

In La Brisa, composers, musicians, music lovers, critics, poets, writers, politicians, professors and friends “came without summons to listen to what they could find nowhere else” (idem). Renown artists such as Manuel Salazar, Antonio Herrera, Pedro María Becerra, Álvaro Romero, Diego Estrada, Ernesto Salcedo<sup>107</sup>, ‘Eddy Salospi’, José Joaquín Soto, Ramón Becerra, Angel María Cruz, Tomás Rengifo, Luís Eduardo Saavedra and personalities such as Antonio María Valencia, travelled from all corners of Valle of Cauca, around the country and from abroad, to take part in these *tertulias*. The above well described how these *haciendas* played an important role on the musical tradition of the central zone of Valle del Cauca during the first part of the XIX century, stimulating the contact between musicians and the conformation of musical groups such as the *estudiantinas*.<sup>108</sup>

These meetings in large *haciendas* of influential families not only illustrate the type of musical practices in the region that preceded the Mono Núñez festival, but also reveal sociocultural aspects linked to its origins that have been the subject of debate and criticism by different scholars, in relation to the contest’s discourses about its vocation to “rescue” and endure a musical “tradition” of Ginebra and Colombians.

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<sup>107</sup> Ernesto Salcedo Ospina, tenor soprano, characterised by having a high-pitched voice, which allowed him to play female roles in opera and theater. (Fondo Archivo del Patrimonio Fotográfico y Filmico del Valle del Cauca, 1900)

<sup>108</sup> The historian Héctor Rendón Marín (2009) references that the *estudiantinas* are groups mainly formed by the three main instruments that constitute the organology of Colombian Andean music: the *bandola*, *tiple* and guitar (although they can include other instruments), according with musicians who have been fundamental references of the development of plucked string music in Colombia such as Jesús Zapata Builes and León Cardona. ‘The *estudiantinas*, whose original characteristics were very similar to the Spanish rondallas, are closely linked to popular European groups, whose cradle and shelter in our country was mainly in Bogotá and Medellín towards the end of the 19th century. The first records on students in the Colombian context date from this time; In particular, two important groups stand out that emerged from the enthusiasm generated by the experiences and studies of some musicians from the country in Europe, or by the fortuitous presentations and contacts with foreign groups: the Lira Colombiana by maestro Pedro Morales Pino (from Valle del Cauca) and the Lira Antioqueña, advised by the Spanish musician Jesús Arriola. Both inaugurated a strong chordophonist movement, whose splendor was projected throughout the 20th century; students whose features converged towards the progressive configuration of an imaginary that began to distinguish them as ‘typically national’ groups (p. 9-10).

**Figure 50**

*Samuel Herrera, Benigno 'Mono' Núñez, Rafael Saavedra at Hacienda Belén, celebrating the meeting of artists on the riverbank. Ginebra, Valle del Cauca. Year: 1945.*



Source: filmic archive of Valle of Cauca.

**Figure**

**51**

Meeting of artist friends 'El grupo de Buga': Samuel Herrera, Manuel Salazar, José Antonio Ospina, Ernesto Salcedo, Pedro María Becerra, Tulio Gaéz, Benigno "El Mono" Núñez<sup>109</sup>



Year: Jul-4-1921 Biblioteca departamental José Garces Romero.

<sup>109</sup> According to Archive of the photographic and film heritage of Valle del Cauca, 'during the first 25 years of the 20th century, in Buga and neighboring towns, musical activity was so abundant that it can be said that Buga was the musical center of the region. A deep sense of identity was spontaneously cultivated, and the gatherings and concerts were the characters in which music was the vehicle of communication and the reason for the most common meeting of the representative sectors of society, for whom the musicians were the beloved and friendly that propitiated the ludic as emissaries of the feelings of love and the typical lyricism of the time'.

Hernando José Cobo (2010), musicologist, musician, teacher and founding member of Canto por la Vida, sustains that the creation of the Mono Núñez festival “did not obey any popular tradition, nor was it the reflection of a clamour from all the inhabitants of Ginebra to have an event that would echo their daily musical expressions” (p. 16). He stands that “there was no musical activity in Ginebra that could possibly have generated a music school or a consistent musical movement at that time, rather than the bohemian tradition of gatherings, heir to the nineteenth-century salon that was concentrated above all in the *haciendas* of the upper or patrician classes of the population,<sup>110</sup> who were the promoters and supporters of the contest in the first instance” (p. 44). Cayer (2010) and Cobo (2010) highlighted that the contest from its inception has been of ‘private nature’. It has had private sponsors and financial support from government agencies and officials from Bogotá,<sup>111</sup> which helped it to rapidly gain local, regional and national recognition.

It can sound incongruous that a festival with such national recognition, aimed to promote, strengthen and nurture Colombian music and its national genres did not necessarily have a close relationship with the local communities and their musical expressions. But as Ana María Ochoa (1997) stated, the meanings of a genre to people are built from the complex network of interactions that occurs around them. In other words, it is not enough to describe its formal elements. Rather, it is a matter of dimensioning how these formal elements are inserted into the daily life through specific musical and social practices. ‘It is there, in the way in which sounds inhabit us, that we define what they mean to us’ (p. 2). Indeed, the way the contest has built its discourses and imaginaries around what it is interpreted as “tradition”, as “national” and as “Colombian”, hide much more complexity, debate and historical understanding, to be examined in the light of this research.

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<sup>110</sup> According to Cobo (2010), ‘Ginebra was founded in 1909 and declared a municipality in 1945. Its urban area was laid out on lots ceded by local landowners who served as founders; a large part of the landowners, farmers in their great majority and the general population of the town are direct descendants of these founders. Among them Benigno “Mono” Núñez, who was already a teenager when the town was founded’ (p. 16)

<sup>111</sup> At that time Cornelio Reyes, official of the Ministry of Government of Colombia and Mario Medina, the General Directorate of Integration and Development, both from Ginebra, helped to sponsor the contest and facilitated contact with renowned artists and people of national media. Although the festival was limited in its early years to Ginebra and its neighboring towns, the presence of these personalities, media and academy, attracted national attention to the event and, of course, to the local town (Cobo, 2010).

In his research work *Configuration of the Colombian Andean music genre in the Mono Núñez Festival* (2010), Hernando José Cobo studied the symbolic attributes that were loaded to the ‘Colombian Andean music’ genre, related to ‘the mythical conformation of the Colombian nationality’. Cobo analysed how a competitive musical event, such as the Mono Núñez festival, greatly influenced on the formation of a musical genre from a private institutionalised vision, generating ideological concepts of musical discourses. He spotlighted on how the conceptual tensions to regulate the musical competition from specific places of social class, taste, ideological positions and particular imaginaries of nation, tradition and authenticity, “conditioned, modulated and regulated the connotative and denotative elements of the Andean Colombian Music genre, as a mechanism of access to its performance spaces” (p.vi). Going further, there are additional historical reasons behind this phenomenon.

Different musicologists have studied how Andean music has played an important role in the construction of the nationalist project of Colombia during the XIX century and its ideals of “citizenship”<sup>112</sup>. Undeniably, this musical genre has been linked historically to certain discourses and values on ideals of Colombianness, which has not only permeated but sustained the festival. As a matter of fact, the *bambuco*, considered the most representative rhythm of the Colombian Andean Music has been a central problem of the music and Colombian identity<sup>113</sup>.

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<sup>112</sup> According to Rodríguez (2011), the metaphor of the family associated with people and homeland was used especially during the first half of the 19th century as an equivalent of a *nation*. Then, (...) ‘the liberal government of the nation in the second half of the 19th century frequently used the category of citizen, associating their identification with someone committed to the progress and updating of the country. The reforms that involved the educational and teaching systems, the abolition of slavery, the policies of economic liberalization with the abolition of traditional taxes and, especially, the separation of church and state, attacked long-standing interests, especially those related to property. For its part, the conservative Regeneration in power at the end of the century sought national unity through a return to political centralism, the resumption of relations between church and state based on the system of concordats and the promulgation of a definitive constitution of 1886, whose validity expired in 1991’ (p.2).

<sup>113</sup> Rodríguez also analysed how the *Bambuco* was used to reinforce early nationalist and patriotic discourses during the XIX century been associated to independency military scenes such as the Battle of Bomboná in 1822, the War of a Thousand Days and the Colombian-Peruvian War of 1932. Other Andean Colombian rhythms such as the Contradanza also played an important part of these military events. The Battle of Boyacá took place to the beat of the contradanza ‘La vencedora,’ and the entry of the army victorious to Bogotá under those of the contradanza ‘La Libertadora’. These were Bolívar’s favorite pieces, who added to his military skills those of a good dancer at a time when the contradanza was the fashion in palace balls. The two scores were published on July 20, 1884, as a tribute to the *Grito de la Independencia*, in the Illustrated Newspaper Paper, pages 400 and 382, respectively’ (p. 10).

In her work *The Bambuco*, “National Music” of Colombia: Between custom, invented tradition and exoticism (2011), the Colombian musicologist Martha Rodríguez points out that

The *bambuco* was pertinent and functional in the discourses of the nation of the literate and political elites disseminated through the institutions provided for it, in such a way that they constituted a basic corpus and a memory of facts, which (...) contributed to the configuration of the *imagined community of meaning*, characteristic of the profile of a nation. (p.2)

The music researcher Carlos Miñana Blasco described it in his work *Los caminos del Bambuco en el siglo XIX* (1997), that *bambuco* was linked in its beginnings to the military music that supported the independence processes of the Creoles in the 19th century. Initially, the music used included *contradanzas* (country dances of English influence) as a musical opposition to the Spanish colony. However, he sustains that something local, creole, of popular taste and rhythmically enough to support the military activities, had to be found:

It definitely had to be something “new,” something mestizo and those requirements were met by the bambuco. A music (...) that, as we would say now, fused African, indigenous and Spanish forms and that -in addition- was deeply related to similar mestizo forms that were being produced at that time throughout the Spanish Colonial America. (p. 10)

As many Latino American nationalist movements, “the mestizo was idealised as being of bi-ethnic or tri-ethnic origin, but the image displayed was always at the lighter end of the mestizo spectrum. The future would bring, almost magically, a whitening of the population through the mixture of races” (Wade in Cayer, 2010 p. 10). In effect, since the 19th century, musical genres of the Colombian Andean region (such as *bambuco*, *pasillo*, *guabina* or *bunde*, among others) started to be envisaged as the ‘national music’ by excellence; a conception maintained by the Mono Núñez festival (Cobo, 2010; Cayer 2010).

The notion of “national music” had a relationship with the historical predominance in Colombia of a political-economic centralism nestled in the Andean lands and the academic-nationalist approaches to vernacular music (Pulido, 2018). Andean “national music” was undoubtedly promoted and projected in many parts of the country through the radio during the first part of

the twentieth century<sup>114</sup>. It was even listened to in places far from the capital such as rural hamlets of Colombian Atlantic zone. As the testimonies of the National Folkloric Survey of 1942 analysed by the Colombian folklorist Renan Silva shown, even musicians from Corozal (Sucre, Colombia) reported knowing emblematic composers such as Luis A. Calvo and Emilio Murillo as well as hearing *pasillos* and *bambucos* (Rodríguez, 2012).

As Rodríguez (2012) highlighted, during the nationalist period there was an attempt to define what was Bambuco and its origins as “a mechanism to sanction identity, to control its reference frames”. She pointed out how although the mestizo origin of *bambuco* was accepted by some nationalists such as the Colombian poet Rafael Pombo, its African roots were not necessarily recognised by some scholars. She sustained that *bambuco* was stratified as well as the citizens of the time.<sup>115</sup> The *bambuco* of the Pacific coast – its aesthetics and forms of musical practice – was not recognised as “national music”. What it was considered the traditional, creole and ‘national’ was the written *bambuco*: the “improved”, “stylised” and “erudite” one, a *bambuco* closest to the modern ideals to nation; a “bleached”, “occidentalised” and “cleaned” *bambuco*, as many musicologists have defined it (Santamaria, 2017; Wade, 2002). Rodríguez sustains that the solution to deny the Afro roots of the genre was, calling it *bambuco Viejo* (old bambuco), a description that applied even today to characterise music rarely written, such as in the Marimba and Chirimía music. ‘*Bambuco* origins are also denied by ignoring its diversity and undervaluing the different forms of *bambuco* that Afro, indigenous people and peasants continue making today: *jugas*, *arrullos*, *currulaos*, *kuchwalas*, *meweikuhs*, *guambianos*’ *bambuco*, peasant *bambucos* of the Massif, *rajaleñas*... *Bambucos* with 200 years of tradition’ (Miñana, 1997, p. 11).

This phenomenon is present in the Mono Núñez festival, following Cobo’s analysis. He highlights that the contest has maintained certain differentiations between the musical aesthetics and practices of indigenous, peasant and Afro roots and the music and ensembles that conserve

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<sup>114</sup> The first radio stations in Colombia were founded at the end of the twenties of the XX century. Between 1929 and 1936 stations went from one to twenty and in 1944 almost all cities had at least one.

<sup>115</sup> In Bogotá, the differentiation between the gentlemen, ‘cachacos’ and footwear, contrasted with the servants, ‘guaches’ and ‘ruanetas’, in a hierarchy of everyday life issue that gain more complexity over time during the century and that led scholars to make wide classifications of ‘national people’ (Rodríguez, 2011)



the aesthetic codes of such Andean “tradition”. To differentiate those aesthetics and practices, he criticises that the contest solved the issue creating a “autochthonous music” category, in which even the groups ascribed to it cannot access to the highest award of the event, the Gran Mono Núñez, only reserved to the ensembles and soloists that perform representative music of the “tradition” (i.e., “national”). But not only the *bambuco* occupied an important place on the social imaginary of the 20th century in Colombia.

The *tiple*<sup>116</sup> was also catalogued by folklorists of “ferreous nationalism” as central symbol of the nation:

What makes the *tiple* become a national symbol is transcending the anonymity of the peasant and the “humble” and crossing and traversing social classes. There is a felt need to define the tiple as a symbol of something with which one can feel pride and not the shame of its unacceptability in society; that is, of its roots in the peasant popular. Transcending that unacceptability means building a tradition worthy of the tastes and cultural practices of the upper class. In Bordieu’s terms, turning tradition into a cultural capital that represents its values (Ochoa 1997, p. 38)

According to Ochoa (1997), the two main spaces in which this search took place during the first half of the 20th century were: 1) the concert hall, generally reserved for European erudite culture and 2) the music industry, the nascent space of urban culture. Musicians move the Andean music from the family room of peasant homes and urban middle and upper class to the concert hall, searching for symbolic valuation of their practice and economic sustenance, which also promoted processes of professionalisation during the first part of the century. It is well known that the figure that stands out the most to this respect is Pedro Morales Pino (1863-1926). Raised in Cartago (Valle del Cauca),<sup>117</sup> this musician, composer, director, pedagogue and painter has been considered a key milestone of the first stages of music in Valle del Cauca in the 20th century. The “father” of the Cauca’s Valley music. He was the one who most influenced the

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<sup>116</sup> In his work *Los caminos del tiple* (1988) David Puerta defined the tiple as ‘a creole creation of the 19th century, based on the guitar of the time of the Catholic kings’ (cited by Ochoa, 1997, p. 38)

<sup>117</sup> According to the birth registry that Jaime Rico Salazar obtained and shown in his work on Pedro Morales’ biography, the artist was born in Ibagué (Tolima) not in Cartago (Valle). Rico sustains that people from Cartago ignored that fact.

transcription of *pasillo* and *bambuco*. Morales Pino played music by great masters on national instruments such as the *bandola* and took some Andean musical traditions, created original work from them, poured them into clever arrangements for string ensembles and performed them in “impeccable versions, shoulder to shoulder with the concert repertoires of the day” (Elianne Duque in Arenas, 2009). As Arenas (2009) put it, “*Morales Pino* is the myth of origin and the origin of the myth of national music”,<sup>118</sup> an obligatory reference for all musicians, ensembles and organisations inserted in the Andean Colombian music sphere, such as the Mono Núñez festival and Canto por la Vida music school.

Two types of feat trace the mythical importance of Morales Pino. A purely physical one in which the hero performs the courageous act of leaving the province, systematically writing national music on the score, performing “erudite” music on an equal footing with his own music based on Andean tradition and more later, make the journey, full of risks and difficulties, to take that music through Central, South America and the United States. (Arenas, 2009, p. 23)

A large part of the records that circulated in Colombia since the beginning of the 20th century were imported by record companies established in the United States and Europe. Emblematic composers associated with the canon of Andean “national music” were hired in the 1910–1920s by foreign companies to record for the Latin American market. Emilio Murillo, Alejandro Wills, Jorge Áñez, Alcides Briceño and the Uribe brothers recorded in the United States. Their repertoires included global genres such as waltzes, polkas and dances and Colombian Andean music, such as *bambucos*, *pasillos* and *torbellinos* (Pulido, 2018, p. 72)

The radio modelled consumption patterns and shapes social, political and cultural values through the dissemination of information, artistic expressions and commercial advertising during the century. After the violence of the 1950s, tight state control over radio content

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<sup>118</sup> ‘Pedro Morales Pino as an archetype, offers diverse readings. (...) there is an interesting influence that has to do with his tutelary presence in the formation of the groups that will develop his ideas. Let us cite three emblematic cases. The trio that began the transformation of the sound of the format was called precisely “*Trio Morales Pino*” (Peregrino Galindo on tiple; Álvaro Romero on guitar; and Diego Estrada Montoya on bandola). Later, the trio that would follow this trail and create its own school, *Trio Joyel*, in honor of a work by Morales Pino (Aycardo Muñoz on tiple; Fidel Álvarez or Gauco Cedeño on guitar; and on the bandola, Luís Fernando León). Later, the *Pierrot Trio*, which also takes its name from a musical work by Morales Pino (Jaime Barbosa, on tiple; Henry Colmenares, guitar and Fabián Forero, on bandola). As can be seen, three generations of bandola players – and it could be said, the most prominent in each era – have a guardian shadow in the musician from Cartago’ (Arenas, 2009, p. 23).

demanded that radio networks renew their programming and focused on entertainment and “neutral” information and reinforce Colombian nationalist sentiments (Pulido, 2018). On the other side, musical exercise was qualified and strengthened thanks to radio programming. Since 1935, the Colombian radio competition for having the best interpreters to work with orchestras and fixed groups intensified.

The radio adopted the “radio-theater”<sup>119</sup> model, which demanded high musical skills and performance quality. Radio greatly impacted both artistic promotion and the employment for musicians. The radio stations such as Radio Santafé that sought to exalt “the most authentic expressions of Colombian popular art’ with the ‘voices and melodies of the homeland’”<sup>120</sup>, promoted groups such as the Granadino Ensemble of Hernando Rico Velandia, the Estudiantina Santafé and the Nocturnal Colombiano orchestra directed by the great Colombian pianist Oriol Rangel. During the 1950s, Rangel consolidated one of the most iconic radio programmes of “national music” of the time: *Antología Musical de Colombia*, sponsored by the Ministry of Education and which allowed the programme to be listened around the country. For 15 minutes, Oriol and his group performed highly crafted arrangements, compositions and versions of *bambucos*, *pasillos* and other Colombian genres, such as *joropos* (from the Colombian-Venezuelan plains) and *contradanzas* (from Chocó of the North Pacific coast).

The notion of Andean “national music” has persisted throughout the past century in tension with other Colombian and transnational musical genres. Since 1930s and 1940s, regional “tropical” genres such as *cumbias* and *porros*, popularised by Lucho Bermúdez,<sup>121</sup> and later *vallenato*, gained acceptance by the Colombian public and great commercial success. Merged with global music (from Argentina, Cuba, Mexico, and North America) such a turn displaced Andean genres creating a “double crisis of meaning and of market” (Cobo, 2010, p. 116).

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<sup>119</sup> Musical presentations in theaters that were broadcast by radio programmes.

<sup>120</sup> Expressions of the announcer Jairo Correal Bernal, in 1963, in Radio Santafé.

<sup>121</sup> Lucho Bermúdez (1912 -1994). Iconic Colombian composer, musician and director considered one of the most important performers and composers of Colombian popular music of the 20th century. His musical work was deeply influenced by porros and fandangos of the Savannah of Bolívar and the coastal towns of northern Colombia and the jazz bands of the 20s and 30s. His work popularised cumbia and porro in Colombia and internationally, during the 40s decade.

**Figure 52**

*Conjunto Granadino and Oriol Rangel and Nocturnal Colombiano.*<sup>122</sup>



*Músicas de Colombia* Facebook page.

Although elevated to category of national symbol, Colombian Andean music failed to fully integrate into the national and international market and its performance and circulation spaces began to shrink with the turn of the century, the development of phonographic industry, radio broadcasting, cinema and television (Cortés, 2004; Restrepo, 1998; Santamaría, 2006 in Cobo, 2010). Morales Pino-type music was losing its strength as dance music, a task that was being absorbed by the “hot” music of the Atlantic Coast and the Caribbean, a process that gave rise to other listening habits, other forms of social appropriation and to that ambivalent place that Andean music has in the collective unconscious of the country (Arenas, 2008).

This situation was object of debate between specialists and amateurs of the time. In the middle of the century, nationalist voices claimed that the cultural programming of State radio stations should be headed by Colombian Andean genres, “at risk of disappearing”. The repeated requests to increase the national music deserved in May of 1952 a pronouncement by the director of the *Radiodifusora Nacional*, who considered that the “cult” of Colombian music was going through a decline:

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<sup>122</sup> The Conjunto Granadino was a ‘estudiantina’ founded and directed by Hernando Rico Velandia in Bogotá in 1938. The formation of the group was divided into two stages, in its first phase: Hernando Rico Velandia, Enrique Villegas, Eduardo Osorio, Manuel Bautis and Juan Paez. In the second, its members were: Hernando Rico Velandia, Ernesto Sánchez Gómez, Leonidas Nieto L, Eduardo Osorio Gutiérrez, Luis Carlos Martínez, Bernardo Jiménez, Julio Garavito and Enrique Viteri (the latter only as a musician for presentations).

**Figure 53**

*Lucho Bermúdez y su orquesta, one of the most significant exponents of cumbia in dance orchestra format in the country. Album cover of 1947.*



“Discogs” label website.

[...] But it is well worthwhile, (...) to comment very cordially, but also very frankly, on the difficulties encountered by the “cult” of national music and its occasional and increasingly scarce propellants. In the first place and without paying attention to the causes, the change in musical taste of the last generations. There is no reason to avoid the accomplished fact that Colombian youth do not “feel” the music sustained by the prestige of Calvo and Morales Pino and prefer the vernacular and Afro-Cuban rhythm that is being served as the only alternative to their prerogatives [...] Acknowledging the fact does not mean protecting it or covering it up. But it could have its justification. What are national artists doing to contain this decline of what they call “national music”? (Arturo Abella in Pulido, 2018, p. 74).

The arrival of *cumbia* and then *vallenato*, which became de facto “national music” since the middle of the century, the fashion for ballads in the 1970s and 1980s, the rage of Spanish rock in the 1980s and 90s and more recently, the enchantment produced by the archaic and *raizal* sonorities of the boom in globalised “ethno” music at the beginning of this century, caused

Andean music such as Morales Pino to lose recognition and visibility. This gradual silencing produced a lot of fear in some sectors, which did not understand that the changes were due to new social dynamics and the emergence of new cultural logics.

The Mono Núñez festival emerged in the context of a national Andean music in decline and to emotionally relieve the sense of loss of identity that it entailed. In consequence, “the characteristic way adopted to exorcise these ghosts was the creation of interpretation contests, which have undoubtedly been key in the process of social legitimization of Andean music in the last decades of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> (Arenas, 2008, p. 29).

The festival appeared in 1974, to “rescue” and “guard” the “Colombian music”, understood as the Andean “national music” referenced earlier. The Mono Núñez festival consolidates the “Colombian Andean music” as a musical genre, demarcating its *topos* in 1978, which explicitly excluded the Pacific coast and the Eastern Plains. Before that, the Andean music only existed as a topographic reference in early Colombian folklore manuals. According to Gustavo A. Rengifo,<sup>123</sup> the festival opened performance spaces to musicians, groups and musical expressions that started to experiment difficulties on their circulation dynamics, although they “continued to be practiced in a very profuse and hidden way” (interviewed by Cobo, 2010, p. 20). Even more,

Musical expressions of the entire Andean subregion that people only referenced through the folklorologists’ writings and sound archives – such as those of the *Radiodifusora Nacional de Colombia* – were visible at the festival. The *guabineras* from Vélez (Santander), the *rajaleñas* from Huila, groups of *quenas* and *zampoñas* (and *charangos*) from Nariño, *chirimías* from Caldas and the flute bands from Cauca, among others unusual expressions such as the *destrós*, the Antioquian ‘*vueltas*’ and the *chotis*, began to appear in Ginebra, Valle. (Cobo, 2010, p. 20)

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<sup>123</sup> Rengifo is also one of the most outstanding Andean music artists of the generation born in the second half of the 20th century, whose vocal and instrumental work has been widely publicized and has become a paradigm for musicians born on the edge of the history of the festival. He has participated in all the artistic and organisational instances of the Mono Núñez festival since the first year of the contest. He was part of the Tres Generaciones trio – formed by Mono Núñez and Álvaro Romero-, that won the Mono Núñez prize. Member for many years of the Technical Committee of FUNMÚSICA and its executive director. (Cobo, 2010, p. 21).

**Figure 54**

*“Aires de Pubenza” and “Torbellino con canto de Guabina” groups*



Chirimía from Cauca, Colombia. Funmúsica’s website.

In parallel, musicians who came from an academic tradition and “rebelled from the academy against the ostracism in which the conservatories kept Colombian music”, also found a space for artistic development and musical exchange:

(...) the guitarist who was not able to graduate because he proposed playing Colombian music in his graduation; the bandola player who despite having all the academic titles, could not establish a chair of bandola in any university... and all that knowledge of harmony, counterpoint and that ability to make arrangements, was turned into the conformation of large groups that simply continued the tradition that 80 years earlier had been proclaimed or consolidated by figures like Pedro Morales Pino with the Colombian Lira. (Cobo, 2010, p. 20)

The conservatories’ disdain for Colombian popular music was not a new issue. In his article “El precio de la pureza” (2009), Eliécer Arenas pointed out that although the instrumental Andean Colombian music was written and read, still it was not considered good music by certain members of the literate elite of the century; an aspect that still subsists, although to a lesser extent.



**Figure 55**

*Nogal Orquesta de Cuerdas (Nogal String Orchestra)*



Nogal String Orchestra’, a group that emerged in the eighties in the Colombian National Pedagogical University (Bogotá). One of the most significant milestones of the century, marking a transformative chapter in the vibrant and evolving history of Colombian Andean music (Arenas, 2008). Foyer room of the Colón theatre, 1995 (Caro, n.d.).

Judging it from the parameters of European music, Narciso Garay, for example, said that those who composed that music were minor and mediocre musicians. This is going to be the pattern from then on: a significant number of musicians with ‘scrolls’ will get used to looking at this practice with disdain. In the system of differences and in the struggle for the legitimacy of their respective social places, these musicians, heirs to a tradition that they come to spread convinced of their intrinsic superiority, perceive this music as elementary, peasant and uninteresting. The curious thing is that from the other side, from the angle of folklorists, that music does not present special relevance either, because it is too contaminated, it is not pure, it is not rural and authentic enough. (p. 24)

Such a paradox hides something else, a much more complex issue that goes beyond the scale of classification, valuation, or description of the genre. In Eliécer Arenas (2008) opinion Andean music was born from a sin:



(...) eating from the tree of knowledge, that is, being created with the intention of being removed from its context of use and longing to be heard, valued and discussed as artistic music of popular tradition with international projection. As the loss of innocence, said Bauman, is a point of no return, this music, with the modernization processes of the cities, opened up more and more to the sounds of the world. (p. 28).

In effect, the Mono Núñez festival has had to tackle the ambivalence and the unresolved problems of this music in its secular history, which has led to a permanent conceptual crisis and debate. Such debate is expressed in the contest in the form of: 1) a dichotomic discourse that seeks to differentiate the popular tradition from the academic and contemporary, to control the artistic, aesthetic, poetic and organologic aspects of music and finally, to satisfy the needs of a sector to conserve *the* ‘tradition’, ‘crystallising’ music through its canonical references (from the end of the 19th century to the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup>); and the aesthetic, discursive and organisational turns of the festival, consequence of internal heated debates that put into question the limits of such tradition, its canonical references; and 2) the needs to recognise the mobility of musical practices, the dialogic nature of its own contexts of production and the particular musicians’ and artists quests.

The contest has played an ambiguous role when it has been the privileged vehicle of social legitimization of the musician dedicated to this practice – as it allows him to gain authority and recognition – and the messenger of the discourse of conservation and custody of the tradition that has deepened the gap between the discourse that such events promote and the music that is played at them. Indeed,

[t]he festival must reinvent itself year after year in the process of building discourses about the Colombian Andean music without close referents of similar events that could serve to save efforts in the formation of a discursive corpus with consistent theoretical support. It does it with what is closest to it: the writings produced by folklorologists (...), which are articulated to the discourse of construction and representation of the nation, as ideological support for the organisational structure of the festival and subsequently -although in some way linked to the above-, the formation of a Technical Committee from 1986, which gives an apparently more independent, academic and democratic profile to the formulation of the concepts that will govern

the calls and bases of the contest. But next to and above this, doxa must be placed, that is to say, the current of opinion that, from the board of directors of FUNMÚSICA, ultimately validates, filters or rejects the proposals of the Technical Committee, research groups or individuals, depending on the greater or lesser ideological flexibility of its constituents in turn. (Arenas, 2008, p. 9)

Consequently, the history of the Mono Núñez festival is also the history of the complexity of its internal debates around the Andean Colombian music. Covered with the halo of “national music”, especially in its instrumental facet, the Andean Colombian music integrates discursive practices, the most discussed, but also musical practices, the least studied but essential to understand it. The struggle of the Mono Núñez Technical Committee to tackle the complex interrelations of the music with its three extreme poles: the academic cultured music (whose discourses usually present it as if it were the father figure of all the others), the oral rural or urban music (whose discourse tends to consider it more “natural”, “authentic” or “pure”) and commercial mass music, made difficult the understanding of its changing, mobile and contingent nature. As expressed in the following testimony of Gustavo Adolfo Rengifo referring to the changes that the festival experimented with during the 1980s:

Since the 1980s, the topic of “new expressions” started. Then groups began to appear, such as Trio Nueva Colombia, Cuatro Palos, Ancestro, Delta Trío, etc., which began to show some musical proposals in Colombian instrumental music, that were updating the musical discourse, using different, fuller and more complex harmonies. And from the point of view of the texts, there was also an influence. My work was coming, the work of Guillermo Calderón, Luis Enrique Aragón, Eugenio Arellano; we were already singing other things. Then, the idea of new expressions of Colombian music began to emerge. And arguments ensued. Ah, the group Ensamble came from Quindío, and they presented the modal suite and all unusual music, well, like rock, well. The wave of... Hector Fabio Torres, who was the director. Then there was a tremendous discussion. The festival solved it through creating the modality of “new expressions”. At that time, the festival had six modalities, which later were seven. The vocals modalities: soloists, duets and trios and mixed groups; and the instrumental ones, which were: soloists, duets and trios, *estudiantinas*. Later another one was created, which was the seventh: the cappella modality. So, there were seven awards that had to be given. So, then they said: “no, let’s create the ‘new expressions!’” and they created a division: “new expressions”, with the same

seven awards. So, there were fourteen. So, it was very complicated because later it was not known who a new expression was. Then Miller Alarcón would come out and sing something, that's a new expression! And then, he sang a song by Luis Carlos González, that's not a *new* expression! (G. Rengifo, personal interview, 2020)

As a matter of fact, to understand the fate of the Colombian Andean music throughout the 20th century and the meaning of its contemporary aesthetics (within the Mono Núñez festival framework and any other project centred in this music such as Canto por la Vida), is necessary to focus on the complex interrelationships that make this musical practice a 'music of frontier', as Arenas has defined it (2008):

The fact that since the conquest itself we have had the need to assimilate the languages and knowledge frameworks coming from Europe shows, in the case of popular music, that the great musicians that emerged in America – including North American jazz musicians – move in an aesthetic that we could call “frontier” and that perhaps we should claim as a significant achievement of mestizo cultural practices. Positioning themselves in the logic of the border has allowed thousands of creative musicians on this side of the Atlantic to negotiate, transfer and put into dialogue the rigor of the languages inscribed in popular and folkloric traditions with the normative pressures promoted by the Western academy focused on reading and writing in the name of rigor and excellence. (p. 33)

Such works reveal Colombian music as both a historical and contingent creation, serving as the foundation for its establishment as “Colombian music”. However, they also highlight the significant cost borne by other musical traditions—and the social groups associated with them—through its institutionalisation as a symbol of national identity. This process was marked by centralism, racism, and exclusionary practices that have characterised the country's political landscape since its inception. Finally, some of these analyses conclude that the right to participate in cultural discourse and to influence decisions on matters of national significance has been restricted to a small, privileged segment of the population.

This appendix sought to shed light on some of the phenomena and critical discussions surrounding the Mono Núñez Festival in relation to Colombian Andean musical practices. Firstly, it outlined the context in which the festival emerged, exploring how these musical

traditions have been present in the region and how certain social and cultural practices have fostered their development and appropriation. Subsequently, the appendix examined critical debates regarding the treatment of Colombian Andean music within the framework of the competition, while also analysing issues related to its production, circulation, and consumption, which have contributed to its weakening. Finally, it highlighted some of the challenges the festival has faced in embracing the complexity of these debates. This discussion complements the information provided in Chapters 3 and 6.

The appendix concludes by emphasising the nature of Colombian Andean music as a border practice, reflecting on the political dimension of decision-making in spaces of power that ultimately define social, aesthetic, artistic, and cultural trajectories. This additional information provides a broader understanding of the context in which the Canto por la Vida project unfolds, as well as the challenges involved in constructing an educational initiative that acknowledges the complexity of these debates.

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