

## Mexican Folklore Suite

### III. THE SNAKE

(Folk story from Padilla, Tamaulipas)

duration: 4'

One cool evening, we were sitting on the porch at Don Evaristo's in the moonlight. We had been talking about Quetzalcoatl, the 'Plumed Serpent,' the Mayan counterpart, Kukulkan, and the very similar figure of Viracocha, among the Incas. After a long, pensive silence, Don Evaristo said:

"Yes, the snake has traditionally been a very strong motif in most cultures of the world. It's a symbol of wisdom, but at the same time, it's often also a symbol of death or trickery."

"Do you know any modern stories about snakes?," asked Emily.

"Oh, sure! Here's one from the state of Tamaulipas – from the reservoir that swallowed up the town of Padilla.

"Padilla, incidentally, was once a prosperous city, which played an important role in Mexico's imperial past.

At the time, Padilla was the capital of Tamaulipas, believe it or not! Folk tale written by Homero Adame.

"On July 19th, 1824, Agustin de Iturbide, ex-president and emperor of Mexico, was executed there, by a Federal Government firing squad.

It was, in fact, just after Iturbide's return from exile. Then, 171 years later, this town wrote its last page in history: it disappeared under the waters

of the Vicente Guerrero reservoir. Nowadays, when the reservoir waters are at their lowest point, you can just see the remains of Padilla –

a ghost town, no more than the ruins of the former church and the schoolhouse. Nothing else is left of its illustrious past. Folk story written by Homero Adame.

"Anyway, back to the snake story – a fisherman who works on the Vicente Guerrero reservoir said to me one day:

'You know what, Evaristo, all those things they say about the snake in the middle of the reservoir are true! I've seen it with my own eyes!

'One weekend, we all went out fishing as usual, and we were taking the boat out to the middle of the reservoir because that's where the biggest fish are. So, there we were, cruising gently along, when one of my friends said: "Look! Over there! There's a rattlesnake in the water!"

Now, that was a very strange sight to see, because any child knows that rattlesnakes only live on land, right?

.But we hadn't seen anything yet! We stopped the engine, to stare at the snake, and imagine our surprise! Before our very eyes, the snake rose up in the water, up and up till it was standing up, as straight as a rod, on its tail! We were all struck dumb with amazement! Then the snake bent its head back down towards the water, dived in, and disappeared from sight! We just didn't know what to think! If anyone else had told me the same story, I would have thought he was inventing it.

But I swear to you, I saw the whole thing with my own eyes, and it's as true as I am standing here today!

'None of us could stop talking about that rattlesnake, not that day, nor for many days to come. Most people thought it was just a typical fisherman's tale,

and that we were making it all up, but then another fisherman confessed that he had once seen the snake too. It was in the very same spot,

and he saw it standing up on its rattle, too!'

Folk story found in Homero Adame's blog at:

<https://adameleyendas.wordpress.com/2010/11/06/myths-and-legends-from-the-state-of-mexico-the-mermaid-of-the-volcano/>

Written by Homero Adame and taken from the English textbook Activate! 2.

By Carol Lethaby, Homero Adame and Pat Grounds. Ediciones Castillo, S.A. de C.V. Monterrey, Mexico. 2003. P. 100.

The music:

This movement is a pretty straight-ahead rendering of the story.

The percussion (using the Teponaztli drum) and the cello represent a rather normal fishing trip. The melody of the cello line comes from a traditional Mexican folksong about an alligator. The trumpet joins in on the folk music -

as a companion on the trip - when the cello begins to represent the slithering snake lurking in the water.

The 'snake' rises up higher and higher, until it is standing atop the water, and the rattle is heard (the ayacachtli).

This sets off some rather frantic and scared music.

The music again returns to the folksong, but this time the slithering snake is more sinister - represented by the cello sul ponticello. Again, it eventually rises up, and the frenetic music pushes all the way forward through the end of the movement, with the rattle a constant presence.

Instruments:

C trumpet and B $\flat$  piccolo trumpet

Cello: pizz and arco

Percussion:

Teponaztli: a type of (usually decorative) slit drum  
used in central Mexico by the Aztecs and related cultures.

Ayacachtli: a Mexican rattle consisting of a container gourd stuffed with seeds.  
In this case, the ankle-version, where many are harnessed together, would be preferred.

### III. The Snake

James M. Stephenson

Allegro ♩ = 120

C tpt.

Cello

Percussion HI (smallest)  
MID  
LOW

Teponaztli Solo



*p* poco a poco cresc.

\*it would be ideal if low note on teponaztli drum was an "F".

Perc.

5



Perc.

9



Perc.

13 **A**

*f*



Vc.

Perc.

17 **B**

*p* sotto voce

*p*



Vc.

Perc.

*pp*

*pp*



29 **C**

Vc. *p* *f* *mf*

Perc. *p* *mf*

34

Vc. *p*

Perc. *p* *f*

38 **D**

C tpt. *p*

Vc. *p*

Perc. *p*

43

C tpt. *mf*

Vc. *mf*

Perc. *mf*

The Snake

4

47

C tpt. *p*

Vc. *p*

Perc. *p*

Musical score for measures 47-50. C trumpet, Violoncello, and Percussion parts. Percussion features triplets.

51 **E**

C tpt. *f* *mp*

Vc. *f*

Perc. *f*

Musical score for measures 51-54. C trumpet, Violoncello, and Percussion parts. Percussion features sixteenth-note patterns.

55 **F** Presto spiritto ♩ = 172

C tpt. *p*

Vc. *p*

Perc. *p* *f* *f*

Ayacachtli (snake rattle)

Musical score for measures 55-62. C trumpet, Violoncello, and Percussion parts. Percussion includes Ayacachtli (snake rattle). Tempo change to Presto spiritto.

63

C tpt.

Vc. *f* pizz.

Perc. *ff*

Musical score for measures 63-66. C trumpet, Violoncello, and Percussion parts. Violoncello has pizzicato marking.

72 **G** a tempo  
St. mute

C tpt. *mf*  
pizz.

Vc. *mf*

Perc. *mf*

80

C tpt. *p* *p* *p* *f*

Vc. *p* *p* *p* *f*

Perc. *p* *p* *p* *f*

88 **H**

C tpt. *p* *f* *p* *f*

Vc. *p* *f* *p* *f*

Perc. *p* *f* *p* *f*

96

C tpt. *p* *mp* *mf* *f*

Vc. *p* *mp* *mf* *f*

Perc. *p* *mp* *mf* *ff*

The Snake

6

105 G.P. Andante ♩ = 80 rit. Open I poco Adagio ♩ = 66

C tpt.

Vc.

Perc.

Teponaztli

pp sempre sul pont Ayacachtli

112

C tpt.

Vc.

Perc.

117 J

C tpt.

Vc.

Perc.

122

C tpt.

Vc.

Perc.

127 **K** Presto spirito  $\text{♩} = 172$   
B $\flat$  picc. tpt.

C tpt.

Vc.

Perc.

*f* *gradually away from bridge (back to normal)* Teponaztli *mf* Ayacachtli

135

B $\flat$  Tpt.

Vc.

Perc.

*f* *leggero* *pizz.* *f*

143

B $\flat$  Tpt.

Vc.

Perc.

*p* *p* *p* *f*

**L** 151

B $\flat$  Tpt.

Vc.

Perc.

*arco* *p* *f* *f* *p* *f*

*fp* *f* *fp* *f*

159

B♭ Tpt.

Vc.

Perc.

*mf*

*f*

167 M

B♭ Tpt.

Vc.

Perc.

*p*

*p*

*p*

175

B♭ Tpt.

Vc.

Perc.

*mp*

*p*

183 N

B♭ Tpt.

Vc.

Perc.

*p*

*pizz.*

*p*



*poco a poco accel. al Fine*

191

B $\flat$  Tpt. *mp*

Vc. *mp* arco

Perc. *mp* \*hold Ayacachtli in stick hand

*p* \*again, a lowest tone pitched at F would be great!

199

B $\flat$  Tpt. *mf*

Vc. *mf*

Perc. *mf*

207

B $\flat$  Tpt. *f*

Vc. *f*

Perc. *f*

P

213

B $\flat$  Tpt.

Vc.

Perc.

*ff*

*ff*

*ff*

219

B $\flat$  Tpt.

Vc.

Perc.

*fz*

*fz*

*fz*

www.StephensonMusic.com