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VOLUME IX  
GENRES: CARIBBEAN AND LATIN AMERICA

The success of the *vals* continued into the late 1970s thanks to a growing recording industry and cultural policies that required nightclub owners, radio and television stations to observe quotas in support of national music. *Valses* such as Augusto Polo Campos's 'Contigo, Peru' (With You, Peru) were even used as part of political campaigns calling for national unity among the various regions of the country. Yet, by the late-twentieth century Lima's cultural and ethnic makeup had changed and the *vals* no longer represented the experiences of the generations of migrants that came to be known as the new Limeños. In the early twenty-first century the *vals* is still actively performed by many Limeños in a variety of middle-class and working-class environments, even though its presence in the mass media and mainstream popular culture has decreased significantly. This, however, is not an indication of the waning of the genre but rather of its re-transition to a musical genre that once again is a marker of a particular local rather than regional or national identity. In fact, in recent years there has been a small but vital revival of the early-twentieth century neighborhood-based, working-class *vals* that has brought attention to previously unknown local composers and performers who were overshadowed by their professional and commercial counterparts, and to their grandchildren and great-grandchildren, many of whom continue to make a living as working musicians.

### *Vals Criollo* (Argentina)

The presence of *vals* in Río de la Plata can be traced back to the beginning of the nineteenth century. However, it was not until the middle of the century that it became widespread as a ballroom dance. In Argentina, *vals* is the only genre that crosses two of the most important repertoires of popular music of the twentieth century: *tango* and folklore.

In a sketch showing the choreography of the *vals*, Carlos Vega identifies it as a European waltz from the early nineteenth century that is danced in pairs (Vega 1956, 65). He makes no mention of the presence of text (lyrics). The figure in which one foot slides to the side and front on the downbeat, while the other foot moves during the remaining beats of a 3/4 measure, was incorporated into three of the most important folk dances in Argentina: *cielito*, *pericón* and *media caña*.

In ballrooms the *vals* was danced like its European counterpart, with couples embracing and moving across the floor while turning at a fast pace. What is known as *vals* or *valsecito criollo* ('little creole waltz'), however, is a type of close couple dance in 6/4 time. Lauro Ayestarán describes *valsecito criollo* in Uruguay as 'a genre that has been turned into folk but that still

needs to make the final step away from the civilized stage the way *mazurka*, *danza* or *habanera*, *chotis*, and *polka* did before ...' (Ayestarán 1967, 78).

There are two main streams of *vals criollo*:

1. During the first half of the twentieth century many pieces were composed and published in simple scores for voice and piano. Many of these works were already part of the repertoire of the so-called 'orquestas típicas' ('typical orchestras') that performed *tangos* and waltzes, and of 'orquestas características' ('characteristic orchestras'), to which people danced *tangos*, *milongas*, *rancheras*, *pasodobles*, waltzes and a few *tarantelas* or foxtrots that were in fashion.

Formally, this type of *vals criollo* has an A section that includes two verses, a B section with two verses of similar meter and occasionally a C section (labeled as a trio on the score) with a shorter stanza and contrasting musical material. Commonly, section A is in a minor key and either the B or C section is in the relative or parallel major. The form is closed by a return to A.

Normally, melodies involve more than one octave and feature large leaps as well as instrumental idiomatic writing. Melodies often start with an upbeat of five eighth notes, and it is common to have a succession of several eighth-note measures and to use melodic progressions as building blocks for musical ideas.

The subject matter of *vals criollo* is often love and nostalgia for the loss of an idealized past: the old neighborhood, the absence of one's lover, the adored mother, etc. What Uruguayan author Idea Vilarriño said about the *vals-canción* can be easily applied to the Argentine *vals criollo*:

They are always, or almost always, sentimental and delicate in their subject matter and use of language. They deal with treason, but in environments and circumstances that are neither undignified, bloody, nor miserable. It happens in gardens, parks, and dance salons. ... She is never just a woman ... but a bride ... a beloved one. ... The serenade is almost a theme. (Vilarriño 1993, 11–13)

Among the most notable performers in this group are the Gardel-Razzano duo, and composers such as Sebastián Piana, Cátulo Castillo, Enrique Maciel, Cristino Tapia, Tormo-Canales, Rosita Melo, Julián Gaio, Feliciano Brunelli, Anselmo Aieta, Enrique Cadícamo, among others.

2. The other stream of *valsecito criollo* is closer to the folk repertoire. In Argentina, the areas in which *vals criollo* is cultivated are: Mesopotamia (Entre Ríos, Corrientes, Misiones), where *vals* is performed mostly by accordion and/or bandoneon and guitars; Córdoba, in the center, where ensembles feature three to four singers that are accompanied on guitar; and in the west or Cuyo region (San Luis, San Juan and Mendoza), where ensembles commonly include several guitars and a *requinto* (a type of small guitar) to accompany the singer, which is the preferred formation for the performance of serenades.

These *valsecitos criollos*, especially those from Córdoba, feature poetry with a varying number of stanzas which is set to music. These stanzas are shorter than those described in group (1). The formal structure of these works also varies – some have a refrain while others do not. Musically, they are generally divided into two similar sections, each with two or three different subsections that are repeated and alternated. The minor mode is more frequent in this type of *vals*, as are headless beginnings (i.e., without the first eighth). Rhythmically, hemiolas are prominent, as they are in most Argentine folk dances. The thematic content is similar to the first group with the addition of a few themes, such as the search for local flavor through characters or places in a city or town, as well as songs about the Virgin.

The most notable composers of this type are: Rubén Darío Gamboa, Raúl Montachini, Ricardo Arrieta, Nicolás E. Soria, Buenaventura Luna, Hilario Cuadros, Andrés Chazarreta and Carlos Montbrun Ocampo. Among the soloists and ensembles of national renown are: Edmundo Cartos, Alberto Rodríguez, Hilario Cuadros, Buenaventura Luna, the Ocampo-Flores duo, Cristino Tapia, Antonio Tormo, Ariel Ramírez, Los Cantores del Alba, Los de Alberdi, Los del Suquia, Los 4 de Córdoba, Los trovadores de Cuyo and Los Visconti.

During the first half of the twentieth century *vales* performed by the most popular 'typical' and 'characteristic' orchestras were featured in live performances and in radio stations such as LR 4 Splendid, LR 3 Belgrano, LR 1 El Mundo and LV 10 Radio Colón, of Buenos Aires. *Vales* were also published in simple scores for piano by Ricordi, Musical Korn-Intersong, Alfredo Perrotti, Peermusic Argentina, Crismar, etc.

After the success of the *Primer Festival Nacional de Folklore* (First Annual National Folk Music Festival)

in 1961 in Cosquín, Córdoba, more festivals were created for the dissemination of folk music, such as Doma y Folklore in Jesús María, Festival de Peñas in Villa María, Festival de Folklore in Baradero, etc., most of them occurring during the summer months. These festivals showcase the most popular folk ensembles, some of which have remained active through the years and continue to perform with new members. During the 1960s and 1970s performances in *peñas* (popular local venues for folk music) were at their peak, triggering the highest gross sales of albums of this music by important labels like RCA Victor, Microfón, Music Hall, Columbia and Odeón.

#### *Vals* in Other South American Countries: Ecuador, Chile, Colombia, Brazil

In Ecuador the *vals criollo* of coastal origin gave rise to the *pasillo* – a type of *vals-canción* (sung waltz) that is slower and that has taken root in Ecuador and Colombia. Other *vales* in Ecuador and Peru are inspired by the Incaic *yaraví*. The coastal region contributed with the *amorfino* style. Among the most celebrated composers of *vales* in Ecuador, Marieta de Ventimilla, Virgilio Cornejo ('Guayaquil de mis amores' [My Beloved Guayaquil]) and Nicasio Safadi ('Virgen Pura' [Pure Virgin]) stand out. Within the European style notable composers are Carlos Amable, José Ignacio Ventimilla, Sixto María Durán and Carlos Solís. In the twentieth century the Ecuadorian singer Julio Jaramillo introduced the romantic styles through the *bolero*, *pasillo* and *vals*. The *pasillos* 'Mis flores negras' (My Black Flowers) by José Flores and Amable Ortiz, 'Sombras' (Shadows) and Rosario Sانسores and Carlos Brito, and the *vales* 'Cuando llora mi guitarra' (When My Guitar Weeps) by Augusto Polo Campos, 'Ódame' (Hate Me) by Rafael Otero, 'Fatalidad' (Fatality) by Laureano Martínez Smart and 'Alma M'ia' (My Soul) by Pedro Miguel Areco among many others were disseminated throughout Latin America thanks to Jaramillo's popularity.

In Chile, in the mid-nineteenth century the dances *maisito*, *resbalosa*, *palomita* and *minero* were danced in popular salons, while *vals* and *contradanza* conquered high-society salons. Eventually, these dances would also enter the popular repertoire. In rural areas the *vals* is blended with the *cueca* – the prototype of Chilean traditional dance. In the twentieth century composers Rosa García ('Dos vales de salon' [Two Salon Waltzes]) and Juan Orrego Salas ('Rústica' [Rustic]) were recognized as outstanding *valsistas*.

The *vals* was introduced in Colombia in the nineteenth century coming directly from Europe. Initially, the Colombian *vals* retained its Austrian bourgeois