

Heritage Education as a Strategy in the Vallenato Chair from the Theatrical Play "Alejo Durán"

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ABSTRACT

Heritage education faces the challenge of generating experiences that allow students to actively relate to the cultural manifestations of their territory. In this context, the performing arts can be constituted as a pedagogical strategy capable of integrating knowledge, sensitive experience, memory and creation. The objective of this study was to analyze the possibilities of staging the life and work of the vallenato minstrel Alejandro Durán as a heritage education strategy and pedagogical resource for the Vallenato Chair. The research was developed through a qualitative approach and a descriptive design, articulating documentary review, research-creation and evaluation of the experience. As an artistic product, the play *Apa, Sabroso, OA: The life of Alejo Durán* was developed, structured in two acts and seven scenes, through the integration of theater, vallenato music and corporal expression. The experience was presented to students and members of the educational community and later evaluated by thirty participants through a perception survey. The results show a favorable assessment of the proposal: 90% rated its relevance to the Vallenato Chair as excellent, 86.7% rated the integration of artistic languages as excellent and 93.3% expressed an excellent assessment of the possibility of recommending the experience to other educational institutions. The results do not demonstrate a direct impact on learning, because no diagnostic tests or subsequent measurements were applied; however, they

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show a positive perception of the educational potential of the experience. It is concluded that the performing arts can function as a mediation to address heritage content from a situated perspective, as long as the representation is accompanied by processes of reflection, research and creation.

Keywords: heritage education; artistic education; performing arts; Vallenato Chair; Alejandro Durán; pedagogical mediation

1. Introduction

Contemporary art education recognizes that learning does not occur only through the verbal transmission of content. Artistic experiences allow the mobilization of cognitive, bodily, emotional, social and cultural dimensions, generating forms of learning in which the student can observe, interpret, experiment and create.

This perspective is especially important when educational content is related to cultural heritage. Teaching heritage involves much more than transmitting dates, names and historical events. It involves generating possibilities for students to understand cultural manifestations, recognize their meaning and establish relationships with the territory in which they live.

Heritage education can, therefore, find in the arts a resource to approach cultural content from sensitive and participatory experiences. UNESCO (2024, 2025) has insisted on the importance of articulating culture and arts education, as well as on the need to promote contextualized learning processes.

In Colombia, curricular guidelines for artistic and cultural education raise the importance of relating artistic experiences to students' cultural contexts (Ministry of National Education, 2022).

Within this framework, traditional vallenato offers a field of special interest. UNESCO recognized in 2015 the traditional vallenato of the Magdalena Grande region as intangible cultural heritage that requires urgent safeguarding measures. This situation poses challenges related to the transmission of knowledge, practices and meanings associated with this manifestation.

Education can contribute to these processes when it generates meeting spaces between new

generations and the cultural expressions of their territory. Alejandro Durán is a relevant reference for this task. His career is closely linked to the history of vallenato and the tradition of minstrelsy. In addition to his recognition as the first King of the Vallenato Legend Festival, his musical work is part of a narrative tradition that allows him to address aspects related to territory, memory, orality and culture.

However, presenting information about Alejandro Durán through a traditional class can limit the student's experience to the reception of data. Faced with this, the possibility of using the performing arts as pedagogical mediation arises.

Theatrical representation allows a historical trajectory to be presented through characters, situations, music, movement and dialogue. In this way, the student can approach the heritage content through an artistic experience.

The question that guided this research was: what possibilities do the performing arts offer as a heritage education strategy and pedagogical resource for the Vallenato Chair based on the life and work of Alejandro Durán?

The general objective was to analyze the possibilities of a staging of the life and work of Alejandro Durán as a heritage education strategy and pedagogical resource for the Vallenato Chair.

The specific objectives were: to design a scenic experience based on historical and cultural information about Alejandro Durán; to assess the perception of the participants regarding its educational relevance; and to establish possibilities of using the proposal within artistic and heritage education processes.

2. Art education and heritage education

Art education can contribute to comprehensive education when it allows students to develop processes of perception, creation, interpretation and communication.

The arts do not have to be used only as complementary resources to teach other content. They are also forms of knowledge and experience.

Álvarez-Valdivia and Morón-Velasco (2022) analyzed the possibilities of educating through art in multicultural contexts and proposed an interdisciplinary and inclusive methodology. Their work is relevant because it shows the possibility of relating heritage, culture, and educational processes through artistic experiences.

From this perspective, heritage education can be developed through experiences in which the student is not only a recipient of information.

A stage work can generate a first approach to the content and, subsequently, open up possibilities for research and creation.

Heritage thus ceases to be presented as something exclusively belonging to the past and becomes an experience related to the present.

3. The Vallenato Chair as a space for cultural mediation

The Vallenato Chair can be a space to bring students closer to the history, musical expressions, narratives and knowledge related to vallenato.

The study of the figure of Alejandro Durán allows us to address different dimensions: musical history, minstrelsy, orality, songs, territory, identity and heritage.

The work of Flórez Fuentes and Sarmiento Flórez (2023) demonstrates the possibility of relating the narratives of Durán's songs with processes of collective memory and recognition of popular knowledge.

From a pedagogical point of view, this means that songs can become sources for interpretation, analysis and creation activities. The scenic proposal expands this possibility. Instead of

working only with the song as an object of analysis, the representation of the character and certain situations of his trajectory is incorporated.

The work allows, for example, to develop activities related to the history of vallenato, oral narration, character analysis, body expression, music and cultural memory.

4. The performing arts as pedagogical mediation

The main pedagogical characteristic of the performing arts is its ability to integrate different forms of communication. Voice, body, space, sound, music, objects and relationship with the audience participate simultaneously in a performance.

Ivaldi et al. (2021) highlight the multimodal nature of teaching and learning practices related to the performing arts. This condition allows staging to be understood as a mediation.

Historical information can be organized through a dramatic sequence and presented in such a way that the viewer observes relationships between events.

In the case of Alejandro Durán, music plays a particularly important role. It is not simply accompaniment, but part of the content that is intended to be addressed. Body expression, on the other hand, allows us to work on elements that could hardly be communicated only through an oral presentation.

The stage experience can also generate an emotional response. This dimension does not replace conceptual construction, but it can contribute to generating interest and willingness to delve into the content later.

5. Methodology

The research was developed from a qualitative approach and a descriptive scope. The documentary review was articulated with a research-creation process. The documentation allowed the identification of information related to Alejandro Durán, his career and the cultural context of traditional vallenato. Subsequently, the play *Apa, Sabroso, OA: The Life of Alejo Durán*, structured in two acts and seven scenes, was

addressed. The proposal combined theater, vallenato music and body expression.

The experience was presented to students and members of the educational community. After the presentation, a perception survey was applied to thirty participants. The instrument included six indicators: knowledge of the life of Alejandro Durán; clarity and understanding of the staging; integration between theater, music and body expression; recognition of cultural heritage;

relevance to the Vallenato Chair; and recommendation of the experience to other institutions. Each indicator was assessed using the categories excellent, good, fair and deficient. The results were organized by frequencies and percentages. The interpretation was carried out taking into account that the instrument allowed to know perceptions, but not to verify learning.

6. Results

The results show a favorable reception of the experience.

Table 1. Evaluation of experience

Indicator	Excellent	Good	Regular	Poor
Knowledge of Alejandro Durán's life	80,0 %	20,0 %	0 %	0 %
Clarity of staging	76,7 %	23,3 %	0 %	0 %
Integration of artistic languages	86,7 %	13,3 %	0 %	0 %
Heritage recognition	83,3 %	16,7 %	0 %	0 %
Relevance to the Vallenato Chair	90,0 %	10,0 %	0 %	0 %
Recommendation to other institutions	93,3 %	6,7 %	0 %	0 %

The indicator related to the knowledge of Alejandro Durán's life obtained 80% excellent rating and 20% good. The clarity of the staging reached 76.7% excellent rating and 23.3% good rating. This was the indicator with the lowest percentage of excellence, which allows us to identify the need to take care of the relationship between historical information and dramatic construction. The integration of theater, music and body expression obtained 86.7% excellent rating. The recognition of cultural heritage reached 83.3% excellent rating. The particularly significant result for the educational approach was the relevance to the Vallenato Chair: 90% of

the participants rated it as excellent and 10% as good. Finally, 93.3% rated the possibility of recommending the experience to other institutions as excellent and 6.7% as good. In none of the six indicators were there regular or deficient responses.

7. Proposal for pedagogical use

Based on the experience developed, different ways of incorporating the work within the Vallenato Chair can be considered.

7.1. Before the performance

The experience can begin with an exploration of prior knowledge. Students can identify what they know about Alejandro Durán, minstrelsy, and traditional vallenato.

7.2. During the performance

The play can become an active observation experience. Students can identify historical events, musical elements, characters, places, forms of expression and aspects related to the minstrel tradition.

7.3. After the performance

The stage experience can become a starting point for new activities. Students can research Alejandro Durán, analyze songs, reconstruct historical events or compare different interpretations of the figure of the minstrel.

7.4. Research and creation

One possibility is to ask students to select a cultural figure or manifestation from their territory and develop a small scenic proposal based on documentary sources.

7.5. Assets and Liability

The work can also be used to discuss the problems related to the safeguarding of traditional vallenato. Students can identify threats, transformations and possibilities of transmission and then propose actions from the school, the university and the community.

8. Discussion

The result of greatest interest for this study was the assessment of the relevance of the experience for the Vallenato Chair. 90% of the participants rated it as excellent. This result allows us to identify a favorable perception of the possibility of using the performing arts as pedagogical mediation.

The proposal coincides with the approaches of UNESCO (2024, 2025), which promote greater articulation between education, culture, and the arts. There is also a relationship with Álvarez-Valdivia and Morón-Velasco (2022), who show the possibilities of art as a means of relating school learning to diverse cultural contexts. However, it is necessary to differentiate between

perceived relevance and demonstrated educational effectiveness.

The present study did not apply a knowledge test before and after the performance. Therefore, it cannot be statistically established that the participants increased their knowledge about Alejandro Durán as a result of the experience.

What can be maintained is that the participants valued the proposal favorably and recognized its educational potential. The 86.7% excellent rating in the integration of artistic languages is also significant. This combination can favor a broader experience than an exclusively verbal presentation.

The recommendation of the experience, with an excellent rating of 93.3%, shows a high level of acceptance. However, this indicator should not be confused with a learning measure.

From a pedagogical perspective, the main contribution of the experience is to offer mediation that can be integrated into an educational sequence.

The work should not replace research, reading, musical analysis or discussion. Its function can be to activate interest and generate an initial experience that is later deepened through other strategies.

Conclusions

The experience developed allows us to identify concrete possibilities to use the performing arts as a heritage education strategy. The staging of Alejandro Durán made it possible to integrate content related to history, music, orality, territory and heritage through an artistic experience. The results obtained among the thirty participants show a favorable perception. The excellent rating was between 76.7% and 93.3% in the different indicators.

90% of the participants considered the relevance of the proposal to the Vallenato Chair to be excellent, while 93.3% presented an excellent assessment compared to the recommendation of the experience to other institutions. These results allow us to consider that the proposal has potential as a pedagogical resource.

However, they do not allow us to affirm that the experience has generated proven learning. This would require subsequent research that incorporates diagnostic instruments, pre-test and post-test, interviews, focus groups and longitudinal follow-up. From the perspective of art education, the main contribution of the experience is to show that heritage can be

approached from creation and not only from the transmission of information.

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