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## Too little, too late?

# Higher Popular Music Education Reforms as a Strategy of Decoloniality for the Progress and Preservation of Ecuadorian Minorities – the Case of the LAM-UCE Program

## Introduction

Ecuador is the second smallest of the Spanish-speaking countries in South America. It is three quarters the size of Germany, and it has one quarter of its population. It has had 20 different national constitutions since its foundation in 1822. The last one was established in 2008 as part of *La Revolución Ciudadana* (“The Citizens’ Revolution”), a socio-economical project that started in 2006 by the newly elected government of Rafael Correa. Back then, he was a very charismatic leader who at some point managed to gain up to 81% of support (“Presidente R. Correa Incrementa” 2012). His constitution, among other things and contrary to previous ones, was highly focused on a decolonized education and the recognition of aboriginal philosophies under the umbrella of *Buen Vivir* (Balch 2013). Kichwa and Shuar, the two most used languages among indigenous people, were officially recognized and introduced to the primary and secondary educational system.

It is in this context that the Universidad Central del Ecuador (UCE) developed the *Licenciatura en Artes Musicales* (LAM-UCE), the first music program in the country to be based on a decolonial discourse and ‘officially’ academised the Andean- and Afro-Ecuadorian music traditions by introducing them into its curriculum. Julián Pontón, Director of the program, affirms: “This is basically an innovative project. We have taken Ecuadorian *musics* as the starting point of the innovative project. We are here teaching native instruments at the same level as European instruments” (J. Pontón, in-person interview, January 9, 2020). [translated from Spanish].

This paper continues to explain the methodology used in the analysis of the LAM-UCE as part of a doctoral research on popular music discourses in higher education through the lens of decoloniality. Then it expands on the description of the political context of *La Revolución Ciudadana*. After that, it examines the postcolonial and decolonial ideological foundations for the program in question, before proceeding to discuss the program itself based on the findings from interviews conducted with the faculty of UCE. The article ends with a reflection that aims to leave the doors open for further discussion since the apparent struggle between progress and preservation is not inherently mutually exclusive.

## Methodology

This paper is part of a doctoral project designed with a documentary and a field research phase with a sample of four case studies, two in Ecuador and two in Germany. Although Ecuador’s colonial history is directly related to Spain, music education in Ecuador followed the Italian,

German, and Russian schools of music (Moreno, 1930) providing the symptoms of a cultural colonialism scarcely contested by academia. For this, a distinction needs to be highlighted for this paper. Popular music is all the music considered outside the Western European Art Music (WEAM) schools, making it an umbrella term covering other possible categories that follow a more Euro-centric line of thought such as: traditional, folklore, or indigenous. In this context, the predominant adoption of US American models for the teaching of popular music, makes Ecuador a relevant case for this research, on top of being the home country of the researcher and initial place of his professional practice as an academic.

Data was collected from literature regarding Popular Music Studies (PMS), Popular Music Education (PME), Higher Popular Music Education (HPME), Postcolonial studies, Decoloniality, Sociology of Education, Sociology of Music, and Methodology. The literature body consists in pivotal sources in English, German, and Spanish. The main data collection methods during the field research were semi-structured interviews, non-participatory observations, and curriculum analysis (including syllabi, contents, and learning outcomes for specific subjects). The interviews took place with directors and teachers from each case study. All the citations from interviewees are translated from the data collected in the transcripts<sup>1</sup>.

The study approached each analysed program as a cultural knowledge system (CKS), “a social institution based in the activities of creating, teaching, and applying knowledge through the interrelated system components of substantive body, methodology, medium, epistemology, and social structure” (Baker 2011, 11). The concept of CKS offers the opportunity to understand university programs as dynamic environments without strictly delimited epistemological boundaries, where various components co-exist to constantly reinvent themselves. These components are explained in Figure 1.

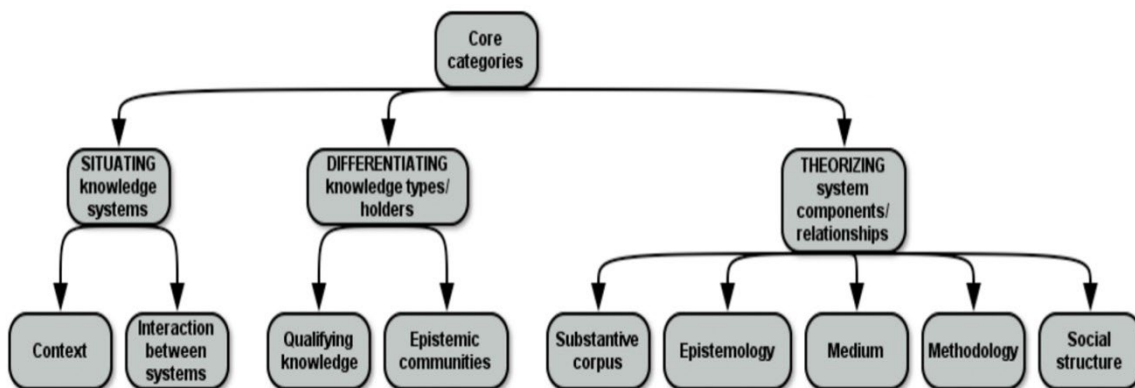


Figure 1: The Core Categories and their Clusters of Sub-categories of Cultural Knowledge Systems (Baker 2011, 25)

This research focused on the components of Epistemology and Methodology within the Theorizing category. Additionally, this work was also guided by the Framework and Pedagogies elements of Kat Reinhert’s conceptual framework (Figure 2) developed in her study of two HPME programs.

<sup>1</sup> The complete transcripts can be found at <https://abnerperezmarin.com/phd-thesis-material/>. They are structured by lines, and the quotes referred to the specific lines of the specific interviewee’s section.

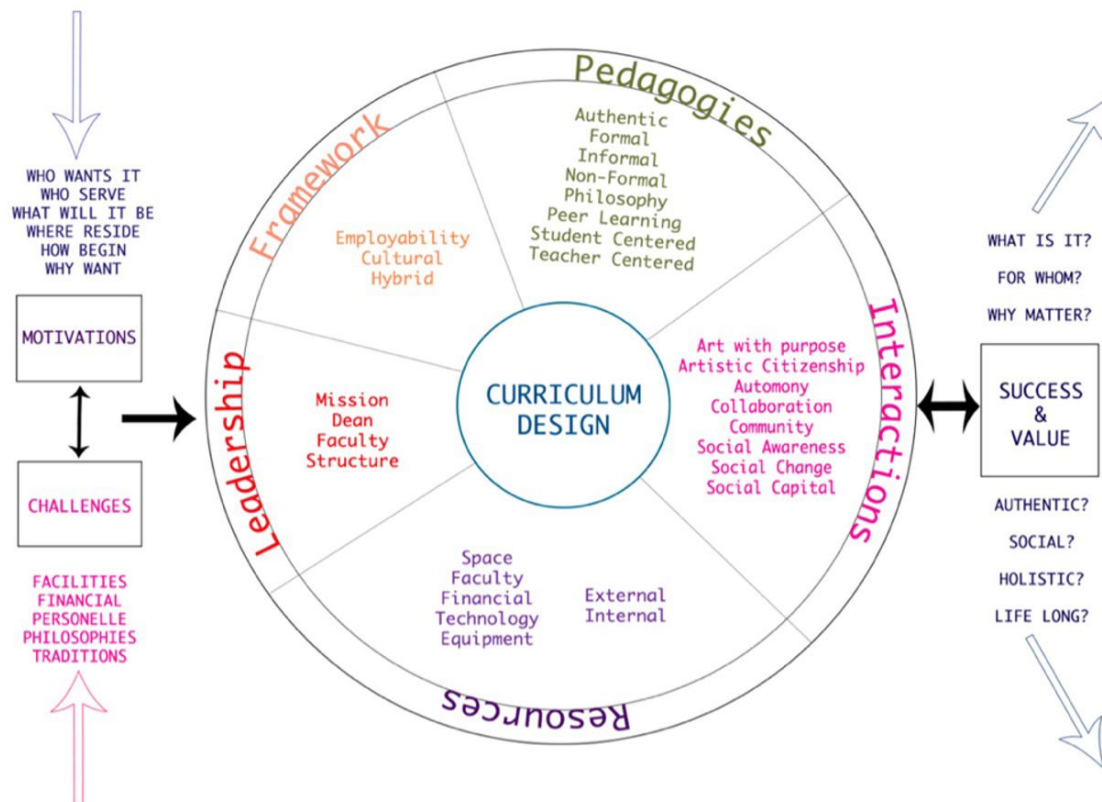


Figure 2: Conceptual Framework (Reinhert 2018, 30)

For the data gathered, the analytic approach adopted consisted of the identification of key themes (Juuti and Littleton 2012). It began with transcription of the recordings and field notes that were taken in Quito, Ecuador during November 2019, and February 2020. Analysis of the interview and observation data resulted in a rich description of the participants' perceptions on the concepts, teaching methodologies and decolonial practices within their programs. The extracts presented in the following sections exemplify broader patterns detected in the analysis of the themes. The next section expands on the description of the political context of *La Revolución Ciudadana* in which the LAM-UCE program was first envisioned.

## Ecuador – *La Revolución Ciudadana* and its Current Political Context

After the Cuban revolution, the decades of the 60s and the 70s were characterised by the constant fight between US-sponsored military governments and socialist revolutions in almost every country of South America. By the 80s, most of them had returned to democracy, although the parties elected were still very much influenced by US interests (Chomsky 2003). Nevertheless, during the first decade of the 2000s, most South American countries had elected left-wing governments which, to some extent, were encompassing many of the ideals that the revolutions intended decades before.

Rafael Correa came to power in 2006 and left office in 2017. He now lives in Belgium and cannot return to Ecuador without facing a trial for accusations of corruption. These claims are strongly denied by him. He asserts that it is a political persecution similar to what has happened with most of the 'progressive leaders' of that decade: Lula in Brazil, Lugo in Paraguay,

and Kirchner in Argentina, among others (“Rafael Correa” 2020). His successor Lenin Moreno, although from the same political party, did not follow the revolution path. In October 2019, he announced a series of economic reforms that provoked the first national strike in 14 years. The protests lasted 10 days, violence was rampant around the country, and 20,000 indigenous people arrived in the capital city to pressure the president. He declared a state of emergency and retracted in the end.

Moreno finished his mandate in May 2021. The current president is Guillermo Lasso, a right-wing ex-banker with a completely different agenda. *La Revolución Ciudadana* turned out to be another bittersweet chapter in the country’s history. However, the vivid opposition against Moreno’s mandate, and the current political environment, show that its profound effects are far from gone. In February 2020, Jaime Vargas, the president of the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (CONAIE) caused controversy in a press conference after referring to himself as the second president of the country. Furthermore, Moreno’s government tried to link him with Correa in an effort to discredit him (“¿Quién es Vargas?” 2020). In the latest elections, the candidate of Correa’s party was the winner of the first round, losing in the second round to Lasso who controversially at last moment became the runner-up after taking, with a minuscular difference, over Yaku Pérez, the candidate representing the indigenous party. Pérez became the first indigenous candidate in Ecuadorian history to occupy the third place in a presidential election. Pérez demanded a recount of the votes; the petition was not granted.

Undoubtedly, the empowerment of Ecuadorian indigenous groups from their linguistic and artistic expressions is part of a long process that aims to give them visibility and relevance in the cultural and political arena of the country. Nevertheless, to assume that progress excludes preservation, or vice versa, is not an adequate framework. The next section introduces the main postcolonial and decolonial discourses before continuing to discuss the strategies for progress and preservation of Ecuador’s indigenous music that take place in the LAM-UCE program.

## Postcolonial and Decolonial Discourses

The founding authors of postcolonialism studies are Edward W Said, Homi K Bhabha and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. All of them come from the East Hemisphere. Postcolonial theory manifests itself as a theory of narratives, trying to establish ‘other’ interpretation, or interpretations, to the ‘official’ ones. It attempts to break off from the discourse of modernity established by the colonial powers (infamously and self-labelled as the West) and to engender critical-theoretical perspectives through displacing, interrogative subaltern, or post slavery narratives. “The issue is more about re-inscribing ‘other’ cultural traditions into narratives of modernity and thus transforming those narratives—both in historical terms and theoretical ones—rather than simply re-naming or re-evaluating the content of these other ‘inheritances’” (Bhabra 2014, 116).

Conversely, according to Gurinder Bhabra (2014), the founders of decolonial discourses are Anibal Quijano from Peru, and María Lugones and Walter Mignolo from Argentina. This is a very important distinction because in Latin America, the writers differentiated themselves from the postcolonial line because ultimately, the term only denotes temporality: something that is after (post) the colonial times. However, decolonialism implies the deconstruction of

that colonialism in order to establish a new path. Decolonialism, for these writers, is about acknowledging their own debts to their own communities as the starting point for the revision of their current identity.

The decolonial discourse poses three different types of coloniality that need to be challenged: power, being, and knowledge. The coloniality of power refers to the political structures of current modern societies where the leaders represent a small proportion of the population, but the wealthiest and whitest one (Quijano, 2000). The coloniality of being follows Heidegger's definition of 'the Being', but goes beyond his Eurocentric, race-based approach, and brings Lévinas and Fanon contributions into the discussion. As Nelson Maldonado-Torres (2007, 257) affirms: "The coloniality of Being is therefore co-extensive with the production of the color-line in its different expressions and dimensions. It becomes concrete in the appearance of liminal subjects, which mark, as it were, the limit of Being, that is, the point at which Being distorts meaning and evidence to the point of dehumanization".

And finally, the coloniality of knowledge has to do with the impact of colonization in the different areas of knowledge production. It reveals the way educational systems have been built and developed upon a science that has been written by the colonial powers ignoring all possible contributions, philosophies, and expressions from pre-colonial communities. Bhambra provides a provocative term for this: the coloniality of imagination (2014, 117).

This last aspect of decoloniality is what the constitution of Rafael Correa tried to address by not only educational reforms but also, implementing a new intellectual property law called Código Ingenios (Ingenious Code). 'Ancestral knowledge', another way of referring to the rituals and beliefs of indigenous communities, was proposed to become a common good, and the intellectual property framework had to make sure of this. The intention, at least on paper, was to start a process of decolonization of knowledge by creating a legal framework where knowledge is of public domain. However, the implications of such a framework affected the protections of 'modern' knowledge, and that is when the Code found strong resistance, and even when it was approved, its impact has been almost zero (Izurieta 2015).

In this context, in 2017, UCE embarked itself upon the establishment a new music program, the next part reviews the most important aspects of it from its director and members of its faculty.

## **Licenciatura en Artes Musicales – Universidad Central del Ecuador**

Universidad Central del Ecuador (UCE) is the oldest and largest public university of Ecuador. It was officially founded in 1620. It is located in the capital, Quito. It is well renowned for its quality of education but also for its politicised and bureaucratic structure. As a public institution, it is free of charge for students, making the admission process difficult. Most of its students come from rural areas and low-income families.

In 2015, the design of a new bachelor's degree in Music began. Its current director, the Ecuadorian flute player Julián Pontón, was part of the team in charge of the initial planning. The project was approved in 2017, and it started running in September 2018. Pontón is a classically trained musician with a renowned trajectory as a performer in the Ecuadorian Symphonic Or-

chestra and his duet with guitarist Terry Pazmiño, who is famous for performing Ecuadorian traditional music.

The *Licenciatura en Artes Musicales* at the Universidad Central (LAM-UCE) is one of the programs offered by the Faculty of Arts together with Performing Arts, Plastic Arts, Dance, and Theatre. At the time of writing, the faculty is made up of 28 teachers, most of them with temporal contracts. It accepts 40 students per semester. The number of applicants has been around 100 per semester, except for the first one when the number was almost double. As a public university, applicants must first pass a national exam to be able to apply to enter. They are then required to attend an audition where their music skills are evaluated in terms of performance, and on the same day, they take another test with regards to music theory. The test is not conclusive, but the audition is. The decision is made on a case-by case basis and the demographics (ethnicity, age, gender, region) of the applicant is a pivotal factor in order to achieve diversity.

Its curriculum is designed in nine semesters. It contemplates four itineraries: Composición (Composition), Interpretación (Performance), Producción (Production), and Musicología en Música Ecuatoriana y Latinoamericana (Musicology in Ecuadorian and Latin American Music). Each itinerary has two exclusive classes per semester starting from the fourth semester until the eighth, and one class in the ninth semester. Students are expected to choose only one of the itineraries.

Generally speaking, the curriculum has fixed subjects organised into four pillars: 1) Fundamentos Musicales, 2) Aproximación y Experimentación Musical, 3) Formación Integral y Saberes, and 4) Investigación Musical. The subjects under the first pillar (Musical Fundamentals) deal with music theory (harmony, arrangements, counterpoint, ear training, choir, and conducting) and music history ('universal' and Ecuadorian and Latin American music). The second one (Musical Approximation and Experimentation) consists of classes with a practical focus: instrument performance, composition and all the subjects of the chosen itinerary. For the teaching of traditional instruments (marimba and drums from the Afro tradition, and winds and strings from the Andean one), the teachers are producing written material that until now was only passed via orality and teaching them in group lessons replicating community practises. Two subjects focusing on instrument-making and ethno-musicology are shared with the third pillar (Integral Formation and Knowledges). This group encompasses subjects related to linguistics, communication, and culture, including cultural management (*gestión cultural*), and pedagogy. Likewise, four classes are shared with the final pillar (Music Research), which in turn, covers methodology, cultural genealogy, and the final dissertation.

The instrument-making workshops focus on two traditions: the Andean-Ecuadorian tradition with various types of panpipes and charangos; and the Afro-Ecuadorian one with marimbas and diverse types of drums. With regards to composition, using elements of the Western European Art Music tradition, the focus is on local genres such as pasillos, sanjuanitos, yaravies, danzantes from the Andean tradition; and bombas, andareles and arrullos from the Afro one.

The first end-of-semester concert took place during the semester observed (the third one since the program started running). It showcased original pieces written by students in their classes of Composition. The works were performed by students, but also by teachers, especially as pianists. Eighteen pieces were presented, and they all had elements of 'classical' and popular music, mainly Ecuadorian typical music genres, but also jazz. The instrumentation was mainly

classical (piano, winds, and strings), but guitar and marimba were also incorporated in one piece each. Experimentation with body percussion was also present.

In terms of popular music discourses, Director Pontón affirms that the LAM-UCE program is the first one to take Ecuadorian popular music as its starting point. He advocates that there should not be any dichotomy between popular and academic music since all academic music has grown out of popular music, and the only difference is on the level of elaboration. He adds that an academic composer has more compositional elements of harmony, forms, orchestration, and all the elements that support the composition; therefore, they do it in a way with greater knowledge. However, it is a matter of starting, based on research and analysis, from the roots, from the popular music of the mestizo, afro, and indigenous (lines 135-141).

Nevertheless, he does find a dichotomy between popular and commercial music. According to him, the difference lies in the content (musically and lyrically). He believes that the first has a very powerful and deep emotional motive while the latter is a music of patterns and repetitive schemes that have proved to be successful for the masses.

Other key members of the faculty express similar dialectical tensions. One of the members of the LAM-UCE founding committee and current piano teacher, Gladys Noguera, believes that popular music is “what it has been outside the symphony orchestra, outside the academy, the conservatory, the music schools, that is, the street” (lines 180-181). According to her, academic music requires levels of perfecting and training, the music is read and interpreted as written, while popular music is just the opposite. She defines popular music as being about the emotion, and listening is the main skill in order to play it, not reading.

Likewise, Julio Andrade, renowned guitar performer, and now professor of the *Escuela Quiteña* (School of Quito) tradition, considers that popular music is defined by its repertoires. The pieces are among the people on a daily basis and not the ones used by the academia or for study purposes. These repertoires are performed in popular codes, codes that the street musician handles based on oral tradition. According to him, there are two aspects that define popular music: the repertoires and the terms in which those repertoires are approached (lines 46-48).

In contrast, Jorge Campos, distinguished composer of experimental music based in France, and now professor in charge of the area of composition, believes that popular is not an intrinsic characteristic of the music itself, but the result of how it is utilised, distributed, and perceived by the audience. He affirms that “even classical music can be popular music, like it was in Cuba or the communist countries of Eastern Europe during the epoch when its promotion and diffusion was an absolute priority” (lines 127-129). Thus, popular music is to do with accessibility and not with format.

Similarly, Nicolás Araúz, in charge of the itinerary of Production, thinks that popular music refers to the music that is massively consumed; in other words, the level of popularity of the music is what it makes it popular. In this sense, he adds that what the LAM-UCE considers to be traditional Ecuadorian music, is actually popular music, because it is music that does not present barriers or difficulties to be understood, to be enjoyed, to be shared, it is the music of the Ecuadorian celebrations, the music that is enjoyed in the Ecuadorian population (lines 148-149).

Additionally, Jackson Ayoví, one of the two Afro-Ecuadorian musicians to hold a professorship in Music in an HEI, believes that popular music is music that has evolved from the community at the beginning, then to the province, and then the whole country takes it over (lines 81-83). He adds that popular music is closely related to the identity of a specific population, to the point of becoming its heritage.

Finally, Pablo Guerrero, renowned music historicist, owner of possibly the vastest archive of Ecuadorian traditional music documents (scores, interviews, testimonies, audio files, to name a few) and now in charge of the area of musicology at the LAM-UCE, is aware that popular music is officially considered as the music disseminated in mass media, and academic music is what is not; or academic music is the one that has more elements for its elaboration while popular music is not. However, he is convinced that popular music has to do with a sense of belonging, of appropriation of a specific place. He puts Plácido Domingo's tango album as an example that no Argentine recognises as their music, therefore, it stops being popular, it becomes anything else but popular (lines 260-262).

Ultimately, through qualitative coding, the following descriptors were ingrained in LAM-UCE faculty's perceptions of what constitutes popular music: popularity, usage, accessibility, outside the academy, emotion, listening skills, appropriation, community, heritage, identity, repertoires, oral traditions, codes of interpretation, tradition, sense of belonging, source of most sophisticated formats.

In terms of decoloniality, most members of the faculty express similar concerns to the ones revised in the literature. For example, Director Pontón considers that Latin America in general suffered a process of independence, of decolonisation, but not of decoloniality. At the ideological level, it continues to reproduce the same schemes of European music and European ideology (lines 61-64). Therefore, to challenge this, Pontón affirms that the LAM-UCE was conceived as an innovative and decolonial educational project, taking Ecuadorian *musics* as the starting point, and teaching native instruments at the same level as European instruments.

The two main strategies of decoloniality within the LAM-UCE are: the construction of local instruments; and the research of local material and expressions. For the first one, the program has hired musicians and luthiers from the indigenous Afro and Andean communities as part of the faculty. Jackson Ayoví is one of them. Observing Ayoví teaching is undoubtedly fascinating. His methods challenge the 'scientificity' of conventional formal instruction. The class observed consisted of the construction of a *bombo* (drum) *afro-esmeraldeño*. Esmeraldas is the province in the northwest of Ecuador that holds the largest afro-community of the country. Ayoví had cut wood and leather himself, for the construction of the *bombo*. He started building the *bombo* while explaining through anecdotes, the beliefs of the community for the construction and use of these instruments. A similar situation happens in the workshop for Andean instruments; musician, and luthier Jhonny García, shows the students how to build their own panpipes while explaining the usage of each and the differences between them.

The second strategy consists of the field research for material of local expressions, either older or current. For this, Pablo Guerrero joined the faculty. His students are digitalising thousands of documents from his archive, and also doing field research. Again, Guerrero's teaching is full of stories of his own experiences with regards to numerous conversations with musicians and composers, while gathering documents and information throughout the years. In the les-



son observed, Guerrero handed the students original scores from the early 1900s by national composers that have never been published and told the story of the compilation called *Yaravies Quiteños*, which was originally published in the name of the Spaniard Marcos Jiménez de la Espada, but the truth is, that it was written by the Ecuadorian composer Juan Agustín Guerrero.

Certainly, more conventional teaching happens in subjects such as Composition and Ensembles. The teaching encompasses a mixture of formal pedagogies and teacher-centred learning, similar to what happens in a conservatoire; however, the repertoire is constituted by popular music in the shape of traditional songs (except in one-to-one classes of piano as a complementary instrument). The fact that the repertoire is more traditional, implies the usage of traditional instruments too. When teaching resources for a specific instrument does not exist in the format of books or music scores, the methodology highly relies on orality. These teachers themselves have learned to play by listening and watching the examples of older performers from their own community. They replicate this practice in the classroom.

Nonetheless, the perceptions about having decoloniality as an official discourse of the LAM-UCE program vary among faculty members. On one hand, the most vocal supporters believe that focusing on local music is the right thing to do, and maybe the only strategy worth following. Director Pontón affirms that unfortunately conservatoires in Latin America only study European music and his intention in the program is to also study European instruments parallelly since they are also part of the tradition and cannot be set aside. However, if it had been up to him, he would have created a program exclusively of Ecuadorian music, but many criteria, many interests, meant that we had to expand the matter (lines 37-41).

Similarly, as part of the Afro-Ecuadorian community mainly found in the provinces of Esmeraldas and Imbabura, Ayoví is very enthusiastic about having decoloniality as a framework for the program. He believes that the government has a debt with the *pueblos originarios* (original communities) that is only now being recognised and addressed in public education. He feels sad about the fact that their music is regarded as folklore but not the culture of the people; however, US-American music, such as blues, jazz or rock, are considered 'the culture of the people'. He feels that this is a way of colonisation. Nonetheless, he considers it very important and positive that the LAM-UCE program is challenging this by implementing not only foreign or European music, but also their music, their marimba, which in his eyes, is no longer only from Esmeraldas but from all of Ecuador (lines 106-120).

Likewise, Andrade notes that education in institutions has always followed a path based on the colonial vision, this is the hegemony of power. In this manner, Latin American cultural conceptions have aligned themselves with how 'the West' sees everyone in the region; but in a decolonial approach, Latin American people look at themselves and launch their knowledge from themselves to the world. According to him, the LAM-UCE has been influenced by the strong political and ideological postulates that the UCE has and tries not to align to the hegemonic educational system. He expresses as a program they have overcome the discussion of wanting to resemble the Sorbonne, and now rather look at themselves, learn from the local community, from the local music, and show that to the world (lines 110-112).

Additionally, Guerrero, echoing Quijano's (2007) words, considers that Latin America has always been the best laboratory for post-cultural colonisation processes (lines 273-274). He also explains that decoloniality in Ecuadorian music is not a new thing. At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup>

century, there was a musical movement led by academic composers called The Nationalists. They led possibly the best attempt at formal musical decolonisation, but their mistake was wanting to differentiate themselves from popular music, causing their pieces not to connect with the ordinary audience. However, Guerrero confirms that all musical education in Ecuador has always been led by foreign influences since the foundation of the National Conservatoire in 1900 by Italians with Italian repertoire.

Guerrero explains that all 'official' Ecuadorian music has tried to sound the same as others. He recalls compositions such as the *Cañari* counter-march and the *Montubio* prelude and dance as efforts that have been a waste of time because they have not transcended as part of the local culture. According to him, music education has always believed that music took its highest expression with Europeans ignoring everything that happened elsewhere; however, by following the path of European music, the rest of the world will never reach them because they will always be ahead. He strongly urges Ecuadorian music education to make its own way, even if the local music has five notes compared with the European dodecaphonism, even if the path is not clear, it must make its own way (lines 273-288).

On the other hand, Araúz notes that the term, decoloniality, could sound "a bit strong" because it implies that Latin American carries a colonial yoke in musical terms and the aim is to remove that yoke by looking inwardly, not focusing on the music that was implanted by the colonisers, but on the one existing locally before them, developed throughout the colonial era until today. However, he believes that the real issue nowadays is that the current consumption of music in Ecuador is no longer related to European colonisation, but rather to the music generated in the US and Anglo-Saxon countries. Then, the decolonial focus should change (lines 220-222).

In a similar fashion, Noguera raises the point that decoloniality has many interpretations. According to her, the fight against the hegemonic should be identified in terms of politicians and specific policies that will always come from more powerful countries, but this fight cannot be against foreign cultures or music. She believes that music is universal, and in this sense, using decoloniality as a discourse for music education in a public university could alienate students. She notes that, generally speaking, students who are in public education have had fewer privileges, stronger socio-economic limitations and barriers throughout their lives, and many things have been denied to them; thus, what they want the least is to feel that an ideological matter by the authorities is being imposed upon them, especially in a space, such as the Faculty of Arts in a public university, where there is supposed to be a lot of freedom of thought and expression (lines 289-293).

In summary, decoloniality at the LAM-UCE program represents one of its, and arguably the most distinctive, epistemological horizons. It is the only HPME course in Ecuador that publicly professes to be a decolonial project. It uses two key strategies in order to apply it: the construction of local instruments, and the research of local material and expressions. The first happens in specific workshops, and the second happens in musicology subjects. All other classes have teaching methodologies from the WEAM tradition with a repertoire of local popular music. Although, most of the faculty members are on board with the decolonial project as officially understood, there are also strong voices concerned with its potential pitfalls in a more pragmatic way with regard to the risks of isolating the program from a more globalised approach, and from the risk of becoming an imposition to the students.

## Final Reflections

The LAM-UCE program is one case study that reflects the urgent need for preservation and progress of Ecuadorian indigenous music. It is a bridge between these two essential forces for survival. Its existence is a result of a long and systematic process that is related with the empowerment of indigenous communities. An empowerment that has been happening for a long time but that found higher visibility and institutional support in La Revolución Ciudadana. The revolution is gone, but its consequences will certainly stay.

Nevertheless, in a postcolonial society, the imperative of progress seems to create unusual tensions when trying to find ways of preserving ancestral knowledge, which is also an imperative when considering indigenous communities as equal as the rest of society. These tensions are usually translated in political discourses that overshadow the organic hybridisation of indigenous cultures. The danger is to confuse decolonization and, because of that, preservation, as a process of rejecting any external influences, and looking for a 'state of purity' very likely by repetition in isolation. A danger that is very much present in populist and fascist political movements.

Furthermore, as Campos, a composer who has lived for many years in Europe and outside of Ecuador, highlights: "It seems to me that the 'decolonization' part is a political game, it is a buzzword that has been manipulated in a very light way, [...] and art, especially art and culture, above all have a quality that no one can take away from it, not even a political standpoint, and that is a tendency to expand as a universe, a tendency towards universality, that, we cannot prevent" (J. Campos, in-person interview, January 10, 2020) [translated from Spanish].

Therefore, the vision and mission of the LAM-UCE program must be understood not as a decolonisation of Ecuadorian music by 'rescuing' it through isolation, but by going beyond and strengthening it through development, using the tools that can be useful in any moment regardless of its origin.

If art presents itself as a bridge between progress and preservation by having an intrinsic force of universality, then political leaders and academics should work together towards the creation of legal frameworks and educational environments that can guarantee the recognition, contributions, and experimentation of indigenous and minority expressions. It is a historical responsibility to make sure that the decoloniality of power, being, and knowledge happens not as a process of 'rescuing' indigenous identities as purely ancestral, but rather by giving them a voice, and listening to what they have to say in their own words, with their own tools and methodologies. As Ayoví responds when asked about the risk of having Afro-Ecuadorian music in the classroom:

Our sounds are sounds of the mountain, which is not the common *do re mi fa sol la si* of the 4:40 tempered system. It is a system that lives, that has survived, despite adversity, it has survived in the mountains, and it is mysterious that this system has reached us intact, and we maintain it. I don't believe at all that this wisdom will worsen, rather, if this knowledge is empowered, our peoples would be empowered even more, and our country too (J. Ayoví, in-person interview, January 7, 2020) [translated from Spanish].

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### Abstract (English)

Ecuador is the second smallest of the Spanish-speaking countries in South America. It is three quarters the size of Germany, and it has one quarter of its population. In 2008, the government of Rafael Correa, a back-then charismatic character with the motto of: *La Revolución Ciudadana* (The Citizen's Revolution), established a new constitution. This was highly focused on decolonized education. In 2017, the Universidad Central del Ecuador (UCE) established the *Licenciatura en Artes Musicales* (LAM-UCE) program with a focus on decolonization. For the very first time, Afro and Andean-Ecuadorian music was present at university. *La Revolución Ciudadana* ended like another bittersweet chapter; however, the empowerment of Ecuadorian aboriginal groups, from their artistic expression, is part of a long process that aims to give them visibility and relevance in the cultural and political arena of the country and the region. This paper takes LAM-UCE program as a case to study to analyse it as part of the process, focusing on the decoloniality of popular music in education. Although the question remains: Does the academisation of popular music from the minorities help them to progress or to preserve them? the answer is definitely not found by one or another, but where progress and preservation intersect.

### Abstract (Deutsch)

Ecuador ist das zweitkleinste der spanischsprachigen Länder Südamerikas. Es ist drei Viertel so groß wie Deutschland und hat ein Viertel seiner Bevölkerung. Im Jahr 2008 führte die Regierung von Rafael Correa, einer damals charismatischen Persönlichkeit mit dem Motto: *La Revolución Ciudadana* (Die Bürgerrevolution), eine neue Verfassung ein. Diese war stark auf eine dekolonisierte Bildung ausgerichtet. Im Jahr 2017 richtete die Universidad Central del Ecuador (UCE) den Studiengang *Licenciatura en Artes Musicales* (LAM-UCE) mit dem Schwerpunkt Dekolonisierung ein. Zum ersten Mal wurde afro- und anden-ecuadorianische Musik an der Universität angeboten. *La Revolución Ciudadana* endete wie ein weiteres bittersüßes Kapitel; die Stärkung der ecuadorianischen Ureinwohnergruppen durch ihren künstlerischen Ausdruck ist jedoch Teil eines langen Prozesses, der darauf abzielt, ihnen Sichtbarkeit und Bedeutung in der kulturellen und politischen Arena des Landes und der Region zu verleihen. In diesem Beitrag wird das LAM-UCE-Programm als Fallbeispiel herangezogen, um es als Teil dieses Prozesses zu analysieren, wobei der Schwerpunkt auf der Dekolonialität der populären Musik in der Bildung liegt. Dennoch bleibt die Frage offen: Hilft die Akademisierung der populären Musik der Minderheiten, sie voranzubringen oder zu bewahren? Die Antwort liegt definitiv nicht in der einen oder anderen Richtung, sondern dort, wo sich Fortschritt und Bewahrung überschneiden.

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