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The Raja's Nicaraguan Dream: Exoticism, Commemoration, and Nostalgia in Luis A. Delgadillo's *Romance Oriental*

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Abstract

Toward the end of a protracted U.S.-American intervention in Nicaragua (1909–33), a catastrophic earthquake and fire razed much of the capital city of Managua on 31 March 1931. Nicaraguan composer Luis Abraham Delgadillo (1884–1961), while residing in New York City, responded to the tragedy with his *Romance Oriental* (*Eastern Romance*) for flute and piano, dedicated to María Huezo, a friend who had perished in the earthquake. The work appears to fall within the nineteenth-century French exoticist musical tradition, but its commemorative purpose departs from the typical Orientalist representation. Delgadillo musically transformed Huezo's memory from that of a "virtuous" woman in life into an "alluring," voiceless female Other, which revealed particular desires. In this article, I argue that the *Romance Oriental* manifests a veiled escapist desire and an acute nostalgia for home. His musical response to the tragedy exhibits a binary interplay of spatial (Here/There) and temporal (Present/Past) landscapes, as the composer yearned for a return to the Managua of his childhood. The work was not a mere break with European exoticist tradition, but a resignification of Western musical convention by a Latin American composer.

Keywords: Luis A. Delgadillo, musical exoticism, nostalgia, Nicaragua, Latin America, Central America

Resumen

Hacia el fin de la intervención estadounidense en Nicaragua (1909–33), un terremoto e incendio catastróficos arrasaron gran parte de Managua, ciudad capital, en Marzo de 1931. El compositor nicaragüense Luis Abraham Delgadillo (1884–1961), mientras residía en Nueva York, respondió a la tragedia con su *Romance Oriental* para flauta y piano, dedicado a María Huezo, quien había fallecido en el terremoto. La obra parece pertenecer a la tradición del exotismo musical francés decimonónico, pero su propósito conmemorativo difiere de la típica representación musical orientalista. La memoria de Huezo fue transformada musicalmente por Delgadillo: de una mujer "virtuosa" en vida a una Otra muda y "seductora", que reveló deseos particulares. Este artículo argumenta que el *Romance Oriental* manifiesta un velado anhelo escapista y una aguda nostalgia de su patria. Su respuesta musical a la tragedia demuestra una interacción binaria entre paisajes espaciales (Aquí / Allá) y temporales (Presente / Pasado), ya que el compositor anhelaba regresar a la Managua de su niñez. La obra no solamente representa una ruptura con la tradición exotista europea, sino una re-significación del lenguaje musical occidental por un compositor latinoamericano.

Palabras claves: Luis A. Delgadillo, exotismo musical, nostalgia, Nicaragua, Latinoamérica, América Central

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Introduction

Toward the end of a protracted U.S.-American intervention in Nicaragua (1909–33)—a period marked by foreign political paternalism, fiscal and financial protectionism, and military occupation—a catastrophic earthquake and fire razed much of the capital city of Managua on March 31, 1931. The human toll and destruction of property were historic injuries to the city that accompanied the insult of compromised state sovereignty. Later that year, while residing in New York City, Nicaraguan composer Luis Abraham Delgadillo (1884–1961) responded to the tragedy with his *Romance Oriental* (Eastern Romance) for flute and piano, dedicated to María Huezo, a family friend who had perished in the earthquake. The work appears to fall within the nineteenth-century French exoticist musical tradition, but its commemorative purpose is a departure from the typical dramatic or instrumental Orientalist representation: Delgadillo memorialized Huezo by exoticizing her as an "angelic creature out of a Raja's Eastern dream."[1] He musically transformed her memory from that of a "virtuous" woman in life into an alluring, voiceless female Other—an exotic object of male desire. Moreover, he also revealed other forms of desire in the process.

In this article, I will show that Delgadillo's exoticization of Huezo in the *Romance Oriental* points to a veiled escapist desire and an acute nostalgia for home.[2] His musical response to the tragedy, evoking an "Eastern" dream world of "voluptuous" melodies and "ear-caressing" accompaniments, exhibits a binary interplay of spatial (Here/There) and temporal (Present/Past) landscapes. From New York City, Delgadillo yearned for a return to the Managua of his childhood, the metropolis as it existed long before the earthquake. In my use of the term "exoticism" or "exotic," I borrow from musicologist Ralph Locke: "a process of evoking in or through music… a place (people, [or] social milieu) that is perceived as different from home by the people who created [or received] the exoticist cultural product… yet it may [also] be perceived as resembling home, [and, therefore] may carry a variety of emotional charges."[3] Furthermore, I seek to build on the contributions to musical exoticism by Locke, Jonathan Bellman, Gilles de Van, and Derek B. Scott, as well as those of Leonora Saavedra and Ricardo Miranda. I will, therefore, utilize an established analytical lens and descriptive language employed in examinations of exoticist Western music.

I would like to thank Leonora Saavedra for her guidance, insight, and suggestions; Luis Delgadillo Tapia for providing key documents; Jorge Eduardo Arellano for sharing the commemorative poem by Benjamín Zeledón, Jr.; Erwin Krüger Maltéz and other descendants of Francisco Huezo for their kind interest and support; Lucía Santos Lepera for her scholarly assistance; and the staff at the Instituto de Historia de Nicaragua y Centroamérica (IHNCA) in Managua.

[1] Luis A. Delgadillo, *Romance Oriental* for flute and orchestra, Manuscript flute and piano score (1931), and orchestral parts ([after 1931]), Fondo Histórico Documental de la Música Nicaragüense, Archivo General de la Nación, Managua, Nicaragua. Unless noted otherwise all translations are my own.

[2] This analysis employs a Full-Context Paradigm, after Ralph P. Locke, in which musical and extra-musical elements are considered in the examination of exoticist works.

[3] Ralph P. Locke, "Exoticism with and without exotic style," in *Musical Exoticism: Images and Reflections* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 47.

Earthquake, Fire, and Aftermath in Managua

The earthquake and fire that razed Managua on the morning of March 31, 1931, the catalyst for the *Romance Oriental*, had no precursor in Nicaraguan memory.[4] The New York Times broke the news on its front page the following day with a prominent headline summarizing the aftermath: "Managua is destroyed, 1,100 reported killed, thousands injured in earthquake and fire; many American casualties, Hoover rushes aid."[5] Occurring during Holy Week, the catastrophic events turned much of Managua from a relatively sleepy city of some 60,000 inhabitants into a mass of smoky ruins with a destituted population.[6] In addition to the human toll of over 1,000 deaths, and approximately 5,000 injured, all of the principal government buildings, churches, commercial businesses, and private property located within a multi-block radius of the city center were laid waste, in effect, crippling the entire country via the seat of its central government.[7] In the wake of the earthquake, the government imposed martial law to stave off looting, and further injury or death. It was an executive action enforced by the U.S. Marines and Nicaraguan National Guard—a sobering reminder of the U.S.-American intervention in Nicaragua, sustained by the presence of occupying military force.[8] A decade later, a children's theatrical work, *Personificación de la Historia de Managua* (Personification of the History of Managua, 1942), would encapsulate the suffering inflicted by the event, a toll exacerbated by the action of the U.S. Marines.[9] The protagonist "Managua," embodied by a "girl dressed in mourning [clothes]," presented a painfully vivid memory of that week:

> I am living terrible days. The cloud of dust infects and the smoke from the fire obstructs my eyes, preventing me from seeing clearly the extent of my misfortune. As well, the cries of the dying, the laments of the survivors, and the continuing uneasiness of the ground below aggrieves my soul of a distressed city. To increase my sorrow, the military of a foreign country has taken control of the rescue measures, whose results are not only ineffectual, but detrimental, for reasons that momentarily hinder examination [due to] my immense pain.[10]

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[4] For general accounts of the earthquake, see Apolonio Palazio, *La catástrofe de Managua: 31 de marzo de 1931* (Managua: Tipografía Atenas, 1952); Dion Williams, "The Managua Disaster," *Marine Corps Gazette*, August 1931; and Willard Beaulac, comp., *Managua Earthquake: Official Report of the Relief Work in Nicaragua after the Earthquake of March 31, 1931* (Washington, D.C.: The American National Red Cross, 1931). For personal accounts, see Juan José Zelaya, *Elixir en una tragedia: terremoto de 31 de marzo de 1931*, manuscript (March 1943), Instituto de Historia de Nicaragua y Centroamérica, Managua, Nicaragua; Robert L. Denig, *Diary of a Guardia Officer*, typescript (n.d.), Instituto de Historia de Nicaragua y Centroamérica, Managua, Nicaragua; and James L.H. Denig, "My Experience in the Managua Earthquake," *Washington Post* (Washington, D.C.), Aug. 2, 1931.

[5] "Managua is destroyed," *New York Times*, Apr. 1, 1931.

[6] Beaulac, *Managua Earthquake*, 5.

[7] The fire destroyed the national archive and library.

[8] For a recent examination of the U.S.-American intervention in Nicaragua, see Jorge Eduardo Arellano, *La pax americana en Nicaragua (1910–1932)* (Managua: Fondo Editorial CIRA, 2004).

[9] The stage play was among the first published histories of Managua.

[10] Josefa Toledo de Aguerri, *Personificación de la Historia de Managua* (Managua: Talleres Nacionales, 1942), 30. "Estoy viviendo días terribles. La polvareda infecta y el humo del incendio nublan mis ojos y me impiden ver con claridad la magnitud de mi desgracia, más los ayes de los moribundos, los lamentos de los sobrevivientes y la continua trepidación de mi suelo, oprimen mi alma de ciudad acongojada. Para aumentar mi pena, el ejército de un país extranjero se ha

The catastrophe came toward the end of the intervention in Nicaragua, whose memory would become inseparable from that episode of its history, until it was displaced by another, much larger seismic event that devastated Managua, yet again, in 1972. Nevertheless, the memory of the first earthquake would also be bound up with remembrances of the many residents of the capital who had died in 1931.

Death and Controversy

María Huezo was among the hundreds who perished during the earthquake. And unlike nearly all of them, she would be remembered in subsequent historical accounts in light of a controversy, between her father and a Roman Catholic cleric, which began days after the devastation. In a pastoral letter to his congregation, entitled "Digitus Dei est hic" ("The Finger of God is Here"), read aloud during mass on Easter Sunday, the bishop of nearby Granada, Canuto José Reyes y Balladares, blamed the residents of Managua for inciting God's wrath, and ignoring standing pleas from the church for piety and decency.[11] He accused "wicked" newspapers of printing blasphemy and defending erroneous information against the church, as well as advocating for limits to the institution's oversight on marriage. More importantly, he admonished survivor and deceased alike for their immoral behavior, especially the enjoyment of "indecent" *bailes* (social dances), and the cinema, a "principal focus of social infection."[12] He repeatedly addressed the behavior of women, whose punishment had been the result of an indecent manner of dress and their participation in various social contexts.[13] In doubling-down on his discourse, the bishop singled-out individuals worthy of blame, yet refrained from uttering their names—he alluded to María Huezo in reference to a "promoter of desecration of the holy days, at Casares, [who] God buried under the rubble of her house," and to Gilberto Saballos, a government minister, who worked toward the secularization of the public education system.[14] The rest of the letter warned those outside of Managua to heed the church or suffer a similar fate. Many Nicaraguans received his message with disgust for its "lack of understanding of the tragic hour, and the violent and anti-scientific tone in which it was conceived."[15]

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hecho cargo de las medidas de salvamento, que no sólo resultan ineficaces, sino perjudiciales, por razones que mi inmenso dolor me impide analizar por el momento."

[11] Canuto José Reyes y Balladares, *Pastoral número XV del Ilustrísimo y Reverendísimo Señor Obispo de Granada en Nicaragua, Doctor Don Canuto José Reyes y Balladares: con motivo de la catástrofe en Managua* (Granada: Tipografía de El Mensajero, 1931).

[12] Ibid., 3–5. "…los principales focos de la infección social."

[13] The bishop's fixation on these cultural elements was an extension of a religio-political position that developed among Conservative elite Nicaraguans in the 1910s, who railed against anything deemed "modern"—goods, fashions, or leisure activities associated with the United States. As the ranking cleric in Granada, the historic seat of the Conservative oligarchy, Bishop Reyes y Balladares was only "preaching to the choir" within his ecclesiastical jurisdiction, until the pastoral letter circulated beyond this domain. For an examination of Conservative Nicaraguan responses to U.S. cultural imports in Nicaragua under intervention, see Michel Gobat, *Confronting the American Dream: Nicaragua under U.S. Imperial Rule* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2005).

[14] Ibid., 4. "…la promotora de la profanación de los días santos, en Casares, Dios la sepulta en los escombros de su casa." Huezo and Saballos are consistently noted in histories touching on the Managua earthquake of 1931.

[15] Palazio, *La catástrofe*, 149. "…incomprensión de la hora trágica y el tono violento y anti científico en que está concebida."

In referencing María Huezo, the bishop attracted reproach from her father, who responded with an open letter while mourning the premature death of his youngest daughter. A recognized journalist, Francisco Huezo chided the bishop for an opportunistic "venting of hate against the dead, whom he wounded in their graves," in addition to the attack on the suffering engendered by the destruction of the capital.[16] He took offense at the false implication of his daughter as a participant in the seasonal gatherings held at Casares, a popular beach destination.[17] He also countered the argument of divine punishment with scientific evidence, citing Alexander von Humboldt, and noted the earthquake to have been indiscriminate in its killing, which called God's retribution toward sinners into question.[18] In closing, he hoped that the bishop would come to see his mistake and retract the unjust message of the pastoral letter. The exchange between the bishop and Francisco Huezo took hold so strongly in the public imagination that it turned María Huezo into an icon—a singular representation of the collective who died during the 1931 earthquake or its aftermath—an association that continued in annual commemorations.[19]

Figure 1: Luis Abraham Delgadillo, 1930.
Source: Delgadillo Tapia Family Archive

[16] Francisco Huezo, "Replica de don Francisco Huezo," in *La catástrofe de Managua: 31 de marzo de 1931*, ed. Apolonio Palazio (Managua: Tipografía Atenas, 1952), 161. "… desahogo de ira contra los muertos, a quienes han herido en sus tumbas…"

[17] Casares was one of a number of beachside spas along the west coast of Nicaragua, and a popular destination during Holy Week.

[18] The writings of Humboldt that relate to Central America resonated with Nicaraguans during the twentieth century, especially his report to Spanish King Charles IV, affirming Nicaragua to be a prime location across which to build an interoceanic canal.

[19] The most recent commemoration of the earthquake to mention María Huezo was in 2016; see "10 datos que debés saber sobre el terremoto que devastó Managua un 31 de marzo de 1931," *El Nuevo Diario* (Managua), March 31, 2016, accessed April 15, 2018, https://www.elnuevodiario.com.ni/nacionales/388822-10-datos-que-debes-saber-terremoto-que-devasto-man/

Musical Response from Afar

At the time of the earthquake, Delgadillo resided in New York City (Figure 1).[20] He was spared its immediate horrors, but the terrible news arrived not long thereafter. The New York Times initially published daily reports on the conditions in Managua, focusing on the U.S.-American lives lost, and the injured, especially among members of the Marine Corps. On April 4, the paper published the first photographs of the aftermath. An entire page of aerial and ground images highlighted homes in ruin, city blocks decimated by fire, and shovel-wielding rescue workers in search of people buried under the rubble. Delgadillo would have been struck by their stark reality—Managua, his native city, was gone. They would have likely had a traumatic effect on him, especially since his wife and children survived and were displaced by the disaster. Little evidence remains of how he confronted such a reality in the months subsequent to the earthquake. However, a group of friends and admirers, "professors and presidents of various clubs," organized a benefit concert for him in the middle of May.[21] Held at Hunter College in New York City, the performance was advertised in support of the composer, "one of the sufferers in the Managua earthquake," whose family was left homeless.[22] The program featured a number of his exoticist solo piano and chamber works.[23]

From the days immediately following the earthquake until he signs and dates the dedication months later, there is no extant documentation to illuminate details as to how he came to compose the *Romance Oriental*.[24] The work is, nonetheless, a noteworthy musical response to the unprecedented historical events that led to the death of María Huezo and the destruction of Managua. The dedication confirmed its role as an intimate commemoration to her, and by extension, the capital of Nicaragua (Figure 2).

> To Mariíta Huezo
> A weeping serenade for you, Oh angelic creature out of a Raja's Eastern dream! I would have wished to dedicate to you a joyful music, overflowing with burgeoned youth, when you once asked me to give you something genuine of mine, yet without delay. And although it follows your tragic and undeserved end, I arrive in spirit to offer up my doleful Romance before your precious mortal remains so that our delicate spirits will vibrate in unison with the Great Light![25]

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[20] "Radicará en Nueva York," *La Prensa* (New York City), May 13, 1930.

[21] "Un concierto a beneficio del profesor Luis A. Delgadillo," *La Prensa* (New York City), May 16, 1931.

[22] "Benefit Concert…," unattributed clipping in the Delgadillo Tapia Family Archive.

[23] "City Brevities. Professor Louis A. Delgadillo…," *New York Times*, May 16, 1931; and "Un magnífico concierto de música incaica," *La Prensa* (New York City), May 21, 1931. Delgadillo collaborated with Uruguayan soprano Julieta Lacarte in settings for voice and piano of poems by Rubén Darío. He also performed a several compositions or arrangements with Mexican violinist Patricio Castillo.

[24] However, Delgadillo presented a work entitled *Romance Oriental* twice during the summer of 1931—first at a private reception and then at a public concert in celebration of Central American Independence—both presumably in New York City. It is unclear if this is the work for flute and piano dedicated to María Huezo, or if it is the song "Iris sagrado," subtitled "Romance oriental," found among his extant manuscripts. For a brief account of the private reception, see "Otro triunfo hispanoamericano en Nueva York," *Hispano América* (San Francisco), Oct. 3, 1931.

[25] Luis A. Delgadillo, *Romance Oriental*. "a Mariíta Huezo / Una serenata sollozante para ti ¡Oh angelical criatura del oriental sueño de un Rajá! Hubiera deseado dedicarte una música alegre y rebosante de juventud florida, cuando me

If read in a straightforward manner, Delgadillo symbolically presented the *Romance Oriental* to Huezo as a spiritual gift of belated condolence, a work by which to mourn her death through music. Yet various details in the dedication imply a poignant intimacy between them—Delgadillo addresses Huezo affectionately, and in the diminutive, Mariíta; his tone is intimate and sorrowful, yet suffused with regret; he bewails Huezo as conflation of opposing binaries, angelic (non-exotic) on the one hand, and "Eastern" (exotic) on the other; and he closes by invoking a spiritual intercourse between them in underlining the word *unísono* (unison). Among Delgadillo's exoticist works, the *Romance Oriental* stands out, in particular, for its commemorative purpose. His other compositions of a similar nature—requiem masses or funeral marches—were otherwise intended as practical ceremonial music.[26]

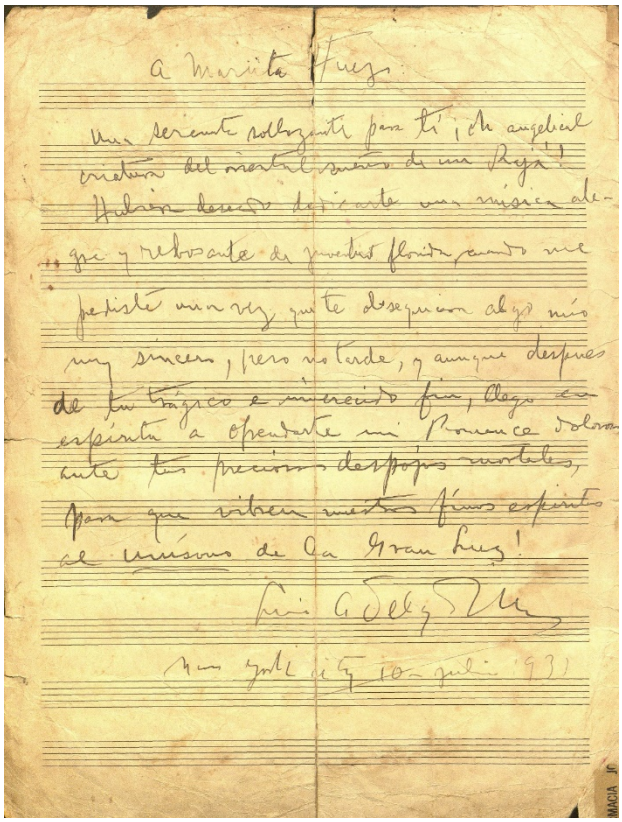

Figure 2: Delgadillo, *Romance Oriental* (1931), flute and piano, dedication page.
Source: Archivo General de la Nación, Nicaragua

pediste una vez, que te obsequiara algo mío muy sincero, pero no tarde, y aunque después de tu trágico e inmerecido fin, llego en espíritu a ofrendarte mi Romance doloroso ante tus preciosos despojos mortales, para que vibren nuestros finos espíritus al unísono de la Gran Luz!"

[26] In Nicaragua, requiem masses were part of the Catholic burial rite, while funeral marches were typically commissioned and performed to mark the first anniversary of a given death. There is one extant funeral march that commemorated the 1931 earthquake; see Carlos Ramírez Velásquez, "Mártires del terremoto," CRV 18/12, Fondo Histórico Documental de la Música Nicaragüense, Archivo General de la Nación, Managua, Nicaragua. Ramírez Velásquez included a note in the violoncello part to the work: "I composed this march in memory of those who died or lost their property on March 31, 1931 in Managua, Nicaragua" / "Esta marcha la compuse en recuerdo a los [qué] murieron y perdieron sus haberes el 31 Marzo de 1931 en Managua, Nicaragua."

In addition to the *Romance Oriental*, Delgadillo composed a small number of works in Orientalist musical garb, beginning in the 1920s through to the final year of his life in 1961. Around the time he commemorated Huezo, he also composed a vocal work for soprano and piano entitled "Isis sagrado" ("Sacred Isis"), subtitled "Romance Oriental," and published it with Sherman Square Music.[27] A through-composed song, Delgadillo set an unusual text, likely his own, in praise of an Egyptian god: "Sacred Isis, gods are the ones who care for you in the temple of the Rajas. Pray! And drink the light, you who suffer. Offer up your bitterness to the divine Allah! His brilliance is as great in Cairo as a breeze from the Nile. The higher white spirit understands. Secular Egypt, the gods are the ones who care for you with reverence. Allah, gives us eternal peace. Allah!"[28] The conflation of an Egyptian god (North Africa), the temple of the Rajas (South and Southeast Asia), and Allah (Muslim world) in a single text makes little sense upon first reading, especially since Isis is mistakenly presented as a male god. Delving further into the work, however, it appears that Delgadillo was less interested in historical or geographic accuracy than imbuing the song with an excess of exoticist signifiers and references.[29]

More than a decade passed before Delgadillo composed another Orientalist work. Completed on January 17, 1942, the ballet *La cabeza del rawí* (*The Head of the Rawí*) for orchestra, after the eponymous work by Nicaraguan *modernista* poet Rubén Darío (1867–1916), presented the tragic love story an "Eastern" king who marries a Persian woman.[30] When she falls in love with another man—a *rawí* (Arabic reciter of poetry)—the king has him beheaded in an effort to win her back. In despair over the loss, she commits suicide, a conclusion that follows in the French exoticist tradition of the archetypal *femme fatale*.[31] A large-scale stage work in seven scenes, the ballet premiered a decade later in February of 1953.[32] In that same year, Delgadillo embarked on what appears to have been a personal composition challenge. Within a span of five months, he produced twelve *sinfonías breves* (short symphonies) for orchestra, the seventh of which was subtitled "Oriental."[33] Much later, in what may have been his final composition, Delgadillo composed the *Noche Oriental* (Eastern Night)

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[27] Luis A. Delgadillo, "Isis Sagrado (Romance oriental)" for voice and piano, Manuscript vocal score, and vocal score, New York City: Sherman Square Music Publishing Co., [ca. 1931], Fondo Histórico Documental de la Música Nicaragüense, Archivo General de la Nación, Managua, Nicaragua.

[28] Ibid., Manuscript vocal score. "Isis sagrado, dioses son los que te cuidan con adoración en el templo de los Rajás. Orad! y bebed la luz, vosotros que padecéis. Ofréndale con fervor vuestro amargor al divino Alá! Su fulgor es tan grande en el Cairo como el céfiro del Nilo. El blanco espíritu superior lo comprende. Egipto secular, dioses son los que te cuidan con veneración. Alá, dadnos siempre paz. Alá!"

[29] Delgadillo published several songs with the company, including "El blanco lirio" (The White Lily, 1931), with an English translation by Ariadne Holmes Edwards, and "Canción de la noche del mar" (Song of the Night of the Sea, [ca. 1931]), both for voice and piano.

[30] Luis A. Delgadillo, *La cabeza del rawí (Ballet oriental)*, based on a text by Rubén Darío, Manuscript short and full score, Fondo Histórico Documental de la Música Nicaragüense, Archivo General de la Nación, Managua, Nicaragua.

[31] For a discussion of the archetype of the *femme fatale* in exoticist art music, see Ralph P. Locke, "Imperialism and 'the exotic Orient,'" in *Musical Exoticism: Images and Reflections* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 184–92.
[32] "Post-data a la Semana de Darío, 'La cabeza del rawí,'" *La Noticia* (Managua), Feb. 10, 1953.

[33] Luis A. Delgadillo, "Sinfonía breve No. 7 (Oriental)" for orchestra, Manuscript short score and parts, Fondo Histórico Documental de la Música Nicaragüense, Archivo General de la Nación, Managua, Nicaragua.

for piano and orchestra in July of 1961, six months before his death.[34] The one-movement fantasia for piano is relatively brief, and includes a virtuosic cadenza for the soloist. These works are the sum of the extant Orientalist compositions Delgadillo produced from the early 1920s onward, revealing his abiding interest in the nineteenth-century French exoticist musical tradition.[35] Moreover, they exhibit a command of its musical style and conventions. And although the *Romance Oriental* falls within the very same tradition, it is unusual for its commemorative purpose and for the apparent musical exoticization of a non-exotic woman from the West.

Remembering María Huezo

Prior to examining the exoticized portrayal of María Huezo in the *Romance Oriental*, it is worth exploring various non-exoticist representations of her—as Huezo was perceived or known in life (Figure 3)—found in documents produced after the earthquake. This emphasis on her humanity and memory will reveal the unusual nature of her exoticization. The most straightforward of these, a Testament of Death, is both factual and clinical in its account, while the rest are a collection of descriptions or representations by men whose idealized remembrances—male gazings of the mind—freeze her in time, memory, and perception.

Francisco Huezo notified the city registrar of her death as a result of wounds received during the earthquake. The testament described her succinctly as "twenty-two years old, unmarried, a school teacher, and of this city, a legitimate daughter of [Huezo]."[36] In defending her honor from the accusations by bishop Reyes y Balladares, her father noted, "Had the Bishop of Granada known my daughter, he would have judged her by the weight of virtue and profound dignity she possessed, with a firmness of character beyond her years."[37] On the first anniversary of the earthquake, a local newspaper recalled her as "virtuous and beautiful."[38] Journalist Apolonio Palazio would similarly place her among the more prominent deaths during the earthquake, and remembered her as "greatly appreciated… for her beauty, refinement, and good heart."[39] In a commemorative poem, *La ciudad*

[34] Luis A. Delgadillo, *Noche oriental (Fantasía)* for piano and orchestra, Manuscript parts, Fondo Histórico Documental de la Música Nicaragüense, Archivo General de la Nación, Managua, Nicaragua.

[35] Beginning with his *Sinfonía indígena o centroamericana* (Indigenous or Central American Symphony, 1921), Delgadillo also employed French musical exoticism in his Indianist compositions, resignifying their characteristics and devices to represent the indigenous in Latin America; see Bernard Gordillo, "Luis A. Delgadillo and the Cultural Occupation of Nicaragua under U.S.-American Intervention" (PhD diss., University of California, Riverside, 2019), 71–72.

[36] "María Huezo" (No. 667, 4 June 1931), *Libro de Defunciones*, vol.1, Managua, Nicaragua, in *Nicaragua, Civil Registration, 1809–2011*, Film 004255064, accessed April 21, 2018, https://www.ancestry.com/inst/discoveries/PfRecord?collectionId=60087&recordId=881390&language=en-US&ahsht=2018-04-22T01:08:05&ahsh=69af222c40d13693cbfdeb9c117547f6. "… veintidós años, soltera, profesora de enseñanza y de este domicilio, hija legítima del compareciente… ."

[37] Francisco Huezo, "Réplica de Don Francisco Huezo," in *La catástrofe de Managua: 31 de marzo de 1931*, ed. Apolonio Palazio, (Managua: Tipografía Atenas, 1952), 168. "Sí el Obispo de Granada hubiera conocido a mi hija, la hubiera estimado en los quilates de virtud y alta dignidad que tenía, con una firmeza de carácter superior a su edad."

[38] [Unattributed] *La Noticia* (Managua), March 31, 1932, in *La catástrofe de Managua: 31 de marzo de 1931*, ed. Apolonio Palazio, (Managua: Tipografía Atenas, 1952), 175. "La virtuosa y bella Srita. Mariíta Huezo… ."

[39] Palazio, *La catástrofe*, 85. "… muy apreciada… por su belleza, cultura, y buen corazón."

mártir (The Martyr City, 1933), Nicaraguan writer Benjamín Zeledón, Jr. recalled her image, sense of religious devotion, and musical ability:

> And Maria, beautiful flower of innocence;
> In this crimson world, a white dove
> Perfumed of sanctity, whose flowering
> White lily, heavenly aroma,
> Went to heaven among a chorus of angels
> To greet God and the Archangels!
> She went, thus it was written in the mysteries
> And there the Mother of God, with her pianos,
> Needed the prodigy of her hands
> And at her altars, the sweetness of her voice!
> The Virgin called Maria to embellish the heavens
> Yielding to her perpetual request and desire
> To be a voice in the choir that praises God![40]

The epitaph on her gravestone, selected by members of her family, memorialized Huezo as poised and graceful: "Everything about her enchanted, everything about her appealed / Her look, her expression, her smile, her gait… / She was full of grace, like the Ave María, / And at the fountain of grace, from whence she came, / She returned… like a drop that returns to the sea!"[41] The epitaph was taken from a poem by Mexican *modernista* poet Amado Nervo (1870–1919).[42] Its lines open and close the poem "Gratia Plena" (Full of Grace) from the collection *La amada inmóvil* (The Immobile Beloved), written over a period of years as the poet mourned the death of his own lover.[43] Similar to the descriptions of María Huezo, Nervo sought to preserve the memory of his beloved by idealizing her in death. The Huezo family's choice of verses was possibly an expression in resonance with that of the poet, which emanated from an indescribable grief and a desire to honor the deceased with an appropriate epitaph.

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[40] Benjamín F. Zeledón, Jr., "La ciudad mártir," *El Gráfico* (Managua), April 2, 1933. I am grateful to historian Jorge Eduardo Arellano for providing me with this excerpt of Zeledón's poem. "Y María, bella flor de inocencia; / en este rojo mundo blanca paloma / aromada de santidad cual florescencia / de blanco lirio de divino aroma, / se fue a los cielos entre un coro de ángeles / a saludar a Dios con los Arcángeles! / Se fue así estaba ya escrito en los arcanos / y la Madre de Dios allá en sus pianos / necesitó el prodigio de sus manos / y en sus Altares la dulzura de su voz! / La Virgen llamó a María para adornar el cielo / cediendo a su constante petición y anhelo / de ser voz en el Coro donde se ensalza a Dios!"

[41] Erwin Krüger Maltez, e-mail correspondence with the author, June 12, 2014. Krüger, echoing a relative of his from whom he received the epitaph, claimed (erroneously) that María Huezo's siblings had written the verses. "Todo en ella encantaba, todo en ella atraía; / Su mirada, su gesto, su sonrisa, su andar… / Era llena de gracia, como el Avemaría, / ¡y a la fuente de gracia, de dónde procedía, / Se volvió… como gota que se vuelve a la mar!"

[42] Nervo was a prominent figure of the literary *modernismo* movement in the Spanish language initiated by Nicaraguan poet Rubén Darío.

[43] Amado Nervo, *La amada inmóvil* (Buenos Aires: Espasa-Calpe Argentina, 1950), 50–51.

The above descriptions are a composite window through which to examine a distinctly male representation of a non-exotic female. It is perhaps unsurprising that in death María Huezo would be remembered not unlike she was perceived in life—a few years before the earthquake, Huezo was described in a Managua newspaper as "distinguished and cultured, her admirable spirituality makes her attractive and admired."[44] These descriptions are idealizations based on selective memories that suggest latent erotic desire—Huezo's purity and virtue are at once inviting and forbidden. Indeed, as I will show, the *Romance Oriental* manifests desire through the musical exoticization of Huezo, while revealing other hidden desires.

Figure 3: María Huezo Ortega, 1920s.
Source: Huezo Family Archive

[44] "Señorita María Huezo," *El Comercio* (Managua), Feb. 22, 1927. "Distinguida y culta, su espiritualidad exquisita la hacen atrayente y admirada."

Exoticizing María Huezo

Alongside the descriptive elements in the title and dedication, in addition to the extra-musical tempo/style indications reinforcing its commemorative purpose, the *Romance Oriental* displays a number of "stylistic signifiers of Elsewhere," musical devices taken from the French exoticist tradition. Employing the established analytical and descriptive language of the aforementioned scholars, I argue that these devices collectively suggest the musical transformation of Huezo from a non-exotic woman into a silent female Other.[45] Firstly, the instrumentation exhibits a strong exoticist characterization.[46] Delgadillo gave the role of the protagonist to the flute, an instrument nineteenth-century Belgian composer François-Auguste Gevaert (1828–1908) described as possessing "a very marked poetic character," yet whose nature was devoid of passion since "its ethereal breath lacks warmth and life."[47] The latter observation is apropos of the flute in the *Romance Oriental* as a posthumous representation of Huezo. Moreover, the observation finds affinity with the archetype of the *femme fragile* depicted in nineteenth-century French Orientalist works.[48] The solo is virtuosic in its technical demands, and utilizes nearly the entire range of the instrument, avoiding for the most part its lowest notes except in the cadenza. An orchestra of strings, woodwinds, brass and tympani variously engages the soloist throughout in conversation or recedes into the background. The orchestration includes English horn and harps, both *de rigueur* signifiers typically alluding to Middle Easterness. Secondly, a deeper characterization is found in other types of signifiers—melodic and textural devices, as well as a number of modal tonalities—whose subversion or distortion of Western compositional convention and functional harmony can denote the Other as simple, underdeveloped, or even primitive. There is a pervasive use of the interval of the augmented second in the work that, when deployed with other exoticist signifiers, is easily the most recognizable of markers suggesting "Gypsies" or Middle Easterners. Within an overall two-part form (A B) with an introduction and a coda, two moments, in particular, exhibit these signifiers in combination, and in turn give the work a sensual *affekt*. Delgadillo does not appear to employ any particular dialect of musical Orientalism, which traditionally evokes a particular locale or ethnicity, but rather makes use of an amalgam of signifiers or set of aural references, sometimes to excess, in characterizing the Other.[49]

The work opens in dramatic fashion with an animated bipartite introduction that hovers around the dominant (E)—distinguished by a brilliant, if dissonant opening *Allegro deciso* and a restless *Meno* in an animated exchange between the soloist and orchestra. The work's more sensual quality—its true character—does not begin to bloom until the A section, which notably shifts to a

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[45] Ralph P. Locke, "Imperialism and 'the exotic Orient,'" in *Musical Exoticism: Images and Reflections* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 184.

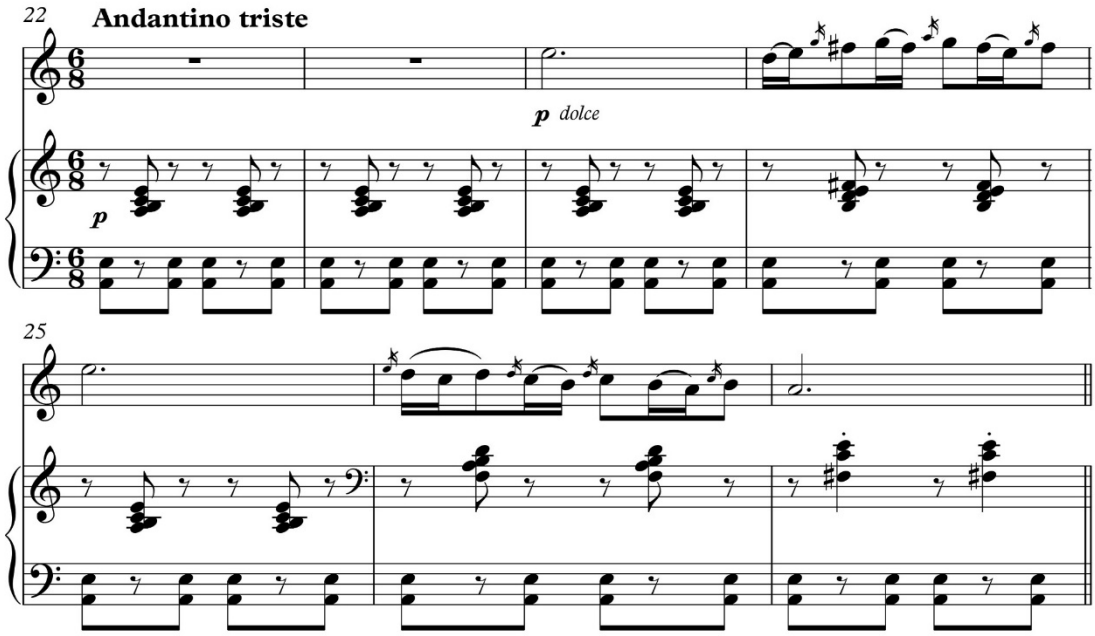
[46] Delgadillo initially composed the work for flute and piano, and later scored it for orchestra. I take both versions into consideration in my analysis, using musical examples from the original version, while referencing the orchestration.

[47] François-Auguste Gevaert, *Nouveau traité d'instrumentation*, (Paris, 1885), 121. "…un caractère poétique très marqué"; "…sou souffle éthéré manque de chaleur et de vie."

[48] Locke, "Imperialism," 182.

[49] For a summary of the more common musical dialects employed in Orientalist compositions, see Derek B. Scott, "Orientalism and Musical Style," *The Musical Quarterly* 82/2 (1998): 309–35.

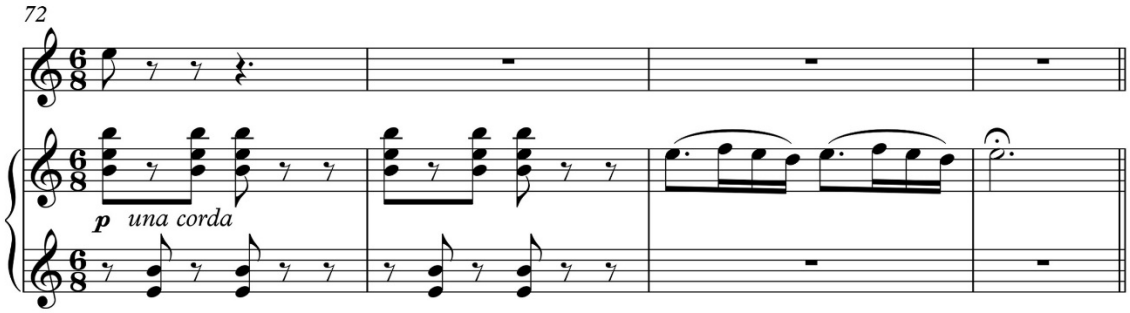
more grounded, somber mood, establishing the tonic in A minor. The initial measures of the *Andantino triste* in 6/8 present the instrumental roles and prevailing melancholy tone of the section (Music Example 1). The orchestra begins with an accompaniment marked by an ostinato on a double pedal point, articulated by a triplet figure of repeated eighth notes.[50] The effect is that of a slow, unhurried pulsation with a grave lilt. The flute enters with a simple, sorrowful melody, whose first phrase in A-Dorian is elaborated over five measures. It is embellished with short grace notes—melodic signifiers of Easterness. The constant pedal point and unremitting ostinato pattern that grounds most of the A section avoids, by its very nature, a strong cadence, insuring that the tension built up from the beginning finds no satisfying resolution in its subversion of Western convention. The section proceeds in a similar manner, preserving the texture of the accompaniment, yet sometimes shifting to related modal areas, until dissolving at its close: a lone oboe is left to mark a repeated arabesque gesture reminiscent of the snake charmer whose alluring melody beckons the creature to appear (Music Example 2).[51]



Music Example 1: Delgadillo, *Romance Oriental*, A section (beginning), mm. 22–27.

[50] The first and third eighth notes are played by the lowest strings, bassoons, tympani, and harps, with the upper strings, clarinets, and horns playing the second, contributing to the texture with a dissonant cluster-like chord.

[51] The arabesque is a musical gesture, a turn, having an affinity with ornamental design in Middle Eastern art or decoration.



Music Example 2: Delgadillo, *Romance Oriental*, A section (ending), mm. 72–75.

The B section (*Andante doloroso*) that follows is where the veil is lifted and the musical transformation of Huezo is fully realized (Music Example 3). A "sensuous" melody characterizes this moment, recalling musicologist Ricardo Miranda's provocative description of "a melody that, like Eastern women, only occasionally allows itself to be seen."[52] As if suspended in time, the soloist no longer interacts with the orchestra, but plays a floating melody over a calm accompaniment: a simple, curvaceous line with sinuous ornaments (arabesque gestures) sings above a slowly pulsating pedal point in the orchestral accompaniment, an undulating chromatic inner line doubled at the octave—the "ear-caressing" strumming of the harp reinforces the "balmy" texture of the strings and woodwinds, an effect only hinted by the rolling of chords in the piano part.[53] Locke has described such an effect as embodying "female sensuality."[54] The cadenza that follows interrupts the "sultry" exhibition of the flute, which now freely expresses itself without the restraint imposed by the orchestra (Music Example 4). A simple melody in A-Dorian punctuated in the bottom range of the flute is ornamented by brilliant arpeggios that soar and fall through the instrument's middle and upper registers, twice grazing the highest note (A6) in the work. The unbridled flight of the soloist is brought to an abrupt end by two accentuated dominant chords in the accompaniment—its grounded Western harmony subdues and disciplines the flute's modal, "Oriental" tendencies. A return to the opening material follows the cadenza with an almost exact statement of the "sensuous" melody and accompaniment (Music Example 5). The ensuing coda (still in A-Dorian) begins with a fragment of the flute melody, yet at the octave, and concludes with an ascending "Gypsy" minor scale that arrives at an ethereal A6 sustained by the soloist while the orchestra's inner harmonic line slowly billows until the closing fermata.

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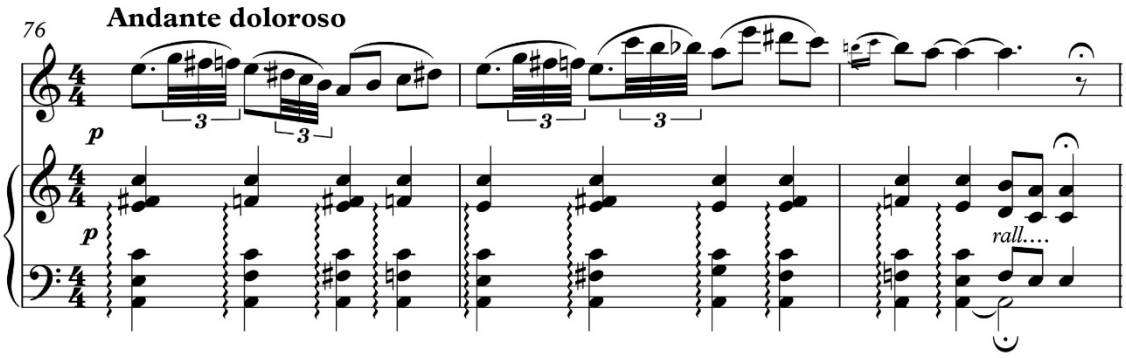
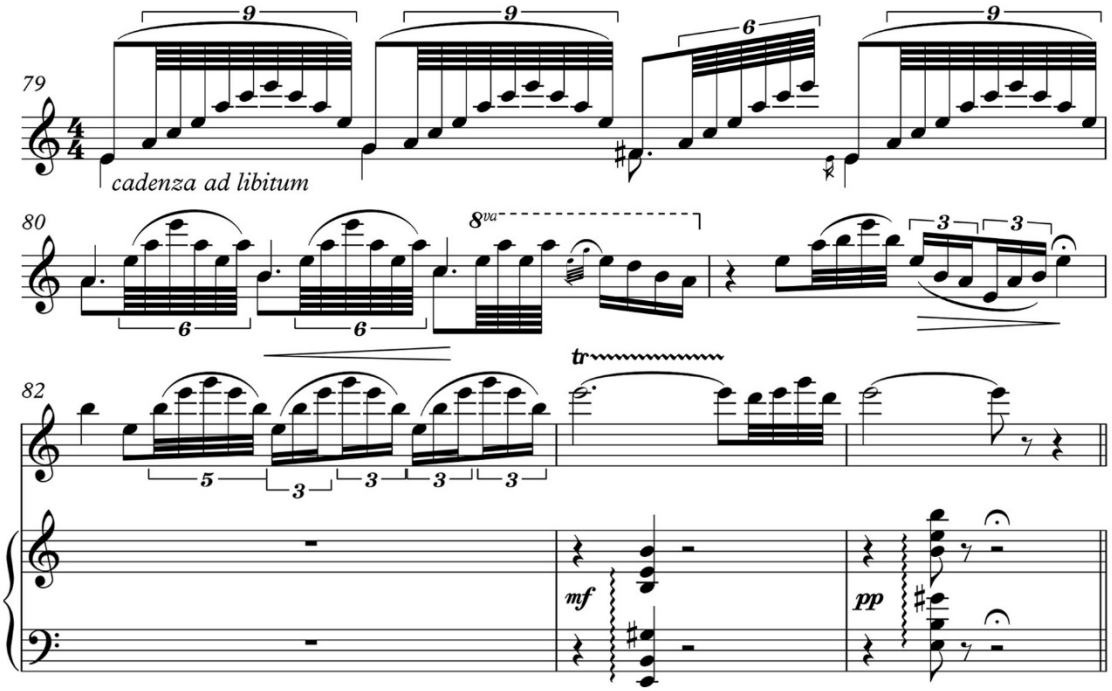
[52] Ricardo Miranda, "Anastasia o de las evocaciones de Oriente," *Heterofonía* 41/140 (2009), 45. "…una melodía que, como las mujeres orientales, sólo en ocasiones se deja ver."

[53] There is a resemblance of the melody to the opening of Debussy's *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune*, also played by a flute, revealing Delgadillo's European musical training and suggesting the cosmopolitan tastes of his dedicatee and the Managua audiences who received the work. Indeed, Delgadillo admired the music of Debussy and among his extant manuscripts are orchestral or band arrangements of Debussy's works. In addition, Delgadillo composed a number of homages to the French composer, some carrying labels such as "Debussean" or "Debussyana."

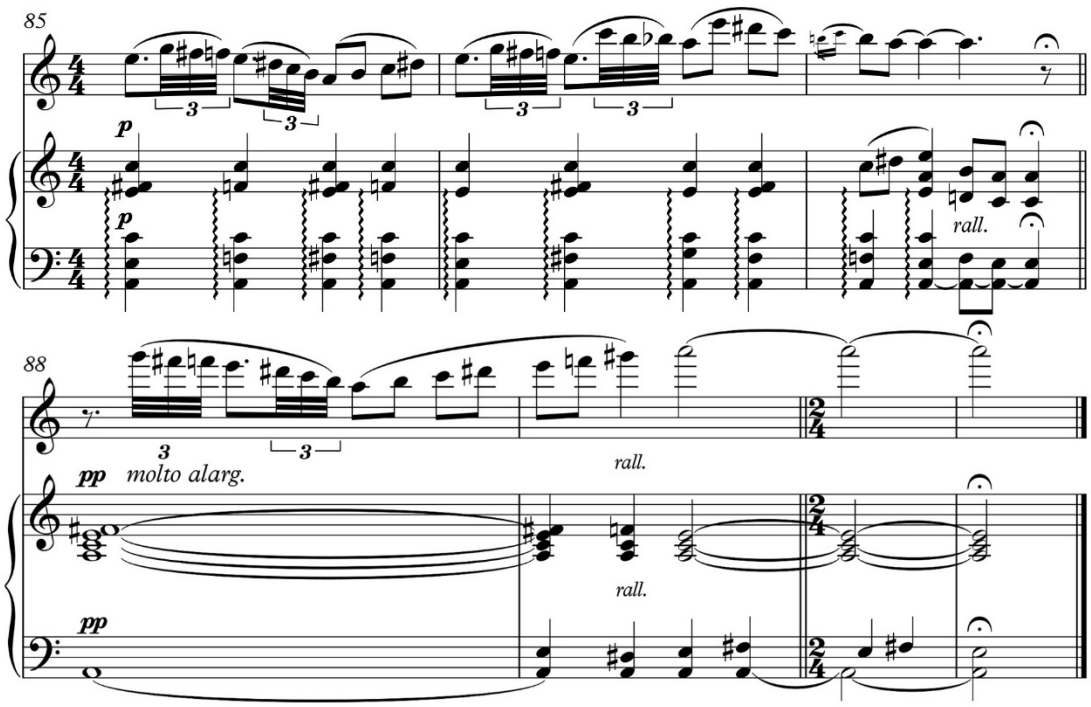
[54] Ralph P. Locke, "Cutthroats and Casbah Dancers, Muezzins and Timeless Sands: Musical Images of the Middle East," in *The Exotic in Western Music* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1998), 118.



Music Example 3. Delgadillo, *Romance Oriental*, B section (beginning), mm. 76–78.



Music Example 4. Delgadillo, *Romance Oriental*, cadenza, mm. 79–84.



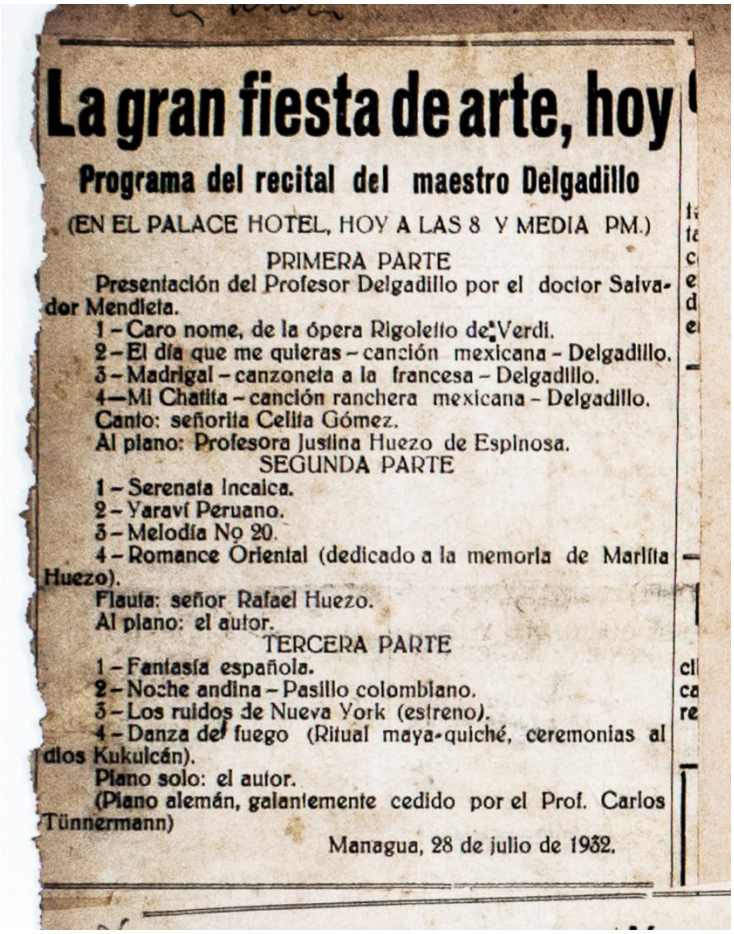
Music Example 5. Delgadillo, *Romance Oriental*, B section (ending) and coda, mm. 85–91.

Spatial and Temporal Landscapes

The *Romance Oriental* reveals Delgadillo's state of mind in the months following the earthquake, suggesting an escapist desire and acute nostalgia for home, each derived from a binary of spatial and temporal mental landscapes. The work strongly points to a romantic, perhaps erotic desire Delgadillo reserved for Huezo, insinuated by the spiritual intercourse he invoked in the dedication. However, there is a more notable desire, another object of longing—Managua before the earthquake. Gilles de Van has posited exoticism to be "the search for a foreign land which changes into a reflection of one's own country."[55] This quality appears to be present in the *Romance Oriental*. From his position in New York City, Delgadillo composed an exoticist work in Orientalist musical garb as an escapist response, triggered by a tragedy, which revealed his desire to be Elsewhere. The work's commemorative purpose and its implicit erotic subtext are veils that disguised his state of mind in responding to the consequences of the catastrophe. The *Romance Oriental* is thus a representation of an exoticized María Huezo, who may also be a substitute for Managua. The earthquake and fire transformed the capital into an Elsewhere—a devastated "foreign land"—in the composer's musical imagination, and subsequently reflected his childhood city back at him. As a result, the catastrophe may have also triggered a particular kind of longing to return to that lost city.

[55] Gilles de Van, "Fin de siècle Exoticism and the Meaning of the Far Away," *Opera Quarterly* 11 (1995): 78.

Delgadillo's desire to escape from reality through the *Romance Oriental* appears to be connected to a particular sense of nostalgia.[56] It suggests he wanted to go home, but not one from the present—he wanted to return to the Managua as it existed before the earthquake and U.S.-American intervention. Svetlana Boym has asserted that nostalgia is not just a longing for a particular locale, but "a yearning for a different time—the time of our childhood."[57] Whereas Delgadillo's exoticization of María Huezo in the *Romance Oriental* was a spatial yearning, his acute nostalgia was temporal, and he may have thus longed for the Managua of his childhood. This nostalgia is most clearly exhibited in the dedication to the work in which he recalled an exchange with Huezo. Tinged with regret for not having fulfilled her request while she was still alive and Managua was intact, Delgadillo ached to give her the work in person. But it was a lost opportunity and temporal impossibility. He was left with only her memory, and of the remains of a capital city that would be rebuilt, though resembling little of its past self.



La gran fiesta de arte, hoy

Programa del recital del maestro Delgadillo

(EN EL PALACE HOTEL, HOY A LAS 8 Y MEDIA PM.)

PRIMERA PARTE

Presentación del Profesor Delgadillo por el doctor Salvador Mendieta.

1 – Caro nome, de la ópera Rigoletto de Verdi.
2 – El día que me quieras – canción mexicana – Delgadillo.
3 – Madrigal – canzoneta a la francesa – Delgadillo.
4 – Mi Chatita – canción ranchera mexicana – Delgadillo.

Canto: señorita Celita Gómez.
Al piano: Profesora Justina Huezo de Espinosa.

SEGUNDA PARTE

1 – Serenata Incaica.
2 – Yaraví Peruano.
3 – Melodía No 20.
4 – Romance Oriental (dedicado a la memoria de Marlita Huezo).

Flauta: señor Rafael Huezo.
Al piano: el autor.

TERCERA PARTE

1 – Fantasía española.
2 – Noche andina – Pasillo colombiano.
3 – Los ruidos de Nueva York (estreno).
4 – Danza del fuego (Ritual maya-quiché, ceremonias al dios Kukulcán).

Piano solo: el autor.
(Piano alemán, galantemente cedido por el Prof. Carlos Tünnermann)

Managua, 28 de julio de 1932.

Figure 4: Delgadillo Concert Program (July 28, 1931), Managua, Nicaragua. Source: *La Nación*

[56] In my use of the term "nostalgia," I employ a fundamental meaning taken from its Greco-Roman root—*algia* (longing) and *nostos* (the return home), after Svetlana Boym.

[57] Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), xv.

Conclusion

On the evening of July 28, 1932, Delgadillo gave a public recital in Managua, his first after permanently returning from what was described as an "odyssey to the United States."[58] The concert program appeared in a local newspaper, and carried the headline "Today, a grand celebration of art," a sign of the public anticipation that awaited him (Figure 4).[59] This would have complimented a much greater sense of expectation for Nicaraguans: the intervention was soon coming to an end.[60] Held at one of the few hotels to survive the earthquake, Delgadillo offered a selection of his music, some in collaboration with recognized musicians, including Huezo's siblings. Rafael Huezo, an older brother, played the flute in what was likely the local premiere of the *Romance Oriental*. Newspapers noted the success of the performance before a sizeable and receptive audience. They singled out the *Romance Oriental*, referring to it as a "Romance Doloroso" (Doleful Romance), a marker of the affective weight of its commemorative purpose. Her memory was already turning into symbol of loss for the disappeared city and its unfortunate inhabitants. [61] Although bittersweet, the work resonated with the audience, allowing them to collectively mourn Huezo through a musical homage. Imbued with nostalgia and clothed in Orientalist musical garb, Delgadillo momentarily brought María Huezo back to life, yet as a representation of the Other. In transforming a non-exotic woman from the West, his employment of the French exoticist musical tradition thus subverted convention in its resignification for a Central American context.

[58] "El concierto de antenoche en el Hotel Palace," [*La Nación*] (Managua), Jul. 30, 1932. "…odisea por los Estados Unidos…"

[59] "La gran fiesta de arte, hoy," [*La Noticia*] (Managua), Jul. 28, 1932.

[60] "Párrafos del Director. Sirva el presente artículo…," *Guardia Nacional* I (March 1933): 1; and Jorge Eduardo Arellano, *La pax americana en Nicaragua (1910–1932)* (Managua: Fondo Editorial CIRA, 2004), 206–209. The U.S. intervention in Nicaragua ended on January 2, 1933 with the transfer of the *Guardia Nacional* command to Anastasio Somoza García.

[61] "Delgadillo obtuvo una ovación antenoche en el 'hall' del Palace," [*La Noticia*] (Managua), Jul. 30, 1932; "El concierto de antenoche en el Hotel Palace," [*La Nación*] (Managua), Jul. 30, 1932; and "El recital del maestro Luis A. Delgadillo," [*El Comercio*] (Managua), 1932.

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