

A PERFORMANCE GUIDE AND PEDAGOGICAL ANALYSIS TO THE SOLO GUITAR
WORKS OF TWO BLACK WOMEN COMPOSERS: ERROLLYN WALLEN AND
TANIA LEÓN

By

CIYADH IRENE HILL-WELLS

(Under the Direction of Daniel Bolshoy)

ABSTRACT

Errollyn Wallen and Tania León are two of the many Black women composers who have made meaningful and important contributions to the guitar literature. Though their work is important, social conditions and circumstances have made it such that they have received less attention and notoriety for their work. As a result, their works for solo guitar are less often performed when compared with other composers although their compositions are substantial in length and scope. To advocate for greater inclusion of their compositions, this document serves as both a pedagogical analysis and performances for some of the solo guitar works by Errollyn Wallen and Tania León. The document provides an overview of these works and detailed commentary about how to create expressive and dynamic interpretations of these compositions.

INDEX WORDS: Black Women Composers, Tania León, Errollyn Wallen, Solo Guitar, Guitar Literature, Women Composers

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The history of the guitar and its music is culturally and sonically diverse. Amidst globalization and social change movements, there are discussions about the lack of racial and gender diversity among those who compose for the guitar. Often, composers who are considered to be canonical for their contributions to the guitar literature are white and male. Composers with more diverse gender and racial identities have historically been excluded from receiving commissions, repeat performances, and a general lack of inclusion within the guitar canon and community. Scholars, activists, and performers are working diligently to make the guitar community more diverse and inclusive of performers and composers with other identities. Those benefiting most from these efforts are Black women composers. Black women composers have made contributions to the guitar literature but have received less notoriety and acclaim for their work. In an effort to champion their incredible guitar compositions and to advocate for Black women composers, this document will serve as a pedagogical analysis and performance guide to the works for guitar by two Black women composers, Errollyn Wallen and Tania León.

Rationale

Black women composers have been writing for the guitar for as long as others have been writing for the instrument. In addition to Errollyn Wallen and Tania León, composers such as Clara Monteith Holland, Courtney Bryan, Eleanor Alberga, Pamela Z, and Jessie Montgomery have written for the guitar in solo and chamber music settings. Their work is important to the guitar repertoire and continues to push the boundaries of both the physical and musical

capabilities of the instrument. This study sets out to fulfill an important need which the need for is more scholarship, analysis, recording, and performance of solo guitar music written by Black women composers.

All of the aforementioned composers deserve similar scholarship analyzing their guitar compositions. Errollyn Wallen and Tania León are only two of many Black women composers to have written and published solo guitar works. They both have been chosen for this study because they have each received numerous accolades and honors in their compositional careers which underscores the excellence of their work and neither has received a dedicated pedagogical analysis or performance guide discussing any of their works for solo guitar. Their compositional styles are incredibly diverse which underscores the depth of artistry and creativity. Wallen and León's nationalistic values and personal histories also represent a vast array of experiences that are important to include within the guitar community. Each have written and published numerous works for solo guitar demonstrating their continued interest in writing for the instrument. Though neither of these composers are guitarists themselves, their guitar music is idiomatic and is well-suited for guitarists interested in performing this groundbreaking contemporary music. This study will focus on four of Wallen's works for solo guitar, *Walking Me to Work*, *Canciones*, *Birthday Portmanteau*, and *Three Ships* and León's works for solo guitar, *Paisanos Semos!* and *Bailarín*.

Purpose of the Study

The literature review will discuss the currently accessible literature and resources as it relates to the lives and work of Black women composers for the guitar through an analysis of the challenges women composers currently face in classical music. A biographical sketch of each Wallen and León and general characteristics of their compositional styles will strengthen the

argument for the inclusion of their compositions within the broader classical guitar repertoire. Throughout the document, the pedagogical analysis and performance guide are presented alongside each other as they inform one another and are largely applicable to anyone interested in learning more about each of these compositions. The pedagogical analysis will assist teachers in determining the prior technical and musical knowledge required to perform each composition. A performance guide is included to assist guitarists who are in search of guidance on how to best perform each of these works. Each of these chapters will continue to emphasize the necessity for this study and future studies that relate to the musical lives of Black women composers broadly.

Methodology

Preparation for this document included the following: creating a brief theoretical analysis of each composition, studying and performing each composition, comparing the various recordings for those of the works where recordings exist, and referencing the limited materials that relate to each composition to create the performance guide and pedagogical analysis.

Delimitations

The scope of this study is limited to pedagogical commentary and performance practices for each of the included compositions. Though it is an important aspect of teaching and performing these works, an extensive theoretical analysis will not be provided in this study.

Review of Literature

Women composers, regardless of their racial or ethnic identities, have always made significant contributions to classical music. “Women’s contributions as composers were largely overlooked for centuries prior to the 20th century”.¹ This statement explains why some research

¹ Kheng K. Koay, *The Kaleidoscope of Women’s Sounds in Music of the Late 20th and Early 21st Centuries*, Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015, 4.

might suggest that women composers have not made substantial contributions to classical music although it is known that composers of all genders have made important and relevant contributions. Overlooking an entire gender's contributions to the literature based primarily on their gender identity explains why there are fewer documents exploring the works of women composers, especially those compositions for guitar.

Kheng K. Koay in *The Kaleidoscope of Women's Sounds in Music of the Late 20th and Early 21st Centuries* wrote about how compounding systems of oppression and a lack of acceptance and explains why many women composers have experienced numerous challenges when navigating musical careers.² These sentiments are not localized to any particular region but are global according to Koay's research. While Koay does draw important conclusions, she fails to acknowledge the complexities of how the other identities that women composers might hold such as disability, sexual, racial, and ethnic identities can also challenge their potential success in the field and why they have been historically overlooked.

Over the last thirty years, some researchers have gone to great lengths to advocate on behalf of women composers and their often ignored personal histories and musical compositions. *Women Composers: The Lost Tradition Found* by Diane Peacock Jezic shares research about the lives of women composers who lived during the eleventh and twelfth centuries and about their compositions. A more recent text, *The Pandora Guide to Women Composers: Britain and the United States 1629-Present*, is a bibliographic text surveying the lives of nearly one hundred prominent women composers. Though some might suggest otherwise, women have been composing music for instruments of all kinds for as long as their male counterparts. There is a continually growing field of research to support this idea.

² Koay, *The Kaleidoscope of Women's Sounds in Music of the Late 20th and Early 21st Centuries*, 4.

In the forward to *Women of Influence in Contemporary Music: Nine American Composers* by Michael K. Slayton, Karin Pendle theorizes why many Black women composers have received less critical acclaim for their artistic pursuits. Pendle suggests that many of the conditions that formally dominated society's treatment of women made it extraordinarily difficult for Black women composers to forge careers in art music.³ It was the prohibitive nature of society that created structures that made it substantially more difficult for Black women composers to obtain success. Prohibitive structures made access nearly impossible for Black women composers to receive commissions and performances of their works, which harkens back to ideas presented by Koay. Though there are noticeable improvements in how our global society has rapidly changed to provide equity for women, there is still much work to be accomplished for true equity to take place in the field.

While conditions for success have improved, the rediscovery of music by what are now considered canonical Black women composers has greatly aided this change in conditions. This change has inspired new areas of research such as this document. A notable rediscovery has been the music of Florence B. Price, the first Black woman to have her work premiered by a major American orchestra.⁴ Scholar Rae Linda Brown discusses how this resurgence of Price's work in *The Heart of a Woman: The Life and Music of Florence B. Price* has lifted the entire body of Black women composers into greater prominence.

³ Michael K. Slayton, *Women of Influence in Contemporary Music: Nine American Composers*, Lanham, Md: Scarecrow Press, 2011, X.
<https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,shib&db=nlebk&AN=350557&site=edslive&cstid=uga1>.

⁴ Rae Linda Brown and Guthrie Ramsey, *The Heart of a Woman: The Life and Music of Florence B. Price*, Music in American Life, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2020, 1.

Additionally, much of this advocacy work has been completed by institutions such as the Center for Black Music Research (CBMR) which is located at Columbia College Chicago. The CBMR is a research institute dedicated to the music of the African diaspora. The research archives housed within the CBMR greatly assisted in the creation of this document. One of the foremost scholars on the lives and music Black women composers, Helen Walker-Hill's research writings are located at the archive. Her research has greatly influenced much of the field of Black women composers.

Helen Walker-Hill produced several books during her life about Black women composers. She briefly references the guitar in two of those books. The first is *Music by Black Women Composers: A Bibliography of Available Scores* which is a bibliography comprised of what was at the time of publishing all of the known musical scores by Black women composers. The text is categorized by instrument with subcategories dedicated to solo and chamber music with two sections for guitar include entries for solo guitar and guitar in chamber music. Another of Walker-Hill's book that includes mention of the guitar, is *From Spirituals to Symphonies: African-American Women Composers and Their Music*. In the text, Walker-Hill, gives context to and supports an argument for the need for research of the music of Black women composers. She briefly interviewed Tania León in her research of this book and though the focus of this text is on women of themselves might identify as African-American, it represents larger narrative around the work of Black women composers.

Mildred Denby Green's *Black Women Composers: A Genesis* shares early research into the music of Black women composers including Florence B. Price and her contemporaries Julia Perry and Margaret Bonds. This text is more akin to an early theoretical analysis of their works and not solely focused on their personal histories. Theoretical analyses, pedagogical and

performance commentary about music by Black women composers are still much needed and are as important as writings of the lived experiences of Black women composers. Fortunately, many Black women composers have been forthcoming in sharing about their lived experiences. In the rest of *Women of Influence in Contemporary Music: Nine American Composers*, Tania León and other composers share memories and details about their lives as composers who are living and working in America. In *Black Women and Music: More than the Blues*, the chapter written by Teresa L. Reed “Black Women in Art Music” tells the story of Black women’s involvement in music in addition to their work as composers.

The recorded history of women as guitarists and composers for the instrument dates back to the beginning of the modern guitar’s origins some six-hundred years ago. This history though often fails to mention the work of women composers for the guitar, especially contemporary women composers of color. Important historic composer-guitarists include Emilia Giuliani Guglielmi and Madame Sydney Pratten, who through the advocacy of some have become more well-known and their music receives some performances today. In 2009, Annette Kruisbrink published an edited volume of guitar works by women composers called, *Guitar Music by Women Composers*. It features original compositions and transcriptions of guitar music by women composers, some popular and some less well-known, but equally as deserving of study. Selected compositions of historic women guitar composers are still performed today as there are a few advocates of their music writing and performing their outstanding compositions.

An example of an increase in scholarship specific to women composers for the guitar is an annotated bibliography called *Guitar Music by Women Composers: An Annotated Catalog* which was compiled by Janna MacAuslan and Kristan Aspen. This annotated bibliography was crucial as it helped to create one of the most comprehensive lists of women composers that existed at

that time and is still one of the more complete resources that exists. Community-generated and crowdsourced resources allow for continual updating and editing which is crucial as the music of women composers continues to be rediscovered. The International Working Group of Women and Music oversees the Archiv Frau Und Musik-Archive of Women in Music International Research Center in Frankfurt, Germany. This particular archive assists and has score holdings for works listed on a resource called Women of the Classical Guitar.com, one of the most complete and up to date lists of works for guitar by women composers. The lists include works for solo guitar, guitar duo, concerti, and other various instrumentations that include the guitar.

While bibliographies and other resources are extremely helpful, recorded music reaches an even larger audience of musicians and non-musicians who are interested in the work of women composers. The primary researcher for the Women of the Classical Guitar database, Heike Matthiesen, independently released *Guitar Ladies: Classical Guitar Music by Women Composers* in 2016 which features works for solo guitar by women composers. Dr. Connie Sheu released *The Woman's Voice: Original Music for Guitar by Female Composers* in 2012 which includes music by historical and living women composers. These recordings show that there is an interest and need for more performances of music by women composers. Several of the works on these albums and similar recordings are sharing many of these works for the first time. Unfortunately, none of these albums feature a composition by a Black women composer. There are very few albums of music only featuring the works for guitar by Black women composers. The absence of music by Black woman composers on recordings similar to these stresses that there is a great need for more scholarship, research, and study of these works. That is not to say that Black women composers for the guitar do not exist as the research shows that they do. Database resources such as Music by Black Composers.com and Guitar Music by Black

Composers.com are vital in sharing works for guitar by Black composers. Resources such as these exist for almost every instrument family focusing specifically on works that may have received less acclaim because of the ethnic, racial, and gender identity of the work's composer.

All of this research demonstrates that although music for guitar by Black women composers is underperformed, it does not mean that there are no Black women to have ever written for solo guitar. Numerous Black women composers have written for the guitar as a solo instrument. This document specifically focuses on six of the works for solo guitar by Errollyn Wallen and Tania León. The goal is to share how two important composers have demonstrated interest in the instrument as it is the assumption of some that Black women composers have no interest in writing for the guitar. Wallen and León are not the only Black women to have produced works for solo guitar. Mikayla Fitzgerald, Mason Bynes, Brittany R. Green, The Honorable Elizabeth A. Baker, and Lauren McCall are some of the many Black Women composers to have produced works for solo guitar. Though their work will not be written about in this document, each of their works should receive continued scholarship and research. Though not every Black women composer to have written for the guitar was mentioned in this literature review, those that have been mentioned does demonstrate that there is a continued lack of access that Black women composers have to guitar performers and commissions which largely prohibits their success in the guitar genre.

CHAPTER 2

ERROLLYN WALLEN: THE BRITISH RENAISSANCE WOMAN

In an interview for *Gramophone Magazine*, Pwyll ap Siôn says this about Errollyn Wallen, “An influential figure and inspirational role model for young musicians, respected and admired by fellow composers and performers, and recognized by the pillars of the British musical establishment, Errollyn Wallen is a leading figure in today’s classical music world.”¹ Siôn’s summation of Errollyn Wallen’s life beautifully describes the impact of her work and how important her contributions are to classical music

Errollyn Wallen was born on April 10, 1958² in the commonwealth of Belize, but only lived there for only a few years. As a child, Wallen emigrated to England with her brother as she and her brother were primarily raised in the care of her aunt and uncle. She has always maintained a close relationship with Belize regardless of where she has lived and pays homage to Belize in many of her compositions. Music has always been an important part of Wallen’s life as she was exposed to a variety of musical styles and genres from a very young age. She would go on to say that exposure to music early on in her life greatly influenced her compositional language and voice.³ Though no one else in Wallen’s family was musically trained, she received training and guidance in classical music as an adolescent. Wallen studied composition at Goldsmith’s College, King’s College London, and King’s College at the University of

¹ Pwyll ap Sion, “Errollyn Wallen: Pwyll Ap Sion Profiles the British-Caribbean Composer Who’s a True Force to Be Reckoned with and Has Found Her Own Path in Music,” *Gramophone*, December 2020, Gale General OneFile.

² “Errollyn Wallen Biography,” accessed July 14, 2021, <https://www.errollynwallen.com/biography>.

³ Errollyn Wallen “Cello Concerto”, Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, November 4, 2020, Video interview and musical performance, 9:58, <https://youtu.be/v7AJc6LXEL8>.

Cambridge. Wallen has also lived around the world including in New York City, studying dance and composition at the Dance Theatre of Harlem.

Errollyn Wallen has always been an artist. She is a pianist by training, and in the beginning of her professional career performed with bands across many genres including pop, jazz, metal, and a variety of others. She has said that experimenting with other genres and styles of music led her to composition. Part of her experimentation also led her to start her ensemble, Ensemble X⁴ whose motto is, “We don’t break down boundaries in music...we don’t see any.”⁵ From there she continued to create her own path in classical music, a genre often prohibitive for women identifying classical musicians of color. Wallen has continued to be an advocate for the inclusion of Black women musicians in the field saying that everyone should be entitled to and have access to classical music.⁶

Errollyn Wallen is the recipient of numerous awards and accolades, some of which she has been the first Black women recipient. In 1998, Wallen became the first Black woman to have her work performed at the BBC Proms in the event’s then 103-year history. Her work has been to outer space on NASA’s STS 115 mission and has been featured as part of the 2012 London Paralympic Games.⁷ In 2020, Wallen was appointed Commander of the Order of the British

⁴ Errollyn Wallen, “Errollyn Wallen,” Interview by Anita Awbi. *M Magazine*, 01 2015, <https://www.prsformusic.com/m-magazine/features/interview-errollyn-wallen/>.

⁵ “Errollyn Wallen Biography,” accessed July 14, 2021, <https://www.errollynwallen.com/biography>.

⁶ Errollyn Wallen, “Traditions should change” says Proms composer Errollyn Wallen” interview by Vincent Dowd, September 12, 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/news/entertainment-arts-54115638>.

⁷ Wallen, “Errollyn Wallen Biography”.

Empire and received the 2020 ISM Distinguished Musician Award.⁸ These awards and achievements not only demonstrate Wallen’s excellence within the field, but also her commitment to creating and sustaining a musical career and life.

Errollyn Wallen’s Compositional Style

On many occasions Errollyn Wallen has been candid about how she has continued to evolve, shape, and create her own compositional language and style. Her compositional language is brave, open, and representative of her character and identity. “To compose is, by definition, to juggle with uncertainties – constantly, between what one hears in one’s head and what one actually writes down, between intent and result, between swagger and insecurity, between chaos and order and certainly, between pleasure and pain.”⁹ Wallen is always trying to balance the desires and wishes of her audience while continuing to meet her own expectations of how she wants her music to sound, balancing numerous musical elements, and how she wants her music to be heard. She accomplishes this by continuing to break her own rules and to allow for great freedom and expression in her music.¹⁰

Errollyn Wallen produces exceptional musical compositions across many styles and genres in addition to continuing to perform her own compositions. Her performances as a singer-songwriter fuse elements of traditional vocal jazz with pianistic gestures that one might only find in the music of canonical piano composers. In her writing she also effortlessly combines folk music, operatic style gestures, and electronic music to create unique and new sounds.

⁸ “Composer Errollyn Wallen CBE announced as recipient of the 2020 ISM Distinguished Musician Award,” Incorporated Society of Musicians, last modified April 24, 2021, <https://www.ism.org/news/errollyn-wallen-cbe-dma-2020>.

⁹ Errollyn Wallen, “Slave to the Rhythm,” *Contemporary Music Review* Vol. 11, Parts 1 and 2. (1994): 293, <https://doi.org/10.1080/07494469400641221>.

¹⁰ Wallen, “Cello Concerto”, 12:00.

One of the predominant features of Wallen's musical language is her rhythmic style and her continual evolution of it. Her experience as a dancer lends itself greatly to the gesture, patterns, and motion that she creates in her rhythms. She once said that for her rhythm is color, pulse, shape, and patterns which carryover from dance and that if she had not chosen to be a composer, she would have likely become a choreographer.¹¹ Her rhythm is underscored by a constant pulsating feeling that challenges the performer to maintain throughout a performance artistically speaking. Her harmonic language constantly shifts between tonality and atonality within the same compositions. There is a timbral variety in her compositional language as well as she composes electroacoustic music in addition to her orchestral settings. Wallen's work is an embodiment of who she is as a person and what she believes most to be true about the world.

Three Ships: Three Miniatures for Solo Guitar

Three Ships: Three Miniatures for Solo Guitar is a set of three short miniatures for late-intermediate and early-advanced solo guitarists. Errollyn Wallen uses song and dance as inspiration to create moments that transcend reality and transport the listener to a far-off place through movement, time, and space. These miniatures are lyrical in nature, almost songlike in such a way that one could imagine someone singing the melodies accompanied by the guitar maybe even being performed nearby a sea or ocean. As an adult, Wallen has spent much of her life composing in and maintaining a lighthouse in northern Scotland in a very remote location. She said that living in the lighthouse and near the sea has a rhythm of life where she finds inspiration from the marine life and surrounding nature.¹² One might assume that her home in

¹¹ Wallen, "Cello Concerto", 8:00.

¹² Wallen, "Cello Concerto", 7:00.

near the sea and love of nature influenced *Three Ships*. Through each these movements Wallen was implying that the journey to a destination is more important than arriving at the destination itself. This is one of the many possible interpretations that could be gleaned from these incredibly exciting three miniatures.

Three Ships: Three Miniatures for Solo Guitar is Errollyn Wallen's first published work for solo guitar. Written in the summer of 1998, this piece was commissioned by the Bath International Guitar Festival with the support of Keller S.A., the manufacturers of Admira Guitars.¹³ The piece was commissioned for use in the Admira Young Guitarist of the Year Competition that was held the same year and was premiered by Gary Ryan at Guildhall in Bath, England on July 27th, 1998.¹⁴ In 2001, Wallen wrote an additional three miniatures that were added to the original which are titled, *Three More Ships*. The entire set of miniatures was recorded and released on October 3rd, 2005 on Tom Kersten's album *Black Venus: New Music for Solo Guitar*¹⁵ by BGS Records. Kerstens is the founder of the International Guitar Festival, an organization in London, England that champions and commissions new works for guitar. The International Guitar Festival has commissioned Wallen to write several works for guitar and Wallen and Kerstens have continued to maintain a close collaborative relationship since this initial recording project.

¹³ Errollyn Wallen, *Three Ships: Three Miniatures for Solo Guitar*, New Music Series 106 (Bath, London: BGS Music Publication, 1998).

¹⁴ Wallen, *Three Ships: Three Miniatures for Solo Guitar*.

¹⁵ Tom Kerstens, *Black Venus: New Music for Guitar*, (British Guitar Society Records, 2005), <https://www.bgsrecords.com/product/black-venus-new-music-guitar/>, CD.

Errollyn Wallen writes that *Three Ships* are, "...my impressions of an imaginary place, an imaginary dance and an imaginary ancient song".¹⁶ Each of the movements represents figments of her imagination which are shared in the naming of each miniature and can be heard in the music. The pieces were kept intentionally simple to, "capture the guitar's innate lyrical properties".¹⁷ The simplicity of these pieces makes them approachable for young guitarists for whom the pieces were originally written and the score was edited by Kerstens to provide fingering suggestions to the guitarist. The titles of the miniatures are "Sailing", "Brio", and "Dark Eye" which come together to create a set of pieces eight minutes in length. A songwriter and performer in her own right, Wallen brings harmonic freedom, expression, and exploration into each of the movements. She uses the entirety of the instrument's timbre, depth, and tone to write these deeply transformative works.

"Sailing"

The shortest of the three movements, "Sailing" is the first miniature in the set. One of the most prevailing features of this piece that is an important interpretative point is Wallen's use of the expression marking *sempre legato*. Her expressive direction refers to how the guitarist should create their musical phrasing and also how they should focus their attention on creating a legato sound between any two melody notes. This style of legato can be difficult to achieve on the guitar. It requires the guitarist to depress a fretted note in the left hand without unintentionally creating an excess string noise or sound between the initial attack of whichever fingers are playing in the left hand. Creating a legato sound on the guitar is also more challenging because both the right and left hand must be involved to make the sound. The right hand attacks the string

¹⁶ Wallen, *Three Ships: Three Miniatures for Solo Guitar*.

¹⁷ Wallen, *Three Ships: Three Miniatures for Solo Guitar*.

to create the sound while the left hand must depress the initial fret. The sound must be sustained until the left finger in the left hand plays the adjacent fret without an additional stroke in the right hand. Legato sounding phrases and passages contribute to the lyricism that Wallen is highlighting and creating in “Sailing”.

The opening phrase of “Sailing” is one of the best examples of how Wallen’s expressed lyricism is to be played on the guitar. In example 1, the first three measures include various moments in which slurring between the notes assists with providing a connected, legato sound. The additional fingerings added to this section includes slurs between any of the notes in mm. 1-6 that can be performed on the same string which assists with creating a truly legato sound. Example 1 was annotated to demonstrate an expressive and artistic expression of this phrase. The bracket at the beginning of m. 1, included by the composer, indicates that the guitarist should play the first two notes with a partial barre covering strings five and six. A barre is a technique and gesture where one of the fingers in the left-hand depresses more than one string at a time. In mm. 1-2, the barre is only needed for the first three beats and should be quickly lifted thereafter.

For beats one, two, and three, those notes should be slurred and should sound as connected as possible. The p above the staff that has been added indicates that the beginning of the phrase should be performed with the thumb in the right-hand. The E to F, performed on string four, should also be performed with a slur. In m. 2, there is a different and expressive fingering that should also be considered in performance. This fingering creates a legato sound between the F and B-flat using a glissando which should be performed with the first finger in the left-hand moving quickly from the first to sixth frets on the sixth string.

Articulation markings are, in large part, how guitarists shape their interpretations as well. It is necessary to acknowledge how Wallen creates opportunities for lyricism and connection without the use of adjacent notes or notes where slurs could be played between the frets. The writing in m. 6 in example 1. is representative of how a legato sound can be achieved without notes that are adjacent to one another on the fretboard. One of the features of the guitar is its ability to use open strings which allow for the guitarist to move between strings and frets in a way that can be played without excess noise. Therefore, m. 6 and the way that it is written allows for the notes to sound as if there is no space between them because of the descending direction of the notes in the melody in conjunction with the open strings.

The musical score for 'Sailing' by Errollyn Wallen, measures 1-7, is presented in three systems. The first system (measures 1-2) is marked *p* and *espressivo, sempre legato*. The second system (measures 3-4) is also marked *p* and includes a *V* marking. The third system (measures 5-7) is marked *cantabile* and includes a *III* marking. The score features various fret numbers (0-4), open strings (indicated by '0'), and slurs. Measure 6 is highlighted with a box.

Example 1. Errollyn Wallen, *Three Ships*, “Sailing”, mm. 1-7

When picturing a fictional place without any additional details, one has to conceive movement and travel as a means of arriving at the fictional destination. In this case, the method and vehicle for travel is a boat which is indicated by the title. Travel often takes place through

motion which Wallen evokes in a rather musical way, constant shifts in meter. This entire miniature is only 25 measures in length, but there are 13 total meter changes within the piece as shifting meter almost every other measure implies an uneasiness or an unsettled feeling that one might experience while sailing. In this movement, the uneasiness is accentuated by different phrase lengths and an asymmetrical placement of phrases because of the absence of any patterns. The changes in meter and phrase length are often sudden and bring a surprise jolt to the sound and motion of a proceeding phrase into an entirely different direction. The harmonic rhythm in this movement is equally paced, since the compound meter that is consistent throughout, helps to maintain the motion and the harmony changing almost every beat.

One theoretical aspect that someone might notice immediately upon studying these pieces is that only one of the miniatures has a designated key signature. In “Sailing” there are some harmonic indications of a potential key signature although Wallen does not indicate a key signature at the beginning of the piece. The first chord in “Sailing” in example 1 is an F major7 chord which is then followed by a B-flat major7th chord. The C major chord in m. 7, a dominant chord in F is an indication of the possibility of F minor or F major being the initial key area. Chords following this initial key area change in rapid succession to a F-sharp major7 chord. There are brief moments in key areas such as E major, and C-sharp minor with the ending being potentially in A minor or E minor, with the E note sounding more final and conclusive. This piece is in A minor though that is not given by the composer. From a performance perspective, identifying and understanding potential key areas helps to understand the form and structure of a composition and can also assist a guitarist in identifying notes within the melody.

There are a few features that might lead one to see that this piece was intended for a student still reinforcing their working knowledge of the fretboard, particularly their knowledge

of the upper frets on the first string. Generally speaking, the melody has very few large intervallic leaps and notes that are beyond the tenth fret of the instrument. Except for few notes, nearly all of this piece can be fingered to be played in either the first or second position. The very last chord of the piece is the only point at which a guitarist would need to depress more than two strings in the fretting hand. Small technical details such as this ending in m. 25, points towards “Sailing” being a piece ideal for an intermediate guitar student.

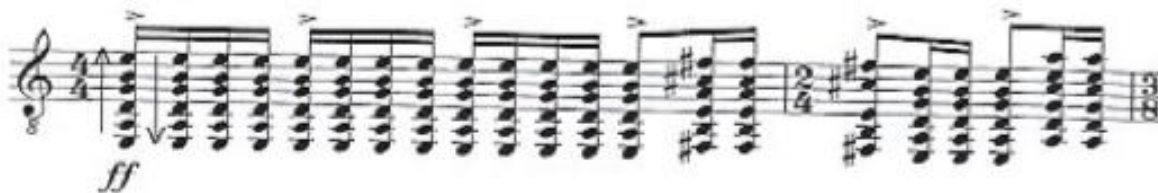
“Brio”

The title “Brio” elicits an entirely different mood than the other, more subdued movements in *Three Ships*. This second movement is a brilliant representation of Wallen’s love of dance and how her compositional language and use of choreographic devices and technique meet on the guitar. Choreographic devices are the techniques and tools used to choreograph dance and movement. Brio means vigorously, very spirited, brilliantly, and with great energy. The score indicates that the movement should be played *con brio*, with intensity, and with tone that is harsher. Wallen indicates that this second movement is to be a dance, likely one that is to be full of spirit and passion. This vibrancy, passion, and spirit also evokes a Spanish sound and style that is maintained throughout the dance.

Wallen has composed “Brio” to be an “ancient dance”. Dance is an integral part of the history of classical music broadly and guitar music as well. In many genres, the guitar is an instrument used to accompany a dancer. Much of the guitar music that accompanies dance features fast repetitive strumming, loud boisterous gestures, and densely composed chords which are elements often found in music composed in a Spanish style. “Brio” has all of these elements. Words such as mysterious, pensive, and metallic can be used to describe the arid atmosphere that Wallen evokes in this composition.

A prominent feature of Wallen's compositional language and also major choreographic device is gesture. In Wallen's music and especially in "Brio" gesture equates to movement, pattern, repetition, and also freedom of expression. The gesture that encompasses all of these elements in this movement is the repetitive alternate strumming pattern. There are endless artistic and expressive possibilities and decisions to be made about how to perform this repetitive gesture, which is incredibly exciting from a performance and pedagogical perspective. The analysis of Wallen's gestures will provide a variety of performance techniques and approaches that can be used for these chords.

In example 2 on beat one in m. 1 Wallen provides directional arrows that are to be interpreted and depending on the interpretation will yield a variety of different results in tone, timbre, and performance technique. The arrow on the first 16th note in m. 1 in example 2 is pointing in an upwards direction. Wallen is communicating that the guitarist should strum down across all of the strings of the guitar, allowing multiple strings to be struck at the same time and that it should not be arpeggiated in any way. The guitarist should strum from the sixth string to the first string. For the arrow pointing in a down direction on the second 16th note in m. 1 in example 2, this means that the strum should be performed starting at the first string and moving towards the sixth string, which is an upward motion that should be performed mostly with movement from the elbow and very little motion in the wrist in the right arm. To perform Wallen's accents which are placed on the down beat of each group of 16th notes in mm. 1 and 2, the movement and stroke of the arm needs to be performed with great force and energy as to accent by way of a louder dynamic level for those accented chords.



Example 2. Errollyn Wallen, *Three Ships*, “Brio”, mm. 1-2

There are two potential ways of performing the alternating repetitive strums as Wallen has written. The first is to, using the thumb and index finger held together as with holding a plectrum or pick, create a pick-like sound. This is done by using the edge of those two nails pressed together to attack the strings of the guitar. Another way to play the strums is to use the right-hand thumb nail to strum across or attack the strings at an angle that is perpendicular to the strings. These performance techniques, which is a crucial musical and gestural element of “Brio” would be most suitable with for a student with less familiarity and technical facility of the rasgueado. The rasgueado is a gesture that is far more expressive and artistic and lends itself well to this piece.

The rasgueado technique for “Brio” should be considered as well because of the inherent tone, timbre, and dynamic capabilities of the gesture better encapsulate and demonstrate how dance has such a strong influence and place within this movement. A rasgueado, “...uses only one finger for each strum, with multiple strums performed successively by multiple fingers, this creating rhythmical embellishment.”¹⁸ A more conventional technique for performing the rasgueado would be to use the right-hand fingers to make the fan-like gesture or motion. In

¹⁸ Seth F. Josel and Ming Tsao, *The Techniques of Guitar Playing*, Bärenreiter, 70.

guitar notation, composers and guitarists use a specific lettering system for shorthand to denote the fingers. They are the following: thumb-p, index-i, middle-m, ring-a, little finger-c. These are based on the Spanish names. Table 1 includes the Spanish name for each of the fingers.

Spanish Finger Name	Right-Hand Finger	Right-Hand Letter
pulgar	thumb	p
índice	index	i
medeo	middle	m
anular	ring	a
meñique	little finger	c

Table 1: Right-Hand Lettering System for Guitar

To perform the chords in “Brio” as a rasgueado, it should be performed with a (a-m-i-p) or (c-a-m-i-p) pattern. The rasgueado, broadly speaking, has the ability to elicit an auditory and visual excitement and movement that is in some ways reminiscent of a dance. There is a careful choreography of the hands and fingers that as a lover of dance, Wallen might have a great appreciation for and understanding of in relation to this movement of *Three Ships*. When performing the rasgueado, the guitarist has the ability to control the volume, attack, and tone of each individual finger as opposed to a strumming gesture where those elements do not change as often.

Since “Brio” is indicative of brilliant and bright sounds, the tone of this piece should be closer to the bridge of the guitar producing a ponticello tone. A fortissimo dynamic level should be maintained throughout as well. Performing the rasgueado in this way is made more

approachable as the consistent left hand barre chord shapes create opportunities for the rasgueado gesture. Example 2 demonstrates how the E minor7 to F-sharp minor7 chord change when coupled with a rasgueado make this gesture approachable and very musical in terms of this gesture being reminiscent of a dance.

Unlike the other movements, “Brio” is not through-composed and has a structure that exists in the form of three sections with some repeating phrases and musical content. There are indications of the changes in tonality, mood, rhythm, and harmony to signal these different sections within the miniature. The first section is mm.1-15 and is mostly composed of fast, repeated chords and constantly shifting meters that are often jarring and sound disjunct and almost nothing as one might imagine a dance such as this to sound like although it is imaginary. Wallen uses the second section, mm. 16-31, to continue shifting meters while expressing some of the more melodic moment of the piece. The third and final section, m. 32 to the end, employs many of the same characteristics of the first section with little change and maintains this until the end of the miniature.

There are additional moments throughout the movement where accents and embellishments are elements of compositional language. One of these elements is in example 3 in mm. 22-24 where on last two 16th notes of the guitarist plays a chord in the third position and then needs to shift using a glissando to the 12th, 14th, and 15th frets respectively. In addition to the glissandi between the notes, Wallen has marked that they should be accented and that the higher note should be played with a staccato. What is interesting about this part of the composition is the extraneous physical movement that when watching a guitarist perform this gesture is visually interesting to the eye and noticeable. Being that gesture is a large part of Wallen’s compositional

voice, this is an excellent example of how gesture is a part of the physical movement of dance and an element of her music.

There is something else in this miniature about the accents that should be interpreted beyond just the performance of the piece. Throughout all of the sections, the repeated use of accents can be interpreted as specific steps or gestures within the dance. The interpretation of these accents as a guitarist is that Wallen is alluding to the idea of the guitarist as the dancer since the guitarist is the one creating all of the motion and movement within the short piece. Situating the guitarist as the dancer within the piece allows for the guitarist to evoke motions and gestures and postures that might mirror how a dancer would approach a dance such as “Brio”.



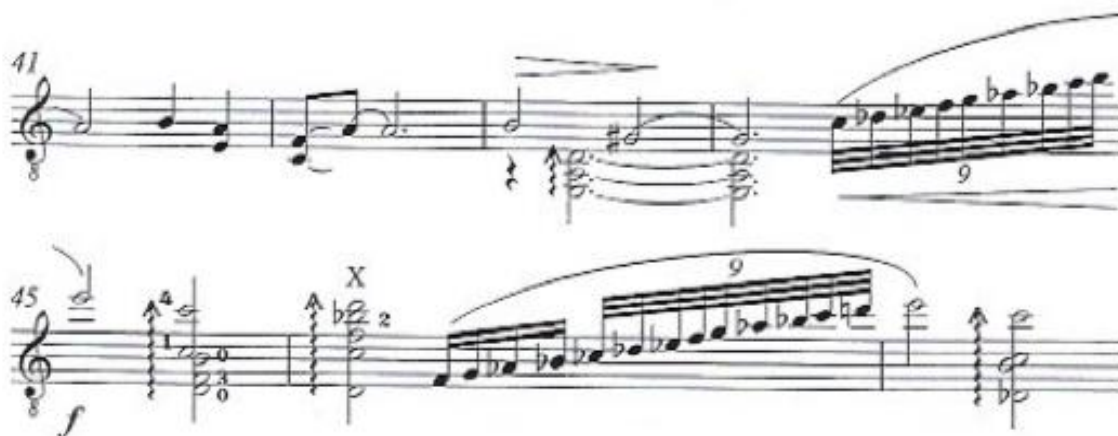
Example 3. Errollyn Wallen, *Three Ships*, “Brio”, mm. 22-24

Since dance is about movement broadly speaking, Wallen’s use of quickly shifting chords across the fretboard coupled with the rasgueado technique demonstrated in example 2 are additional ways in which Wallen situates the guitarists as the dancer as these movements are very energetic, boisterous, and coordinated. If the guitarist were to visualize themselves as a dancer, creating this imaginary dance, then repeating the theme indicates the importance of that material and solidifies Wallen’s ideas about how the guitarist is to interact with the dance as the dancer and not solely as the accompanist.

“Dark Eye”

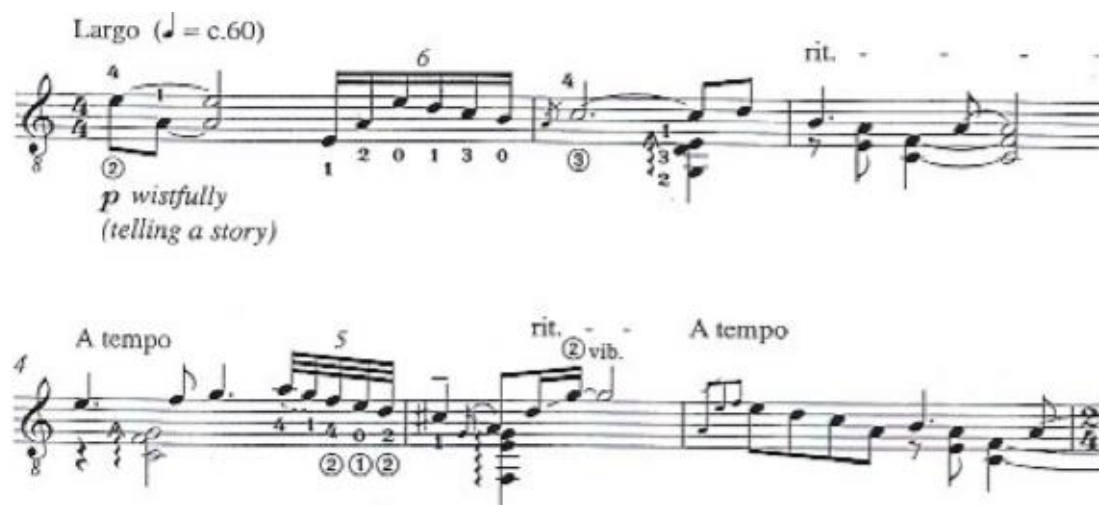
“Dark Eye” is the third and final miniature in *Three Ships*. On Kersten’s recording, “Dark Eye” is the last miniature as *Three More Ships* is performed before this movement which demonstrates the different order in which this piece can be performed. This miniature is about an imaginary song which can be described as slow, meditative, dissonant, and dark. Wallen guides the guitarist to play the song wistfully whilst attempting to tell a story and maintain the essence of a nondescript ancient song. The harmonic and melodic structure of “Dark Eye” is much freer than what one might find in a song where there are more repeated patterns and arrangements. Instead of a repetition has a compositional technique, each phrase is marked by a different tone, mood, theme, and expressive direction leaving no two sections the same.

Example 4 shows the variety of compositional techniques and gestures that are found throughout the movement. Within this example Wallen includes fast virtuosic scalar passages which are preceded and followed by more harmonically varied chords. The chords in mm. 45-46 are different from those previously discussed in “Brio” as these are to be arpeggiated so that each note is clearly heard and to create a sound where the strings ring out across one another in the process. This stroke is to be performed with the right-hand thumb attacking or moving across the strings in a direction that is perpendicular to the strings. This as an example of some of Wallen’s most idiomatic writing for the instrument as it shows her understanding of how different types of chords can be performed on the guitar. Since these gestures and phrases are as idiomatic as they are, the movement feels rhapsodic where sections seem to almost be improvised.



Example 4. Errollyn Wallen, *Three Ships*, “Dark Eye”, mm. 41-47

There are elements that Wallen does write in this movement that give some guidance to the guitarist in relation to how the melody and harmonic interact with one another. “Dark Eye” is the only movement with a given key signature that is explicitly provided at the beginning of the composition, A minor. Though there are occasional passing and neighboring tones in mm.1-3, the chord changes move from A minor to C, C in 2nd inversion, A minor, and the F major in 2nd inversion which are firm indications of A minor as exemplified in example 5. These sorts of indications can be crucial for some interpretive decisions, particularly those involving identifying melodic notes which can often be more challenging to hear when many notes are being performed simultaneously as they often are on the guitar.



Example 5. Errollyn Wallen, *Three Ships*, “Dark Eye”, mm. 1-6

The more rhapsodic and fantasy-like structure and gesture of this piece make it deeply moving as a song. Identifying how all of those gestures and qualities meet can provide a much more in-depth analysis and understanding of the piece. An example of the types of gestures that are freer and improvisational in nature are the embellishments which in songs are usually fleeting and ephemeral in terms of the impression they leave on both the guitarist and listener. These embellishments can also be seen as an attempt to mimic how some phrases and techniques can be sung. Grace notes in m. 6 in example 5 mimics the passing tones that a singer improvises while singing when moving between phrases. The scalar passages in “Dark Eye” in example 4 are all proceeded and followed by long tones and harmonies with five or six notes. If these scales were to be sung, they might be more tense as that is often the apex of a phrase. These scales mimic melismatic moments in a song where a singer might need to quickly pronounce several words in a short length of time. The passages in example 4 could also mirror more melismatic gestures that require great flexibility and technique for vocalists. As a guitarist, performing these scales should be very legato with a variety of slurring and fingerings without unnecessary shifts.

It is the job of the guitarist to provide continuity between the contrasting or more disjunct sections of this piece and building and creating the story will help with this. Careful attention must also be paid to the constantly changing time signatures and meters. In an effort to adhere to those meter changes, a guitarist might be tempted to play faster than what is marked or asked. “Dark Eye” is an example wherein the initial expression marking is *largo* in example 5, and during the first ten measures there are directions to *ritard*, adjust back to a tempo a number of times before the tempo of the piece increases to 70 beats per minute which is 10 beats more than the initially stated tempo.

There are many other pedagogical aspects to this piece that lends it to be included as a set piece for a competition or to being a part of a university level guitar curriculum. *Three Ships: Three Miniatures for Solo Guitar* is a piece ideally for a late-intermediate to early-advanced guitar student though it would also be an exciting piece for a guitarist of any level. Wallen is very detailed and provides great direction about how to perform the piece while leaving opportunities for interpretation and self-expression.

Canciones

Canciones is one of Errollyn Wallen’s longer and more expansive works for solo guitar as it explores the art of song and its relationship to the guitar across three distinct and varied movements. In Spanish, *canciones* translates to songs. Songs are a very prominent musical form and very popular within the guitar repertoire. Each movement showcases Wallen’s creativity as a songwriter and performer and how those things influence her writing for the guitar. While the movements work together, they also each have the ability to stand alone as independent musical compositions and could be performed as such should a guitarist choose to do so. *Canciones* is an outstanding piece for the guitar and should be considered an essential pedagogical addition to

any university guitar curriculum. It was commissioned by the International Guitar Festival in London and was premiered by Tom Kerstens in 2008.¹⁹ Beyond the premiere performance of *Canciones*, it has yet to be recorded.

Canciones is a three movement work for solo guitar. The increase in tempo, and in harmonic and melodic activity as the movements progress in addition to the repeated thematic material makes this entire piece very cohesive and well-suited for the guitar. Wallen provides opportunities for the guitarist to create their own widely varied interpretation of *Canciones* as she has not provided any additional information about the creation or context of the movements. The guitar's ability to support both melodically and harmonically while also accompanying makes the instrument ideal to accompany a singer. The use of the song form across the three movements is interesting and might pose a few questions for the guitarist that could ultimately have some influence on the interpretation. The first question might be about if these *Canciones* are to be an accompaniment to another instrument or if they are to be contextualized as a setting of songs without words. Secondly, if these are not songs without words, are there words or lyrics that are to be interpreted along with these songs. It is possible that Wallen has left these questions unanswered to allow the guitarist an opportunity to draw such conclusions for their performance. As will be discussed, *Canciones* is a wonderful set of pieces that are pedagogically sound and should be used in educational settings. Each movement has broad technical aspects that for the appropriate student, could serve as a meaningful and important educational and artistic opportunity.

¹⁹ Errollyn Wallen, *Canciones*, Edition Peters, 2008.

“Cancion I”

The first movement of *Canciones* is composed of sporadic and diverging ideas that are connected to one another by brief melodic references from previous material across the entire movement. Each of these contrasting sections highlights a different fundamental guitar technique. Some of these techniques would be more appropriate for an advanced guitar student and someone who has a lot of technical facility over the guitar. An expressive and artistic performance of this movement creates connection and continuity between the different elements of Wallen’s compositional voice.

The opening of the movement is reminiscent of an overture and is to be performed at a stately, moderate pace. One of the elements that contributes to this pace is the meter shifts in the opening phrase. The time signature shifts three times in the first ten measures from 3/2 to 2/2 to 3/2 as demonstrated in example 6. Another element that Wallen includes that impacts the opening statement of the piece is the suggestion that the guitarist should play in a ‘noble’ manner. It has a noble sound because of Wallen’s use of mostly inverted triads producing a declamatory sound in the opening. The remaining material can be performed in such a way that allows for as little shift or movement between the chords as possible or that has close voice leading. Guitarists should work to create an as legato and as connected sound as possible between the chords. The primary way to do this is create left hand fingerings that create as few position shifts as possible. These chords will need to be performed in the upper positions of the guitar until m. 7 or m. 8 in order to maintain this sense of connection between the chords.



Example 6. Errollyn Wallen, *Canciones*, “Cancion I”, mm. 1-13

The most drastic thematic and technical change takes place in m. 10 where it is marked faster as the tempo is now quarter note equals 130 beats per minute. Very little, if any, of the melodic material between these changes in mood or harmony remain from the opening theme, meaning that identifying how the sections are to connect with each other is something the guitarist needs to craft in an artistic way. A method of creating connection between these two types of material, one should maintain the same tone which is more of a neutral tone in terms of nail attack and placement on the guitar.

Another instance where two diverging ideas or techniques are written in quick succession is in example 7 in mm. 59-65. During this section the guitarist starts by playing double stops then moves to ascending and descending scales to separated and arpeggiated broken chords. Transitioning between these three very technically different might be challenging for some students. In order to maintain balance and continuity between the differing ideas the guitarist should continue with all of the gestures and abstain from including any expressive elements such as rubato that might make performing the gestures even more difficult.



Example 7. Errollyn Wallen, *Canciones*, “Cancion I”, mm. 55-66

Maintaining a consistent tempo across scalar figures is also challenging. The scalar passages in mm. 60-64 in is one of those instances. Choosing the appropriate position on the guitar to perform this passage will aid in maintaining a consistent tempo throughout though there are potentially unnatural string crossings to identify in the right hand. This passage should be performed at the sixth position as this position is most approachable and assists in preparation of the upcoming material making the change to m. 65 closer to the current position in mm. 63-64. Another excerpt of the piece that might also be challenging is mm. 90-92 in example 8.



Example 8. Errollyn Wallen, *Canciones*, “Cancion I”, mm. 89-92

In mm. 90-92 each of the downbeats are at intervals that are a sixth apart from one another. The second eighth note of each beat is a minor third down or major fourth up from the

previous two notes, which also happens to be the root note of each of the chords. The likely solution to performing this section would be to start at the eleventh position and then continue shifting down until the desired position for the upcoming section. Fingering positions always have a great impact on the sound and comfort of the guitarist. Connections or gestures that are more legato with slurs and open strings will greatly assist in ensuring that all of the different ideas within the movement have a connection to one another.

The various types of technical elements in this movement are idiomatic to the guitar which further supports the idea that this piece should be an essential part of the essential guitar repertoire. In mm. 1-10 it demonstrates how the basis for a lot of harmony, triads, can be so beautifully written on the instrument when inverted to make for close voice leading. The previously discussed scalar passages are such an important aspect of the guitar repertoire. Adequate voice separation and highlighting the various melodic tones should be the focus of this movement from a pedagogical perspective. There are moments where a student might need assistance deciding which notes are to be considered a part of the melody and which are not. This piece creates a between challenging chords in m. 48, long and fast scales at m. 60, and other important thematic material that an intermediate to advanced level guitar student would be able to perform.

“Cancion II”

Errollyn Wallen has spoken about her greatest compositional influence saying that, “My role model was J.S. Bach – for his music and his attitude to hard work...”²⁰. The inspiration of J.S. Bach in this movement can be seen in example 9 as Wallen’s opening theme of an

²⁰ Jessica Duchon, “Errollyn Wallen’s ‘Anon’: Manon Lescaut for the 21st Century,” *Independent*, July 21, 2014, <https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/theatre-dance/features/errollyn-wallen-s-anon-manon-lescaut-21st-century-9619708.html>.

arpeggiated D minor chord closely mirrors the opening of many of Bach's compositions literally and figuratively. To achieve a legato sound, all of these notes should be played across multiple strings to allow for the sounds produced by the strings to ring over one another.



Example 9. Errollyn Wallen, *Canciones*, “Cancion II”, mm. 1-4

In the opening, Wallen references J.S. Bach's style of melodic writing to produce several phrases that sound almost Baroque in style. Another example of that references the Baroque contrapuntal style begins in m. 20, which is a recapitulation from mm. 1-20. In m. 20 in example 10 there is an A on the 7th beat which is an octave above the G. The A should be played with a rest stroke a finger in the right hand. Performing this note with the a finger will allow the guitarist to accentuate that note since it is an important part of the melody. This G is a lower escape tone and not a part of either of the chords which are in this measure, D minor of B flat major. The D in the top voice is the beginning is in the style of counterpoint writing where two voices with differing rhythm and melody are presented at the same time. This pattern which moves between A and D in the top voice changes again in m. 24. Not only do the notes in the counterpoint change, but the rhythm also changes as a 2 against 3 pattern is performed.



Example 10. Errollyn Wallen, *Canciones*, “Cancion II”, mm. 20-26

Familiarity with Bach’s counterpoint writing and identifying elements of that style of writing within *Canciones* greatly impacts a variety of decisions that need to be made for guitarists in performing this piece. This could also serve as an important pedagogical moment for a teacher to demonstrate how counterpoint style writing is composed in contemporary music. The section in example 10 with the counterpoint style writing is a section where balancing the volume of the sound in the various fingers in the plucking hand to make sure that neither part of the melody is either too loud or too soft is going to be what is most important to focus on as a guitarist. All of the notes in the top voice should be performed with the a finger using a rest stroke technique as that provides the necessary control needed for this section. Tone, often impacted by the position of attack of the nails in right hand, should be considered as there are tones that are more artistic and expressive for this movement.

There are some technical challenges in this section, in addition to any musical challenges or techniques that might arise. In m. 24 in example 10 the left-hand notes and fingerings cover two octaves on the guitar. The E-flat to F are large intervals on the guitar that would need to be played at the 11th position as that is the only place where this large of an interval would be manageable or comfortable to play on the instrument while maintaining the written note

duration. Larger intervals can be difficult to perform on the guitar if the intervals span across many frets horizontally. Not only would this large of an interval be a challenge, but also this rhythm might be difficult since Wallen's use of ties displace various notes and how each of the voices in the counterpoint interacts with each other.

Example 11. Errollyn Wallen, *Canciones*, “Cancion II”, mm. 49-54

In mm. 49-53 in example 11, the activity in the two voices changes. Instead of placing the sustained note in the top voice, the sustained note is in the second or lower voice while the more active voice is placed in the top as these passages are more scalar with a variety of small chromatic six-note figures existing within the same phrase. Within the six-note gestures every group of three notes descends with the first beat of that grouping either being an upper or lower neighbor tone with the proceeding downbeat. This is yet another captivating moment in Wallen's writing as it changes and presents something new to the piece.

“Moto perpetuo”

“Moto perpetuo” is the third movement of *Canciones* and describes a piece where, “figuration is persistently maintained”²¹ and where the concept of perpetual motion the primary expressive and technical element. The name is also an indication that the piece will include fast, repetitive figures and gestures. To demonstrate how to attain certain skills that can be acquired in this piece, practice exercises have been provided to help guitarists understand how to create isolated practice exercise for concepts and skills that should be mastered and that are within the piece.

The entire first section of this movement is various groupings and figurations of sixteenth notes that need to be maintained with a steady tempo across the constant changes in meter which alternate between 3/4, 6/16, 7/16, and 11/16 as demonstrated in example 12. Shaping and creating an interpretation for a phrase such as this primarily involves identifying how expression can be included in this section. Expression partially involves placement of accents. Though Wallen does not place accents in any of the single-line melodic material in this movement, one should use the patterns of strong and weak beats to include accents on the first 16th note of each grouping. Her grouping of the 16th notes as shown in example 12 also supports the idea. Understanding how subdivisions influence accents and articulations across changing meters is an important aspect of this piece. These are interpretative elements especially in a movement such as this where the majority of the melodic material is made up of a single line that are important to identify. This further supports the notion that the rhythm and meter are largely the focus of

²¹ Michael Tilmouth, “Moto Perpetuo” (Oxford University Press, 2001), <https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.19224>.

this movement and will need to be an important point of practice and preparation for some guitarists.



Example 12. Errollyn Wallen, *Canciones*, “Moto Perpetuo”, mm. 1-4

Maintaining perpetual motion and a sense of rhythmic consistency requires skills that can be acquired through scales practice exercise similar to that in examples 13 and 14. The following practice exercises have been included as an example of the types of practice exercises that can be created in order to practice how to create and maintain perpetual motion in the context of this movement. Important pedagogical focuses for this piece are speed and consistency.

The practice demonstration in example 13 is a regrouping of mm. 1-4. Small adjustments were made to the groups of 16th notes so that they could be presented in 4/4. Writing the exercises in 4/4 time regroups mm. 1-4 so that it is easier to practice and read. In example 13 all of the notes are to be played on the open 6th string E. This exercise is on the 6th string only so that the guitarist can practice proper right-hand positioning, technique, and form in the right hand for only one string at a time. Cross-string movements and adjustments have been written in example 14. To practice maintaining perpetual motion and in performance of the piece, guitarists should use alternating i and m strokes in the right hand. For example 13 and for any notes played on the 6th string, the guitarist should play these notes with a free stroke, a stroke where the fingers do not rest on the strings beneath them after the initial attack. On other strings, guitarists might choose to alternate between free and rest strokes where it is appropriate. The accents in the

are written to suggest how accents and similar articulations should be performed in the sections such as this throughout the movement. Rests have been included in example 13 for two reasons. The first reason is that it maintains most of the original 16th note grouping in the order that Wallen wrote them. The other reason and also a benefit of including the rests is that it provides a stopping point or point of reset within the exercise to reassess between each repetition. Guitarists should practice the exercise continuously, varying the tempo to practice motion at different speeds.



Example 13. Demonstration Practice Exercise

There is one primary difference between the exercise provided in example 13 and the one provided in example 14. The difference is that in example 14 some of the notes have been moved beyond the 6th string to the 4th string. Quickly shifting between and across strings in the right hand will change the approach and attack as well as the stroke in going from free stroke to potentially rest stroke.



Example 14. Demonstration Practice Exercise

There are numerous variables that can be altered to create practice exercise like those in example 13 and 14. One of these variables could be practicing changing tone and attack, going from a more ponticello tone that is harsher and provides more tension in the strings to a more muted *tasto* sound. A guitarist could also practice changing the volume from beat to beat or between each measure to hear and notice the differences between the beats. These are examples of how a guitarist could create practice exercises to help learn and master the various technical elements of the movement.

The majority of the melodic material in “Moto perpetuo” mirrors the melodic and rhythmic content found in example 12 with the exception of a drastic change that takes place a m. 49 and example 15. The harmonic content of this section is more chordal and with less melodic material that is made up of repetitive cells of notes. This new material beginning at m. 49 in example 15 starts with an A Major and eventually finishes on a B minor7 chord. Much of this section is composed of the melodic material as demonstrated in example 15, with various harmonic changes and passages. Some of the melodic material that completes this movement is similar to what was presented in example 12 with the exception of the inclusion of a strumming technique used in m. 102 on strings 4, 5, 6 as seen in example 16. Though it is not indicated, this same material appears at m. 110, m. 115, m. 128, and m. 129 which likely means that each time this appears, the guitarist should use that same strumming technique of the thumb strumming across the strings with alternating strokes.



Example 15. Errollyn Wallen, *Canciones*, “Moto perpetuo”, mm. 49-51



Example 16. Errollyn Wallen, *Canciones*, “Moto perpetuo”, mm. 101-102

Whether it be the variety of technical elements such as the repetitive perpetual figures in “Moto perpetuo”, contrapuntal and legato writing in “Cancion II”, or the chordal variety in the first movement. *Canciones* is an extraordinary composition and deserves to be added to the repertoire of any guitarist. In a pedagogical setting, this piece would be ideal for a student who is either late-intermediate or early advanced and who is ready to perform a multi-movement work that is substantial in length since this piece is nearly ten minutes long. *Canciones* is a necessary contribution to the guitar repertoire that should be recorded as well. A premiere recording of *Canciones* and of Wallen’s other yet to be recorded works would not only serve as necessary contributions to contemporary recorded music, but as a great opportunity for others to advocate for greater inclusion of works by Black women composers in the guitar literature as the guitar compositions by many Black women composers are often underperformed and not recorded.

Walking Me to Work

Walking Me to Work is a simple and powerful composition for solo guitar that in only three minutes uses the inspiration of a short poem to evoke feelings about movement and labor. As with many of her other works for solo guitar, Wallen was commissioned to write *Walking Me to Work* by the International Guitar Festival in London, England in honor of the 2002 edition of

the festival. Tom Kerstens premiered the work in 2002 and later recorded it for his album *danza! The Music of Dance* which was released on June 15, 2013 on BGS Records.²²

Much of the power and significance of this composition comes from the brief poem that was included in the score notes and is also below. Since Wallen does not include any attribution for the poem, it can be assumed that she wrote the poem. The poem reads:

I'm gonna walk me to work
Through the Field
'Cross the Bridge
Gonna Lay Down my Tools
By the railroad track²³

This poem is that a statement about the independence and defiance that one can be emboldened with when working. The interpretation in this document connects lines within the poem to phrases of the music.

The first connection and perhaps what is believed to be the most important connection between the melodic material and the poem is between the first line, "I'm gonna walk me to Work"²⁴, and mm. 1-11 in the music, an excerpt of mm. 1-5 available in example 17. The initial 11 measures of *Walking Me to Work* includes a statement of the primary theme and the extension of the theme. The next line, "through the fields"²⁵ is represented by mm. 12-19 as the music here

²² Tom Kerstens, Liner notes to *danza! The Music of Dance*. CD. British Guitar Society Records, BGS114, <https://www.bgsrecords.com/product/danza-music-dance/>. 2003, CD.

²³ Errollyn Wallen, *Walking Me to Work* (Edition Peters, 2003).

²⁴ Wallen, *Walking Me to Work*.

²⁵ Wallen, *Walking Me to Work*.

is the first statement of the theme with included harmonic support. “Cross the bridge”²⁶ is a line that implies change, or distance, or motion as bridges are used as connection points to a destination which is what mm. 20-26 do in the music. This phrase is the only one in the music where the primary theme is not stated so this break in the music from that material is a connection point. In m. 31 the sudden inclusion of the slap gesture, which will be discussed below beautifully mirrors the imagery portrayed by the phrase from the poem “Gonna Lay Down my tools”²⁷ as the metallic sound of a string slap most nearly sounds like what it might sound like for someone to drop their heavy working tools once arriving to work. The final line in the poem, “by the railroad track”²⁸ is an addendum or coda almost in the music which is represented by mm. 35-39 as this is an ending of the music. In addition to the inspiration of this piece being mirrored in this poem, understanding Wallen’s love of song and lyricism in her music could lead one to believe that this poem is or was also set to song.

Line from Poem	Measures in Music
I’m gonna walk me to work	mm. 1-11
Through the fields	mm. 12-19
Cross the bridge	mm. 20-26
Gonna lay down my tools	mm. 27-34
By the railroad track	mm. 35-39

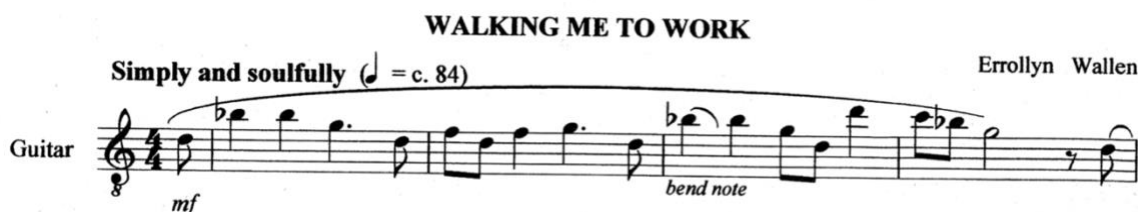
Table 2: *Walking Me to Work* Poem and Music Connection

²⁶ Wallen, *Walking Me to Work*.

²⁷ Wallen, *Walking Me to Work*.

²⁸ Wallen, *Walking Me to Work*.

Simple and soulful are the two words that Wallen uses to describe *Walking Me to Work* and are also her expressive performance directions which is most nearly a reference to the primary theme in example 17. The single line melody with a soulful flair serves as a meaningful foundation for this entire composition. In m. 3 in example 17, beneath the B-flat, Wallen indicates that the guitarist is to bend the note. Since this note would either be performed on either the first or second string, the guitarist should bend the string in an upward direction. The distance or how far the string should be bent is to be determined by the guitarist although it is not uncommon for the composer to indicate how far to bend the string or what tone should be produced as a result of the string bend. The guitarist should bend the string to produce a tone that is a quarter tone higher than the notated pitch. It is an unexpected welcome in what might otherwise be considered a very simple melody and is the very essence of soul conceived in *Walking Me to Work*.



Example 17. Errollyn Wallen, *Walking Me to Work*, mm. 1-5

The harmonic support described earlier begins in m. 12 and is composed of primarily E minor chords with the primary theme added on top as the melody. The writing of notes that are one semitone apart, B and B-flat, sounds as if the notes are clashing against one another like one might hear in blues or jazz music. Though the B-flat is a part of the melody, it should be accented along with the other melody notes with an m or a rest stroke fingering.



Example 18. Errollyn Wallen, *Walking Me to Work*, mm. 11-14

Throughout the entire composition, there is only one phrase where the primary theme is not at the focus of the pitch material and that is in the phrase that begins at m. 20 in example 19. This section is more different both rhythmically and melodically from the rest of the piece and the rhythmic variation in m. 20 includes the sixteenth notes that are written on a weak beat which is then accompanied by a dotted eighth, 32nd note group to be played as a triplet. The figure on the fourth beat almost sound as though they are embellishments and sound almost improvised in nature.



Example 19. Errollyn Wallen, *Walking Me to Work*, mm. 19-22

Extended technical gestures are a staple in Wallen's writing for the guitar and provide elements of surprise within her more lyrical writing. It makes the piece unique and is from a pedagogical standpoint, provide opportunities to teach students about the different extended technical gestures that are often in contemporary guitar music. One example of this is that in *Walking Me to Work* Wallen requires the guitarist to "slap" the guitar strings. What makes the

performance of this gesture even more difficult is the Wallen writes that the slap in moments in the music where multiple notes are to be played either before or after the slap which can be seen in example 20.



Example 20. Errollyn Wallen, *Walking Me to Work*, mm. 31-34

Notation is often a limitation in the communication of extended techniques as not every gesture has an already created symbol and not every composer feels as though creating an entirely new symbol for one gesture is appropriate. Symbols assist in communicating location, duration, and even tone but in the case of the slap that Wallen has composed, there is not a widely used symbol to represent a slap therefore she indicates the gesture by placing slap above the staff in example 21. The lack of a symbol leaves room for ambiguity in the slap as it is unclear as to the duration of the slap and how the slap is to be performed. In the annotated example below, it has been indicated the where in the music it should be performed, with the arrows, and duration of each of the slaps should be a 16th note. On the premiere recording, Kerstens plays the slap where indicated with the arrow in example 21. The sound produces with this gesture sounds like a thumb slap.



Example 21. Errollyn Wallen, *Walking Me to Work*, mm. 31-34 with annotations

The thumb slap is a gesture and technique where the right-hand thumb briefly slaps the guitar strings. This gesture, for this piece, would be played exclusively on the bass strings and is made using some combination of the wrist and elbow working with one another to produce the desired sound. Kerstens does not play the treble strings on the recording, likely due to the difficulty of performing both a slap and pluck in the right hand at the same time. The motion is very quick and allows for the guitarist to return to playing sooner than if they had taken away their entire hand from playing position. During this motion, when the thumb hits the strings, it applies a slight amount of pressure which depresses the strings against the metal frets creating the slapping noise or sound that is metallic sounding and fairly harsh to the ear. The thumb slap requires the guitarist to pluck and slap almost simultaneously and without space between the gestures.

Walking Me to Work is a powerful, yet brief work about the journey of joy and despair and what it means to continue to go to work day in and day out. As mentioned, Wallen leaves ample opportunities for students to learn important musical lessons and techniques in this piece as it is ideal for an intermediate guitar student or a first-year undergraduate student. A student performing this piece might be ready to explore the upper part of the guitar neck. It is not very rhythmically demanding nor generally require a lot of further analysis or in-depth study.

Birthday Portmanteau

Birthday Portmanteau is a short composition for solo guitar with a wide-ranging set of gestures and sounds. Wallen presents a complex set of ideas in a very succinct way and only in 21 measures. This piece was commissioned in honor of Howard Skempton's 60th birthday by the International Guitar Festival in London, England and was premiered on May 5th, 2007 by Tom Kerstens. Howard Skempton is a widely celebrated English composer and pianist. The work has

yet to be recorded and distributed as of the writing of this document. The word portmanteau is not often used in the titles of musical compositions or when making more broad references to music. A portmanteau is a word that is created when two words are combined, and the sounds are blended together. There is some uncertainty as to Wallen's use of the word in the context of this composition. It is possible that her use of portmanteau refers to a melodic and harmonic reference within the piece or something similar.

Birthday Portmanteau is a composition with great artistic and technical variety and also elicits many of the guitar's most prominent technical achievements. The diversity of techniques includes, percussive gestures and elements, single-line melodies, expansive chords, and scalar passages. The aforementioned list does include one thing that is important to highlight as it is a similarity between *Birthday Portmanteau* and *Walking Me to Work* which is Wallen's use of percussive sounds and gestures which will be discussed briefly in the upcoming section.

Walking Me to Work and *Birthday Portmanteau* each begin with the statement of the primary thematic material. The primary theme of *Birthday Portmanteau* is two measures of the same melody. Example 22 is an excerpt of the opening theme which is comprised of ascending fifths and sixths and what could be conceived as an arpeggiated A minor chord. The primary theme is repeated throughout the piece with the occasional slight rhythmic alteration. This theme could be used as an excellent way to practice contrasting dynamics and thumb projection in the right hand.



Example 22. Errollyn Wallen, *Birthday Portmanteau*, mm.1-2

An example of the rhythmic duration of the primary theme being slightly altered is in m. 15 which is in example 23. In this statement of the theme, m. 14 is the presented as it was in m. 1 and in m. 15, the theme is slightly augmented with the addition of one more E during the third beat of the measure. This is also an example of the more chordal material that is within the composition and the variety in the short composition.



Example 23. Errollyn Wallen, *Birthday Portmanteau*, mm. 14-15

Another example of the variety in *Birthday Portmanteau* is in m. 6 where the primary theme is repeated as it is originally presented, but the top voice is a repetition of certain notes. This demonstrates Wallen's composition of complex ideas, quarter notes and its variations played against continuous sixteenth notes. From a pedagogical stance, m. 6 in example 24 should be performed with alternating i and m free strokes with careful consideration of the order of the strokes as to minimize the number of string crossings and should be performed in first position.



Example 24. Errollyn Wallen, *Birthday Portmanteau*, mm. 6-7

An important pedagogical and performance aspect of this document has been how both Tania León and Errollyn Wallen have included a variety of simple and complex percussive gestures within most of their solo guitar compositions. Wallen writes one of the simpler percussive gestures or extended techniques which is for the guitarist to briefly tap the body of the guitar in some manner and is demonstrated in example 25. This gesture is otherwise known as a *golpé*.



Example 25. Errollyn Wallen, *Birthday Portmanteau*, mm. 8-10

Wallen does not provide or suggest where exactly this gesture should be executed nor does she indicate the dynamic level at which it should be performed. This *golpé* should be performed using the thumb on the strumming hand to tap the area of the guitar that is considered to be the upper bout or area closest to the body of the guitar. Performing the tap on this part of the instrument will produce a sound that is fairly dark and could also be done with large dynamic variety though the gesture should be performed at a *mezzo piano* dynamic level.

Birthday Portmanteau is an outstanding addition to any intermediate guitar student's repertoire and should be considered an essential part of any university guitar curriculum for first or second-year students. There are many reasons why this piece should be considered including that there is a diverse array of musical techniques in it including repetitive gestures, dense chords, and percussive gestures. This piece serves as a replacement for pieces such as Leo Brouwer's *Estudios Sencillos* or any of the Preludes by Francisco Tárrega.

CHAPTER 3

TANIA LEÓN: A GLOBAL CITIZEN

“My ancestors came from different parts of the world; they came from different cultures,” she says. “I take pride in the heritage each of them passed on to me, and I represent all of them within myself. I prefer to be an inclusive human being.” -Tania León ¹

Traveler, activist, conductor, pedagogue, and composer are only a few of the words that describe the work that Tania León has done during her career. Her contributions to the classical music field spans more than forty years and she continues to write groundbreaking music across many genres. León’s music and compositional style are largely influenced by her relationship to her birthplace of Cuba. Her mixed-race heritage has also had a profound impact on her work and identity as a composer.

Tania Justina León was born on May 14, 1943 in Havana, Cuba and is of French, Spanish, Chinese, African, and Cuban descent.² León showed an interest in music and began taking piano, violin, and music theory lessons from a very young age. Her musical talents were recognized by her peers and family and would eventually lead her to writing and performing music professionally. In 1961 León graduated from the Carlos Alfredo Peyrellade Conservatory with a bachelor’s degree in solfège and music theory. Two years later, she graduated with what is equivalent to a master’s degree at only seventeen years old from Havana University. León then continued studying, branching out into business administration and accounting and received

¹ K. Robert Schwarz, Liner notes to *Indígena*, New World Records, <https://nwr-site-liner-notes.s3.amazonaws.com/nwcr662.pdf>. 2007.CD.

² Donna Jean Reiner, “The Colors of Culture: Characteristics in Selected Works of Tania Justina León (1943–),” (PhD diss., The Union Institute, 2000), 37, <https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/colors-cculture-characteristics-selected-works/docview/304675254/se-2?accountid=14537>.

degrees in subsequent fields in 1965 which demonstrates her varied interests and excellence across many disciplines.³

Through the Freedom Flights⁴ program, León was given the opportunity to move to the United States and arrived in Miami, Florida, in 1967. Shortly thereafter she moved to New York City, New York where she started her career as a musician and composer. Her early years in New York City were full of many successes including graduating from New York University in 1971 and 1973 with degrees in music education and music composition. During this period in her life, she also began working at the Dance Theatre of Harlem and served as pianist, composer, and conductor for the theatre, an opportunity that would have a profound impact on her career trajectory. León's composition career began blossoming in the early 1980's after she received commissions from institutions such as the National Endowment for the Arts and also after having served as the resident composer for the Lincoln Center Institute.

León has continued to do all of this work over the course of her career and has received notable compositional awards and prizes including the 2020 Pulitzer Prize for music for her composition *Stride*. In spite of her rejection of nationalistic and exclusionary labels in the earlier years of her career, León has been a longstanding advocate on behalf of composers of color by creating opportunities for everyone to have access to careers in music. She truly embodies the ideals of global citizenship by fostering community, connection, and belonging through her work.

³ Reiner, "The Colors of Culture: Characteristics in Selected Works of Tania Justina León (1943–), 36.

⁴ Reiner, "The Colors of Culture: Characteristics in Selected Works of Tania Justina León (1943–), 37.

Tania León's Compositional Style

Tania León's compositional language and style are largely influenced by her racial and ethnic identity and heritage and can be heard in her music in a variety of ways, mostly through her rhythmic complexity and diversity. This complexity and variety are also inspired by her interest of other genres of music, primarily jazz and the dance music. Her knowledge of all of these genres allows her to mix the elements of those styles to create her style. León said, "Though these musical mixes seem strange, they reflect who I am. They come when I least expect it...in the street, sitting at home, in the car. Ideas start tapping in anywhere, anytime. They wake me up and all of a sudden I'm hearing an entire orchestra playing something."⁵

Most characterize her León's music by its rhythmic complexity. Her rhythms are polyrhythmic, cross-rhythmic, and syncopated. She often mixes these rhythms throughout each of her compositions. Some of her love of rhythm is inspired by her love of dance as dance is a theme across many of her compositions as well. The influence of dance on her music gives it a lot of motion and movement as it is very active and often changing.

The harmonic and melodic makeup of León's style is similar to her rhythmic language. Her melodies are largely atonal and made up of sparsely populated textures. She composes for many different timbres. Another element of her compositional language is improvisation as many of her compositions include guided improvisation phrases and sections. She utilizes a tonal pallet that has many elements and sounds and presents an array of colors that makes her music deeply expressive and artistic.

⁵ "Tania León" Soy Unica, Soy Latina, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, last modified May 25, 2005, <http://www.soyunica.gov/guests/tanialeon.asp/>.

Paisanos Semos! (We's Hillbillies!)

Paisanos Semos! is an energetic and lively contribution to contemporary guitar literature. Through its style, technique, and use of gesture, it is an outstanding example of all of the musical and technical possibilities of the instrument and of León's writing. Completed in 1984, *Paisanos Semos!* is Tania León's first published work for solo guitar and was commissioned by guitarist Ana María Rosado. Rosado commissioned the piece as part of a larger commissioning project that she was completing at the time and enlisted works from a variety of composers to write pieces that used polyrhythms as the prevailing rhythmic feature in each of the compositions.⁶ *Paisanos Semos!* was premiered in June 1986 in San Juan, Puerto Rico by Rosado and appears on Rosado's album *We've got (poly)rhythm* which was released in 1992 by Albany Records.⁷ The recording of *Paisanos Semos!* is a riveting representation that beautifully encapsulates León's ideas on polyrhythmic writing. As part of their collaboration for the piece, Rosado also edited the score to provide performance suggestions for guitarists. León's view on the creation and continued use of polyrhythms makes her inclusion in Rosado's project even more relevant. Her explanation of these elements and her fusion of them into her composing of polyrhythmic gestures are at the forefront of *Paisanos Semos!*

First of all, I have a problem with what we call the music of Cuba. Because it is a hybrid of many influences from the people who came there, including the Africans. The Africans themselves had so many different tribes, all using different rhythms. The infusion of rhythms from Nigeria and the West Coast of Africa was particularly great, but the other rhythms were there too. Similar rhythms and forms came from Spain. And with Spain comes the Arabic influence, the Moors. In addition to all this, there were the Chinese. So here we have an incredible richness of what we call polyrhythms.⁸

⁶ Ana María Rosado, Liner notes to *We've Got (Poly)Rhythm*, Recorded 1986, Albany Records, 1992. CD.

⁷ Rosado, Liner notes to *We've Got (Poly)Rhythm*.

⁸ Ronald De Feo, "Cross-Currents and Polyrhythms: A Conversation with Tania León (Illustrated).," Review: Latin American Literature & Arts, no. 63 (200

León gave the piece a title that is metaphorical and also has direct references to what she composed within the piece. The subtitle and translation of *Paisanos Semos!* is *We's Hillbillies*. Translated from Spanish, paisanos semos loosely translates to we are peasants which León further translates to “we is hillbillies”, a more informal and colloquial translation of the phrase. The “We” in “We’s hillbillies” is likely a reference to those whom León has a shared racial and ethnic identity which is an integral part of her compositional style. Based on what she has previously said, the title may also be a reclamation of the often demeaning or derogatory nature associated with the word hillbillies. These subtle references could be a means through which León is taking pride in her identity and using the piece as a public declaration. In the program notes in the score, León provides additional context for the inspiration for the piece saying that *Paisanos Semos!* is “an homage to peasants that till the soil”⁹ and that the initial structure of the piece is a story based on the lifecycle of a sprouting seed.¹⁰ Over the five minute composition, the story explores the lifecycle of a seed wherein the seed is a metaphor for life and through the music, León leads the listener through the cycle of maturing, thriving, and slowly dying.

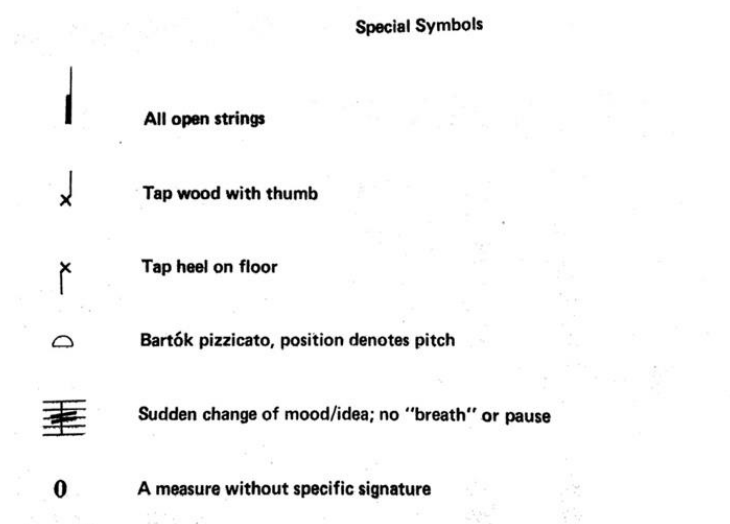
Identifying and making interpretative decisions based on those references provides not only an important educational experience but is part of what León’s work essential addition to an advanced student’s repertoire. *Paisanos Semos!* then becomes a piece where many pedagogical aspects are to be discovered and discussed because there are many elements to analyze and identify. Such aspects include the inclusion of extended technical gestures, mood, rhythm, and movement. What makes this piece the most essential to discuss is how those technical gestures, regardless of their familiarity, are to be performed in such a way that highlights the overarching

⁹ Tania León, *Paisanos Semos!* (Peer Music Classical, 1986).

¹⁰ León, *Paisanos Semos!*

metaphor in the piece as well as how they interact with the rest of the music. This is what is so exciting about the piece. Through the research and analysis this piece from a performance perspective, much of performance guidance needed for *Paisanos Semos!* should be focused on León's use of gesture and how those gestures enhance the piece in an interesting and thoughtful way.

As part of the score, León includes a list of special symbols and gestures for the guitarist to interpret and perform within the piece which are in example 26. There are symbols more widely used and some that are less well-known and one example of this is the symbol that directs the guitarist to tap their heel on the floor while performing. Most guitarists will likely be comfortable playing the guitar and tapping their feet at the same time. Since it is less common for such a gesture to be an element of the composition, the guitarist will need to coordinate and plan the movement within the context of the performance.



Example 26. Tania León, *Paisanos Semos!*, Special Symbols

An example of the duration of the gesture and the notated pitch material that accompanies one of the instances of this movement is demonstrated in example 27. In order to appropriately choreograph this gesture and for the performance of it to feel as natural to the piece as possible, the guitarist should determine the heel of which foot to use to perform the gesture. This will vary depending on the support device that a guitarist uses while playing this piece. Support devices are devices that guitarists use to elevate the neck of the guitar. Considering alternative support devices might be needed in this situation although it might be uncomfortable for a guitarist to consider switching support devices just for the performance of this particular piece. Without switching support devices, the guitarist should perform the movement with the heel of the right foot. However, León does not provide alternative gestures for guitarists without the physical ability to perform the gesture. An alternate suggestion would be for the guitarist to substitute the heel tap with a golpé using the right-hand thumb. Additional considerations for either of the movements should be the volume and balance to ensure that the tap is audible to the listener. The foot tap gesture is example of the León's use of extended bodily techniques that are included in many of her compositions.

* Top notes are harmonics.

Example 27. Tania León, *Paisanos Semos!*, mm. 55-59

Many composers, especially those whose music is influenced by other genres, often push musicians to explore new possibilities on the instrument. León includes improvisatory sections in her compositions with both fully notated and non-notated sections. The inclusion of such

sections in León's music is likely an influence from jazz. Though the guitarist in this piece does not have choice over the pitch content, guitarists have artistic freedom over tempi, extended gestural or technical elements, expression, and dynamics, among other details. While *Paisanos Semos!* is fully notated, León outlines the improvisational choices which are indicated by her special symbols and otherwise through various expressive notations.

The special symbol that could arguably have the largest impact on the piece is the one that indicates that the guitarists should perform the phrase with sudden change of mood/idea; no breath or pause which is demonstrated in example 28. According to León's guidance, the change should be different in such a way that it sounds drastic and sudden from any of the previously presented material. The suggestion of mood or idea within a piece is highly subjective and is often part of how guitarists impose their own artistic interpretations onto a piece. For some, mood implies tone while for others it implies dynamic level or expression, and can be ephemeral, improvised, or unplanned. One of these gestures is placed and serves as a connect between mm. 14 and 15 and because this section of *Paisanos Semos!* is about the beginning of life, the change in mood and idea at this juncture should reflect such ideas about shaping and starting life. A performance of this phrase should be legato in m. 14 with all of the notes ringing over one another to a more staccato and marked expression to match the *ritmica* in m. 15. This is a drastic change in mood from the previously presented material.



Example 28. Tania León, *Paisanos Semos!*, mm. 14-16

In m. 32 in example 29, León writes another phrase where the guitarist is to make a sudden change in mood, but at this change of phrase there is no time signature. A change in mood at this phrase should present a change in tempo to a slower tempo with rubato as directed and change in tone to opposite of what was being played in m. 32.



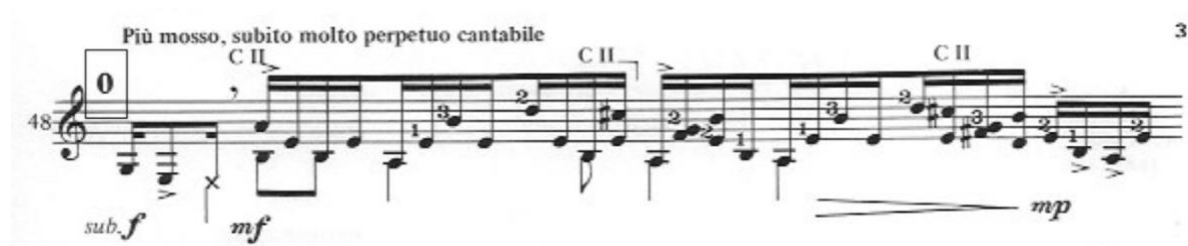
Example 29. Tania León, *Paisanos Semos!*, mm. 32-33

Paisanos Semos! is an homage to those in León's life who she felt were deserving of being honored through musical memory. In the notes provided with the score, León also references farmers as those to whom she is paying respect and how those same farmers worked to maintain and preserve the seeds by tilling the soil.¹¹ León never says so explicitly, but based on the information that is provided, one might infer that the seed in her story of *Paisanos Semos!* is a metaphor for the lifecycle and the moments that we experience during each of the parts in the cycle of life. Another aspect of this metaphor is the part in which the farmers who maintain the land represent the ancestors who are teaching and sharing wisdom and knowledge with others and all of which can be heard throughout the piece in some manner.

Paisanos Semos! has three primary sections that León masterfully weaves the metaphor of the seed and farmer throughout in a very clear way. Section A, mm.1-47, represents the stage

¹¹ Tania León, *Paisanos Semos!* (Peer Music Classical, 1986).

strong and weak beats and follow no identifiable pattern. In the section part of the lifecycle, the primary focus is on creating conditions that allow one to thrive as the music is iterative and continues to shift but is always moving forward. The length of this section correlates with this section of life which is often the longest.



Example 31. Tania León, *Paisanos Semos!*, m. 48

León writes the final section, the C section mm. 49-59, to represent the end of the lifecycle or as a pronouncement of death. The sparseness at this section in the piece is a metaphor for how the end of the life of a seed or person is much slower and has great distance between any two events. Also, the distance between the events is marked by an arid and aethereal, almost searching feeling. The metaphor of a seed is also important and something that should be considered when crafting the interpretation. A performance will draw connections to and have a relationship between those two things and how they interact within the piece.

Paisanos Semos! is a challenging piece and should only be assigned to an advanced student who is interested in exploring the use of extended techniques. Much of the time spent on teaching this piece will likely be focused on the connection and relationship between the extended techniques and gestures in the piece and the rest of the pitch content.

Bailarín

Bailarín is a powerful work for solo guitar that is inspired by dance and movement. Its addition to the guitar repertoire makes it stand out as a work that brings together elements of many styles on one instrument. The striking melodic theme dances across each of the pungent melodies and sharp rhythmic gestures that mimic the gestures of a dancer's feet. *Bailarín* is Tania León's second work for solo guitar though not her only work to include guitar after the writing of *Paisanos Semos!* as there is guitar in a number of her chamber works. The piece was written for David Starobin, a guitarist who is known for his ambitious commissioning projects and who has been featured on numerous recordings. *Bailarín* was written in 1998 and was slated to be premiered on Starobin's *New Dance*, an album featuring dance works for guitar. Due to extenuating circumstances, the piece was instead recorded and premiered on *Family Album: New Music with Guitar, Vol. 7*. This album was released in 2007 by Starobin's record label, Bridge Records.

The title of the piece means dancer and speaks to León's love of dance and movement. Her love of dance can be seen throughout many of her creative projects as she has written several ballets and other types of works influenced by movement. *Bailarín* lends itself to León's tendencies to write music heavily influenced by dance, movement, and gesture. Four minutes in length, *Bailarín* has a key signature of G Minor and starts with the main theme which has been described as "buoyant and rhythmic".¹² The opening theme is in example 32. The buoyancy that Starobin describes in this main theme is felt by the misplaced accents and generally descending contour of the different voices. The theme is almost pulsing and is a reference to the title and how dance movements are to be embodied and played by the guitarist. Mirroring the careful

¹² Tania León, *Bailarín* (Peer Music Classical, 2016).

execution of a choreographed movements, the theme's accented and syncopated gestures continue throughout the piece. The primary theme is repeated in its original form and developed in throughout the rest of the piece including at m. 21 and m. 56 in examples 33 and 34. The rhythmic qualities of the theme are slightly developed throughout the iterations of the theme through León's addition of the occasional tie to sustain some of the melodic notes.



Example 32. Tania León, *Bailarín*, m. 1



Example 33. Tania León, *Bailarín*, mm. 20-21



Example 34. Tania León, *Bailarín*, mm. 56-57

León's inclusion of improvisatory elements and emphasis on rhythm remain constant in *Bailarín* as well as many of her other works that include guitar. One of the similarities between *Paisanos Semos!* and *Bailarín* is León's use of some of her previously used special symbols to indicate various extended techniques. Unlike *Paisanos Semos!*, she does not include an additional list of the symbols to assist with the score meaning that the guitarist needs to research and interpret these symbols and gestures. One of the symbols and gestures that is common, but that León uses in an interesting manner is the golpé. A golpé is a percussive gesture that creates a deep sounding hit on the body of the instrument which is notated in example 35 in m. 23 and m. 25.



Example 35. Tania León, *Bailarín*, mm. 23-25

For any guitarist, determining the method of execution for a golpé is an important decision especially when it is written in the middle of the phrase with many melodic notes as León composes in *Bailarín*. It is the pitch material prior to and after any of these extended techniques that makes the decision-making process around performing the gesture more crucial. The tempo of the music also heavily influences choice in the location of where the gesture should be performed. In *The Techniques of Guitar Playing* the authors have outlined the possible areas on the guitar to execute a golpé which are helpful as León does not suggest a place where this gesture is to be performed on the instrument which is in example 35.

Considering all of these things in *Bailarín*, the guitarist should perform the gesture that the authors in *The Techniques of Guitar Playing* refer to as the “Face: Anywhere on the soundboard apart from the traditional locus”¹³. This suggestion provides the guitarist with the necessary freedom to choose a location amongst a few options where the guitarist feels it is most appropriate and comfortable given the tempo and other pitch content happening around this gesture. In addition, the “Face” suggestion considers most how the added marcato accent above each of the golpé symbols can be performed without any additional adjustments. Analyzing the use of these gestures such as the golpé and how the inclusion of them within the music impacts the overall performance is an important aspect of both pedagogical analysis and performance guidance for *Bailarín*.

In this piece, León continues to write phrases without a specified meter which is another compositional technique that she also used in *Paisanos Semos!* The absence of a time signature means that the guitarists have the ability to do the following: identify and create any downbeats, create micro phrases within the larger phrase, choose placement of accents, suggest a tempo based on previous tempi, and any other elements within this phrase. One of the phrases in *Bailarín* where León includes these elements is in m. 27. As demonstrated in example 36, this phrase is especially challenging because the pitch material in this phrase is mostly made of up harmonics which have no indication of duration as all harmonics are noted as León has noted them, note heads that are left empty. The guitarist needs to play this section in such a way that the harmonics and accents are performed in the same style and at a length relative to the rest of the piece. The guitarist should play each of the harmonics for two beats beginning with a mezzo

¹³ Seth F. Josel and Ming Tsao, *The Techniques of Guitar Playing* (Bärenreiter, 2014), 158.

forte dynamic level to carefully decrescendo into the mezzo piano at the end of the phrase. The tempo of this phrase should be between 112 and 120 beats per minute. This tempo mirrors the previously held tempo and supports the attacca direction as well.



Example 36. Tania León, *Bailarín*, m. 27

The second major section where León writes for the music to be played without meter is in m. 68 in example 37. While there are more directions in this phrase, many of these can be left up to interpretation and need further analysis from a performance perspective. An interpretation of this section brings in elements of improvisation while adhering to the note lengths and durations. This section includes many more moments of pause and silence and it is suggested that the guitarist perform these at two to three times the lengths of any previously performed material. The B, a quarter note with three horizontal lines above it, are indicative of a gesture that should mimic the sound of a tremolo which should be performed using a p-a-m-i pattern on the fifth string. Shifting four to six frets away from the initial note in each of the glissandi gestures should allow for each of them to sound improvised, but not create less than ideal shifts in the left hand between the different notes. Each of the shifts should produce an audible tone of some sort.



Example 37. Tania León, *Bailarín*, m. 68

Near the middle of this phrase, there are five accented slashes which could be interpreted to mean a variety of things. The interpretation of these slashes and horizontal arrow that follows is that the performer should repeat the five slashes that proceeded the figure at a fast pace and do so at least once until the performer is ready to continue with the rest of the phrase. This phrase demonstrates the wide array of symbols found in guitar music and how their various interpretations, similar to the one that is presented, can be very different.

Interpreting how four, five, and six note harmonies will be played is an integral part of creating an expressive and artistic interpretation of music for the guitar. These chords such as the last beat in mm. 25 in example 38 and mm. 61 in example 39 are a few of the instances in which such performance decisions should be considered.



Example 38. Tania León, *Bailarín*, mm. 25-26



Example 39. Tania León, *Bailarín*, m. 61

It can be assumed that most any five note or six note chords will need to be strummed in some way as opposed to being plucked. The manner in which it will be strummed should match the rhythmic vibrancy and tone of the piece needs to be determined by the performer. Some performers might prefer for these strummed chords to have a more muted and dull sound which is produced by strumming across the strings with the flesh of the thumb on the plucking hand. Alternatively, a brighter sound can be achieved by using more of the nail to strike the strings more perpendicular to the strings. There is also the option of using a fan-like motion across the strings producing a more *rasgueado* sound. Not only do all of these techniques produce a different tone, but they will produce great dynamic variety which could mean that some gestures are more appropriate in certain phrases throughout the piece than in others. It is preferred to use a variety of tones and methods of strumming throughout the piece. For the excerpt in example 36 since these chords are placed after a scale and are to be played *forte*, these chords should be played with the thumb more perpendicular to the string creating a sound that is more pronounced. In example 37 a more muted and softer tone is appropriate to match the *mezzo piano* dynamic and overall mood of the piece during this phrase.

In between all of the chords presented in various ways, there are a variety of scalar figures throughout the piece. In example 40, the scales are written with different combinations of semi-

tone and whole-tone patterns. Identifying the differences between the sales and how they might be practiced could be an important pedagogical aspect of this compositions.



Example 40. Tania León, *Bailarín*, mm. 17-19

The majority of m. 45 in example 41 is a scalar figure wherein each ascending group of four notes are then followed by another ascending grouping of four notes but those four notes begin on a different note not following conventional scalar patterns.



Example 41. Tania León, *Bailarín*, mm. 44-46

Scalar sequences and patterns and the placement of such passages on the instrument in the fretting hand and how they are best performed by the plucking hand will likely need careful planning and practice. The passage in example 39 presents those pedagogical lessons within the context of the piece as with any piece, the different expressive gestures that impact tempo, such as rubato and other things are a part of how this could be performed and taught to a student. Exercises to practice this type of scale pattern could involve playing ascending scales in groups

of four notes and then shifting to another set of four notes from a different scale. Practicing each of these gestures at a different speed can also be practiced and shared with students learning this piece and is applicable to much of guitar literature.

Another element of improvisatory performance that has not been previously discussed is if and how the elements of improvisation, the decisions made by the performer, should be carried over from performance to performance. Across many genres, improvisation is both rehearsed and spontaneous. León does not indicate whether or not the performer should carry these elements across performances or if they should stay the same. Keeping them the same or changing it from performance to performance is a decision that a performer could make. For a student less familiar with these concepts and improvisational techniques, they should prepare their interpretation in such a way that the improvisatory decisions are rehearsed and made prior to the performance of the piece. Alternatively, a student with more improvisational skills might decide to make changes from performance to performance.

As with dance as a form of art, movement and choreography are important to how guitarist should approach performance as composition that is inspired by those things. For any musician, there is a visual aspect to performance and to movement that is often considered when creating an interpretation and planning a performance. *Bailarín*, being that it is a piece about dance, requires significant thought into how a performer, if at all, might approach choreography and movement for this piece. León includes many details in her scores especially as it relates to accents, dynamics, and phrasing. Additionally, there are symbols that might not be familiar to the guitar literature as they are in other areas of music. The remembering of all of these things means that a guitarist carefully considers how each of these details are to be brought out and, in this instance, mimic the footwork of a dancer. While León provides the space to create the dancing

aspect of the piece, the performer has to evoke the emotion, feeling, and essence of a bailarín.

Bailarín is undoubtedly an important piece and contribution and is a piece for an advanced student or professional-level guitarist. Understanding and relating this piece to dance is essential for playing this piece.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the purpose of this document is to be a pedagogical analysis and performer's guide for a selection of solo guitar works by two Black women composers, Errollyn Wallen and Tania León. Aside from the work of León and Wallen, there are many Black women composers who have made significant contributions to contemporary guitar literature, but for reasons documented in the literature review, their works are less often analyzed, performed, and recorded.

It is a necessity for students and performers to record and perform the work of Tania León and Errollyn Wallen amongst all of the other brilliant Black women composers. Additionally, it is suggested that that each of these works be considered as part of the standard curricula for undergraduate and graduate guitar students as there are many important lessons to be learned and taught in these pieces as there are in any of the more commonly taught and performed solo guitar works.

The hope is that more composers, performers, and students feel empowered to commission more works by Black women composers and continue to analyze, recorded, and share those works with audiences all around the world. The most effective tool for advocacy, for those interested in advocating for Black women composers, is to continue to support their work through continued performance.

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