

# Federico Leguizamón and the Poem-Score: Reading and Chant in the Vocal Rendering.

Federico Leguizamón y el poema-partitura: lectura y canto en la puesta en voz.

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## Abstract:

The poetry of Argentine Federico Leguizamón (San Salvador de Jujuy, 1982) reveals a connection with contemporary musical culture. Cumbia, reggaeton, Andean folk expressions, Argentine rock and bolero appear in his performances and texts. In live performances, such as at the 2010 Rosario International Poetry Festival, Leguizamón experiments with different rhythms in his texts through his voice. This allows him to correct, cross out and rewrite his poems, which change over time. He alternates between recitation and reading and, on occasions, accompanies his voice with a tambourine to mark the beat. These instances reveal tones, timbres, volumes and rhythms that we will explore: how are music and voice articulated? What do they transform, cross out or reaffirm in the texts? How is musical combination incorporated? The notion of musical score is also questioned in these vocal performances, as a form of rhythmic and sonic inscription. The journey begins with the 2010 presentations and continues with the publication of these texts in *The sounds of la galaxia* (2014, Gigante), until a certain crystallisation in *Cantos del desierto y la montaña* (2020, Neutrinos). The hypothesis posits that Leguizamón is permeated by musical punctuation linked to digital DJ procedures, such as sampling, delay, mashup, and reverberation.

**Keywords:** Contemporary Argentine poetry. Vocalisation. Musical score. Digital DJ techniques.

**Resumen:**

En la poesía del argentino Federico Leguizamón (San Salvador de Jujuy, 1982) se evidencia un contacto con la cultura musical contemporánea. En sus puestas en voz y textos aparecen la cumbia, el reggaetón, expresiones folclóricas andinas, el rock argentino y el bolero. En presentaciones en vivo, como el Festival Internacional de Poesía de Rosario de 2010, Leguizamón experimenta mediante la voz con distintos ritmos sobre sus textos. Esto le permite corregir, tachar y reescribir sus poemas, que cambian con el tiempo. Alterna recitación y lectura y, en ocasiones, acompaña su voz con pandereta para marcar el compás. Estas instancias revelan tonos, timbres, volúmenes y ritmos sobre los que indagaremos: ¿cómo se articulan música y voz? ¿Qué transforman, tachan o reafirman en los textos? ¿Cómo se incorpora la combinatoria musical? También se interroga la noción de partitura en estas puestas en voz, como modo de inscripción rítmica y sonora. El recorrido inicia con las presentaciones de 2010 y continúa en la edición de esos textos en *The sounds of la galaxia* (2014, Gigante), hasta cierta cristalización en *Cantos del desierto y la montaña* (2020, Neutrinos). La hipótesis plantea que Leguizamón está atravesado por puntuación musical vinculada a procedimientos digitales de DJs, como sampling, delay, mashup y reverberación.

**Palabras clave:** Poesía argentina contemporánea. Puesta en voz. Partitura. Procedimientos digitales de DJs.

### Leguizamón and 2001: poetry readings with musicians in mechanic workshops.

Federico Leguizamón (San Salvador de Jujuy, 1982) began participating in poetry readings at the beginning of the new millennium. In December 2001, he organised a series of readings at his father's mechanic's workshop. These events, which lasted four meetings, took place amid the chaos of the political representation crisis, the state of siege and social unrest. What was unique about this space was that not only was poetry read, but improvised percussion instruments were also played using whatever objects were available: "I read the poems and the guys played. It was a mechanic's workshop, so we used gas cans, metal cylinders, and tools we found. There were stage sets, musicians joined in. It was not strictly a literary scene" (Personal communication, 2 September 2023).

These gatherings emerged from a neighbourhood need to get together and showcase the artistic practice that each person developed on their own: "As I was always very involved with people in music or the more expressive arts, I put together these oral poems so that I could share them at gatherings" (Personal communication, 7 June 2021).



Federico Leguizamón reading to the rhythm of the congas in his father's mechanic's workshop. December 2001, San Salvador de Jujuy.

There are two points worth highlighting here. First, the orientation of the texts toward listening to others and their possible effects explains their collective origin or craftsmanship. Second, this fact raises the question of what textual and vocal procedures enable this participatory directionality. In fact, the variable "percussion instruments" may have functioned as a matrix that constituted a type of rhythmic text that could establish a dialogue with others based on common ground. For Leguizamón, this practice is called "oral poetry." But what does he mean by this?

In this category, certain classic ideas related to orality and writing resonate, such as those of Walter Ong (1982). According to Ong, there is no oral literature opposed to written literature, but rather verbal artistic forms that condense different visual and non-visual manifestations of vocalicity. In this context, although all texts are related to sound, certain poetic forms, such as those of Leguizamón, could be considered to have a non-essential link to writing. We could break down here that 'the oral' actually refers to a musical condition of language that is emphasised over the textual. As Paul Zumthor argues in *The Letter and the Voice*, poetic recitation—putting words to voice—can be considered an act of 'vocalicity' in which 'even though the recited text has been composed in writing, the writing remains hidden' (2006, 22).

**Voice as a methodological problem**

It is possible to think that in this concealment of writing mentioned by Zumthor lies a revaluation of the sonic condition of language and its power of communion, through the voice, in the midst of an otherwise unstable social context.<sup>1</sup> After all, this cycle of poetry mentioned by Leguizamón – which developed precisely in the midst of those events – could be thought of as the inaugural putting into voice of his poetic writing. At the same time, it is only possible to reconstruct it from the story, since we do not have access to hear it today. Unlike writing, the voice is revealed as an evanescent and elusive materiality. Starting from these characteristics is fundamental to constructing a figure that allows us to read this poet throughout this work.

In this article, we use the terms "poetry reading," "performance," and "poetry recital" interchangeably to refer to small-scale poetic events that can take place in bars, art centres, libraries, bookshops, museums, cafés, and cultural centres. Poets participate in these events, sharing their texts, and sometimes a musical finale is included. However, we will attempt to identify and characterise the obvious differences between these notions. One of the terms, "recital", can be interpreted with different nuances or emphases: one more musical, associated with both song and the act of reciting poetry without visual support, and another more literary, linked to the direct "reading" of the text. Although these terms linked to the cultural dissemination of events do not impose anything in advance, it is true that poets do not always read their texts. For example, Leguizamón often uses the book or sheet as a support, but relegates it in favour of his recitation "show".

In this sense, despite the intrinsic differences in their vocal performances, both have a spectacular character that aspires to a musical condition and constructs "[...] devices for exhibiting fragments of the world" (Laddaga 2006, 14). For this reason, writing, for Leguizamón, is a vehicle, a means "[...] among others, of transporting the written word" (p. 15), whose purpose is the stage and poetic vocal performance. Over the course of twenty years, Leguizamón produced dozens of un d voice performances at poetry events that have not been documented, and on occasion we will incorporate them through his own testimony.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Leguizamón does not consider these readings at the mechanic's workshop to have been inaugural, as he states that his literary activity dates back to the self-publication of the short story collection *La suma del bárbaro* (2000), which was presented alongside a jazz band in a bookshop.

<sup>2</sup> Non-institutional poetry readings generally take place in an informal setting. The audience often records parts of the event, but this is by no means a systematic activity.

Rather than perceiving this absence as a shortcoming, we are interested in thinking that the difficulty of apprehending this object is part of a somewhat paradoxical political power.<sup>3</sup> On the one hand, we are faced with the concrete fact that not everything is documented, that there will be gaps and absences in reconstructing certain listeners—ours, in the present moment of writing this article, and those of the people who witnessed those events. On the other hand, and at the same time, we will have to face a seemingly contradictory situation. This historical period we are going through and working on is characterised by a rising technological democratisation that produces multiple captures of the same event. This also means that, in some cases, we will have to deal with endless records<sup>4</sup> that obstruct critical analysis and selection.

This raises certain questions: What should be left out and what should be included? These are methodological difficulties that create a constant tension between certain gaps that coexist with an excess of documentation. Added to this is the time *lag* of listening critically, *in absentia*, from the future and through digital devices. We are not interested in thinking of these recordings as mere vocal variations of writing, but rather as experiences that have their own poetic status and require critical listening. In *Images and Words: Writings on Cinema and Theatre* (2005), Alan Badiou proposes something similar in relation to dramatic art. A voice performance, like a play, has an immanentist relationship with its surroundings. Thus, it has no truth outside itself, but can produce meaning on its own. Following Badiou's reasoning, there would then be a truth-voiced articulation with the voice that: "[...] does not occur anywhere other than on stage" (2005, p. 121).

Similarly, the voice-outs that we will analyse in this article are addressing an audience within a specific space. And those listeners, who are part of the audience, are not simply passive recipients

<sup>3</sup> Irina Garbatzky points out that the poetic performances of Marosa di Giorgio, Batato Barea, Roberto Echavarren, and Emeterio Cerro in the 1980s possess a resistance to archiving that should be noted as a characteristic of this type of object. Given this lack of some records, she proposes the construction of a repertoire composed of low-quality or lost recordings, divergent oral accounts, and references in the print media (2015, p. 23). Although our research analyses a historical period in which technology allows for a greater number of records, when it comes to poetry, there will always be gaps related to informal and spontaneous events.

<sup>4</sup> In this article, we question the political motivations behind the distribution of records and archives of Argentine poetry. As Jacques Attali says in *Noise: An Essay on the Political Economy of Music* (1995), recording has been a means of social control, a political objective, regardless of the technologies available. When Western technology made sound recording possible at the end of the 19th century, it was first conceived as a political aid to representation (1995, p. 130). In other words, it emerged as a technology that imposed a new social system, achieving the de-ritualisation of music and heralding a new network, a new economy and a new politics in music as in other social relations (p. 132).



of the voice that is reading. It will be important to describe in each case how this interrelationship works, what types of listening are present, and what kind of staging will determine the space from which a poem is being read. We will work with audiovisual and sound archives in which the voice is conceived as a materiality that is folded, cut, and combined. The figure we will construct below will start from these objective particularities as premises to be problematised.

The mention of these early poetic events—in the capital of Jujuy—is not random, but rather responds to a theatrical emergence of the voice in Argentine poetry. In this context, readings are regularly held in art galleries, bars, cultural centres and even mechanical workshops, while at the same time becoming part of the state's cultural policies. This led to a crossover between the independent scene and more institutional spheres, as well as borrowing and exchanges between different artistic disciplines. With substantial differences that we will develop, it can be thought that these voices were projected, between virtuality and sound, towards the stage and poetic expression; conditions that in some way guided and determined them. These are writings forged in an interdisciplinary artistic field between the Internet, musical culture and the visual arts with which poetry coexisted and interacted on a daily basis.

A DJ plays records during his *set*, Nicolas Bourriaud explains in *Radicante*, that is, products. His job is to propose a personal journey through the musical universe (his *playlist*) and link these elements in a certain order, taking care of their links as well as the construction of an atmosphere. He intervenes in real time on the crowd of dancers, with the ability to respond to their movements. In addition, he can physically intervene in the object he uses, practising *scratching* or through a whole series of actions: filters, adjustment of the parameters of the mixing console, sound adjustments, among others. A DJ's style can be perceived by his ability to inhabit this open network, to see a history of sound (2009<sup>a</sup>, p. 43).

Leguizamón, as a poet, brings together and dissects an experience linked to the practice of DJing and electronic dance culture. In fact, his texts feature techniques such as *looping*, *sampling* and *remixing*, which are then amplified and take their final form in the voice performances. However, we note a notable initial distance mediated by the type of practice. Leguizamón does not produce music nor does he place himself in the borderland that hybridises his texts or voice performances in that direction. Poetry does not seek to become popular music in an aesthetic leap. Nor is it part of its

circuits, even though discos and parties are mentioned in the poems as nerve centres of dance and sensory explosion.

The resources he uses to construct and read his texts are those of poetry, writing and voice, which are devoid of the technological instruments used by a DJ or artist who composes and assembles sounds using machines. However, it is possible to think that these are texts whose technical dimension operates precisely under this influence, as if he were dissecting these materials and appropriating their compositional tools. Leguizamón's poems do not have a mixing deck, a turntable, or software; rather, both writing and voice constitute an "[...] internalised technology" (Ong, 2006, p. 85) that works with this composition as an effect.

While with some of Leguizamón's contemporary poets, such as Mariano Blatt (Buenos Aires, 1983), it is still possible to look back retrospectively at published texts to highlight a series of rhythmic procedures that are then amplified in the voice performances, with Leguizamón this task is by no means straightforward. The peculiarity of his case is that the live reading instance—although, as we will describe below, the reading is intermittent and is, rather, another possible way of interacting with the written medium – functions as a sound laboratory in which texts are tested, corrected, and crossed out. If a laboratory is a space equipped to carry out research, experiments, analysis and testing in scientific and technical fields, the materials available to Leguizamón at a poetry festival or reading are his voice, a written medium, the microphone and the interaction – the listening – of the audience.

At these events, his voice traverses different rhythmic conjectures that add to and shape the syntax and meaning of his poems' structures. This action, seen from the point of view of an open process, allows him to obtain concrete data and scenic effects<sup>5</sup> which he then pours back into those same texts :

It is a historic moment in which meetings, gatherings, festivals, bonfires, and the sharing of oral poetry take place. I have thousands of ways of reading, like a Benedictine monk, a punk, a bolero singer. I managed to turn that into such standard metrical lines that I then change them on the fly. (2020, n/a).

<sup>5</sup> A scenic effect is the audience's reception—laughter, applause, shouts, boos, silence, among other reactions—to a particular verse or rhythm.

Based on Peter Szendy's formulations on listening as a practice, Salomé Voegelin delves deeper into the idea of an ethics of participation in relation to sound in *Ethics of Listening*. For her, listening ethically means taking responsibility for intervening in the very movement of what is heard, allowing its meaning to emerge contingently and transmitting it in one's own voice as a singular gesture:

Ethical listening in that sense describes the responsibility of participating in the motion of the heard: to draw its meaning contingently, and to pass it on in one's own sound as personal speech. It is an ethics of the self, of subjectivity, as much as of the world, of objectivity, as in effect the two become intertwined within its participatory framework, depending on each other for a definition in faint pencil marks

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For this reason, we can see different rewritings throughout his publications. A journey through these variations begins with an untitled booklet that he distributed at presentations since his reading at the Rosario International Poetry Festival in 2010; it continues with the publication of those same texts alongside others in *The Sounds of the Galaxy* (2014, Gigante), until they reach a certain crystallisation in *Songs of the Desert and the Mountain* (2020, Neutrinos). However, this "crystallisation" would not be more than momentary, given that, when listening to his readings after this publication, changes, additions and modifications continue to manifest themselves. The preponderance of reading aloud in his poetic practice – as an instance of production – takes us down a different path: from the booklet to the voice and from the voice to two of his published books.

In 2010, Federico Leguizamón was invited to the eighteenth edition of the Rosario International Poetry Festival.<sup>6</sup> Two audio recordings remain from his time at the event. The first can be found on the website *Sonidos de Rosario: registros y documentos sonoros* (*Sounds of Rosario*:

<sup>6</sup> The curatorship was carried out by Osvaldo Aguirre, Pablo Makovsky, and Daniel García Helder. It was organised by the Ministry of Innovation and Culture of the Province of Santa Fe, the Secretariat of Culture of the Municipality of Rosario, and the Parque de España Cultural Centre/AECID. This edition was dedicated to the memory of the Santa Fe poet Juan Manuel Inchauspe (1940-1991), whose works were reissued as part of the Festival.



recordings and audio documents)<sup>7</sup> because it was a poetry marathon held on the esplanade of the former Bernardino Rivadavia cultural centre. The second recording of the reading table was provided by the management of the Parque de España Cultural Centre and forms part of the doctoral thesis from which this article is derived.<sup>8</sup>

Some questions arise prior to the description of these materials. In principle, an institutional poetry festival such as the one in Rosario—with a history of almost 20 years at that time—functions as a movement that is, to a certain extent, consecrating within a field, however small it may be. Within the framework of a regulated and formal setting, certain tones, stridencies, or variations that would occur in a more informal setting—a reading series, an independent festival, or a poetry recital in a bar—tend to be toned down.

<sup>9</sup>On the other hand, as we said before, Leguizamón distributes a booklet to the audience, which includes almost all the poems he will read. It is a series of A4 sheets loosely bound with a stapler. They have no title and do not identify the author. Above the texts, which are arranged horizontally and vertically, there are marks, traces of lines, crossings-out, arrows pointing to some indications (many of which are unintelligible). On the back, like a back cover, there is a double-entry table entitled "LA SUMA DEL BÁRBARO VOL 2!" (THE SUM OF THE BARBARIAN VOL 2!), which includes the names of the texts written by the author to date. When we talk about reading "indications," we are not referring to bodily gestures as in dramaturgy, but to marks that guide the modulation of the voice; that is why it is interesting to ask how a strictly physical phenomenon such as reverberation—an echo, an expansion of sound in space—can become an inscription or a form of punctuation that operates on a philosophical-conceptual level. How is it that something so material and acoustic can organise listening in a way similar to a full stop, a parenthesis or a footnote, and produce pauses,

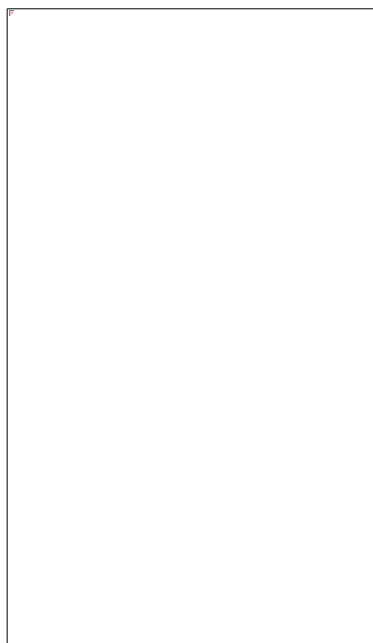
<sup>7</sup> Recording available at <https://www.sonidosderosario.com.ar/audio/xviii-festival-internacional-de-poesia-rosario-2010/>, not included in the YouTube playlist for this article due to format incompatibility.

<sup>8</sup> This material is part of the FIPR archive on which the Parque España Cultural Centre in Rosario and the Institute for Critical Studies in the Humanities are currently working [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G\\_Nw6RLjgoU&list=PLv1xapYxgK7p04rAzaeQgEX7-hBy80KMD&index=2&t=2s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G_Nw6RLjgoU&list=PLv1xapYxgK7p04rAzaeQgEX7-hBy80KMD&index=2&t=2s)

<sup>9</sup> An entry includes published texts, among which are narrative and theatrical texts: *La suma del bárbaro* (2000); *Domingos* (2001); *La salamanca* (2003); *Nada, Cuando llegó la brigada amanecía en el barrio* (2004); *Del acusico en la línea* (2006); *Show sobre el río* (2010). The following table lists the unpublished works: *13:23PM* (2002); *Narciso and the last fucking poems* (2007); *Sobre el río, The Sound of la galaxia* (2007); *Rene Quispe, de Casabindo* (2008); *Esperando a mi hombre, Y, el Hárem* (2009); *The Prize* (2010).

detours or emphases that are not written but which, by modulating the voice, inscribe meaning? This intersection between vibration and concept, between echo and reading, raises a question about the very conditions under which sound can become thought.

One could take up, based on Szendy in *Listening: A History of a Music-Loving Ear* (2003), the idea of the musical subject, with the difference that, in Leguizamón's poetry, it is a type of subject that rewrites *the listening* of its own voice. In the sense that the booklet functions as a circumstantial text—in a way, it is a programme or a souvenir of the presentation he is going to give—in which the h y marks of a rhythm, a replay, a fragmentation of his listening are inscribed. In other words, there is always more than one listening, more than one performance, and more than one interpretation, as Szendy points out: "The score never stops breaking up, dividing" (p. 14). For this reason, the booklet takes on a complex character that places it between a poetry publication, a show programme, and a score with certain vocal indications.



Leguizamón's booklet-score functions as a written representation of the listening experience of his poems , because it contains symbols and notations that communicate instructions for a vocal interpretation . These are not musical instructions in an academic sense—it is by no means a stave—since, strictly speaking, a vocal score communicates variables that guide the musical interpretation

of the voice. Its intrinsic characteristics are the duration of a note, the tempo – "crescendo" or "decrecendo" – the tonal volume, the pauses, pronunciations, breaths, and types of rhythms.

Nor does the booklet distributed by Leguizamón convey this precise musical information, as a vocal score would. It is clear that the poems contain musical information of this nature (since, as we will explain later, we notice this immediately upon listening to them). However, this information is implicit or encrypted as part of the texts themselves. In "*Yo no sé donde fui más feliz en todos días*" (I don't *know where* I was happiest *in all my days*), we can, for example, notice several verses that are crossed out (this encourages them to be omitted when read live): "two lives are breaths that go away/ go away/ go away/ down again/ my dance, everyone knows/ there are days that are/ surfed by beauty" (2010, n/a). The paradox is that in the recording of the reading at the Rosario International Poetry Festival, they are pronounced. Later, in '*ey corazón*', which is published in his two subsequent books with several modifications, he changes the appearance of the ex r 'ay' to 'ey'. At the same time, he places a fragment representing a vocal cry in brackets: "oe oe/ oh oh oh/ oh oh oh/ oe oe/ oh oh oh/ oh oh oh". Although this is a form of expression whose function is to produce emotional intensity in a song, Leguizamón pronounces it without melodic intonations, in a rigid manner.

The handwritten inscriptions on the pages form a notation system parallel to the poems, interacting with them, questioning them or commenting on them. Some seem to be a continuation or suggestion for the incorporation of new verses. Others, on the other hand, are drafts of poems along with other suggestions in the form of opinions on those same texts. Next to one manuscript, he clarifies: 'Losing identity, words/ friends at the party, brothers' (2010, n/a). On a page that only contains a drawing of sticks—similar to a musical stave, but vertical—there are a few scattered words such as 'white', 'decide', 'say', and on the other side of the page, in handwriting: 'of sound'.

In the short poem '*some self-torturing*': 'some self-torturing/ wounded by the freedom that does not exist that there is no/ rolling around in razor blades/ the sick writers of the people/ who achieve sovereignty/ and fly over time' (2010, n/a), the following can be read horizontally in cursive: "if they come for me/ I would like to see them coming head-on". But who should come head-on? The sick writers of the people? Those of the city? These are questions, readings, inscriptions of successive listenings that these poems provoke, as if the mutant journey through rewritings and vocalisations enabled an open system of commentary (since the audience has access to them by having the booklet-score with them during the show).

The last poem in the booklet, whose image we have just included in this article, proposes the search for an idealised place where the voice is transformed into a great river: "that flows/ abysmal". It is a scenario in which there will be no "enthusiasm" for reading, but rather for listening: "which city will now sound" (2010, n/a). As if the "walls of the future" dispensed with the idea of reading and literature were constituted solely on the basis of sound: elements of nature in their coexistence with the urban. However, this is not the end of poetry: "I will smoke again with my friends/ I write poetry/ I have no money/ I am young and handsome/ and the city continues on its course/ and nature too" (2010, n/a). This continuity outside of textuality is precisely what closes his performance at the festival, coinciding with the last verse that indicates that it is the "END OF THE SHOW". But Leguizamón reinterprets the idea of "show", a term that in English refers to an exhibition whose function is strictly to entertain the audience.

Espectáculo and show are words whose meanings are often confused or considered equivalent, although we could establish a series of differences between the uses that Leguizamón actually gives them. The word espectáculo comes from the Latin *spectacŭlum*, which is associated with the idea of *spectāre*, meaning to contemplate; while the word 'show' comes from the Old English *sceawian*, which means to look, see, contemplate, observe, inspect, examine, search, choose. In principle, a show highlights a certain active participation on the part of those who attend the event, as they not only 'contemplate' but also seek and choose.

In this sense, etymological dictionaries<sup>10</sup> agree that the meaning of show, since the 16th century, has also carried with it the intention of deception or simulation through the staging of an ostentatious display. A show seems to have, unlike a spectacle, a certain grandeur or particular brilliance. In relation to Leguizamón's performances, these margins of meaning intervene from several points of view. Leguizamón stages a performance alone; that is, he uses himself, the stage and the audience, but does not depend on other people or artistic practices. This reveals the emergence of a type of one-person show composed of poems that form a sound-poetic piece because it is woven from a composition that involves poetry, but also musical experimentation through the voice. In this sense, it is an experimental practice because sound research is carried out

<sup>10</sup> In this article, we consulted mainly *Breve diccionario etimológico de la lengua castellana* (1987) by Joan Corominas and DECEL. *Diccionario etimológico Castellano En Línea* (Available at <https://etimologias.dechile.net/>).

with the aim of discovering different popular musical modulations of the poetic word. It involves trial and error and a certain margin for the unexpected, such as a new cadence, a shift between a proposition that depends on one rhythm but ends up applying another (such as reading a bolero to the rhythm of reggaeton). This is because experimentation involves manipulating variables, analysing and observing how they change over time. Although the materials – written support, voice, microphone, audience – may seem to be the same, the combination of these new rhythms acts as a moment of detection of novelty.

In the section "Listening (hearing) to the modern ear's bill," Szendy starts with digital phonography and *sampling* and asks himself, given *the growing use* of radio, cassette tapes and compact discs as listening devices, in what sense we could say that it is the listeners who *make the music* (in the same way that Marcel Duchamp said "it is the viewers who make the paintings") (2003, p. 125). Musical modernity would shape two guiding threads that weave together this story in the first instance: that of the familiar arrangement, that of the arrangers who sign their listeners, and another more strange one, that of a theatre or stage where we encounter *characters who are listening*, where we, listeners and spectators, go to *see* and *hear* them *listen* (125-126).

There he reviews the types of listening proposed by Adorno in the *Introduction to the Sociology of Music*. There would be, mainly, two *attitudes of listening* according to the constitution of copyright and the consolidation of performance practices: that of the 'expert' or 'structural listening', which designates a form of fullness that does not admit any distraction or *fluctuation* and is functional to the work. On the other hand, there is a second type of listening associated with entertainment, which we could associate with the show. The aesthetic experience proposed by Leguizamón in these presentations distances itself from certain definitions or interpretations of the show that prioritise entertainment as their central axis. This is because the emphasis is on generating active listening that can decode the ensemble of rhythms, cultural, musical and poetic references.

### Musical *remix*: voice show at Poetry Festivals



As we anticipated a few lines ago, on 22 September 2010, as part of the eighteenth edition of the Rosario International Poetry Festival,<sup>11</sup> a poetry marathon was held on the esplanade of the former Bernardino Rivadavia cultural centre. All the foreign, national and local poets invited to the event participated. As this is an audio recording of the activity, we only have access to the voices, but not to the gestures made during the reading or certain interactions that took place with the audience. Each of the guests had to choose a poem to be read outdoors. Although the idea of a marathon is associated with a sporting event, in this context it seems to have the purpose of presenting all the poets in the edition quickly and concisely through a short poem.

The readings follow one after another with almost no pause, after a brief introduction by the announcer. Listening to this file allows us to note two important points in relation to the types of listening that a poetry festival of this nature elicits. First, we get a more general overview of the curation, as we hear an individual sample of each voice and its inclusion in the whole. In this context, a series of critical criteria can be considered, based on age range, geography, styles, predominant aesthetics, poetic traditions, among other issues. On the other hand, our object of study—specifically, Federico Leguizamón's voice—is intersected by the readings of the other poets, which allows us to consider a series of contrasts between those texts, his own voice, and the others. But we can even reconstruct that different modes of listening are proposed within the same event. In this case, it is an intervention in the public space that would target not only the audience that eventually attends all the activities programmed by the festival, but also the people who circulate in that space and who may circumstantially encounter a series of unexpected sounds in the urban context.

In the marathon, Leguizamón chooses to read "*Siento los sonidos llegando*" (I feel the sounds coming), one of the poems found in the booklet he previously distributed. The text begins with a

<sup>11</sup> The festival began on 21 September and ended on 26 September 2010. Some of its venues were the Parque de España Cultural Centre – whose director at the time was the poet Martín Prieto – the El Cairo cinema, Detention Unit No. III and public schools in the city. The event featured exhibitions, recitals by Paco Ibáñez, Fernando Cabrera, Adrián Abonizio and Ana Prada, plays, a poetry marathon, talks at the José Manuel Estrada Municipal Public Library, poetry clinics led by Irene Gruss, and nightly readings at the Tercer Mundo bar. Some of the guests included Julián Bejarano (Paraná), Arturo Carrera (Buenos Aires), Tomás Boasso (Rosario), Luciana Caamaño (Mar del Plata), Paula Aramburu (Rosario), Douglas Diegues (Brazil/Paraguay), Thomas Boberg (Denmark), Igor Barreto (Venezuela), Nadia Prado Campos (Chile), Enzia Verduchi (Mexico), Virna Teixeira (Brazil), Martín Rodríguez (Buenos Aires) and Wingston González (Guatemala), Cristian Molina (Rosario), Francisco Marzióni (Rafaela), Gabriela Bejerman (Buenos Aires), Sergio Bizzio (Buenos Aires), Virna Teixeira (Brazil) Washington Cucurto (Buenos Aires), among others.

festive scene from the highlands called "la arrastradita". As he himself recounts in a personal communication, these were dances that took place in the middle of the Puna, in the province of Jujuy.<sup>12</sup> During the 20th century, fulfilled the social function of being courtship spaces for young people. Their peculiarity is that the name "arrastradita" refers to the fact that, on occasions, these parties culminated in episodes of ritualised male violence: rape or sexual assault of the women who attended. This is a cultural reference that Leguizamón came into contact with through the oral family and social history of his place of origin. However, it could be argued that, at a popular festival of this kind, where dancing takes centre stage, there is also a generic mix of music, ranging from carnavalito, zamba, huayno and chacarera to Colombian cumbia and its more contemporary transformations: "I feel the sounds coming/ tonight I'm going to fumanchar/ I'm going with Richar/ tonight the arrastradita".

Without making direct translations between "la arrastradita" and the procedures of the poem, it can be thought that festivals of this kind carry within themselves an idea of a mixture of musical materials that are related to contemporary digital sound editing tools such as remixing.<sup>13</sup> But how do these procedures relate to poetry? If *remixing* involves taking an original song and changing elements of its rhythm and structure, Leguizamón's voice operates on two interrelated levels: semantic and rhythmic. On the one hand, he extracts particles that form part of the poetic configuration of certain popular musical genres. These are words, expressions and intonations that establish specific identifying links with these genres, which reappear in certain songs. Strictly speaking, the "sounds that come through" indicate that: "tonight I'm going to fumanchar" and "the fumancheros are getting ready, they're going to fumanchar/they're going to fumanchar".<sup>14</sup> However,

<sup>12</sup> In a personal communication dated 7 June 2021, which can be found in the appendix to the doctoral thesis that gave rise to this article, Leguizamón comments that, although he never attended these festivals, he heard about them. He understands that they form part of a certain "cultural memory" of his place of origin.

<sup>13</sup> In a recent work entitled "PM Poetry and Music Festival: New Ways of Making Silence" (2019), he identifies possible links between text and sound. He suggests that there are two main areas. The first is the relationship between poetry and music, commonly known as sound poetry. That is, a type of poetry that emphasises its materiality as sound, especially in the avant-garde. The second area includes other forms such as phonetic poetry, which is based on a written text (sometimes in invented languages or glossolalia) and tends to use only one or more voices. This type of intervention is carried out through various recording media (analogue or digital) that can incorporate real-time effects. In this essay, Cussen points out that these crossovers occur not only at the referential and structural level but also outside of technologies.

<sup>14</sup> The expression "fumanchar" appears repeatedly in Argentine cumbia villera. For example, in a song by the band Damas Gratis called "El fumanchero" it says: "Dance cumbia cumbiamberos, the fumanchero has arrived/ Fumanchando from the head, raising a beer/ The fumanchero Indian paints us, we are made up of gunmen/ El

in this extraction process, the lyrics that could be sung to the rhythm of a cumbia villera,<sup>15</sup> are read with a certain calmness, even quickly, which produces a derealisation of cumbia as a genre and of the poem as a potential song; but also of the poem as a written text that is simply read. Beyond the words, the voice extracts the musicality because it intones with other rhythms that do not coincide with the type of lyrics.

This divergence of identification, which becomes a recurring theme in several of Leguizamón's poems found in the booklet-score, coexists with sudden changes in musical register. If the poem proposed "fumanchar" based on cumbia, it immediately shifts to romantic emotion, the lyrics of a bolero<sup>16</sup>, with an intonation *in crescendo* in the last vowels of the final words: "I am thinking of you / I am thinking of you / I am thinking of you / the afternoon of songs / I am thinking of you". This, in turn, bears clear similarities to a classic bolero of the same name: "Estoy pensando en ti" (1970), by Ecuadorian composer and singer Julio Jaramillo (1935-1978). The lyrics of this song say: "I am thinking of you / crying / in lament / under the wind / cry with me."<sup>17</sup>

However, towards the end of the reading of that same poem, the festive atmosphere – characterised by altered perception and collective dancing – returns to the foreground, proposing a type of choreography that could be identified with a potential reggaeton: "a dog losing its sense of smell / kiss hand mouth / kiss hand mouth / what's playing is the kiss hand mouth dance / arandela reclining now drinks wine / and tonight I want to dance [...] / with petrarca they're going to break".<sup>18</sup> In this case, we cannot distinguish a specific song, although it is a type of lyrics that gives physical instructions for performing a dance. This is the case with the Americanism "bacilar" ( ), which is

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fumanchero sings a cumbia, I am a fumanchero and I sing my cumbia/ I drink wine and you drink beer, ah ah, I want to get off/ This madness in my head, ah, ah" (2001).

<sup>15</sup> Cumbia songs have a specific rhythm and tempo characterised by the classic four-four time, i.e. four beats per musical bar. The phrases are usually simple, short and repetitive.

<sup>16</sup> With variations, the themes in boleros of Afro-Cuban origin are usually love, heartbreak, regret and nostalgia. They usually have an instrumental introduction, a four-four time signature (similar to cumbia, but slower), but the accented beats create a sensual, swaying rhythm, unlike cumbia. The percussion is usually provided by maracas, with moderate tempos similar to cumbia.

<sup>17</sup> Song available at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8RA15RrJKho&ab\\_channel=MexTunes](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8RA15RrJKho&ab_channel=MexTunes)

<sup>18</sup> Although related to Latin genres such as bolero and cumbia, reggaeton usually has a very fast tempo, synthesizers and more pronounced electronic effects. However, the rhythm is a combination of rhythm patterns inspired by Jamaican dancehall. One of the key elements of the reggaeton rhythm is the "Dem Bow". This is a particular rhythmic pattern on the drums consisting of syncopated and repetitive drum beats. The name comes from the song "Dem Bow" by Shabba Ranks, which influenced many reggaeton rhythms. Similarly, the synthesised bass is another fundamental part of this rhythmic base.

spelled "vacilar" and is commonly used in Central America, both in song lyrics and colloquially, to refer to the idea of a movement that follows a rhythm and also to allude to a lewd look in the middle of a dance.<sup>19</sup>

However, the only rhythm that Leguizamón effectively maintains, in almost the entire performance, is that given by the verse structure of his own composition. In the speed of his reading, the *remix* of the musical elements we have just described creates an effect that not only de-realises these popular genres themselves, but also gives a disconcerting listening experience that lies somewhere between song and poetry – with mostly erudite poetic references, "con petrarca<sup>20</sup> van a quebrantar" (with Petrarch and the others they are going to break), which contrast or dialogue with the "popular" character. Similarly, his reading of this particular poem appeases the notion of song demanded by the very rhythms he evokes from the lyrics. As Paul Miller points out in *The Science of Rhythm* (2020), the *mix* creates fluid interpolations between the objects of reflection in order to fabricate a zone of representation in which the interplay between the one and the many, the original and its double, is interrogated (52). But what happens when these procedures are deployed in longer vocal performances, i.e., in shows?

In this regard, we are interested in comparing two performances by Leguizamón that are separated by a distance of eleven years. The first, as already mentioned, is an audio recording of a round table at the Rosario International Poetry Festival, held in 2010, an event that took place a few days after the marathon, on Sunday 26 September. The reading—in which poets Luciano Lamberti (Córdoba) and Sylvina Bach (Tucumán) also participated—took place at the Parque de España Cultural Centre. Leguizamón reads, strictly speaking, the poems found in the booklet, but in a different order than the one stipulated. None of the texts have titles, so we will name them after their first verse: '*man who is leaving*', '*these monkeys are dehydrated*', '*Saturday Saturday*', '*I don't know where I was happiest these days*,' '*yellow crack breaks and falls*,' '*we all have different experiences*,' '*I feel the*

<sup>19</sup> The *Breve diccionario etimológico de la lengua castellana* (Brief Etymological Dictionary of the Spanish Language) indicates that the word "vacilar" comes from: "[...] the second half of the 15th century. From the Latin vacillare, which means to sway from side to side, to wobble, to oscillate" (1987: 595).

<sup>20</sup> Petrarch (1304-1374), a poet who pioneered the Italian Renaissance, wrote a series of sonnets and lyrical songs under the name 'Canzoniere' (Songbook of Love). Leguizamón takes up this reference in these texts, which are configured and work with the song.

*sounds coming," "hey heart," "some self-torturing," "when I find a place."*<sup>21</sup> We could define this collection of poems as raw material that, from that moment on, the poet will recombine in different ways.

The poems function, when read aloud, as proto-songs that weave together a network of particles of meaning that form links with music, in this case, Colombian. The reading begins with '*hombre que te vas*' ('man who is *leaving*'): 'man who will not return / to sing the keys / of our song / how much longer / how long absent / graphomania is a passion'. Immediately afterwards: 'he walks through the streets, people notice / he walks through all the cities / he has crossed the hill, he has arrived in Bogotá [...] / the lights come on in the middle of the show'. What emerges in this 'show' is precisely a skeleton of short verses, disjointed, hesitant songs that address a loving subject:

the nights without you  
are the hours and days repeating the same old thing  
the feet, the heart  
are the days on new roads  
on Fridays, you say  
I spend my time going round in circles calming the pleasure  
my feet, baby  
I get lost in the filter and I stop being myself  
latino heart, heartbroken  
where is my Latin heart  
in the *aphasia* of the song (s/n, emphasis added).

If a song is, in its most traditional sense, a musical composition that includes lyrics, melody, rhythm and harmony, Leguizamón works with these materials by grouping, replacing and selecting specific elements, such as *samples*<sup>22</sup>, which he then reconfigures and mixes using the *remix*

<sup>21</sup> On this occasion, he also reads some texts that are not found in the booklet or in published books, such as "I am the rat man".

<sup>22</sup> The first samplers were made with magnetic tapes and began to be constructed in the 1950s with the advent of concrete music (the origin of electronic music) discovered and popularised by French composer Pierre Schaeffer. Since then, the sampler has evolved into its contemporary version, which no longer works with analogue sound recordings but with digitised sounds. For Simon Reynolds (2015), from that crucial moment on, we began to live in a "sampladelia" that traversed and created a range of musical genres: techno, hip hop, house, electronic, post-rock, among others. "Sampladelia" disorients and alters perception, drastically



*technique*, using his own voice as a playback device. A *sample*, in the language of sound editing, is a fragment of recorded sound that is used to produce music. It can be any sound, such as a violin, a voice, or a specific effect from an old song. These files are processed through a sampler, which is an electronic instrument that sequences and reproduces these sound recordings. Leguizamón uses *samples* from a broad generic spectrum ranging from American, regional, Andean folk music to "Ay viditay, me voy cantando" (n/a) and Latin culture as sources of inquiry. This work with sampling intervenes in traditional ideas of musicality because it breaks down the space-time of interactive performance in real time—the poetry festival—and the traditional acoustic space—the technological environment required by a DJ who composes music using these procedures.

The type of sampling carried out by Leguizamón could be thought of through the idea of "song aphasia,"<sup>23</sup> which he himself proposes in the poem we have just quoted. It is a procedure rooted in a poetic language that is inscribed in the musical and vice versa. The song functions as a device constituted by successive listenings and materials, a sound framework that is not limited to the linear reproduction of a melody or a text, but is constantly subjected to contiguities, alignments, meaningful articulations and subordinations. These shifts are not merely formal: they produce effects of meaning in the listener, activating memories, affections and references that exceed the strictly musical field. In this process of signification, the song reveals itself as an unstable structure, where the operations of repetition and variation, fragmentation and recomposition play a central role.

At the same time, as Lacan points out, this dynamic accounts for an absence or "a deficiency in the function of meaningful equivalence through similarity" (1984, p. 315), that is, an impossibility of fixing meaning by mere similarity between sound or linguistic elements. Instead of guaranteeing the identity of signifiers through repetition, the song highlights their displaced, deferred, incomplete nature. This hiatus in the signifying chain allows unexpected, even contradictory meanings to emerge. In this way, the song presents itself not only as an aesthetic object but also as a space of production,

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expanding the methods developed by late 1960s psychedelia. Sound sources are extracted from their origin (which is sometimes completely lost), cut, stretched, worked, looped and recombined.

<sup>23</sup> In *Seminar 3* (1955) devoted to psychosis, Jacques Lacan revisits Roman Jakobson's "Two Aspects of Language and Two Types of Aphasia" (1941) to consider precisely how, in this language disorder, the subject shows complete mastery in structuring a sentence in which, however, the verbal embodiment of what the sentence points to is manifested on the margins.

where the poet as listener actively participates in the construction of meaning, guided both by the sound marks of the text and by their own auditory associations.

If we momentarily transfer this logic of disarticulation to live reading, we can notice the presence of songs—some recognisable and others impossible to identify. They seem to be transliterated, but within the same Spanish writing system. Leguizamón translates certain lyrics or poetic forms into equivalent characters to constitute a new poem, maintaining some pronunciations and the phonetic structure of the genres, such as the consonant rhyme of popular couplets.<sup>24</sup>

In '*sábado sábado*', the confused voices bring a 'song that is lost, cables to the sky/ altars of fire in celebration/ the neighbours' song improvises the forces'.<sup>25</sup> However, the song, as a poetic structure, is postponed throughout the text. Towards the end, it is taken up again, albeit as a "song of the exiled": "to those I greet/ with great devotion/ sacred virgin/ path of killcana/ delicious virgin/ don't say it was me/ show in Croatia/ show in Romanian/ uoioioio/ ie/ ie" (2010, p. 2).<sup>26</sup> The word 'killcana', which in Quechua refers to the action of writing, is identified with a virgin who is prayed to and asked for favours. At the same time, it is mentioned that 'the show' is actually taking place in 'Croatia' and in the 'Romanian' language. This distorts the original idea of a religious song from the highlands because Leguizamón introduces a reference to another language and mixes geographical locations. On the other hand, "Yo" and "show" have a certain phonetic similarity in their pronunciation when read fluently, which causes confusion when listening. Show of the self? Self of the show?

This same idea, which appears in several poems he reads on that occasion, "show Leguizamón show", together with that of dance, self-immolation and celebration, articulates the performance, transforming the individual poems into a poetry show that can be heard under the conceptual idea of a piece that borders on all those frontiers. In another poem, "*Estos changos están deshidratados*" (These monkeys are *dehydrated*), it says: "Listen, my son, write yourself a guayabera/ apart from you,

<sup>24</sup> Popular couplets are poetic forms that usually have stanzas of four octosyllabic verses and consonant rhymes, although these structures may vary according to geography. One example of this is *Las coplas americanas* (1960) by the Afro-Cuban poet Nicolás Guillén, which Leguizamón explicitly mentions in other voice performances.

<sup>25</sup> This poem is read in completely different ways in each vocal performance.

<sup>26</sup> We are quoting from the untitled fanzine, made with stapled A4 sheets, which he distributed at that festival and continued to distribute at other events over the years.

your mouth/ apart from you, it provokes". Sometimes the musical reference is clear (Rubén Rada<sup>27</sup> in this case) but it is combined, aligned, in the song's aphasia, with another somewhat more diffuse one. For example, the term 'guayabera',<sup>28</sup> which not only refers to a Cuban garment, but also to a type of son montuno rhythm, which is played with the conga, bongo and tumbadora. At the same time, it echoes popular songs such as 'Quiero un sombrero' by Los Wawancó, a tropical music group formed in Argentina in the 1970s: 'I want a guard hat/ I want a flag, I want a guayabera/ And a son to dance to'.<sup>29</sup> Although different genres such as salsa and cumbia are articulated, this variation has the effect, when listening, of a radio whose dial changes, allowing us to hear fragments of songs, some identifiable and others that sound familiar to the ear because they remind us of a particular song or we associate them directly with popular festivals.

In 2021, eleven years after the International Poetry Festival in the city of Rosario, he attended the Poetry Festival, Acá No. 14 in the city of Mar del Plata.<sup>30</sup> In this case, it is an audiovisual recording of the performance, which took place at the Theatre Club within the Bronzini Cultural Centre. The audience seated in the stands and the dark theatrical atmosphere, illuminated by spotlights, convey the idea that a show is about to take place. On this occasion, he once again distributes the same booklet from 2010 and introduces a new element to the show: the tambourine that will accompany the recitation.<sup>31</sup> 's recitation begins with the poem we analysed at the beginning of this section, "*Siento los sonidos llegando*" (*I feel the sounds coming*), but to the rhythm of tambourine beats that mark the verse breaks. On this occasion, the tone is untimely, with a strong intonation of the final vowels, while he moves closer and further away from the microphone, causing his voice to sway back and forth: "esta noche la arrastradita" (tonight, the little drag).

<sup>27</sup> Song available at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jjHnUpSufMo&ab\\_channel=Tom](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jjHnUpSufMo&ab_channel=Tom). The distinctive feature of the music of Rubén Rada, a Uruguayan musician born in 1943, is that it combines candombe, salsa and bossa nova. The song Leguizamón refers to is called "Cha-cha, muchacha" (2000).

<sup>28</sup> Helio Orovio's *biographical and technical dictionary of Cuban music* mentions the guayabera and also traces the term. He links it directly to the guayabo tree, which was used to make drums, agongos, percussion instruments and pots (1981, p. 2015).

<sup>29</sup> Song available at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yypa7p1FbUQY&ab\\_channel=CMTV.com.ar](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yypa7p1FbUQY&ab_channel=CMTV.com.ar)

<sup>30</sup> The Acá Poetry Festival is a literary event that has been held independently in the city of Mar del Plata since 2007. The annual event brings together the contemporary voices of Argentine poetry. Over the course of two days, poets participate in and attend reading tables, book presentations, publishing fairs and various types of exchanges with the public, such as talks and debates.

<sup>31</sup> Available at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jjHnUpSufMo&ab\\_channel=Tomsta](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jjHnUpSufMo&ab_channel=Tomsta)

Immediately, upon reaching the seventh verse, the poem is cut off and linked to a fragment of "*Estos changos están deshidratados*" (These monkeys are dehydrated): "I don't want to know anything about anyone/ not the songs, nor the days, nor the ways of being/ I don't want to run into anyone, not even the ladies" (n/a). The sound collage he constructs from these two poems at the beginning of this presentation is only perceptible to the ear if one has heard or read it before, because it operates under a condensation effect. Just as we described Leguizamón's remix procedures in relation to popular music, these operations of extraction could be thought of in relation to the poems themselves.

Although he previously distributed the texts he was going to read, the recitation begins to include others that have been published in his books: *The Sound of the Galaxy* (2014) and *Songs of the Desert and the Mountain* (2017). However, he does not read at any point, but uses the microphone as if he were *freestyling* poetry<sup>32</sup>, but without the rhythmic pattern and tone of *rap*, the improvisation that it would imply: "White river runs down the walls and ceilings/ What are they, angels?". In this case, the book is on stage, but its appearance is not operational, merely scenographic. At times, the poet takes the book in his hands, even opens it, but does not proceed to read anything from it; the pages seem to be blank and the only possible materiality that is considered is the voice.

At each pause, the audience cheers and applauds and demands more poetry. Leguizamón continues, and in a circular fashion, returns to one of the poems from the beginning as if it were a *sample* that repeats itself every so often in a *loop*, although this time he recites it in its entirety: "*I feel the sounds coming*" and: "These monkeys are dehydrated/ they lack liquid, not basil/ they have too much time and my desire/ I don't want to be with anyone/ not with the songs or the days or the ways of being/ I don't want to run into anyone, not even the ladies" (n/a). The idea of "sounds coming" is presented as enigmatic. Where would they come from? He immediately announces through the microphone that will recite a song "from the place I come from": "quebradeño humauaqueño/ cholita, ay". At this point, where he has mixed his own poems with popular songs from different genres, some aspects of this operation can be understood. The live *remix* manages to harmonise the

<sup>32</sup> Within hip-hop culture, freestyle is a spontaneous artistic expression that consists of creating lyrics and rhymes in an improvised manner. These practices are put to the test in events called battles, in which rappers face off and test their verbal ingenuity.

music and culture of the Aymara and Quechua peoples who inhabit the Andean region – historically eclipsed by the white culture of Buenos Aires – with contemporary musical materials, as an act of justice, but also as a reactivation of the question of the identity of these cultures today.

In this sense, the performance in the city of Mar del Plata combines fragments of pre-existing poems to create a new poetic-musical piece based on the concept of a show, whose spectacular nature revolves around a poetic *loop* that is repeated, with variations, over time. It is no coincidence that he chooses his most widely read poems after a decade of successive rewritings, publications and drafts. In this way, these texts are subjected to constant updates based on the specific context in which they are enunciated, put to work again. For Reynolds (2015), a *loop* made with a "generic" theme is functional because it has the right elements for the DJ to mix it with other similar themes, thus creating a musical flow that is never the same. What initially appears homogeneous reveals, in its altered recurrence, subtle inflections and changes as the listener attentively immerses themselves in the atmosphere (189). In the specific case of his 2021 presentation, Leguizamón proceeds to mix in a similar way the texts that he has read repeatedly in the past,<sup>33</sup> which leads us to consider that this sound collage expresses variations that time has imposed both on his own voice and on its inscription in the writing itself.

### Sound in books: writing, singing and musical reading

In 2014, *The Sounds of the Galaxy* was published by Gigante, and in 2017, *Songs of the Desert and the Mountain* was published by Neutrinos. In principle, it is appropriate to think that, in Leguizamón's case, the poetry books do not precede the vocal performances, but rather specify a space-time for them, a specific moment. This is so because, as we described earlier, he is constantly reworking, recombining and changing the texts based on the contact of the voice with the stage, the show. Strictly speaking, the books contain the same piece—in the first, under the name 'The sound and the show, some show poems' (2010)—from the booklet mentioned above, although with various changes: ellipsis of elements, replacement of words with others, cuts, subtractions, among other operations. However, apart from the poems '' and 'de show', the books contain other types of poetic-

<sup>33</sup> Audiovisual recording available at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o-r2-JUCFd8&t=73s&ab\\_channel=AnaPorr%C3%BAa](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o-r2-JUCFd8&t=73s&ab_channel=AnaPorr%C3%BAa)



essayistic texts, which we will discuss below, that question the origin, identity and provenance of the materials used in their vocal performances.

If *The Sound of the Galaxy* attempts to consider sounds in their entirety, *Songs of the Desert and the Mountain* questions how songs sound in these specific landscapes. The poetic language works from a series of planes and perspectives that range from greater to lesser. However, the idea of the galaxy in these texts is not strictly associated with altered perception or the collection of stars—interstellar dust, particles in motion, as a gravitational system—but rather with the broken Jujuy- e as an autonomous cosmic structure that converges in the universal. From this point of view, sound contains within itself other subsystems such as songs, but also music, noise and dance as the syntax of a type of listening that is defined in a geography. This is an unstable field, which is subject to attempts at classification: 'Four dimensions of the sound of the galaxy'; 'End of the sounds of the galaxy' and 'To the street'.

These numbered prose pieces, composed of short sentences that resemble verse, attempt to capture—like a field recording—the space and time in which these sounds of the ravine converge as physical events of reality: 'water making noise' (p. 7), 'carnival songs' (p. 13), 'sound of the wind', 'sound of the hills' (p. 15). However, the sounds take on a suspenseful and metaphysical character. They do not circulate rapidly in extensive enumerations, nor do they overlap each other in a confusing manner, but rather are extracted from their original habitat to acquire relationships of similarity with each other: '[...] The sound in stages. Tick tock. Fakir of the hills. The heels walk on you. In stages. The days' (Leguizamón, 2014, p. 15).

The onomatopoeia of the clock resembles the sound of heels walking "step by step" like the passing of days and hours. These are sounds that are subjected to an editing process that alters them minimally, changing their obvious interpretation. Leguizamón says: "Broken poetry. That says nothing and is not understood. Cheesy stop. That people now listen to" (p. 15). As if that territorial space, dominated by sound and listening from a historical point of view—where a culture of oral tradition prevails over written tradition, as is the case in much of Andean culture—could only generate broken, incomplete listening, fractures, damage that affects its own integrity and functioning.

For this reason, there is a "sound that wobbles" (p. 18), unstable in every sense, because it is traversed both by the geographies of the desert and the mountains, and by the identity of the peoples of the highlands and north-western Argentina (NOA), as well as by the political and conflictive

tensions involved in its inscription in that "national soundscape" (p. 20). In this context, writing these prose texts is presented as an experience linked to "the instinctive capacity for execution" (28). Sounds, unlike writing, cannot be fixed or repeated identically, but their execution is always mediated by the body, space, and the specific circumstances of listening: "in the course of events. Butterfly. Of what happens in every room in the world" (28). In this way, their appearance in the poem places them in the foreground, demanding to be questioned.

The sound strictly linked to the dance spaces that appear in these poems is marked by another kind of experience that is far removed from the fast pace of urban life. It is the ontological dance "[...] of wisdom" (2). These are the popular songs of NOA, the Andean territory, a rhetoric that has been typified in language, over the centuries, in musical and folkloric expressions. Leguizamón says in relation to this:

I dislike folklore lyrics. The social structure is determined by those lyrics, and people sing them and they continue to be reproduced. That's how popular songs are [...] Now reggaeton and cumbia have been legitimised. Things that I saw value in. Luckily, I championed the value of cumbia and reggaeton, and it worked. *The world moves to those rhythms.*" (Personal communication, 7 June 2021).

It is interesting to note that, if "the world moves to those rhythms," Leguizamón's poetry proceeds to break down that cultural standardisation of regional popular traditions, even to the point of making them strange by combining them with others using the procedures described in the previous sections. The time of the sounds of the ravine, unlike writing, is not linear because it is associated with the cosmic, the cyclical, the sacred, the seasons, the solstices and equinoxes: "The stakes of the lights. Directed, I remember, by the sounds of the galaxy. That are already leaving, that are already gone. And that suddenly" (26). This ending *in media res* establishes the possibility of a return; the sounds—nature, songs, voices, noises—abandon their context of appearance to dialogue with each other and blend into the texts.

In "The End of the Sounds of the Galaxy," the sensation of light and heat is a memory, because those days are coming that are "spoken" in other rhythms, of the elegance of sadness: "[...] to the blue dance of the taquirari, oh. The sunny days are coming. With new wings to tell. A gentle movement, from days gone by, and the present fear, of days to come" (p. 38).

This is how a musical element from northern Argentina, "el taquirari", makes its appearance. It is a dance similar to the carnavalito<sup>34</sup> of Bolivian origin, which is played and danced in clubs, religious festivals and carnivals. In this way, it can be seen that, in Leguizamón, spatial references are fused with the sounds and marks of that *territory*, the gorge, which functions as a vital 'galaxy' in which one can hear 'the sound of the wind' and read 'a bone in the pampa that shines. The rising sun of biology' (p. 13). What emerges there and is pointed out is the space of Jujuy as a "dotted sound" (p. 20) that seems to be the antidote to the technological threat of the text: "The model of writing is the model of books. The white of the books and the ink intertwined" (p. 27). For this reason, his poetry books are created in the course of voice performances, in a project that, from its inception, made those sounds its material, beginning with *Nada* (2005)<sup>35</sup>, which worked strictly with *noise*:

I didn't give it the key of music. I read it quickly, as if making a noise, sounds. That's why the idea of the sound of the galaxy, paragraphs, came later. And then I arrived at something more musical according to the convention of rhythm and harmony. The first book I wrote, called *Nada*, would be that *Noise*. Then *The Sound of the Galaxy* would be a kind of *ambient*. The *Songs* would finally be permeated by music, by singing. More traditional, *seeking popular song*. I don't know how that would work. How I imagine the song. Take reggaeton, cumbia (Personal communication, 7 June 2021).<sup>36</sup>

We are interested in highlighting this idea of "searching for popular song" through the desert and the mountains. Does the search imply a poetic investigation of a possible origin? *Cantos del desierto y la montaña* recovers most of the texts from *The sound of la galaxia* but is no longer divided between the show and the non-show. It is a rewriting whose central focus of inquiry is precisely song and songs as social functions—aspects of that sound material we described at the beginning. In this way, the songs that are sung are scattered throughout the texts as access points to a collective memory. A type of listening that seems to belong to all of us: "I will sing your song" (2017, p. 51).

<sup>34</sup> Carnavalito is a type of rhythm and music with pre-Hispanic roots that is celebratory in nature and danced at popular festivals in northern Argentina.

<sup>35</sup> This book, which we will not discuss in this article, was published in 2005 by the National University of Jujuy Press in the Mirilla collection.

<sup>36</sup> This communication is included in the appendix of the unpublished doctoral thesis that gave rise to this article.

A refrain, a fragment, even a word is remembered, beginning to spin within the text like a cassette tape used to record songs from the radio that has been damaged by the passage of time: "trululú trululú trulalalá" (24). But also, like a song that tries to sing what it heard – "La hija del fletero" (1993) by Los redonditos de ricota<sup>37</sup> and misses a word or changes it for another:

Oh oh  
the mechanic's daughter  
oh oh  
the mechanic's daughter  
oh oh  
the mechanic's daughter (p. 44).

Even latiguillos, modified musical intermezzos, in which some singers recite a more conversational part of the song's lyrics. Leguizamón says: "it's the band playing for you/ in songs with names from the past/ playing for you" (p. 53) in reference to the lyrics of "El satánico Dr Cadillac" (1989)<sup>38</sup> by Los Fabulosos Cadillacs, which say: "Always some idiot to convince/ you talk all night like a boy scout/ you talk about my life like your dad/ the Cadillacs playing for you/ the Cadillacs playing for you/ yes [...]". Or "Yo no me quiero casar y usted" (2001)<sup>39</sup> by the band Turf: "I'm no longer here/ I'm gone/ I've left here," which in Leguizamón lends itself to another more reflective variation on the concrete action of "leaving": "[...] I'm leaving/ I'm no longer here/ I'm the one who has now gone/ I'm no longer here/ I'm no longer here/ I'm outside" (p. 64). This is not a reference that operates solely under intertextuality; rather, in this case, Argentine national rock<sup>40</sup> is processed as a creative force, even taking it to the realm of humour and absurdity, as in "Chicas extremas" from the same book: "[...] boys and girls want kebabs/ they want kebabs/ they want, they want, they want/ kebabs!" (2017, p. 75) in relation to "Quieren rock" (2002) by the band Intoxicados;<sup>41</sup> which, in turn, pays homage to

<sup>37</sup> Song available at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XacNmPqBork&ab\\_channel=PatricioReyysusRedonditosdeRicota](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XacNmPqBork&ab_channel=PatricioReyysusRedonditosdeRicota)

<sup>38</sup> Song available at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nz1QJozrRNw&ab\\_channel=gasparduclosbesa](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nz1QJozrRNw&ab_channel=gasparduclosbesa)

<sup>39</sup> Song available at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kiKCXChGFgA&ab\\_channel=PopArtDiscos](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kiKCXChGFgA&ab_channel=PopArtDiscos)

<sup>40</sup> Argentine "national rock" refers to bands that achieved popularity within the country after the Falklands War in 1982, when there was an open call to stop listening to English-language rock music due to the conflict with England. It can be thought of as a musical and identity movement that continues to this day and began several decades earlier with the emergence of the first bands in El club del clan in the 1960s.

<sup>41</sup> Song available at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qWhyicQJNdG&ab\\_channel=CMTV.com.ar](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qWhyicQJNdG&ab_channel=CMTV.com.ar)

the album *Los chicos quieren rock* (1988) by Los ratones paranoicos. To the point that singing these songs by others confuses the poem itself, which asks who the subject singing is: "absolute, political, total poetry/ that changes the world your word/ not being/ poetry, what is my voice?" (p. 65).

It is not about a particular subject, but rather that the texts in the book attempt to construct a total song – which eludes the individuality of the poem – in which all the voices that emerge from these songs can converge at the same time. It is the song that 'is playing' (p. 34) and is sung over the top, the song that is sung over the song by those who listen to it and repeat it. They can be "Songs of Joy" that merge into "the song of vagrancy/ for everyone" (p. 36). But they can also be transformed into a song that comes from a church: "Lord of the shepherd/ lord of prayer" (p. 40). Songs construct knowledge, identity, and reality. That is why they can be plundered and intervened upon : "if you are not here, if there is no song/ a bump in the road/ that takes us further away every day/ and without returning and the path/ of not seeing you alive/ and the great days and their great nights [...] camperitai, so viejitai/ today you shelter me/ these things" (2017, p. 41). The ending of a regional term, used to designate the beloved, can generate a new language, but also an innovative rhythm based on that ironic variation, as it leaves its mark on common objects –campera– and their qualities –viejita–.

Leguizamón's books propose, beyond their permanent contact with the stage and the show, a musical reading that operates under the rhythmic imprint of the songs they allude to. Although they also generate their own rhythms that thread the poems together, such as the percussion he uses based on the word 'son'. On the one hand, it is a copulative linking verb, third person present indicative in the Spanish language; on the other, 'son' comes from the Latin *sonus*, which refers to the expression of a sound and also to the Cuban musical genre: "[...] los días son cien luceros son/ dados vueltas ni qué se yo/ un cantor gesticulando por las mesas" (2017, p. 12) and in another poem: "hay días que están/ surfeados por la belleza/ cómo son cuáles son" (2017, p. 15). Thus, the voice expresses a concern about the nature of its own singing, asking "what song is this song" and pointing out its vagueness or mismatch with recognisable musical forms: "this song I dance is not sorrow / if it is not rumba, I don't know what it is" (2017, p. 22). This doubt generates an effect of writing in motion, in which the festival and the party are inscribed.

The mixture of materials from different origins – Argentina, Central America and the Caribbean – creates a montage of rhythms that are linked in a search for the origin of the definitive



or total song as a utopian poetic goal. In this sense, in Leguizamón's poems, there is no concrete boundary between the material of poetry and that of music. Both converge in the same space. Poetry, in this way, is inserted as a practice, a vehicle that liberates the voice and attempts to hum the song of all songs.

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