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Colin Franklin Prize - Collection Essay

The Bodleian Libraries
Colin Franklin Prize for Book Collecting
Collection Essay

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Please Note:

Any mention of items in the bibliography of my collection will appear as “CB#” following their reference in this essay (ie, a reference to item 14 will be CB14). Some parts of this essay are adapted from my writing on Auza León (see Chávez 2022a and 2022b). Titles of texts and institutions are kept in the original Spanish.

ATILIANO AUZA LEÓN AND 20TH C. BOLIVIAN ART MUSIC

On a sunny December day in the temperate summer of Tarija, Bolivia, my family and I made our way to my aunt’s apartment overlooking one of the town squares. A piano, collecting dust, sat around the corner from the entrance, yellowed keys facing frosted windows. I offered a chord and tensed at the result—what was meant to sound like a major triad was harmonically as an ethnically ambiguous child, simultaneously major and minor and augmented all at once. I was delighted. I had begun learning piano during my undergraduate studies in music education and was eager to see if I could sight-read despite the unwarranted atonality of a supposedly equally-tuned instrument. Burrowed in the piano’s bench amidst an unkempt collection of sheet music, I found Atiliano Auza León. At the very bottom of the pile, beneath the Hungarian Marches and *Eine Kleine Nachtmusik* and other reductive arrangements, lay the piano score for *6 Danzas Bolivianas del ciclo ‘Runas’ por violín y piano* (CB1), with the violin part gently tucked into the first spread. As a teenager, seeing a piece by a Bolivian composer among the expected scores of the German canon surprised me. My undergraduate research in musicology and comparative literature began here, in locating an art music composer among Bolivian urban modernity and the European musical canon. So too did my collecting begin: I convinced my aunt to let me bring the score back with me to the United States.

Atiliano Auza León was born in 1928 in Sucre, Bolivia, exactly seventy-two years before myself on the fifth of October. Yet we share more than a birthday. As a musicologist and pedagogue, Auza León is—like myself—concerned with the education, history, and performance of music in Bolivia. His trajectory across Bolivia and Argentina as a composer over the course of his life has shaped art music in Bolivia in the 20th century. One of only two Bolivian composers to participate in the Centro Latinoamericano de Altos Estudios Musicales (CLAEM) in Buenos Aires, Argentina with such notable composers as Alberto Ginastera, he trained as a violinist and has spent his life directing orchestras and choral ensembles, teaching musicianship to young people, and writing books on and works of Bolivian music.

I was lucky to encounter his composition as a first year undergraduate student whilst visiting my family. Following the gift of *6 Danzas* (CB1) from my aunt, I arranged the violin part for cello, my own instrument, and performed it for auditions and classes at my university. Fascinated by the piece and curious about its composer beyond only my interpretation in performance, I set out to investigate his life and works, hoping to find more. I came across his history of Bolivian music: a tome written in 1982 and one of the only books of his available in but a handful of universities in the United States. This text became the core of my undergraduate dissertation.

As I will soon illustrate, I acquired all of the items in my collection subsequent to the *6 Danzas* during my research. Performance brought me to research, which brings me back to performance once again, as I see my collection as a budding personal library of Bolivian musical culture that will allow me to cultivate a synergy of textual and notated materials to facilitate historically-informed performance and research. Though this collection may *seem* simple—fourteen scores (CB1-14) and seven books (CB15-21) of Auza León's output with one biography of him commissioned by the region's cultural government (CB22)—its story comes from a deep embeddedness in contemporary transnational connectivity and serves as a starting point for what is hopefully a long life of acquiring books and scores of Bolivian music.

Acquiring Materials Through My Transnational Family

I received funding from the Herb Alpert School of Music at the University of California, Los Angeles in May 2021 to acquire Auza León's works for my undergraduate dissertation research, and extend my gratitude for their support. Yet these texts were not available to purchase or acquire from any source in the United States, and nor did Auza León's publishers have contact information I could remotely access. I made a plan to travel to Tarija and La Paz to locate his works. Unfortunately, this trip was halted by limited funding and concerns regarding the COVID-19 pandemic.

After years of building excitement for my research, I was devastated. I video called my family in Bolivia to tell the tale. Looking at the little rectangle of my face reflected at me beside the larger rectangles of my tía, abuela, and mamá, I saw the dramatic irony of my smile fall as I went from repressed excitement to genuine disappointment, relating the happiness of my funding approval to the wistfulness of being kept from Bolivia by the factors at hand. Maternal consolations that everything would work out were punctuated by problem-solving questions: well, where can we find his books? Who do we know that knows him? Eventually, my family promised to help me locate Auza León's texts in Bolivia so that we could use my funding to ship them to the US, out of love for me and my interests.

After a few weeks, my tía called me with an unexpected development: she had found Atiliano Auza León himself! From the United States, I had not been able to verify where he was living, not to mention whether or not he was still alive. When all I knew to seek were texts, my family had found the very center of my research. I used my research funds to pay for my tía to acquire his texts directly from him and ship them to the US, and as compensation for a virtual interview.

This story is one about transcending normative processes of collection acquisition and the singularity of the research process. As an undergraduate living and studying in one of the most expensive neighbourhoods in the United States while the world still reeled from a global pandemic, I experienced a triple bind that limited my ability to access and research materials: institutionally, the undergraduate is less supported financially, temporally, and intellectually than the graduate researcher; my research draws from sources difficult to access without physical presence in Bolivia; and an array of contemporaneous personal circumstances prevented me from having the time and freedom to travel for the purpose of research. Yet, rather than restrict myself as a result, I persisted in acquiring what university funds I could and accepting the help of my family. Transnational affect afforded me a degree of access I would not have otherwise enjoyed.

I center affect and community as cornerstones for both my research process and my personal collecting. The humanities in the West experiences an abstraction of collectivity in research where we are expected to be individual agents in the processes that produce research, seen for example in the predominance of single-authored papers and the canonization of individual figures and their ways of thinking. This irony obscures that all of our processes are necessarily bound up in our relations to people, particularly those without intellectual or institutional affiliation to our projects or to academia at all. My family is embedded in my life such that these acts of support across the spatiotemporal boundaries of transnational living become necessary for both my personal and academic developments connected to my generational homeland, inseparable from my processes of becoming.

Citational Curiosities and Collection Trends

The items in my bibliography have been published over a time period of nearly sixty years, through various publishers located in the cities of Tarija, Sucre, La Paz, and Oruro in Bolivia as well as one in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Likely as a result of the progressions of Auza León's career and the publishing industry for music in the Andes, a range of publishers are represented, and not all books and scores carry publication information that is standard in printed materials in the West. In cases like *Esbozo Histórico de la Música Tarijeña* (CB18), it is evident that the book's patrons are the local government, and yet it is unclear who the publishers might have been, especially in comparison to the biography written of Auza León (CB22) which was sponsored by the same government but published through Editores Asociación Jorge Paz Rojas. Two of his violin pieces (CB9, 10) have printed composition dates of 1964 and 1951 respectively, yet their publisher's copyright dates are listed as 2014 and 2016 respectively, which begs the question of who published the first editions. Yet both those pieces and some other works (CB3, 6) are printed on standard A1 sheets and spiral-bound with clear plastic covers, indicating that they may not have been printed and distributed as a part of a publisher's print run, but rather only printed as needed for certain performances.

Indeed, some of these musical works clearly have special performances they were prepared for: Auza León's choral works for children (CB6) were written for a local themed concert in Tarija; 2007 quartet (CB7) was written to celebrate the centenary of the national conservatory; his 2008 vocal works (CB8) were written to celebrate the bicentenary of the revolution of Chuquisaca, known as the first grito (shout) of liberation from Spain in South America. His books reveal a concern for both pedagogy (CB15, 16, 18, 19, 21) and philosophy (17, 20). Yet their bibliographies are sparse when present, making it difficult to trace an intellectual genealogy.

Some publication dates do not match composition dates in odd ways: his piano and string chamber music (CB5) has a cover page with La Paz, 2006 printed though the music itself lists a copyright of Sucre, 2001; similarly his recent piano works (CB3) were supposedly composed in 2020 and yet the copyright lists 2019. Two pieces lack any publisher (CB7 and CB11) and another two also lack dates of publication or composition (CB13 and CB14), though I deduce that the opera reductions (CB14) were published circa 1980 when the opera was premiered. A part of my next steps in collecting items on Auza León—and prospectively his contemporaries—is to locate these publishers to not only see if other items are available, but also to clarify information that leads to some citations being incomplete. However, I also accept that a part of collecting items of this sort is that there might not always be answers. I shall continue to press on.

Prospective Additions

The five items I would add to this collection are as follows:

1. Auza León, Atiliano. *Historia de la música boliviana*, 2nd ed. Sucre, Bolivia: Tupac Katari, 1982.
2. Auza León, Atiliano and Norma Mendez de Paz. *Incallajta: ópera en tres actos*. La Paz, Bolivia: Editorial Impr. Master, 1980.
3. Auza León, Atiliano. *Sinfonía Boliviana*. Tarija, Bolivia: 2006.
4. Anaya Arze, Franklin. *La música en Latinoamérica y en Bolivia*. Cochabamba, Bolivia: Editorial Serrano, 1994.
5. Díaz Gaínza, José. *Historia Musical de Bolivia*. La Paz: Editorial America, 1996.

I have chosen three works by Auza León: a book, an opera, and a symphony. This is to cover a breadth of his work across his musicological and compositional output. Ironically, though an early part of my journey with studying Auza León was his history of Bolivian music, I only had access to the book through the institutional library; though I am grateful to UCLA and other libraries for possessing this book, I would also very much like to add it to my personal collection. It would also be the book that I would recommend to the Bodleian Libraries for addition to its collections, as it is Auza León's most influential work. Though not a central part of this list, it seems that the first edition of this text has escaped circulation, so it would be an unlikely but delightful addition to my collection, particularly alongside the oft-cited second edition.

The second item on my list—Auza León's *Incallajta*—is significant as it is the composer's most-referenced work (excepting the *Runas* cycle) in secondary sources. *Incallajta* is hailed as Bolivia's first opera, and thus one of Auza León's crowning achievements as a composer. Norma Méndez de Paz wrote the libretto. When premiered in 1980, it was recognised as one of the most important developments in Bolivian art music, and was revived thirty years later for the bicentenary celebration of the city of Cochabamba in 2010. The title refers to a location outside of Cochabamba: one of the largest archeological sites of Incan territories. Though I have read the piano reduction of some arias, I would very much like the full score and libretto of the opera.

Auza León's *Sinfonía Boliviana* takes the third place on my list as his only symphonic work to date. His musical output consists primarily of piano works, choral works, and chamber works, which makes his symphony a rare piece in his oeuvre. I have previously arranged a movement from his *Runas* violin sonata, transforming it into a symphonic piece to explore how his chamber textures might translate to

the orchestral context. The *Sinfonía Boliviana* would be both a cornerstone to my collection and an illuminatory text for how Auza León engages with composition outside of vocal and chamber spheres. Though the publisher is currently unknown—like many of his works—I would seek to acquire it during continued visits to Bolivia.

The third and fourth items I would like to add to my collection remind us of the first item on this same list. Auza León is of course significant both for his own musical contributions to Bolivian art music composition and for his historical writing on the country's music writ large. While own history of Bolivian music is widely cited by both Bolivian and Western writers, engaging with the musical historiography of the country—and, indeed, expanding the musical content of this collection beyond Auza León—requires placing his writing in dialogue with other writers of music history. Anaya Arze and Díaz Gaínza's book would be welcome counterpoints to Auza León's history book, particularly in that they were written over a decade after the composer's. Anaya Arze was a Cochabambian architect and teacher who founded the historic music school Instituto Eduardo Laredo in Cochabamba after studying in Europe on a UNESCO scholarship. Díaz Gaínza was a Spanish-born Cordimanian priest who taught and wrote music in Potosí. Like Auza León, both writers were embroiled in a synergy of musical life in which teaching, composing, and writing were all significant aspects of their craft, careers, and legacy. I would begin by collecting their histories of Bolivian music and then expanding to their other books and scores, with a particular eye for chamber music.

Taken together, the additions of Auza León's work and of new authors such as Anaya Arze and Díaz Gaínza would stimulate the continued growth of my collection. They would be a significant step in continuing my personal and professional interest in Bolivian musicologist-composers, facilitating my (perhaps utopic) dreams of developing a robust personal library of books and scores that I would employ not only for my research on Bolivian music, but also to encourage performances of Bolivian art music works amongst ensembles and musicians in Europe and North America.

Essay Word Count: 2498

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