

Josh Rodriguez

CUICATL

(Nahuatl Song)

SATB + Piano

PERUSAL SCORE

For SATB + Piano

Program Notes

Written in 2023/24, *Cuicatl (Nahuatl Song)* based on Nahuatl poetry by the Aztec ruler Nezahualcoyotl of Tetzcohuco, expresses the existential yearning of a person who recognizes life's transience and searches for meaning. The poet finds solace in leaving behind songs and flowers – beauty – for the next generation. This poetry concludes with a joyful wordless Nahuatl exclamation "ohuaya" (similar to English exclamations of wonder: "oh! wow!"), a journey that is musically reflected by a slow introspective beginning which then speeds up in the second half as it moves toward an exalted conclusion.

For the inquisitive, Nahuatl is spoken by 1.7 million Nahua peoples, primarily living in Central Mexico (with smaller populations in the United States). The lasting impact of this vibrant culture resounds today partly in the many Nahuatl words that have entered English. These include: cacao (cacahuatl), coyote (coyōtl), tomato (tomatl), mesquite (mizquitl), ocelot (ōcēlōtl) and words associated with Mexican spices (chili, chipotle, and jalapeño). *Cuicatl* was originally premiered under the longer name, *¿Can ca iuhqui noyaz? / In What Manner Shall I Go?*

Duration: 4.5 mins

Performance Notes

With *Cuicatl* I offer two settings of King Nezahualcoyotl's ancient wisdom: in the original Nahuatl and in Spanish. To facilitate performance, the Nahuatl version has been written in the choral score with its pronunciation (not its traditional notation) and a pronunciation guide can be found on the next page.

Spanish Version (with English Translation by Josh Rodriguez)

¿Con qué he de irme?

With what shall I go? [also translated as: In what manner shall I go?]

¿Nada dejaré en pos de mi sobre la tierra?

Will I not leave something behind on earth?

¿Cómo ha de actuar mi corazón?

How should my heart respond?

¿Acaso en vano venimos a vivir,

Do we really come to live in vain,

a brotar sobre la tierra?

merely to exist on the earth?

Dejemos al menos flores

At least, let us bring flowers

Dejemos al menos cantos, ohuaya!

At least, let us bring songs, [joyful, wordless cry] wow!

Composer Biography

Known for his energetic rhythms, rich harmonic language, and striking colors, award-winning Colombian-American composer Josh Rodriguez (b. 1982) continues to gain recognition as an emerging composer and collaborator on a national and international scale. Born in Argentina and raised in Guatemala, Mexico, and the United States, Rodriguez's musical imagination has been formed by this bilingual, multi-cultural heritage. He collaborates regularly with theatre and film directors and has received notable concert commissions in a wide range of musical genres. Rodriguez serves as Associate Professor of Music Theory and Composition at Elmhurst University. Find his music on YouTube, Instagram, and joshrodriguezmusic.com

NAHUATL PRONUNCIATION GUIDE

This Nahuatl pronunciation guide, prepared in consultation with Fermin Herrera, Professor of Chicana & Chicano Studies at California State Northridge, is organized as follows: the first line is a written form of 16th century Classical Nahuatl, the second line contains indications concerning its pronunciation, the third line is Miguel León-Portilla's Spanish translation, and the fourth line is my own English translation. This poetry can be found in the *Cantares Mexicanos*, Song 17, folio 10r (both Bierhorst and Miguel León-Portilla use this song number designation, but León-Portilla calls it verse 136).

Nahuatl: Çan ca iuhqui noyaz
Pronunciation: San ka yúh-kee nó-yas
Spanish: De igual modo me iré
English: In what manner shall I go [or "With what shall I go?"]

Nahuatl: in oompopoliuh xochitla
Pronunciation: een o-om-po-pól-yooh sho-chéé-tla
Spanish: como las flores que perecieron?
English: as the flowers that perished?

Nahuatl: antle notleyo yez in tlalticpac
Pronunciation: án-tle no-tlé-yo yes een tlal-tík-pak
Spanish: Nada mi fama será alguna vez, nada será mi renombre en la tierra?
English: Will my fame be as nothing, will my name be empty, in vain on earth?

Nahuatl: manel xochitl manel cuicatl,
Pronunciation: má-nel shó-cheet má-nel kwéé--kat
Spanish: Al menos flores, al menos cantos!
English: At least [I will leave behind] flowers, at least songs!

Nahuatl: quen conchihuaz noyollo
Pronunciation: ken kon-chéé-was no-yól-lo [can also be pronounced no-yól-la]
Spanish: Como lo hará mi corazón?
English: How will my heart respond?

Nahuatl: yehua onen tacico
Pronunciation: yé-wa ó-nen ta-sééko
Spanish: En vano hemos llegado,
English: In vain, have we arrived,

Nahuatl: tonquiçaco in tlalticpac ohuaya!
Pronunciation: Ton-kee-sá-ko een tlal-tík-pak o-wá-ya!
Spanish: hemos brotado en la tierra. [grito alegre sin palabras]
English: In vain, have we burst forth on the earth. [joyful, wordless cry]

Note: As in any language, there is great variation in the way Nahuatl is spoken. For each phrase, there are a number of acceptable contractions and variations which would be practiced by Nahuatl speakers. I have chosen the version in *Cantares Mexicanos*. Also, the Spanish version of this choral setting is somewhat abridged including words which unpack the meaning of the poem; It is therefore not a "literal" transliteration from Nahuatl. I found the Spanish language poem under the title "Un Recuerdo Que Dejo" on <https://www.poemas-del-alma.com>, but the translator was uncredited and its original publication uncited (. To conclude, I chose to repeat some phrases and to conclude with what was originally the fourth line to emphasize the legacy of beauty that the poem's narrator offers.

CUICATL (NAHUATL SONG)

13

S.

A.

T. *p* *mf*

¿án - tle no - tlé - - yo yes een tlal - - tik - - pak? ¿ken—
 ¿Na - da de - ja - ré— en pos de mi— so - bre la tier - ra? ¿Có - mo

B. *p* *mf*

-tla? ¿án - tle no - tlé - - yo yes een tlal - - tik - - pak? ¿ken—
 mi? ¿Na - da de - ja - ré— en pos de mi— so - bre la tier - ra? ¿Có - mo

Pno *mf*

8ba

18

S.

A. *mf* *f*

Yé - - wa ó - - nen ta - séé - -
 ¿A - ca - so'en va - no ve - ni - - mos a vi -

T. *f* *mf* *f*

kon - chéé - was no - yól - lo Yé - - wa ó - - nen ta - séé - -
 ha de'ac - tuar mi co - - ra - zón? ¿A - ca - so'en va - no ve - ni - - mos a vi -

B. *f* *mf* *f*

kon - chéé - was no - yól - lo Yé - - wa ó - - nen ta - séé - -
 ha de'ac - tuar mi co - - ra - zón? ¿A - ca - so'en va - no ve - ni - - mos a vi -

Pno

8ba

*alto line may be sung 8va

24 ritardando.....

S.

A. -ko, Ton - kee - sa - - ko
-vir a bro - tar *p*

T. -ko, Ton - kee - sa - - ko een tla - tik - pak?
-vir a bro - tar so - bre la tier - ra? *p*

B. -ko, Ton - kee - sa - - ko een tla - tik - pak?
-vir a bro - tar so - bre la tier - ra? *p*

Pno

PERUSAL SCORE

29 a tempo *mf* *p* *mf*

S. ¿San ka yuh - kee no - yas?
¿Con que'he de ir - me? ¿Con que'he de ir - - - me?_

A.

T. ¿San ka yuh - kee no - yas een o - om - po -
¿Con que'he de ir - me?_ ¿Con que'he de ir - me_ ¿Na - da de - ja -

B. een o - om - po -
¿Na - da de - ja -

Pno

CUICATL (NAHUATL SONG)

34

p *mf*

S. *mp* *mf*

A. *mf*

T. *mf*

B. *mf*

Pno

tlal - - tik - - pak
la tier - - ra

een o - om - po - pól - yooch sho - chéé - tla yes een tlal - tik - pak ¿ken kon - chéé - was
¿Na - da de - ja - ré de mi so - - bre la tier - ra ha de'ac - tuar mi

- pól - yooch sho - - chéé - - tla ¿án - tle no - - tlé - yo ¿ken kon - chéé - was
- ré en pos de mi so - bre la tier - - ra ¿Có - mo ha de'ac - tuar mi

- pól - yooch sho - - chéé - - tla ¿ken kon - chéé - was
- ré en pos de mi tier - - ra ¿Có - mo ha de'ac - tuar mi

(8)

39

f with confidence *mf* *f*

S. *f* *mf* *f*

A. *f* *mf* *f*

T. *f* *mf* *f*

B. *f* *mf* *f*

Pno *f* *mf* *f*

no - yól - - lo Yé - - wa ó - - nen ta - séé - -
co - - ra - zón? ¿A - - ca - so'en va - no ve - ni - - mos a vi -

no - - yól - - lo Yé - - wa ó - - nen ta - séé - -
co - - ra - zón? ¿A ca - so'en va - no ve - ni - - mos a vi -

no - - yól - - lo Yé - - wa ó - - nen ta - séé - -
co - - ra - zón? ¿A - - ca - so'en va - no ve - ni - - mos a vi -

no - - yól - - lo Yé - - wa ó - - nen ta - séé - -
cor - - ra - zón? ¿A - - ca - so'en va - no ve - ni - - mos a vi -

(8)

CUICATL (NAHUATL SONG)

ritardando.....a tempo

44

S. *p*
 -ko Ton - kee - sá - - ko een tlal - tík - pak?
 -vir a bro - tar so - bre la tier - ra?

A. *p p mp p*
 -ko Ton - kee - sá - - ko een tlal - tík - pak? Má - - nel
 -vir a bro - tar so - bre la tier - ra? De - je - mos

T. *p*
 -ko Ton - kee - sá - - ko een tlal - tík - pak?
 -vir a bro - tar so - bre la tier - ra?

B. *p p*
 -ko Ton - kee - sá - - ko een tlal - tík - pak? má -
 -vir a bro - tar so - bre la tier - ra? De -

Pno *p*

49

S. *p mp p*
 má - - nel
 De - je - mos

A. *p mf p*
 má - - nel
 De - - je - - mos

T. *p mp p*
 má - - nel
 De - je - mos

B. *mp p p*
 - - nel má -
 - je - mos De -

Pno *mf*

CUICATL (NAHUATL SONG)

53 *p* *mf* *mf*

S. má - - - nel_ má -
De - - je - - mos_ de -

A. *mf*
má - - - -
de - - - -

T. *mf*
má - - - - nel____
De - je - - - - mos_____

B. *mf*
- je - nel_ má - - - nel____
- je - - mos_ de - - je - mos_____

Pno *8va* *8ba*

57 *f*

S. *f*
- je - - - - nel_ má - - - - nel_ má - - nel
- je - - - - mos_ De - je - mos al me - - nos

A. *f*
- je - - - - nel_ má - - - - nel_ má - - nel
- je - - - - mos_ De - je - mos al me - - nos

T. *f*
má - - - - nel_ má - - - - nel_ má - nel
de - - - - je - - - - mos_ De - je - mos al me - nos

B. *f*
- - - - - nel_ má - - - - nel_ má - - - - nel
- - - - - mos_ De - je - mos al me - - - - nos

Pno *f*

61

ff *mf*

S. shó - - - cheet shó - - - cheet má - - - nel
 flo - - - res flo - - - res al me - nos de -

A. shó - - - cheet shó - - - cheet má - - - nel
 flo - - - res flo - - - res al me - nos de -

T. shó - - - cheet shó - - - cheet má - - - nel
 flo - - - res flo - - - res al me - nos de -

B. shó - - - cheet shó - - - cheet má - - - nel
 flo - - - res flo - - - res al me - nos de -

Pno

8ba

PERUSAL SCORE

66

f *opt. solo*

S. má - - - nel kwéé - - - kat kwéé - - -
 - je - - - mos can - - - tos can - - -

A. má - - - nel kwéé - - - kat kwéé - - -
 - je - - - mos can - - - tos can - - -

T. má - nel kwéé - - - kat kwéé - - -
 - je - mos can - - - tos can - - -

B. má - nel kwéé - - tkat kwéé - - kat kwéé - -
 - je - mos can - - tos can - - tos

Pno

8ba

