

I will now briefly share the background, process, and resulting materials of the opening piece in our debut (available at the [RAY](#) website): our co-composed bambuco named after the ensemble: bambuco visionaries.

Ethnomusicologist Carolina Santamaría Delgado presents Colombian bambuco as a “traditional Andean genre, defined as national symbol by an elite around the 1850s,” she goes on to say we do not have documental evidence of its oral transmission before the nineteenth century, but it probably originated from “wind and percussion ensembles formed by Indigenous and Black peoples of the old southern province of Gran Cauca” (2007, p. 6). Santamaría points out that at the end of the nineteenth century, bambuco “had entered the aristocratic spaces in Bogotá as a ballroom dance genre,” and it also led to a popular urban genre known as bambuco-canción (song) which involved string instruments (2007, p. 6).

Angie and I both come from immigrant families within the Andean region, and we were raised in the urban environment of Bogotá within academic music environments. Our choice to write a bambuco *for* inclusion seemed to have come intuitively, probably influenced by our upbringing as part of families that enjoyed playing, singing, and admiring this refined, nationalistic genre. After reading Santamaría’s historic review on how, at the beginning of the twentieth century, composer Guillermo Uribe Holguín (who studied at the Scholla Cantorum in Paris) imposed a French-influenced curriculum at the Colombian National Conservatory of Music that did not include traditional genres like bambuco (2007, p.8), I realized we might have also chosen to compose a bambuco as a way to defy the conservatory education that had for long rejected oral Afroindigenous traditions, and also had recently denied Angie access to higher education.

Our compositional process started through WhatsApp calls and voice memos, the basic harmonic progression came to me in a dream, and I immediately shared it on guitar with Angie to ask for her feedback. As I recorded this excerpt (available as part of the supporting materials at the [RAY](#) website) the characteristic rhythm of bambuco came to me intuitively. Bambuco has a characteristic hemiola (sesquialtera) often found in other Latin American genres like son jarocho (from Veracruz, México), Santamaría explains that the particularity of bambuco is the intricate “coexistence of two accentuation systems evident on endings of phrases and melodic articulations” (2007, p. 14-15)¹. In our case, we were appealing to the oral tradition and using recordings to share our ideas, so Angie approved of the harmonic/rhythmic base and swiftly proposed a heartfelt melodic idea, that we later developed in three voices assigned to the viola lines. After putting all the elements together, we recorded a sort of *esqueleto* (sample/draft) using Audacity².

To me, the most beautiful moments of this collective composition process were when, during one of our virtual meetings, we spontaneously started to craft the lyrics collectively, with input from Angie’s mother, Nancy Castillo, who joined the creative process after casually hearing us talk about this during one of our online meetings. We were *musicking* (Small, 1998) in community, even beyond the “official” members of the ensemble, and this inspired us to sing the repeated word “Visionaries” collectively. Here is an excerpt of the translated lyrics, the complete version is available at the [RAY](#) website:

¹ This has created a recurrent argument among musicians in Colombia who state bambuco should be notated in 3/4 meter, starting the phrases with an empty downbeat, because of the melodic accents in opposition to the bass; despite it being clearer to read when notated in 6/8 (less syncopation).

² Audacity, free audio editor: <https://www.audacityteam.org/>

We are inclusion, opportunity
access to life in dignity
searching for equity
the approval of this society...

...so individualistic
it stops looking
beyond what it can observe
unable to see or dimension
the lack of sensibility

Nevertheless, we are grateful for who listens
and, with their love, joins us in this fight;
giving hope of harvesting the new dreams,
which as seeds will give fruition to new life

"Vi-sio-na-ries" (sung collectively and
inviting the audience to join)

Somos inclusión, oportunidad
acceso a vivir en la dignidad
buscando equidad
la aprobación de esta sociedad...

...tan individual
deja de mirar
más allá de lo que puede observar
no es capaz de ver ni dimensionar la
carencia de sensibilidad

Mas sin embargo agradecemos al que
escucha y, con su amor, nos acompaña en
nuestra lucha; dando esperanza, de cultivar
los nuevos sueños cual semillas darán fruto
a nueva vida

"Vi-sio-na-ries" (canto colectivo, invitando
al público a unirse)

Figure 1. Bambuco visionaries lyrics by A. Pico, E. Hernández, C. Manosalva, L. Villamarín & N. Castillo. Excerpt, full version available at [RAY](#).

The final arrangement came together only days before our debut; we rehearsed and recorded preliminary versions for reference in a teaching space at the National Conservatory (which my father uses to teach) and I transcribed the score in staff notation using Sibelius software. We premiered the piece with a formation of Yineth Lorena Villamarín Zárate in the voice, Carlos Julio Manosalva Manosalva and Andrés Gabriel Cruz Lozano, on piano, Daniel Lozano Martínez and Mateo Mendoza Parra in the guitars Angélica Pico Castillo, Ricardo Hernández Mayorga -my father-, and me in the violas. We were able to rent the Otto Greiff Hall from the Orquesta Filarmónica de Bogotá (see Figure 9).

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A. Gtr. Cante 3 veces
Vi - sio - na - ries

E. Bass Cante 4 veces
Vi - sio - na - ries

Voice

Pno. Cante 2 veces
Vi - sio - na -

Vla.

Vla.

Vla.

Example 1. Excerpt from bambuco visionaries' score (traditional staff notation).

Note the lyrics for singing while playing on every instrument (violas join next).

Each repetition added one performer at a time.

The outcome of our debut concert was more successful than we expected, families, friends, colleagues, teachers, professors, both in Colombia and abroad, joined either in person or through the livestream, and we invited everyone to sing the chorus “Vi-sio-na-ries” as an encore with us! (see fig. 16, minute 43:48). We were also able to collect enough funds through GoFundMe and Vaki (Colombian currency crowdsourcing

app) to compensate everybody involved in the *musicking*: performers, video and audio recording specialists, hall staff (through the reimbursement from the rental of the space), although many of our members decided to donate their time for us to create an ensemble fund that we later could use for professional development. This was an example of decolonial sustenance, we were not only singing *with* our audience but building a community of solidarity beyond a single performance and enjoying the process of speaking up for accessibility and inclusion beyond the binary of performer/audience (Gonnet & Shifres, 2015).

Visionaries also decided to move towards expanding our network of collaboration through playing, aiming to learn *otherwise*. We intend to truly embrace opportunities in which all members have the agency to shape our work. We connected with the Tetragrama Chamber Choir in Argentina³, who also has a diverse pool of members across the visual spectrum, to coordinate a virtual collaboration recording the song “Ubi Caritas” by Norwegian composer and pianist Ola Gjeilo. More recently, Visionaries gathered to participate at the 2025 International Low-Vision Song Contest (ILSC) in Germany, several other ensembles and singer/songwriters from Colombia were also eager to apply, but the lack of partnerships between the German Federation of the Blind and Partially Sighted (DBSV) and Colombian institutions for the blind who could organize a national preliminary round to pick a single representative musical project, made us withdraw our application, along with most of the other Colombian participants.

³ Directed by Eduardo Sasiain Huertas, for more information see: <https://www.redcoralargentina.org/#!/-tetragrama/>

Although institutional inclusion and support is still lacking, Angie is now completing her undergraduate degree at a private institution, the Sergio Arboleda University in Bogotá, and reflecting back on our journey with Visionaries, choosing to change the focus of our research towards performance helped us build our community and *musicking* through orality. This change of approach resonates with the Decolonial Disabilities Studies Collective movement, that aims for “an alternative way of engaging and connecting with different forms of knowledge and praxis that are decolonial, interdisciplinary and community engaged, [creating a] body of knowledge, theory, and praxis that aims to unsettle hegemonic forms of knowledge production in Western disability studies.”⁴

⁴ Decolonial Disability Studies Collective. *About the DDCC*. Carleton University. Available at: <https://carleton.ca/ddsc/>. Accessed on June 20th, 2025