

The Instrument of Music: A Musical Comedy

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This play explores the role of music in the expansion and consolidation of Bahá'í communities, and draws on the example of Latin America. It doesn't try to describe the rich historical development over the last four decades in that part of the world in detail in regard to the use of music—it would be simply too ambitious to try to capture 40 years of experience in a short theatre piece—but it chooses, instead, to place elements of the experience gained in that part of the world into a fictional reality as a way to prompt thought about the impact and use of music to contribute to the growth of any community.

Scene: A screen is used throughout the performance to project quotes, images, and the lyrics of the songs. The stage is bare at the beginning. The set pieces include three brightly coloured doors, which are pushed on after the Prologue, and remain on stage throughout. A tree, some tree stumps, and a sign with the name of the village on it comprise the rest of the scene. Light is used throughout to bring the scene “alive”, and to put it to “sleep” during the interlude between scenes.

PROLOGUE

We hear a solo flute. The following words are projected onto the screen:

*“Hearken to the reed-flute, how it complains,
Lamenting its banishment from its home:
‘Ever since they tore me from my osier bed,
My plaintive notes have moved men and women to tears.
I burst my breast, striving to give vent to sighs,
And to express the pangs of yearning for my home.
He who abides far away from his home
Is ever longing for the day he shall return.’*

- Rumi

“When the masses of mankind are awakened and enter the Faith of God, a new process is set in motion and the growth of a new civilization begins.”

- The Universal House of Justice.

The year '1983' then appears, followed by a picture of a small town in Latin America, which stays on the screen until the friends begin to "journey" to the village. The flute fades.

RAÚL and ANDRÉS enter from opposite sides of the stage and meet in the middle. They are young, energetic, and very enthusiastic.

RAÚL: Well, Andrés, this is an exciting time to be alive!

ANDRÉS: Raúl, I was thinking exactly the same thing.

RAÚL: We live in a time when we can teach the Cause of God to all the people of our country who have never heard of it before.

ANDRÉS: Just imagine what the people of the future will think looking back at this time.

RAÚL: They will long to be alive now.

ANDRÉS: We are young!

RAÚL: Energetic!

ANDRÉS: Enthusiastic.

RAÚL: And part of the first mass teaching campaign ever to be organized by our National Assembly right here in our own country.

ANDRÉS: Hundreds of teachers!

RAÚL: Each pair of teachers sent to a different village.

ANDRÉS (*excited*): Which village have we been allocated?

RAÚL opens a letter and reads.

RAÚL: The village of Santa Cecilia. In the district of Melodia.

ANDRÉS: I long to meet the people living there.

RAÚL: To see their faces, and their smiles ...

ANDRÉS: ... when we tell them the good news of the coming of Bahá'u'lláh.

RAÚL: To hear them singing with joy about Him.

ANDRÉS: To hear them praying using His words.

RAÚL: And teaching their children about His Revelation.

ANDRÉS: Raúl, let's not hesitate for a minute longer. Let's go!

He makes to walk off.

RAÚL: Wait, Andrés, we need to bring something very important with us.

ANDRÉS: What? We have our hearts, our smiles, our trust in God, and our prayer books ... what else do we need?

RAÚL: You mean you've forgotten already what we learned at the teaching conference!?

ANDRÉS looks blankly.

RAÚL: The conference about teaching ... and ...

ANDRÉS: Music!

RAÚL: Yes, that's right. The Counsellor reminded us all ...

ANDRÉS and RAÚL: Don't forget to take a guitar!

ANDRÉS: He said - it's the way we can attract the pure hearts of the people.

RAÚL: Well ... actually ... what he said was it's the Word of God that attracts the hearts, but music can make its influence more effective.

ANDRÉS: Oh, right, yes, that is what he said. He also said: Music is a way we can more easily teach prayers to the people we meet.

RAÚL: That's right! And a way we can help them learn about the education of children.

ANDRÉS: And a way we can tell them stories of the life of Bahá'u'lláh.

ANDRÉS and RAÚL: Don't forget the guitar!

ANDRÉS: Ok. Hang on. I'll run home and get it.

ANDRÉS runs off stage and returns immediately carrying a guitar in a case.

RAÚL (*looking to the audience*): Wow, that was fast! Excellent! Let's go!

They begin to go off the side of the stage they came on from (i.e. opposite sides) but then stop and realize they should go off together. They come back into the middle.

RAÚL: Let's sing a song right now, to set us off on our journey.

ACT ONE

*They start to sing **Mi Deseo es Servir**, and begin their journey while they continue to sing. As they travel, images are projected on the screen behind them. ANDRÉS and RAÚL “get on the bus”, then on a motorbike, then on a donkey, and eventually they reach the village by foot. As they approach (still singing), a villager (the MAYOR) enters furtively, places a pole with a wooden sign with the name of the village on it, looks at the strangers and exits quickly. All that can be heard is the sign creaking in the wind and some birds. As they speak, behind them villagers enter one by one placing the doors of their houses on the stage (three in total – MR. RODRIGUEZ, the LADY, and CHILD 1), peeking shyly at the strangers, then leaving quickly. One villager (MRS. RODRIGUEZ) enters and places a tree. Two children (CHILD 2 and CHILD 3) enter, place two tree stumps under the tree, then leave. All the while, ANDRÉS is oblivious, looking out front while this goes on behind them. But RAÚL notices the villagers.*

ANDRÉS: Look at that scenery, Raúl.

RAÚL: The people living here have a bird's eye view of God's creation.

ANDRÉS (*breathing deeply*): And the air!

RAÚL: So sweet and fresh.

ANDRÉS: But, boy, getting up here took a lot of effort.

RAÚL: And a long time – a twelve-hour bus ride ...

ANDRÉS: ... with chickens, and even a goat. It licked my ear!

He rubs his ear.

RAÚL: (*rubbing his behind*) Then another five hours by motorbike on a bumpy mountain path.

ANDRÉS: (*rubbing his own behind even harder*) Then another four hours by donkey on the steep pathways that the motorbike couldn't go.

RAÚL: Then another two hours by foot ... until we reach here.

ANDRÉS: A village above the clouds. Santa Cecilia – we made it!

They high-five. Then look around.

RAÚL: But, where did all the people go?

ANDRÉS: Maybe they are sleeping?

RAÚL: It's the middle of the day!

ANDRÉS: Maybe they're shy.

RAÚL: Didn't you notice as we walked into the village, that some people went into their houses and closed the doors?

ANDRÉS: I was too busy looking at the beautiful scenery.

RAÚL: Yes, then people peered at us through their windows safely from inside.

ANDRÉS: Well, we are strangers. They probably don't get many new people coming to visit them.

RAÚL: Let's sit down here in the central square, play the guitar and sing a song. Let's hope their hearts will be attracted, and they will trust us when they realize that people singing happily can't harm them.

*They sit down and RAÚL plays. They sing **Como Una Flauta**. The sound of a flute is heard during and as the song finishes.*

RAÚL: I can hear someone playing a flute - the people here already know the joy of music!

The sound of the flute stops abruptly. The sound of a goat is heard. The LADY enters chasing the animal. The goat begins to nibble on the guitar (munching sound effect). This happens during the following exchange. ANDRÉS and RAÚL do not see the LADY.

ANDRÉS: Well, I don't know about you, Andrés, but I'm hungry.

RAÚL: Me too! What do you think they eat in a place like this?

ANDRÉS: Not sure ... but more importantly, *where* do you think we can get some lunch?

The goat keeps eating the guitar and it breaks (breaking wood sound effect, followed by the sound of the goat, burping?).

RAÚL: *(realizing and then laughing)* It's the goat that was in the bus on our way here!

The LADY (embarrassed) and the goat disappear quickly.

ANDRÉS *(picking up the broken guitar)*: Oh no! The guitar! He ate my guitar!

RAÚL: *(laughing even harder)* After such a long journey, it must be hungry too!

ANDRÉS: It's not funny! The guitar! What will we use to make music now?

RAÚL: It must be for a good reason. Let's see if we can find a guitar in the village. The people must make music here somehow.

ANDRÉS: *(recovering himself)* Good idea, it'll give us a reason to speak to the people and make a connection with them.

RAÚL: Look, there are some houses over there.

They knock at the first door, but there's no answer, although whispering inside is heard. The next house has its door open and the LADY is sweeping inside. RAÚL and ANDRÉS approach.

RAÚL: Excuse me, madam ...

She freezes in mid-sweep and looks at them, realizing it's the boys whose guitar her goat just ate. In the silence, the sound of a goat braying is heard. They all pretend not to notice.

ANDRÉS: What a lovely house you have!

RAÚL: This whole village is beautiful.

THE LADY: *(smiling)* Thank you. *(tentatively)* Who are you?

ANDRÉS: This is Raúl.

RAÚL: And this is Andrés.

ANDRÉS and RAÚL: We come from Villa Gregorio.

They both nod, smiling. The LADY just stares at them. There is an awkward silence. The goat sound is heard again.

ANDRÉS: Uh We are wondering if you have a guitar in your house.

THE LADY *(panicking)*: A guitar? Why do you want a guitar!? *(trying to change the subject)* Wouldn't you like a nice, juicy mango instead? You must be hungry after your long trip.

She lifts a basket of mangoes and offers it to them, smiling.

ANDRÉS: So ... no guitar?

RAÚL: *(elbowing Andrés, and hurriedly accepting the lady's kindness)* Yes, thank you very much. We are a little hungry after our trip. And your mangoes look delicious!

They each take a mango. The LADY goes into her house and shuts the door. The sound of the goat and the LADY trying to hush it up is heard.

RAÚL: Oh dear. Well the people are friendly, but ... maybe a bit hard to connect with.

ANDRÉS: Perhaps this wasn't such a good idea after all.

RAÚL: No, Andrés, the people are just a little fearful. The Message of Bahá'u'lláh will help to warm their hearts.

ANDRÉS: Yes, we must persevere. And find a guitar to play some music!

RAÚL: Look, there's a door we haven't tried yet.

They knock on the third door and MRS. RODRIGUEZ opens it. She is an older lady.

MRS. RODRIGUEZ: Hello? Oh, look, there are two young men at our door.

MR. RODRIGUEZ: Two young men? Well, where did they come from?

MRS. RODRIGUEZ: I don't know. Let's ask them. Young men, where did you come from?

ANDRÉS: Hello!

RAÚL: Hello!

ANDRÉS: He is Raúl.

RAÚL: And he is Andrés.

MRS. RODRIGUEZ: He is Mr. Rodriguez.

MR. RODRIGUEZ: And she is Mrs. Rodriguez.

RAÚL and ANDRÉS: We come from Villa Gregorio.

MRS. RODRIGUEZ: Ah, Villa Gregorio! That's where our niece lives.

ANDRÉS (*pleased they have made a connection*): Oh! What is her name? Maybe we know her!

MR. RODRIGUEZ: Sofia.

RAÚL (*becoming excited*): Sofia! We have a classmate called Sofia. Does she have long, light brown hair?

ANDRÉS (*excited*): ... and wears glasses, and is this tall? (*he indicates how tall with his hand*)

Pause.

MRS. RODRIGUEZ: Uh, no ... she has short black hair ...

MR. RODRIGUEZ: ... doesn't wear any glasses ...

MRS. RODRIGUEZ: ... and is this tall. (*she indicates with her hand*)

They stand looking awkwardly at each other for a few seconds, the boys quite disappointed. In the silence, the sound of a goat is heard faintly, followed by the sound of some chickens, followed by the creaking of the sign in the wind.

MRS. RODRIGUEZ: Well, how can we help you today?

RAÚL (*recovering*): Oh yes. We have come to ask if you might have a guitar.

MR. RODRIGUEZ: A guitar?!

ANDRÉS: Yes. (*nervously*) You don't happen to have any goats, do you?

MRS. RODRIGUEZ: We don't have a goat, but we do have a guitar!

ANDRÉS (*visibly relieved*) : Oh good!

MR. RODRIGUEZ: It is Sofia's!

RAÚL: Sofia!

MRS. RODRIGUEZ: She brought it from Villa Gregorio on her last visit, but left it here by accident.

MR. RODRIGUEZ: She wanted to learn how to play it on her holiday with us.

MRS. RODRIGUEZ: But she was too interested in climbing trees and mountains to practice!

MR. RODRIGUEZ: She is an active girl.

The couple pass the guitar to ANDRÉS. He strums it and finds out it's really out of tune (sound effect). He tweaks it very quickly and strums again; it has suddenly become in tune. They start to sing the first lines of a song, making it up spontaneously.

RAÚL (*singing*): Sofia, Sofia, so active and so happy.

ANDRÉS (*singing*): She is like a bird, her wings all light and

RAÚL (*singing*): ... flappy.

They all laugh; the ice has truly broken.

MR. RODRIGUEZ: Why do you want a guitar?

ANDRÉS: We'd like to play it in the village square.

RAÚL: To attract people to hear the Message we have brought.

MRS. RODRIGUEZ: A Message?

ANDRÉS: Yes, it is the story of Bahá'u'lláh.

MR. RODRIGUEZ: Bahá'u'lláh? (*struggles to say His Name*). Who is that?

RAÚL: Come with us to the square and we will tell you.

*They gather in the centre of the stage and sing **El Viento Canta**. Gradually, the RODRIGUEZS, the LADY and three CHILDREN gather around them.*

ANDRÉS: Bahá'u'lláh has brought us a Message of unity.

RAÚL: The unity of the whole human race.

RAÚL: Children! Do you like to pray?

CHILD 1: Yes!

CHILD 2: I pray with my mom every night.

CHILD 3: You pray with your mom too?

ANDRÉS: Do you like to pray together?

Silence. The children look at each other shaking their heads.

CHILD 1: We don't often pray together.

RAÚL: Let's sing a prayer together now. The tune will help you memorize it.

ANDRÉS: So you can sing it together every day.

They sing Oh Dios Guíame.

CHILD 1: I want to sing like this every day!

CHILD 2: Can you teach us more prayer songs?

ANDRÉS: Yes, we'll stay here for a week. We can have class as much as you want!

RAÚL: We'll teach you songs and quotes from the Bahá'í Writings about spiritual ideas.

ANDRÉS: We'll tell you stories and play games too.

RAÚL: Bring your parents so that we can explain to them our plan, and ask them to help!

The children cheer. The MAYOR enters.

MAYOR: What is all this commotion? Who is playing music? I haven't heard music like this in the village for a long time. Who are these strangers? Where do you come from? What do you want?

CHILD 1: They have taught us a song, Senor Presidente.

CHILD 2: They have taught us a prayer, Senor Presidente.

CHILD 3: They have taught us about Bahá'u'lláh, Senor Presidente.

Pause. ANDRÉS and RAÚL don't know how to respond to the children calling him Presidente.

MAYOR: Ah, I see you're surprised at them calling me Senor Presidente. I am not the President, obviously ... yet – but I am the Mayor of this village, and I hope to be the president of the country one day, and so, you know, I'm just helping them ... get used to ... the idea ... and the name ...

Silence.

MAYOR (*changing the subject*): So, who is Bahá'u'lláh? (*struggles to say the Name*).

CHILD 1: He is a new Manifestation of God.

CHILD 2: Who has come to bring unity ...

CHILD 3: ... to the whole world!

MAYOR: (*pausing, considering*) I see. These things you have taught my people are ... good! And I see they are happy. And they are singing again. I love to sing!

The MAYOR starts to sing opera (badly)

ANDRÉS: Wow! That was really ba... (*he starts to say the word 'bad'*)

RAÚL (*elbowing Andrés*): ... something! That was really something.

MAYOR: Thank you. I'm training to enter the opera competition in the capital city. I hope to win - I aim to win at everything!

RAÚL: And I'm sure you will ... win at ... something.

The MAYOR is very proud.

MAYOR: What else can you teach us?

RAÚL: There are many Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh – about the unity of all religions, the equality of men and women, the harmony of science and religion ...

MAYOR: My people like acquiring knowledge. There is a very good primary school here in the village, but unfortunately there is no high school. How long will you stay with us?

ANDRÉS: We can only stay for a brief time, but ...

RAÚL: There is a wonderful initiative called Bahá'í Radio. If you listen to this, you can learn more.

MAYOR: Bring a radio! Let's hear it.

The children run into one of the houses, carry back an old radio, and begin to tune it.

CHILD 1: We haven't used this for a long time.

CHILD 2: There's been nothing worth listening to.

We hear the end of a talk on Bahá'í Radio, followed by the beginning of Inexistencia

MAYOR: We will gather to listen to this at five o'clock every night right here. And we will sing these songs that have made you so happy.

The villagers cheer again and gather round the radio. The lights on the village fade slowly, while the sound of the radio continues, along with the singing of the villagers (Inexistencia).

ANDRÉS and RAÚL "leave" the village, coming downstage into a spotlight.

ANDRÉS: My heart is full, Raúl!

RAÚL: I love the people of Santa Cecilia very much.

ANDRÉS: What pure spirits!

RAÚL: How open and receptive!

ANDRÉS: Let's go back and visit them often, to deepen their knowledge and faith.

RAÚL: (*turning to the audience*) So we did ... for a year or so. Once a month we would make an effort to return and see our new friends.

ANDRÉS: Regular children's classes began.

RAÚL: A Local Assembly was elected and began functioning.

ANDRÉS: We brought deepening material for them to read.

RAÚL: Although that was a challenge, because many of the villagers who had grown up in the village couldn't read that well, having only been to primary school.

ANDRÉS: So the Bahá'í Radio helped them a lot.

Pause.

RAÚL: Then ... we got busy with our own lives ...

ANDRÉS: Study, university exams, then new jobs, then new families ...

RAÚL: Before we knew it, we hadn't seen our friends in some years.

ANDRÉS: But we often wondered how they were getting on.

RAÚL: We prayed for them and hoped they were growing in their faith.

They hear the sound of a flute.

RAÚL: Hey, Andres, do you hear that?

ANDRÉS: Yeah, isn't it that flute we heard in the village?

RAÚL: How come it's followed us home? Who's playing it?

ANDRÉS: I don't know ... mysterious. But isn't it beautiful?

They exit the stage on opposite sides, as if following the music of the flute. The music continues as the next quote is projected onto the screen.

INTERLUDE

*“My wailing is heard in every throng,
In concert with them that rejoice and them that weep.
Each interprets my notes in harmony with his own feelings,
But not one fathoms the secrets of my heart.
My secrets are not alien from my plaintive notes,
Yet they are not manifest to the sensual eye and ear.
Body is not veiled from soul, neither soul from body,
Yet no man hath ever seen a soul.’*

- Rumi

“The next four years will represent an extraordinary period in the history of our Faith, a turning point of epochal magnitude. What the friends throughout the world are now being asked to do is to commit themselves, their material resources, their abilities and their time to the development of a network of training institutes on a scale never before attempted.”

- *The Universal House of Justice*

The year 1998 is then projected. RAÚL and ANDRÉS enter carrying copies of Book 1. They are “older” versions of themselves. Their clothes reflect the change of the period.

RAÚL: That study was incredible!

ANDRÉS: I enjoyed every minute of it!

RAÚL: If the institute program is studied by many people, the world will definitely start to transform.

ANDRÉS: Just like the quote about the betterment of the world we studied in the first section.

RAÚL: Oh I memorized that one, let me try to remember ... “The betterment of the world can be achieved ... by ... good behavior” ... No, that’s not right.

ANDRÉS: Let me give it a try. “The betterment of the world can be accomplished through ... uh ... nice actions” ...?

RAÚL: No, that’s not it either.

ANDRÉS: Ok, let’s ask the people here with the most experience (*looking to the audience*). Who knows this quotation? Our memory is still not good enough. “The betterment of the world can ...

The audience responds.

RAÚL: Seems to be that just a few people know it. Let’s try once more. (*addressing the audience*) “The betterment of the world can ...

More of the audience responds.

ANDRÉS and RAÚL: That’s better!!

RAÚL: If it is properly studied the institute program can have a wonderful effect.

ANDRÉS: We have to share this as quickly as possible. But with who?

RAÚL: (*remembering*) I can’t help thinking about the community of Santa Cecilia.

ANDRÉS: (*sadly*) Ah! Our dear friends! So pure-hearted and loving. I miss them. We haven't seen them in a while ... well, actually about ten years.

RAÚL: Mmm, maybe even a bit longer. We haven't been able to visit them as often since we started to work and to take care of our families.

ANDRÉS (*trying to cheer his friend*): I still remember the very first song we sang together on our very first visit.

ANDRÉS sings a little of Coma Una Flauta, and Andres joins in. The sound of a flute is heard.

RAÚL: Do you hear that?

ANDRÉS: Yes, who is playing the flute here?

RAÚL: Anyway, do you remember we had to travel so many hours by bus, motorbike, and then walking?

ANDRÉS: And my guitar was eaten by that goat?!

RAÚL: (*laughing*) Oh yes! That was so much fun!

ANDRÉS (*serious then laughing*): It wasn't fun for me! It was MY guitar!!

RAÚL: But now things have changed. They have a road that goes directly to the town. We just need to take three buses to get there.

RAÚL and ANDRÉS look at each other as if discovering something.

RAÚL: You're thinking the same?

ANDRÉS: We have to go there and bring the institute courses to them! It can help them develop skills, abilities, qualities, and attitudes that will enable them to transform their community.

RAÚL: They are going to love it. It will be so effective.

ANDRÉS: (*impatient*) We have to go there soon. Let's leave tomorrow!!

RAÚL: Alright! But first we need to get some institute books from the Bahá'í Centre, then we can go ...

ANDRÉS: I'll get the books!

RAÚL: And I'll go buy the bus tickets!

They begin to walk off opposite sides of the stage and then suddenly stop.

ANDRÉS: Wait! We can't just leave like that! We have families now; we need to consult with our wives.

RAÚL: I have an idea! We can ask them to take care of the kids this weekend so that we go can go teaching, and then offer to look after the kids next weekend, and they can go teaching!

ANDRÉS: They will love that idea! But let's not remind them what happened last time we looked after the kids for the weekend.

RAÚL: I'm still scraping the chocolate off the ceiling.

They walk off different sides of the stage and then immediately come back on again. Andrés carries several Book 1s.

ANDRÉS: I've got the books!

RAÚL (*waving the tickets*): And I've got the tickets! Let's go! Wait, where's the guitar?

BOTH: Don't forget the guitar!

ANDRÉS *runs off and immediately brings back his guitar.*

RAÚL (*to the audience*): Wow, that was fast!

ANDRÉS: Hey, do you remember that song about traveling and teaching the Faith?

RAÚL: Yes! The song that has inspired so many youth in their time of service. We should sing it now!

ACT TWO

RAÚL and ANDRÉS sing Una Vez Más as they "travel" to the village. Projections are used on the screen to depict their journey. They arrive in Santa Cecilia and are warmly received by MR. and MRS. RODRIGUEZ, who are now much older (with grey hair and using walking sticks) and the LADY, who is bent with age but still carrying her basket of mangoes and leading her goat.

MR. RODRÍGUEZ: (*embracing the two men*): Hello, my dear friends. It's been a long time!

ANDRÉS: We are so glad to see you. We have missed you!

RAÚL: Mr. and Mrs. Rodríguez, you and your family are always in my prayers. I'm very happy to see you.

MRS. RODRÍGUEZ: Thank you, thank you. And you are in mine.

THE LADY: Welcome back! Would you like a mango?

RAÚL and ANDRÉS: Ah! We have missed your delicious mangoes.

MR. RODRÍGUEZ: (*neutrally*) Some changes have happened to our town since you were last here.

ANDRÉS: I can see that you have a better road, (*looking nervously at the goat and trying to protect the guitar*) but does your goat include guitars in its diet ...?

They all laugh, and the LADY looks sheepish. The goat makes a noise.

MRS. RODRÍGUEZ: We also have electricity most of the day ... and a secondary school educational programme now ...

The MAYOR enters. He is the only person who looks the same as he did in Act One.

MAYOR: Welcome back to my town, dear friends! You can see how much everything has improved now that I am the alcade of the comuna!

RAÚL: Ah! Hello Mayor! It is wonderful that you and everybody else are working so hard here. It's also ... kind of strange ... to see you haven't changed much.

ANDRÉS: In fact you look exactly the same as when we arrived 15 years ago.

MAYOR: (*proud*) Thank you. I try to keep myself healthy and trim. *Pause.* What is the purpose of your visit this time? Last time you taught us a lot of songs. Shall we do some singing this time too?

RAÚL: Ah yes, are you still singing opera?

Andrés begins to put his hands over his ears.

MAYOR: I still love singing, but I love politics much more now. (*Andrés looks visibly relieved and drops his hands*) It is a good way to help the people, if you win ... of course.

ANDRÉS: We see there are improvements, and we've brought something that could help to build on what has been achieved so far.

RAÚL: It's a sequence of training courses that can help all the residents of the village contribute to the prosperity of the community.

MAYOR: If it can help the village to become more prosperous, I'm interested! A prosperous village will help me become the gobernador of the province! That is my next move up in the world ... (*awkwardly*) So I can help even more people, of course.

ANDRÉS: Actually this programme will help everyone here become active in service, so all can contribute to and benefit from their community's material and spiritual prosperity.

The MAYOR looks puzzled. Silence.

MAYOR: Spiritual prosperity?

EVERYONE: What is spiritual prosperity?

Pause.

RAÚL: We can explain it with a song.

*They play and sing **Círculo de Amor**. The villagers begin to join in, and start to sing along. The MAYOR is serious at the beginning, but in the end also joins singing, finishing the song with an operatic flourish. Everyone laughs.*

ANDRÉS: We'd like to start the first study circle in the history of Santa Cecilia.

MRS. RODRÍGUEZ: What's a study circle?

RAÚL: It's a group of friends who meet regularly to study the Word of God and consult about how to improve the life of their community.

MR. RODRÍGUEZ: We can offer our home for this worthy activity.

MRS. RODRÍGUEZ: I can prepare some dinner for the friends who come to study.

THE LADY: I can bring mangoes that have just been harvested for everyone .

RAÚL: Your mangoes are always welcome ... but can you leave your goat at home?

Everyone laughs. The goat makes a noise.

ANDRÉS: Thank you! You're all so generous. Now we just need a few more participants ...

RAÚL: Perhaps we could invite some of the youth in the village?

Pause.

MR. RODRÍGUEZ: The youth?

ANDRÉS: Perhaps we could invite the boys and girls that were the participants in our children class all those years ago.

RAÚL: We suppose now they are filled with energy to serve their community.

Silence.

MR. RODRÍGUEZ: We don't have many youth here anymore.

MRS. RODRÍGUEZ (*sadly*): A few years ago, our young people started to migrate to the city to look for better study and work opportunities.

MR. RODRÍGUEZ: The youth you mention are here, but they are planning to leave soon.

MRS. RODRÍGUEZ: Without youth, the future of our village is uncertain.

MR. RODRÍGUEZ: All these beautiful farms on the mountains you see here might be abandoned someday because nobody will work on them.

ANDRÉS: That would be terrible.

MAYOR: Mis amigos! Don't lose hope. Our youth want to improve their condition. Them leaving us is a good thing! I think they should pursue their studies in the city, but then we ask them to come back and work together with us for the material and spiritual prosperity of our village. Like Sofia did!

Everyone looks at the MAYOR in surprise.

ANDRÉS: Sofia is here!?! We're finally going to meet her! Every time we came here, she was in Villa Gregorio ...

RAÚL: ... and every time we looked for her there, she was here!

MRS. RODRÍGUEZ: Living between the two places was getting harder for her, so in the end, she decided to move back here to help us on our farm.

MRS. RODRÍGUEZ: Let's have a conversation with Sofia and her younger friends about service.

MAYOR: Let's go!

They all walk together to the RODRÍGUEZ's home. SOFIA opens the door.

MAYOR: Hola Sofia!

SOFIA: Hola, Senõr Presidente!

ANDRÉS and RAÚL look at each other in surprise that the youth still call him this.

MAYOR (*clearing his throat, a little embarrassed*): I still have my ambitions! (*changing the subject*) These gentlemen are Andrés and Raúl, my Bahá'í friends who are visiting from Villa Gregorio.

SOFIA: Hola! I have heard so many stories about you from my uncle and aunt.

ANDRÉS: You're the one who plays the guitar? Your guitar has been used to sing beautiful melodies, expressing the joy of service and of finding Bahá'u'lláh.

RAÚL: And we couldn't have reached the hearts of the people of this town so easily without it. The songs we sang together inspired everyone and helped them memorize the Word of God.

SOFIA: Actually I've learned all the songs you brought to our community and play them often with my friends.

RAÚL: We heard some of your friends are here! Could we meet them?

ANDRÉS: It will be amazing to see the faces of those children we taught so many years ago that have now become young adults!

SOFIA knocks at her neighbour's door and three youth come out.

SOFIA: Do you remember Andrés and Raúl from your first Bahá'í children class?

ANA (to RAÚL and ANDRÉS, very pleased to see them): Yes, I remember you!

MARTA: Me too! How are you?!

PEDRO: My parents remember your visits because you always brought good music and uplifting ideas.

ANDRÉS: My friends, you are so lucky to live in this beautiful village.

MAYOR: Santa Cecilia is going to be transformed soon. These friends have brought a new programme for us to advance in our knowledge to serve others and develop our community.

Pause. The youth look at each other.

MARTA: But ... we're all planning to leave Santa Cecilia in a few days. I love my home village, but now that I've saved enough money, I'm leaving to get a university education in the city. Then I want to start a small business there.

ANA: I'm going to study computer science so I can work in a big company and get a good income. I can't wait to leave this village, it's all just old people now.

MARTA looks at MR. and MRS RODRÍGUEZ, who look sad.

PEDRO: I'm leaving too. But I'll just get a random job there first, then I'll figure out what I want to do with my life.

ANDRÉS: I see that you're all interested in your personal and material development, and that is necessary for your future, for sure.

SOFIA: (*excited*) But it sounds like the new programme that Andrés and Raúl have brought can help us in our personal development and that of the whole community at the same time! Tell us more about it.

RAÚL: We want to help you start a study circle, the first ever in Santa Cecilia!

ANA: What's a study circle?

Pause.

ANDRÉS: We can explain it with a song!

MAYOR: Wait! Is it the same song you just played? 'Cause we already heard that one (*looking to the audience*).

RAÚL: No, this is another one. There are many songs about study circles!

The MAYOR looks happy. They play the song La Cumbia del Jardinero. Everyone joins in, the MAYOR being the most enthusiastic.

SOFIA: So, you will join our study circle?

Pause.

RAÚL: What you learn will provide you with useful knowledge to be applied wherever you go.

SOFIA: You don't lose anything if you just try... I'm sure you're going to enjoy it.

Pause. The three youth look at each other.

ANA: It sounds interesting. I want to try and experience something different.

PEDRO: Me too. Why not – it can't hurt to spend our last days here learning something new.

MARTA (*hesitant*): I guess ... I'll join for one session to try it out. But I can't promise anything more than that.

MR. RODRÍGUEZ: Let's go study!

All except the LADY go inside MR. and MRS. RODRÍGUEZ's house. As the door is closing, the LADY cries out.

LADY: Hey! Don't forget the mangoes!

The door opens back up again and a hand extends to take the mangoes inside. The LADY then takes a small reed flute out of her pocket and carves it while sitting under the tree. After a very short while, everyone comes out of the house again, very happy and enthusiastic.

LADY (*looking to the audience*): Wow, that was fast!

They bring the empty basket and give it back to the LADY.

LADY: I'll go get some more!

The LADY goes into her house.

ANDRÉS: It's great to see how inspired you all are after studying only the first book of the sequence!

PEDRO: There are more courses like this one?!

RAÚL: Yes! Many more.

PEDRO: Fantastic! I want to do those.

ANA: This study was the coolest one I ever had. Much better than anything I learned in school.

MARTA: And to learn along with our older friends shows us that there isn't that much difference between our generations when we see things spiritually.

MARTA hugs MR. AND MRS. RODRÍGUEZ.

SOFIA: We're not used to memorizing. But it's something good for our minds. Music helped us with that.

She sings No Murmures.

MARTA: Why don't we try to share some of the prayers and quotes we put to music with our friends and families.

ANA: We can do it this weekend!

ANDRÉS: I thought you guys were leaving to go to the city this weekend?

Silence. SOFIA, RAÚL, and ANDRÉS look at the three youth, who look at each other.

ANA: (*hesitatingly*) I think I can postpone my trip for a few days. I know the study of these courses will help me to understand important things before I go to the city - life there is not easy, and I know now that I need to give more time to develop my spirit. Instead of being distracted I can focus on service and study ready for my return to Santa Cecilia!

PEDRO: I wasn't sure what to do in the city, but I think I can stay in Santa Cecilia, study more of these courses and serve here until I have clearer ideas about my future. I can help my father and grandfather in the fields 'til then.

MARTA: I can also stay a few more days. I enjoyed the first part of the study. Is the second part as cool as the first?!

ANDRES: It's even cooler!

Everyone cheers.

RAUL: Since we've been learning about prayer, let's do the practice of the course right now, which is to share a prayer with someone.

ANA: Can we sing it?

RAUL: Of course!

MARTA: But who shall we share it with?

As they look around, the LADY comes out of her house bringing the basket full of mangoes.

THE LADY: Would you like some mangoes?

SOFIA: Mmm, mangoes! Thank you! But this time we also have something sweet to share with you.

SOFIA starts to play the guitar and everyone sings a prayer from Book1. Lights fade, but they continue to hum softly. RAUL and ANDRES come downstage into a spotlight.

RAUL: Boy! The friends in Santa Cecilia really responded well to the institute!

ANDRES: And they loved the songs about study circles!

RAUL: There are so many of them. Where did they all come from?

ANDRES: When the first study circles began, all the participants would get together occasionally to share what they were learning. Of course, being Latin people, they would love to sing!

RAUL: What did they sing?

ANDRES: At first, they just sang any songs they knew – mostly about romantic love.

RAUL: Yes! Us Latinos are very romantic. But that sounds like it isn't completely in line with the spirit of the institute.

ANDRES: Right. So, some of the tutors soon realized they would have to make new songs – about the soul, prayer, service ...

RAUL: Ah! It sounds like we really began to understand how to release the power of music into the community.

They hear the sound of the flute.

ANDRES: There's that beautiful sound again.

RAUL (*looking around*): Where is that coming from?

ANDRES: I don't care anymore. I just love to listen to it.

They exit on either side of the stage, as if mesmerized by the beauty of the music. The flute music continues as the next quote is projected onto the screen.

Act Three: 'The Instrument of Music'

*"This plaint of the flute is fire, not mere air.
Let him who lacks this fire be accounted dead!
'Tis the fire of love that inspires the flute,
'Tis the ferment of love that possesses the wine.
The flute is the confidant of all unhappy lovers;
Yea, its strains lay bare my inmost secrets."*

- Rumi

"To every generation of young believers comes an opportunity to make a contribution to the fortunes of humanity, unique to their time of life. For the present generation, the moment has come to reflect, to commit, to steel themselves for a life of service from which blessing will flow in abundance."

- The Universal House of Justice

The year 2013 is projected. RAULITO and ANDRESITO enter. Their mustaches are gone, and they are dressed in modern clothes. RAULITO is making a call on his mobile. We hear the ring tone.

ANDRESITO (*answering the phone*) Raulito! Have you seen the email from the National Assembly?

RAULITO: That's why I'm calling you, Andresito.

ANDRESITO: This is awesome! A youth gathering and teaching campaign in Santa Cecilia!

RAULITO: Our fathers are going to be so proud of us. We'll be just like them in their youth!

ANDRESITO (*laughing*): It's hard to believe our dads were young once.

RAULITO: I wonder if the people will mistake us for our dads.

ANDRESITO: We do look a bit like them - that's true.

RAULITO: I bet people in Santa Cecilia remember the incident with the goat and the guitar.

ANDRESITO: I can't wait to ask them.

RAULITO: But not everything will be the same, you know? Now small villages like Santa Cecilia even have internet!

ANDRESITO: Boy, I hope we can get wifi up there!

RAULITO: Maybe this means that the Bahá'í community is different too. The way to grow the Faith is much clearer now.

ANDRESITO: We are more systematic.

RAULITO: And more people have capacity to serve the Cause together.

ANDRESITO: But some things haven't changed... like using music in our teaching!

RAULITO: Right! Let's for sure bring the guitar. I can't imagine a youth gathering without singing.

ANDRESITO: Right!

RAULITO: I can't wait! Let's go!

ANDRESITO: See you at the bus station!

They both hang up and walk into the middle of the stage and embrace.

RAULITO (*to the audience*): Wow, that was fast! Wait! Where's your guitar?!

ANDRESITO: I'll go home to get it.

He runs off and immediately comes back with his guitar.

RAULITO (*to the audience*): Wow ... that was ...

The audience responds 'fast'.

ANDRESITO: Do you remember the song our dads taught us – the one they sang on their first visit?

RAULITO: Como Una Flauta! Let's sing it now.

They sing as they "journey" to Santa Cecilia by bus through the mountains. The journey is projected onto the screen. They "arrive" in the village.

ANDRESITO: This must be it. (*reading the sign*) Santa Cecilia. It's just like my dad described. Such beautiful scenery from up here. And the air so fresh!

The sound of a flute is heard.

RAULITO: Do you hear that sound?

The MAYOR enters. The sound disappears.

MAYOR: Raúl? Andrés? (*very confused*) How come you've grown younger instead of older!?

ANDRESITO: No, no, it's not us.

MAYOR: You're not you?

RAULITO: Well, we are us.

ANDRESITO: But we are not Raúl and Andrés.

RAULITO: (*shaking the MAYOR 's hand*) My name is Raulito. I'm your friend Raúl's son.

ANDRESITO: (*shaking the MAYOR 's hand*) And I'm Andresito, your friend Andrés' son.

MAYOR: Oooh! Now I understand!

RAULITO: And you must be El Presidente? You look just like my dad described you.

ANDRESITO: In fact ... just exactly the same ...

MAYOR: (*winking at the audience*) Well, I try to keep healthy, you know.

RAULITO: Did you ever become gobernador? Our dads told us you were hoping to, so you could help a lot of people. That's a noble ambition!

MAYOR: No, I never became gobernador. My life has changed now. In fact, I'm no longer the mayor either. I gave up politics entirely – you can only help people if you win, but what it took to win was just too much. I now serve as a tutor for the training institute in Santa Cecilia. I realized accompanying others made me happier than competing with them, and it leads to the prosperity of all!

ANDRESITO and RAULITO: Wonderful!

MAYOR: Well, the sons of my friends are my friends too, so welcome to Santa Cecilia!

RAULITO: Thank you. It is a very beautiful village.

ANDRESITO: We've come to participate in the youth gathering and teaching campaign.

MAYOR: Oh! Yes, the Area Teaching Committee told me two youth would come to assist us with raising ... animators? Is that what they are called?

RAULITO: Yes! Animators serve junior youth.

CARITO enters.

MAYOR: Hola Carito!

CARITO: Hola Presidente!

RAULITO and ANDRESITO look at the MAYOR

MAYOR: Oh, it's just a nickname now ... they just call me that for fun. Carito, have you met Raulito and Andresito? Their fathers were friends with your mom!

CARITO (*shaking hands*): Nice to meet you!

RAULITO and ANDRESITO: Nice to meet you, Carito!

MAYOR (*to Carito*): How is your family doing since the passing of your great aunt and uncle?

CARITO: Well, you know, it's always hard to lose loved ones. Also, it was both uncle Rodríguez and aunty Rodríguez one after the other, so that made it harder. But the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh about the progress of the soul in the next world are a great comfort to our hearts.

MAYOR: I'm sure your great uncle and great aunt are very happy to see you from the next world serving the Cause, and in the community they loved so much!

CARITO: Well ... actually ... I've been struggling with my service. Accompanying others is not that easy!

RAULITO: That is true. It requires a lot of effort. We're learning the same thing in Villa Gregorio.

ANDRESITO: I've heard many stories of Mr. and Mrs. Rodríguez from my dad. Weren't they the ones who started a programme for secondary education so that the youth wouldn't have to leave the village so early to pursue their studies?

CARITO: Yes, they were! But, of course, they had the support of the Local Assembly and the whole community of Santa Cecilia.

RAULITO: I'm sure their great niece will be able to persevere through difficulties and continue to serve as they did.

ANDRESITO: You know, Carito, this situation reminds me of a song.

They sing Caminando.

CARITO: What a beautiful song! Where did you learn it?

RAULITO: Well, we actually helped to write it!

CARITO: Really?

ANDRESITO: Yes. We participated in a song-writing workshop with other people who have experience with music and the spiritual empowerment programme for junior youth.

RAULITO: The aim was to make songs that could influence youth in positive ways.

CARITO: That's such a good idea! The youth need music, but if we don't any spiritually uplifting songs, well ... we just have to make our own!

ANDRESITO: Yes! That's why these workshops were started. And many good quality recordings have been made of the songs.

RAULITO: So many people have been able to listen to them. They've even been played on the radio!

CARITO: Oh, that's amazing! I bet youth love to sing them with their friends. I'd love to learn them with my friends Pedrito, Anita and Martita. I'm going to visit them now; we're preparing for our youth gathering. Would you like to join us?

RAULITO: That's what we came for!

ANDRESITO: Let's go!

They knock on a door and Anita opens it. Martita also joins her in the doorway.

ANITA: Hola!

MARTITA: Hola!

CARITO: Hola amigas! These are my new friends Raulito and Andresito. They've come from Villa Gregorio to help with our gathering and teaching campaign.

ANDRESITO and RAULITO: Hola!

ANITA: Oh! Our parents were taught the Faith when they were children by two youth called Andrés and Raúl from Villa Gregorio!

ANDRESITO: Those were our dads!

CARITO: It seems that we're all following in the footsteps of our parents.

RAULITO: So, what are your plans for the gathering?

ANITA: We were just reading the message from the Universal House of Justice calling for the youth conferences and realized something. This is our time!

MARTITA: It is so exciting!

CARITO: So we've decided to visit all the other towns and villages in our cluster and tell the youth about this opportunity.

MARTITA: We thought a good way to share our ideas about service and building a new world was to sing this song that was made for one of the youth conferences. Would you like to hear it?

ANDRESITO: For sure!

*They sing **Rehacerte de Nuevo**.*

ANDRESITO: What a beautiful song! I wonder how many other youth in the world have made songs inspired by this call from the House of Justice.

RAULITO: Yes! Music creates a channel that allows beautiful ideas to reach many others.

ANITA: Exactly! Our songs help us to speak easily to other youth about service, confirmation, hope...

MARTITA: And they also bring a lot of joy and make us want to be together!

CARITO: When I hear my friends sing, I want to be part of whatever they are doing. Speaking of friends ... where is Pedrito?

PEDRITO enters listening to music with headphones and humming the reggaeton song.

ANITA: Hey Pedrito! (*he doesn't hear her, so she calls louder*) Hey! Pedrito! What are you listening to?

PEDRITO lifts his headphones off his ears and we can hear reggaeton song.

ANITA: Oh! You're not listening to that kind of music, are you?

PEDRITO: Why not? It's just music, it doesn't hurt anyone.

CARITO: Maybe, but what if you could listen to music that uplifts you instead?

PEDRITO: Uplift? Music is music... it's just for fun.

ANITA: When I learn a song, its lyrics stay with me. I sing them over and over.

MARTITA: And if they're profound enough, they can help us to reflect on constructive ideas.

PEDRITO: (*thoughtful*) The lyrics in this song don't have much meaning ...

ANITA: Or are even full of undesirable ideas.

PEDRITO: Do you guys know any better music?

RAULITO: Actually, I know a great song ... about you!

PEDRITO: A song about me!? Really?

ANDRESITO: Well ... it's called Pedrito. You haven't heard it?

PEDRITO shakes his head.

ANITA: You must be the only person in the whole Spanish-speaking world who hasn't heard it!

Everyone looks at her surprised and they laugh, including Pedrito.

*They sing **Pedrito**.*

CARITO: What a nice song! Is this also from the workshop you attended?

ANDRESITO: Yes! What did you think, Pedrito? Did you like your song?

PEDRITO: It did make me reflect about making choices ... I guess, I'll try to think more carefully about the music I listen to from now on.

They cheer.

RAULITO: So, it seems that music has had an impact throughout the years in Santa Cecilia.

ANITA: Well, music has in fact always been part of our lives.

CARITO: We've inherited this awareness through the generations.

MARTITA: Right! When we were children, we learnt through songs in children's classes, taught first by your dads!

ANITA: And then in our community life, at Feast, in our teaching campaigns ... there's always been music, strengthening our spirits and conveying stories and ideas.

CARITO: And it has evolved together with our teaching and service efforts. Music is a powerful instrument to spread the Teachings.

MARTITA: An instrument of attraction and beauty...

ANITA: An instrument for empowerment and inspiration...

The LADY, now very old and bent, enters with a basket of mangoes. The youth hurry to help her carry the basket.

LADY: Hola! Is this where the youth are meeting? I brought some mangoes for you.

RAULITO: Wait! Are you the lady that owned the goat? And the mango trees?

ANDRESITO: Our dads told us about you and your delicious mangoes ... you mean you're still...?!

LADY: Wait a minute! (*staring at RAULITO and ANDRESITO*) How come I became older but you two became younger?

CARITO (*speaking very loudly as if the LADY is deaf*): These are Andresito and Raulito. I think you met their fathers some years ago, when they used to come here to visit our community.

LADY: You look exactly like them ...

RAULITO: That's what we're told.

LADY: You'll be happy to know my goat has lost its appetite for guitars ... it's also lost most of its teeth, poor thing, so now it can only eat mangoes. So it never goes hungry! I'd better go feed it.

ANDRESITO: Wait! You mean the goat is still...?!

The LADY takes a mango from the basket and exits. The sound of an old goat is heard. Everyone laughs. Lights fade. Everyone except for Raulito and Andresito leave the stage. The year 2020 is now projected.

RAULITO: So, that was the story of Santa Cecilia.

ANDRESITO: Well, part of it. Our friends have continued to use music to teach the Faith, and to transform the culture of their community.

RAULITO: Like our fathers, we visited several times after our first trip.

ANDRESITO: But then, you know... life changes.

RAULITO: And we ended up coming to serve at the Bahá'í World Centre with you all!

ANDRESITO: Here, we often get together with other friends and sing. We love to keep learning new songs.

RAULITO: Like the one written for the opening of the new temple in Colombia.

ANDRESITO: Oh, I love that one!

RAULITO: Let's sing it now for everyone.

ANDRESITO: I imagine the world in the future covered in Houses of Worship. All the people can hear will be the Word of God ... and singing, lots of singing!

RAULITO (*laughing*): I'm sure there'll be other things in the world of the future too!

ANDRESITO: You know what I mean ...

RAULITO: Let's sing the song, and think about the praise of God being heard through music in every corner of the world!

*They sing **El punto de amanecer de la alabanza a Dios**. As they sing, the rest of the cast re-enter and sing with them. Pictures of the temple in Colombia are projected onto the screen. As they finish, lights fade and they exit. When the stage is dark and quiet, the LADY enters playing the flute. She has transformed into a young girl. She dances into a spotlight, winks at the audience, and then continues to play as she skips and dances around the stage until lights fade to black. Throughout this, the following is projected onto the screen:*

*“Did my Beloved only touch me with His lips
I too, like the flute, would burst out in melody.
The Beloved is all in all, the lover only veils Him.
Love desires that this secret should be revealed,
O friends, ye have now heard this tale,
Which sets forth the very essence of my case.”*

- Rumi

THE END