

Mestizaje and Musical Nationalism in Mexico

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This essay is being prepared for an edited volume, The Eagle and the Virgin: National Identity, Memory, and Utopia in Mexico, 1920-1940, Compiled by Mary Kay Vaughan and Steve Lewis. We present this draft to WASHLA members in hopes of eliciting helpful feedback and commentary. We apologize for the length but seek to put some broad trends and processes into perspective in part in order to escape the statolatry that has characterized the historiography of the Mexican Revolution and post-revolutionary state.

Mestizaje and Musical Nationalism in Mexico

Contrary to official myth, Mexican musical nationalism was not born of the 1910 Revolution. It was already underway in the nineteenth century when with optimistic cosmopolitanism, it expressed a desire to join the circle of modern nations. Revolutionary musical nationalism had similar aspirations but delved inward to celebrate Mexican traditions and creativity in both classical and commercial popular music. The shift stemmed from Porfirian and cosmopolitan musical trends, the democratizing, nationalizing dimensions of the revolutionary upheaval, the initiatives of actors within post-revolutionary governments and cultural institutions, and the emergence of the mass media.

A series of factors catalyzed musical nationalism. First, in the nineteenth century, war facilitated the formation of patriotically inclined brass bands in towns, cities, and military units. Second, changing technologies were critical—in musical instruments, sound, and imaging, in transportation and communication. By the 1920s, these were creating mass media markets of entrepreneurs, advertisers, government regulators, broadcasters, artists, and diverse publics. Third, secularization fostered new tastes, sociabilities, bodily disciplines, techniques, and sensibilities, while multiplying the venues for performing and enjoying music. Finally, despite its multiple, changing forms, the state responded to and shaped these processes in national and nationalist directions by sponsoring musical education, dissemination, training, research, and artistic performance.

Above all, musical nationalism was a movement of mestizaje, or mixture. Musicians appropriated foreign genres, instruments, styles, techniques, and repertoires. Musicians intermingled—rural and urban, regional, national, and metropolitan, classical and popular. Porfirian

musical development led to the profiling of regional musics that invaded Mexico City with the 1910 upheaval. These shaped one another and inspired both nationalist classical and popular music, that kept a vital exchange with regional cities and towns. Musical mestizaje also encouraged and resulted from an intermingling of men and women, social classes, and ethnic groups. These broke down distances, definitions, hierarchies, and exclusions that were undoubtedly reconstituted in new ways within the context of an emergent, varied national aesthetic accessible to diverse publics. Recombining old with new, musical mestizaje nourished the formation of mestitized, nationalized subjectivities in a period of rapid, often wrenching change.

19th Century Nationalism: Bands, Orchestras, and the Conservatory

The wars and foreign invasions ravaging Mexico from 1810 to 1867 catalyzed musical nationalism. They introduced genres, instruments, new musical formations, and repertoires. Allegedly, the U.S. invasion of 1846 brought the polka then gaining popularity in Texas and New Orleans through German and French influence. Foreign invaders also provoked a patriotic musical response. Corridos celebrated national defense and demonized the interloper. These popular narrative songs had long been a major source of news and history in the largely illiterate society. In many regions, musicians revised the lyrics to La Paloma to mock the Empress Carlota imposed by French and Austrian armies.¹

The key innovation was the brass band. Historian Guy Thomson argues that bands proliferated in Europe with the invention of the valve that amplified brass' melodic potential and the dramatic effect

¹ Juan Jesus Aguilar Leon, Los trovadores huastecos en Tamaulipas (Ciudad Victoria, Mexico: Instituto Tamaulipeco para la Cultura y las Artes) 106-7. La Paloma had arrived from Cuba in the early nineteenth century.

of events for which they played. Bridging the gap between aristocratic orchestras and popular music of strings, whistles and drums, bands emerged with new forms of popular association and warfare introduced by the French Revolution. In Mexico, Thomson, the band was not initially linked to French revolutionary ideals and their domestic champions, the Liberals, but to their enemy, the Conservative Catholic Party.²

The new bands played for religious rituals and fiestas. To their profane performances they added new genres like the waltz, polka, and mazurka. The bands coexisted with older traditions such as the indigenous chirimia and mestizo son. The chirimia was a reed and drum ensemble that combined European forms and instruments with indigenous content. Chirimia musicians performed at religious, life cycle, community, and curing ceremonies and events. Guarding village secrets and history in their chants, they served as the medium between the community and the divine.³ While indigenous dance was sacred, the mestizo and criollo dance, the son, was a secular one of courtship in which the male circled the modest, alluring virgin until he conquered her--the couple exhibiting skillful footwork (zapateado) in their encounter. Performed at weddings, bull fights, carnivals, and public dances to the music of wandering minstrels or local ensembles of violins, guitars, jaranas (ukuleles) and sometimes harps, the sones had a probable Andalusian origin, reflecting that regions rich admixture of African, Arab, Jewish, Gypsy, and Christian traditions and reached

² Guy P.C. Thomson, "The Ceremonial and Political Roles of Village Bands, 1846-1974," in Rituals of Rule, Rituals of Resistance, ed. William Beezley, Cheryl Martin and William French (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources, 1994), 300, 309-10.

³ Thomson, Bands, 322-7. The chirimia is both the name of the musical ensemble and an oboe-like instrument of oriental origin that entered Spain with Muslim influence. In central Mexico, the chirimia was called the conjunto azteca.

Mexico via Cuba at the end of the eighteenth century. In New Spain, the sones took on regional names and characteristics shaped by local criollo, mestizo, African, indigenous, and rural/urban cultures. Sones flourished in the late eighteenth century as part of the society's deepening secularization, mestization and proto-nationalism that anticipated the Wars of Independence (1810-1821). They evolved in an ambience of demographic expansion and settlement of new regions (northern, western, Serrano and coastal Mexico). They thrived on increased communication with Europe, the Caribbean, and Africa. In 1766, the Inquisition outlawed them. Authorities objected not only to the carnal explicitness of their rhythms and dance movements but to their lyrics' open criticism of Spanish rule. Arrests, trials, and excommunications did not deter the son from invading taverns, aristocratic soirees, and plazas where musket fire announced the dance.⁴

While the new brass bands reinforced local and regional traditions, they also innovated. Conservative leader, Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna, promoted them for purposes of nation-building. He brought Catalan bandmaster Jaime Nuno from Cuba to create a national network of military bands that numbered 230 by 1854. In a competition Santa Ana convoked in 1853, Jaime Nuno wrote Mexico's national anthem. When at the request of the Conservatives, French and Austrian armies invaded in 1861, they brought with them large bands. Their concerts of secular music drew crowds to the town plazas. They offered Mexicans the possibility of learning new instruments, techniques and repertoires.⁵

⁴ See Ricardo Perez Montfort, Estampas del nacionalismo popular mexicana. Ensayos sobre cultura popular y nacionalismo (Meico: CIESAS, 1994) 82; Sergio Rivera Ayala, "Lewd Songs and Dances from the Street of Eighteen Century New Spain," Rituals of Rule, Rituals of Protest, pp. 27-46; Aguilar Leon, Los trovadores, 75-8.

⁵ Thomson, Bands, , 317.

The potential of the Conservative's musical power led Liberal leader Benito Juarez to order his military chiefs to create "cuerpos filarmonicos" as well as National Guard bands in towns. From these experiences emerged the municipal, town, military and police bands that gave preference to clarinets, trumpets, bugles, tubas, and saxors. In the final third of the century with the Liberal victory and consolidation of peace, they became the most popular musical form and one decisive in the formation of a modern musical culture. They opened sound possibilities for traditional music while creating new musical and social sensibilities, associations, and demand. They mixed regional with national and cosmopolitan repertoires. Organizing more complex mechanisms of performance and training, they forged new modes of individual and collective discipline.⁶

With increased communications, sheet music of foreign and regional origin penetrated the country. Band repertoires added opera overtures and arias, polkas, mazurkas, waltzes, and marches. While bands played in religious and family festivals, they were central to patriotic ritual. Fountains in town squares gave way to new bandstands, where musicians entertained before civic (and sometimes religious) authorities celebrating Independence from Spain (Sept. 15-16) or the Cinco de Mayo, marking the defeat of the French in 1862. On these occasions, school teachers and pupils mounted the kiosk to recite effusive poems to the heroes of independence consecrated on the altar of the *patria*--Miguel Hidalgo and Jose Maria Morelos (and Juarez if they were not militantly identified with the Catholic conservative

⁶ See William H. McNeill, Keeping Together in Time: Dance and Drill in Human History (Harvard, 1995).

cause). Most people learned more patriotic history here than they did in schools simply because they were better attended.⁷

In indigenous communities, bands were catalysts of a musical mestizaje. Musicians were privileged citizens, exempt from military and community service and local taxes. Often expressive of factionalism and social differentiation, bands also helped to reorganize and unify communities suffering from the ruptures of war, anti-clerical legislation, the privatization of communal land, and Porfirian economic growth. In concerts for visiting dignitaries, they presented a unified image to the outside world intended to preserve a relative communal autonomy. Playing at ceremonies in which indigenous leaders passed their symbolic canes of command to new officers, they also sanctified an internal order. In varying equations, the new bands coexisted with the chirimia. They often divided civic and religious functions.⁸ While preserving old forms of sociability, bands forged linkages to new imagined communities. In Oaxaca, Macedonio Alcalá's waltz, "Dios Nunca Muere," with its plaintive sentimental chords and graceful rhythms, became the state hymn. In an era of official anticlericalism, it linked patriotism with God. Still today, when they hear the waltz, Oaxaquenos stand and place their right hands on their hearts.

At a level removed from the bands was the Orquesta Tipica. Its music was considered representative of modernizing Mexico. In 1884, the first Orquesta Tipica Mexicana formed with the support of the

⁷ Vaughan, "The Construction of Patriotic Festival in Tecamachalco, Puebla, 1900-1946," in Rituals of Rule, 213-221.

⁸ The information in this paragraph is from Thomson, 320-336. The tendency in Oaxaca and Tlaxcala was for bands to absorb and displace the chirimia. In the Tzotzil communities of Chiapas, a sharp distinction was made between the bands, which were of non-indigenous, ladino origin, and traditional musical forms that continued to guard village history and secrets.

National Conservatory and under the direction of one of its graduates. Later, Orquestas formed in other cities. Their instruments, repertoire and style are a clear example of musical mestizaje. They consisted of chords, psaltery, wind instruments, harps, and marimbas and usually played an instrumentalized popular music of waltzes, romantic songs, and nostalgic pieces. They were in constant demand for performances in Alameda Park in Mexico City and elsewhere. Their songbook, published in 1894, rapidly sold out. Their urban public was initially made up of elites and aspiring middle classes: women with their parasols and men in their top hats who strolled in their finery in city parks and central plazas. With time, those of more modest means frequented these public spaces to enjoy the music.⁹

The Orquesta Tipica identified its repertoire with a *pot pourri* entitled Aires nacionales mexicanos, that included traditional songs like Cielito Lindo. The Aires became an obligatory piece, especially at international performances. In the Panamerican Exposition of 1901 in Buffalo, New York, the Orquesta played under the direction of the Michoacan musician, Miguel Lerdo de Tejada. They dressed in the charro outfit of the ranchero horseman: tight black pants with silver buttons down the seams, short, embroidered vest, and leather boots. They performed the Aires for an enthusiastic audience until their concert was interrupted by the assassination of President McKinley a few blocks away. Back in Mexico, their trip was considered a double success. Porfirio Diaz decorated Lerdo de Tejada with a medal for his contribution to the elevation of Mexican culture. Moreover, the trip to Buffalo brought an emblematic coincidence. Walking the city streets, the musicians found a house with a plaque marked "Music

⁹ Mario Talavera, Miguel Lerdo de Tejada. Su pintoresca y anecdotica (Mexico: Editorial Compas, no date) 69-74.

Academy Jaime Nuno." It belonged to the composer of Mexico's national anthem. The government had lost track of him and it was particularly meaningful to Porfirio Diaz to have located him again just three years before the 50th anniversary of the anthem's composition.¹⁰

A third force promoting musical nationalism came from institutions of musical education, particularly the Conservatory. Until the beginning of the 20th century, Italian influence held sway here. In 1887, a group of them, including Ricardo Castro (1864-1907) Gustavo Campo, and Felipe Villanueva (1863-1893), broke away to found the Instituto Musical where they favored French music. Castro, who had studied in Europe, composed romantic piano pieces similar to those of Chopin and Liszt. He also wrote compositions based on Mexican melodies. His opera Atzimba told the story of the Spanish conquest of the Tarascan kingdom of Michoacan. Campa's opera, El rey poeta, originally Le roi poete in French, celebrated Nezahuatcoyotl, Aztec ruler of Texcoco. It opened in 1901 at Mexico City's Teatro Principal with an Italian company. Both operas typified the Greco-Romanization of Indian civilizations also predominant in Porfirian art.¹¹

Musical Mestizaje at the Turn of the Century

In the Porfiriato, there was a close link between classical and popular music. Conservatory graduates had limited employment opportunities and could find them in directing, composing, and playing in popular bands and other venues such as the circus, churches, bullrings, popular music halls, puppet shows, elite clubs and

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Alba Herrera y Ogazon, El arte musical en Mexico (Mexico: Departamento Editorial, Direccion General de Bella Artes, 1917) 69; Mauricio Tenorio, Mexico at the World's Fairs. Crafting a Modern Nation (Univ. of California, 1998) 72-3, 184.

gatherings, and after 1900, movie theaters. The Band of the 8th Cavalry Regiment played at venues as diverse as the inauguration of President Grover Cleveland in Washington in 1885 and Mexico City film salons. Juventino Rosas, the great composer of waltzes who had briefly studied at the Conservatory, also rang the bells at the Tepito church in Mexico City, played in popular music reviews, and directed military bands. Durangense composer Velino M. Preza, was credited with being the first to interpret Liszt's Hungarian Rhapsody in Mexico. He also directed Mexico's largest army band, the hugely popular Banda de Zapadores, and organized Mexico City's Banda de la Policia. Author of over 400 compositions, he is best known for his evocative waltz "Alauda" dedicated to Senorita Esther Ochoa and for his heroic marches: Chapultepec, Canto al Pueblo, and Himno a la Patria.¹ Like other Mexican composers of marches, he was deeply influenced by North American bandmaster John Philip Souza (1854-1932).¹²

In the expanding venues of the secularizing society, musicians with different levels and forms of training intermingled, sharing techniques and increasing their musical capacity. Their publics demanded diversity and they provided it. Just as bands provided employment to Conservatory graduates, so were they a reservoir from which a new generation of musicians and composers would emerge to shape a new classical nationalist music in the Revolution.

¹² See various articles signed by Estanislao Meija and Nabor Vazquez, on the history of wind bands in Orientacion Musical, June 1943 to June 1944; interview with Juan Pablo Garcia Maldonado, exdirector of the Banda del Estado de Zacatecas, with Marco Velazquez, April 29, 1993, and "Las bandas de musica en la revolcuion," in Polvos de olvido, Cultura y Revolucion (Mexico: Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes and Universidad Autonoma Metropolitana, 1993) 349-79. On Juventino Rosas and his life as a musician in Mexico City from 1880 to 1894, see Album musical de Juventino Rosas (Guanajuato: Gobierno del Estado de Guanajuato, 1994) 9-20.

Mexican composers wrote music influenced by multiple transnational linkages. Afro-Cuban music arrived through a vigorous shipping triangle between Havana, Veracruz, and Yucatan. In the 1880s, to the brothels, cabarets, and neighborhoods of Mexico's Gulf Coast cities, the Cubans introduced danzon, a genre based on a variation of the Spanish counter dance. By 1906 Mexicans listened to danzones by Cuban and Mexican orchestras on records cut by Victor and Columbia.¹³

At the turn of the century, sensual Cuban boleros, habaneras, and claves flooded Yucatan. At first, elites shunned the erotic African sounds and rhythms. That did not keep musicians from producing compositions nor elite men from enjoying them in brothels. The songs quickly circulated in marketplaces and popular fiestas. The Yucatecan romantic song, which would sweep Mexico City in the early 1920s, drew from these genres and from the Colombian bambuco, an African dance shaped by indigenous and Spanish traditions and turned into song.¹⁴

Meanwhile, South American genres penetrated the west coast, particularly Guerrero and Oaxaca. There are several explanations given for the introduction of the cueca by Chileans or Peruvians: they were said to be immigrants headed for the Californian Gold Rush, merchant shippers and their crews, or visiting missions of Chilean soldiers.

¹³ Angel Trejo, ¡Hey, familia danzon dedicado a...! (Mexico: Olaza y Valdes Editores, 1992) 79-81. Further works on danzon include Jesus Flores y Escalante, Historia documental y grafica del danzon en Mexico: Salon Mexico (Mexico: Asociacion Mexicana de Estudios Fonograficos, 1993); Imágenes del danzon. Iconografia del danzon en Mexico (Mexico: Asociacion Mexicana de Estudios Fonograficos, CONACULTA, 1994).

¹⁴ Miguel Civeira Tabuada, Sensibilidad yucateca en la cancion romantica (Toluca: Gobierno del Estado de Mexico, 1978) Vol. 1, 330; Jeronimo Baquiro Foster, La cancion popular de Yucatan (1850-1950) (Mexico: Editorial de Magisterio, 1970) 319, Juan S. Garrido, Historia de la musica popular en Mexico (Mexico: Editorial Extemporaneos, 1974) 58-9; Yolanda Moreno Rivas, "El apogeo de la Cancion Romantica: la inmortal trova yucateca," in Historia ilustrada de la musica popular en Mexico (Mexico: Promexa, 1979).

The Mexican version of this dance, the chilena, was enjoyed far and wide in the Porfiriato.¹⁵

The hybridization of Mexican musical culture was clearly marked at the end of the century in the diversity of regional and popular genres and their increasing articulation with the rest of the country. As regions identified and distinguished themselves from one another, their music acquired national representation. Such was the case not only with *danzon*, the *chilena*, and the Yucatecan romantic song, but with *sones* like the jarabe and huapango. With the Revolution, Jalisco's jarabe tapatio would be adopted as the official national dance. The process owed much to composers and to dissemination by print, rail, and performance. Urbanization stimulated both regional musical *mestizaje* and self-definition as cities like Merida and the ports of Tampico and Veracruz filled with strolling minstrels, who had come from the countryside and distant regions to play in taverns where they absorbed and shaped local genres. In Tampico and Veracruz, the *huapango* acquired a defining profile in its ironic verse, minor chords, counterpoint, falsetto, and flamenco-like zapateado.¹⁶

In the first decade of the new century, Mexican composition flourished in dances with poetic lyrics. Collaboration with poets marked this music with a profusive lyricism, recognized by Carlos Monsivais as distinctly Mexican. As modernist poet Amado Nervo wrote: "Ser poeta es una predestinacion; es realizar a Dios en el alma; es

¹⁵ Roman Garcia Arreola, La musica y el baile de "La Chilena" en la costa oaxaquena (Oaxaca: Proveedora Escolar, no date).

¹⁶ Aguilar Leon, Los trovadores, 183-192.

convertirse en templo del Espiritu Santo."¹⁷ Although Monsivais emphasizes elite aesthetics, the lyrical tradition in popular music was deeply engrained. Both the corrido and the cancionero derive from medieval and Renaissance Spanish poetic genres. Minstrels and ensembles of guitars, violins, jaranas, and harps altered the verse of songs like Cielito Lindo from place to place and occasion to occasion and tested their lyrical competence in poetic duels between singers—a practice particularly polished by the huapangueros of the Huasteca.¹⁸ In the Porfiriato, elites and middle class publics raised this lyrical tradition to an exquisite level of elegance and refinement. A poetic waltz written for violins, psaltery, and piano became the ultimate expression of delicate, modernist sentiment. Many were composed for the perfumed salons of the Porfirian aristocracy with their velvet covered furnishings and their potted palms. Here Victorian virgins, their bodies imprisoned in tight corsets and ensconced in white, lightly touched the hands of eligible gentlemen, keeping a proper distance as they glided gracefully across the room. In 1899, Miguel Lerdo de Tejada, Orquesta Tipica director, wrote and sang the dance, La Perjura, with lyrics by Fernando Luna Drusina. In what Monsivais calls their "unabashed declaration of intimate, sexual infatuation," the poet's words scandalized Porfirian society:

Con tenue velo tu faz hermosa,
Camino al templo te conocí,
Y al verte niña, tan pudorosa
Por vez primera amor sentí.

¹⁷ Carlos Monsivais, "Agustin Lara: El harem ilusorio (Notas a partir de la memorizacion de la letra de Farolito)" in Amor perdido (Mexico: Era, 1977) 63.

¹⁸ Aguilar Leon, Los trovadores, 64-74, 152-170.

Tiernas palabras dije a tu oído,
Dulces caricias te prodigué
Y al ver tu pecho de amor henchido
Ser tuyo siempre fiel te juré.

La Perjura is said to mark the birth of the modern Mexican romantic song--precursor of the bolero that would enthrall post-revolutionary Mexico in its sacralization of sexual intimacy.¹⁹ Even in the Porfiriato, elites came to accept La Perjura, and its popularity swelled as it was played over and over again in kiosks and plazas.

In the first decade of the century, French influence replaced Italian at the Conservatory through the efforts of those who had formed the Instituto Musical. In 1900, the government commissioned Gustavo Campo to visit European institutions with the idea of renovating the Conservatory. The government's objective was to foment a Frenchification of Mexican culture. For artists and the elite, to be modern was to "live in French: savoir vivre."²⁰ When Campa returned, the Conservatory faculty participated in a revision of studies approved in 1903. The reorganization would as much affect the Revolution as be affected by it. It enormously enhanced the technical capacity of Mexican classical musicians, while in the avalanche of revolution,

¹⁹ Carlos Monsivais, "El bolero," in Mexican Postcards, trans. by John Kraniauskas (London: Verso, 1997) 175-6.

²⁰ Jose Antonio Cahero, "Un Mexicano en Paris," Heterofonia, CENIDIM, Num. 107, Vol. 24, Mexico, 1986, 33. On the transformation of the Conservatory, see Batty Zanolli Fabila, La profesionalizacion de la ensenanza musical en Mexico: El Conservatorio Nacional de Musica (1866-1996), Phd. Thesis, Facultad de Filosofia y Letras, UNAM; Mexico, 1997, Vol. 1, 223-297; Alba Herrera y Ogazon, El arte musical, 69; Gustavo E. Campa, Viajes musicales por Europa (Mexico: Antonio Wagner and Levin. Suc., 1909) 1-7, 180-88; Julio Estrada, "La musica Francia y Mexico," in Pauta, Cuadernos de Teoria y Critica Musical, Vol. 2, Num. 8, 5-13.

European influences would not so much dominate as contribute to the crafting of a Mexican nationalist art music.

We emphasize European rather than specifically French influence because the two principal nationalist composers of the early twentieth century had studied in Germany. There, Julian Carrillo became wedded to a Germanic notion of compositional organicity, or the expression of multiple variations within a single aesthetic unity. In the 1920s as head of the Conservatory, he would introduce to Mexico a modernist revolution that privileged new sounds (microtonality) outside the standard scale, but within a compositional unity. Following an evolution taking place among German composers like Aaron Schoenberg, his 1925 work, Prelude to Columbus, typified a tonal rupture with nineteenth century musical formalism while celebrating American themes.²¹ Manuel M. Ponce, who studied in Bologna and Berlin, followed the Germanic path of incorporating popular songs into classical compositions. Upon his return to Mexico, he began to study Mexican vernacular traditions. In 1907, he arranged the lullaby "La Rancherita." In 1909, he performed his Scherzerino Mexicana composed in the style of sones and huapangos. In 1911, he wrote Rapsodia Mexicana No 1. based on the *jarabe tapatio*. In 1912, he composed the path-breaking romantic song, Estrellita. In 1913, he gave his first public lecture on "Music and the Mexican son."²²

²¹ We thank Alejandro L. Madrid for information and analysis about Carrillo and his controversy with Carlos Chavez in "Modernismo, futurismo, y choque generacional: Las canciones de Atropos segun Julian Carrillo y Carlos Chavez," unpublished paper, Univ. Of Cincinnati, 2001.

²² On Ponce, see Emilio Diaz Cervantes and Dolly R. de Diaz, Ponce, Genio de Mexico. Vida y epoca (1882-1948) (Durango: Gobierno del Estado de Durango, Secretaria de Educacion, Cultura, y Deporte, 1992) 75-119. Corazon Otero, Manuel M. Ponce y la guitarra (Mexico: FONAPAS, 1981) 36; Pablo Castellanos, Manuel M. Ponce (Mexico: UNAM, 1982), 25-35.

If the Frenchification of Porfirian "high" musical culture has been exaggerated, the emergence of a nationalist popular music based on Mexican traditions has been ignored. In September 1910, the Porfirian regime dedicated its energies to projecting the country's new modern image in the Centennial Fiestas. These marked the culminating moment in the long reign of Porfirio Diaz. As part of the festivities, the old dictator decided to visit Mexico City theaters--a gesture interpreted as recognizing Mexican music while attempting to get closer to the people. For this occasion, the great soprano, Maria Conesa, reappeared at the Teatro Principal. For her performance of Mexican and Spanish songs, Maria Conesa, better known as La Gatita Blanca (White Kitten), decided to embroider on her skirt the Mexican eagle, emblem of the patria emblazoned on the national flag. This daring act of desacralization had the theater directors on pins and needles as they anticipated the response of Mexico's venerable president. After the curtain fell, they breathed sighs of relief as Porfirio Diaz and his wife, Dona Carmelita, approached the beautiful Maria and warmly congratulated her.²³ From then on, the Mexican eagle was often embroidered on the skirt of the twirling China Poblana, the traditional Senorita of colonial, popular rather than Victorian, elite vintage who would emerge in the course of the Revolution as a national symbol and inseparable partner of the Mexican charro.

Maria Conesa's career would span another rich forty years. In the nationalist fervor of the 1930s, in the musical reviews of the time, she sang Mexicana hasta las cachas--the story of a young girl who decides to "agringarse"--Northamericanize herself:

I decided to become a gringa.

²³ Enrique Alonso, Maria Conesa (Mexico: Oceano, 1987) 85.

I even cut off my braids,
And the charro I loved
Put me to shame.
He said, "Little one,
You are no longer Mexican.
Go away with your sister.
I want a china
With deep, black eyes,
With black, very black braids,
And red lips,
Who sings Cielito Lindo
And has on her pillow
The Virgin of Guadalupe
And only cares about me.

Musical Nationalism and the Revolution of 1910

Just weeks after Porfirio Diaz and his wife received the lovely Maria Conesa, the country erupted in a revolution devastating in its brutality, scourge of death and disease, and violent, treacherous politics. In its invasions and expropriations of haciendas and city mansions, it destroyed the spurious legality of Porfirian wealth and power. It also demolished the façade of Victorian morality and genteel aesthetics. Assaulting Porfirian rules of sexual repression, social hierarchy, and exclusion, the Revolution was a cultural, aesthetic, and erotic mobilization of enormous proportions and consequences.²⁴ Armies, their fellow travelers, and refugees moved south from the northern states of Sonora, Chihuahua, Coahuila,

²⁴ This is the still relatively unexplored suggestion of Carlos Monsivais, "El bolero," Postcards, 166-195.

Zacatecas, Nuevo Leon and Tamaulipas on horseback and train. They came into contact with one another. As they occupied the capital and center and southern states, they mingled with people from Mexico City, Puebla, Jalisco, Yucatan, Campeche and Oaxaca. Campesinos from the southern armies invaded pueblos and cities in central Mexico. The brass bands accompanying the armies exchanged repertoires in a vigorous effervescence and nationalization of music, combining cosmopolitan with more popular, regional, and rural traditions. This music was militarized in its marches (La Marcha de Zacatecas), genteel and nostalgic in its waltzes (Campodonico's Club Verde). The emerging repertoire embraced the traditional (the jarabe) and the new (foxtrot) as dancing became part and parcel of the military experience. Its corridos were at once gay (La Adelita), sad (El Abandonado), lewd (La Cucaracha) and patriotic (La Persecucion de Villa). Soldiers sang them at night around the campfires to guitars and on top of the trains as they pulled out of cities shooting off their guns. Band music was as essential to victory celebrations as to the mourning of loss. Bands even played in the midst of fighting. For battles, Pancho Villa preferred the march, "Jesusita de Chihuahua."²⁵

In the Revolution, regional and rural Mexico invaded the capital-- armies, refugees, politicians, and musicians. The popular theater district, south and west of the Zocalo, jammed with people as musical reviews, comedies, and vaudeville performances took up rural themes,

²⁵ Marco Velazquez, "Las bandas de musica en la revolucion;" Frances Toor, A Treasury of Mexican Folkways (New York: Crown, 1947) 310, Ricardo Perez Monfort, Estampas del nacionalismo, 100-106, Marco Velazquez, Interview with Ricardo Gutierrez, director of the band of San Martin Texmelucan, Puebla, in San Felipe Teotlalcingo, Puebla, June 1992.

icons, genres, and melodies—the charro, the china poblana, the jarabe.²⁶ The Orquestas Tipicas incorporated more vernacular pieces and instruments. In 1919, military band director Miguel Rios Toledano and Jose de Jesus Martinez published the first orchestral arrangement of the jarabe tapatio.²⁷ When the world's premier ballerina, the Russian Ana Pavlova, visited Mexico in 1918 and danced it, the Europeanized upper and middle class audiences were persuaded to abandon their prejudices against this rustic, "primitive" dance.²⁸ Performed by the charro and his braided china, it was quickly incorporated into official events, school programs, and civic festivals and gained fame in the United States as the Mexican Hat Dance.

Revolutionary musical nationalism moved in two directions, both nurturing one another but at the same time creating a greater division and professionalization than had existed in the nineteenth century. Classical musicians, musicologists, folklorists, supported by post-revolutionary governments, would recover vernacular traditions, incorporating their melodies, rhythms, and instruments to create a nationalist art music within a European technical framework. They would disseminate them in both classical and vernacular form through the proliferating school system, civic ritual, political events, radio, and film. At the same time, a popular music emerged—modern and urban despite its often rural roots and themes. The social eroticisation launched by the revolution flowed into a transnational sexualization of

²⁶ See, for example, Ricardo Perez Monfort, Estampas del nacionalismo, 106-120.

²⁷ Ruben M. Campos, El folklore y la musica mexicana. Investigaciones acerca de la cultura musical en Mexico (1525-1925) (Mexico: SEP, 1928), 197-213, Marco Velazquez, interview with Roberto Tellez Oropeza, Mexico City, March 11, 1991; Mario Talavera, Miguel Lerdo de Tejada, 42-66.

²⁸ Luis A. Rodriguez, El Universal Ilustrado, March 28, 1919.

popular culture following World War I. The Charleston, foxtrot, U.S. jazz, Afro-Cuban bolero and danzon invaded Mexico City. At the same time, regional musicians flocked to the capital, some sponsored by ambitious regional politicians, others drawn by the heady mélange of popular musical culture and the new technological possibilities of recording, radio, and film. They captivated the public with their crooning, bands and trios. As in the United States, the icons, genres, and performers of popular theater, music and dance halls, and cantinas were quickly appropriated by radio, recording, and film. Overall, Mexican musical nationalism capitalized upon and deepened a democratization of aesthetic culture. Its public was a rapidly massifying society courted by politicians, commercial interests, artists, social reformers, and cultural entrepreneurs.

The Creation of a Nationalist Classical Music

In 1915, Constitutionalist chief Venustiano Carranza declared that Mexico should abandon foreign models and develop its own national art and culture. The Conservatory was to "recover the national."²⁹ Classically trained musicians needed no coaxing. Amidst the repeated invasions of peasant armies and the strikes and demonstrations of vociferous workers, a coterie of artists gathered regularly in the studio of painter Ignacio Rosas. The studio was located in the city's center in an area of cafes, hotels, and cantinas between the southern theater quarter and the northern political district (Avenidas Cinco de Mayo and Madero) where the Chamber of Deputies, Senate, and cafes packed with politicians, delegations of petitioning campesinos, workers, and hacendados, and newspaper reporters. In Rosas's studio, the Bohemians met to listen to old and new Mexican songs, read their

²⁹ Alba Herrera y Ogazon, El arte musical, 84-101, Batty Zanolli Fabila, "La profesionalizacion de la ensenanza musical," Vol. 1, 322-50.

poetry, and discuss art. The moment of dizzying change inspired them. They spanned the generations. The older poets were there--Amado Nervo and Jose Juan Tablada--and the musician, Miguel Lerdo de Tejada. So were the young artists--Ignacio Fernandez Esperon (Tata Nacho), composer, orchestra leader, and singer who would play a major role in the investigation of vernacular traditions and promotion of commercial music, Adolfo Best Maugard, painter who sought a spiritual essence in indigenous Mexico as the inspiration for a classical nationalist art (see essay by R. Lopez), and composer Manuel M. Ponce.³⁰

In 1917, Ponce became director of the Conservatory orchestra. He had just returned from Cuba. His Rapsodia Cubana and Suite Cubana, based on his study of popular culture, had played to enthusiastic audiences in Havana and New York. In 1917, the Conservatory orchestra performed his Balada Mexicana. In 1919, his Scherzerino Maya introduced indigenous dance rhythms from Yucatan and Chiapas. In 1919, he and ethnomusicologist Ruben Campos founded the Revista de Musica Mexicana, one of several to appear with the idea of promoting innovation. Ponce and Campos spearheaded the recuperation of vernacular music and dance.³¹

In 1921, Julian Carrillo, Conservatory director and now its orchestra conductor, headed the music department of Jose Vasconcelos' Secretaria de Educacion Publica. In the capital, the two organized open-air festivals of folkloric music and dance and free classical music concerts in Chapultepec Park and the Alameda. Carrillo took the orchestra on tour, playing to enthusiastic audiences in cities

³⁰ Mario Talavera, Miguel Lerdo de Tejada, 114-141; Marco Velazquez, interview with Roberto Tellez Oropeza, Mexico City, March 11, 1991.

³¹ The Revista Musical de Mexico was published between May 1919 and May 1920 with 12 issues. Its collaborators included Alba Herrero y Ogazon, Eduardo Gariel, Carlos Chavez and Daniel Castaneda. On Ponce, see Pablo Castellanos, Manuel M. Ponce, 25-35.

throughout the country. He and Vasconcelos issued a convocation to write opera librettos on themes of Mexican history, legend, myth, and custom in order to foment nationalist sentiment.³² The SEP Cultural Missions, created to foster rural schools, joined in the identification of regional music and dance, while the nationalization of music began in schools.

In these heady years, a new generation of composers--Carlos Chavez, Silvestre Revueeltas, and Luis Sandi--and regional band musicians like Candelario Huizar and Estanislao Mejia who had come to the city with the revolutionary armies--invigorated the Conservatory's faculty. On the initiative of students in popular choral music, the Conservatory opened night classes for working people that in 1925 became the Popular Night Conservatory of Music. In 1926, Estanislao Mejia presided over the first National Congress of Mexican Music and a second in 1928 that addressed the collection and fomenting of vernacular traditions.³³

The emergence of a classical nationalist aesthetic was as much the product of individual entrepreneurship as it was of broad national and transnational movements. The major musical conflict of the 1920s involved Julian Carrillo and Carlos Chavez (1899-1978).³⁴ When Carrillo wrote his essay "Sonido 13" on microtonality, other composers in the newspaper El Universal expressed their doubts that the modern ear would quickly embrace such dissonance.³⁵ At first, the young Chavez

³² E.R. Blackaller. La revolucion musical de Julian Carrillo (Mexico: SEP, 1969) 85-89.

³³ Francisco Moncada Garcia, Pequenas biografias de grandes musicos mexicanos (Mexico: Ediciones Framong, 1979) 155-7.

³⁴ The story is told in Alejandro L. Madrid, "Modernismo, Futurismo."

³⁵ Ibid.; Ernesto Solis Winkler, "La revolucion del sonido 13: Un ensayo de explicacion social," Master's thesis, Universidad del Estado de Mexico, 1996, 103.

reproached his senior indirectly. In El Universal, he argued that microtonality was not a new, evolutionary step but had existed for centuries in Hindu music. Then in a daring assault in La Antorcha, he dismissed Carrillo from the nationalist movement: "Either we become Europeanized or we forge the basis of our nationality not in forms we see derivative of these sad cases of (tardy) importation."³⁶ He would later declare, "We deny the professionalist music prior to our own, because it is not the fruit of a true Mexican tradition."³⁷ Carrillo responded in La Antorcha, "How can we de-Europeanize ourselves? I don't understand. On the contrary, it seems to me possible that our race will produce fruits within a received European culture and within these possibilities we ought not to deny the Mexican mestizos, nor anyone in the world, the right to discover what Europe has not discovered."³⁸

As animated by metropolitan modernism as Carrillo, Chavez's vision was more American and iconoclastic. The nationalist buoyancy of the Revolution fired his adolescent passion as he instrumentalized revolutionary corridos and, for Vasconcelos, wrote a ballet for chorus and orchestra celebrating the Aztec fire ceremony. In 1923-4, he visited Europe and found it musically insipid. New York, by contrast, electrified him with its skyscrapers and avant-garde music circles, its

³⁶ Alejandro Madrid, "Modernismo, Futurismo," Gloria Carmona, Carlos Chavez, Escritos periodísticos (1916-1939) (Mexico: El Colegio Nacional, 1997) 60.

³⁷ Madrid, "Modernismo, Futurismo," p. 18, Carlos Chavez, "La musica propia de Mexico," El Universal, Oct. 8, 1930, in Gloria Carmona, Carlos Chavez, 166, 168.

³⁸ Madrid, "Modernismo, Futurismo," 9, Gloria Carmona, Carlos Chavez, 52; Julian Carrillo, Errores universales en musica y fisica musical (Mexico: Seminario de Cultura Mexicana, 1967) 198.

recording studios, orchestras, and jazz clubs.³⁹ Like his literary colleagues in the Mexican Estridentista movement, he set out to destroy decadent tradition, probe the possibilities of new aesthetic languages opened by modern technologies, and unleash the imagination to soar beyond realist depiction.⁴⁰ His "Energia," written for the International Composers' Guild and debuted in Paris in 1931 and New York in 1932, broke with compositional organicity in a lineal interaction and repetition of sounds evoking the pounding of hammers and the buzz of machines. Mechanical rhythms reminiscent of the vigor and movement of a factory constituted a new kind of sonorous unity distinct from both Carrillo's microtonality and Brahms' symphonies.⁴¹

An indigenista who incorporated preColombian percussion instruments into his work, Chavez' Indian sound was not based on study but his imagination. A modernist leap into exoticization, it became naturalized as "Aztec" music: austere, laconic, rasping, monotonous repetition jolted by terrifying outbursts of violence.⁴² In his Americanism, he stylized other tropes that preoccupied his artistic generation. Horse Power, his ballet for orchestra, celebrated an optimistic American vision of vibrant, youthful man, unlimited in his capacities. Within the vision, Chavez juxtaposed the cold, mechanized, industrialism of the U.S. against a sensual, natural Latin America of tropical abundance and luxuriant mystery. In it 1932

³⁹ Roberto Garcia Morillo, Carlos Chavez, Vida y obra (Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Economica, 1960) 26-7; Robert L. Parker, Carlos Chavez. Mexico's Modern Day Orpheus (Boston: Twayne, 1983) 4-5.

⁴⁰ Madrid, "Modernismo, Futurismo," pp. 12-13.

⁴¹ Madrid, "Modernismo, Futurismo," 15; Marc Blitzstein, "Premieres and Experiments-1932," Modern Music, Vol. 9, num. 3, 1932, 124; Paul Rosenfeld, "American Composers. VII: Carlos Chavez," Modern Music, Vol. IV, Num. 4, 1932, 155,157.

⁴² Garcia Morillo, Chavez, 43; Parker, Chavez, 106.

Philadelphia debut with Leopoldo Stowkowski conducting the Philadelphia Orchestra, great papier mache pineapples, coconuts, and bananas, designed by Diego Rivera, danced across the stage.⁴³

Between 1924 and 1928, Ponce left for Paris, Carrillo and Chavez for New York. There, Chavez built his reputation as a composer and deepened his relations with musicians like Aaron Copland. Back home in 1928, he made a proposal to the Mexico City Sindicato de Filarmonicos, who faced a terrible crisis as the shift to sound films eliminated their jobs in movie theaters. He suggested the formation of a National Symphony Orchestra (Orquesta Sinfonica de Mexico, 1929) for which he raised private and public funds. In the OSM's concerts, he mixed traditional classical music with modernist pieces. The orchestra's performance of John Alden Carpenter's Iris Skyscrapers caused such a heated critique in the Mexico City press that a repeat performance completely sold out.⁴⁴ Moving into the Palacio de Bellas Artes in 1934, the OSM played for paying audiences and, with assistance from the government, gave free concerts in parks and the Palacio for workers and school children. It became a vital venue for Mexican musicians and composers Ponce, Revueltas, Huizar, and Chavez himself.

In 1928, Chavez became Conservatory director and furthered the three-pronged renovation underway there. The research program focused on transcribing, recording, and filming Mexican vernacular music and dance and probing its history. Ponce taught musical history. Luis Sandi headed up the program in choral music, a critical element in making a nationalist art music accessible to mass publics in

⁴³ Garcia Morillo, 46-56; Parker, 100.

⁴⁴ Parker, 7.

commemorative events, schools, and union halls.⁴⁵ Teaching musical creativity and composition, Chavez and Huizar trained a new generation of outstanding symphonic composers--Daniel Ayala, Juan Pablo Moncayo, Blas Galindo and Salvador Contreras. Not all their work was properly nationalist but that which was drew from popular traditions and engaged them in meticulous field work. For his Sones de Mariachi, Blas Galindo traveled to Jalisco, Michoacan and Nayarit. Moncayo went to Veracruz to record the sones for his vigorous Huapango. While composing a singular representation of the "national," their work deepened, diffused, and enriched the musical and cultural polychromy of Mexico.⁴⁶ In 1940 as part of the exhibit of Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art, Carlos Chavez directed the OSM at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. The orchestra played Blas Galindo's "Sones de Mariachi," Vicente T. Mendoza's arrangement of Michoacan corridos, Baqueiro Foster's Veracruz huapangos, Luis Sandi's Danzas Yaquis, and Chavez' own Obertura Republicana.⁴⁷

The Mexican government recognized in the new musical aesthetic the most accomplished, representative product of its modern national and international aspirations. Government-supported research,

⁴⁵ Ibid., 11-12.

⁴⁶ In 1933, Chavez became chief of the Department of Fine Arts in the SEP and brought in a number of young composers, Luis Sandi, Roberto Tellez Giron and Francisco Dominguez, to work with Vicente T. Mendoza doing research on folkloric traditions in Puebla, Hidalgo and Veracruz. The results of this research were not published until 1963 as Investigacion folklorica en Mexico, 2 vols, (Mexico: Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes, SEP Departamento de Musica, Seccion de Investigaciones Musicales). Much of the ethnomusical research was done between 1931 and 1939. In 1947, the Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes created its own Musical Department that in 1977 became the CENIDIM. In 1952, the first catalogue of Mexican folkloric music was published with a total 924 documents and 226 records.

⁴⁷ See "Mexican Music," Notes by Herbert Weinstock for Concerts Arranged by Carlos Chavez as Part of the Exhibiton: Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art, the Museum of Modern Art, May, 1940.

recording, filming, and broadcasting of vernacular music resulted in the accumulation of a national musical memory that served as inspiration and enjoyment to present and future generations. Although classical composers may have envied popular musicians for their access to a broader public, the creativity of each nourished the other's in what was truly a Golden Age of Mexican music. The musicians intermingled in their work, their publications and their performance--particularly in the 1930s in the flourishing film industry.

Popular Musical Nationalism

In the 1920s, Mexico City's popular, public culture eroticized in an ambience of democratization, massification, and commodification. Amidst the excitement, disorder, and influx of foreign and regional styles emerged the chica moderna--the modern girl who took off her corset, raised her skirt, bobbed her hair, and moved her body in new, more supple, ever so suggestive ways.⁴⁸ Elites, the Damas Catolicas, and government reformers may have confused them with prostitutes, but the young working class women of the time did not as a rule see themselves this way. As much as they signed up for classes at the SEP's vocational schools, they flocked to the new dance halls, the Salon Mexico and the Club Smyrna, where they could foxtrot, tango, and Charleston. But it was danzon that dazzled them. Robert Buffington argues that the formally controlled danzon allowed "working class girls to protect their reputations" as they broke with family surveillance and the association of "dance halls and cabarets with loose women." Danzon, he writes, provided them with real opportunities to "perform

⁴⁸ See Patience Schell, "The Branch that Grows the Fruit:" Contradictory Visions of Womanhood as seen through Mexico City's Schools for Adults." Paper presented at Conference "Las Olvidadas: Women and Gender in the Mexican Revolution," Yale University, May 2001.

new identities, to renegotiate their relations with men, and to initiate a transformation of intimacy.”⁴⁹ This intriguing argument awaits further research. Buffington himself is aware of the limits of negotiation in a deeply patriarchal society, that received sharp reinforcement from the revolution’s glorification of male violence. Nor should we overstate the extent of democratization in Mexico City’s night life. The Salon Mexico, known as the Cathedral of Danzon, was divided into three dance floors for different social groups—one for the clases acomodadas, another for the aspiring middle and working classes, and a third for the truly poor. A sign in this salon read: “We ask the gentlemen not to throw their lit cigar butts on the floor so as not to burn the women’s feet.”⁵⁰

In the 1920s, ambitious regional politicians used music to create and deepen their political base. In 1921, for the Mexican Centenary Celebrations, Felipe Carrillo Puerto, socialist governor of Yucatan, sent La Trova Yucateca to Mexico City. These musicians composed and sang a romantic song cultivated in the peninsula’s Caribbean milieu. Closely associated with Carrillo Puerto’s government, the Trova performed over XEY radio in Merida, “La Voz del Gran Partido Socialista.” Much in the Mexican tradition, the poet’s lyrics were as important as the rhythms and melodies. The song that won over Mexico City was Peregrina, composed and sung by Ricardo Palermin with lyrics by Luis Rosaldo Vega. Commissioned by Felipe Carrillo Puerto, the poem

⁴⁹ Robert Buffington, “Danzón and the Domestication of Patriarchy,” Paper presented at the Conference Las Olvidadas: Women and Gender in the Mexican Revolution, Yale University, May 2001, pp. 20,6.

⁵⁰ Angel Trejo, ¡Hey, familia danzon dedicado a..., 69-75; see also Jesus Flores Escalante, Historia documental y grafica del danzon en Mexico; Imágenes del danzon. Iconografía del danzon en Mexico.

declared his passionate infatuation with the North American journalist, art critic, and Mexican enthusiast, Alma Reed:

Peregrina de ojos claros y divinos
y mejillas encendidas de arrebol,
mujercita de los labios purpurinos
y radiante cabellera como el sol.

Peregrina que dejaste tus lugares,
los abetos y la nieve, y la nieve virginal,
y viniste a refugiarte en mis palmares
bajo el cielo de mi tierra, de mi tierra
tropical.

Las canoras avecillas de mis prados,
por cantarte dan sus trinos si te ven,
y las flores de nectarios perfumados
te acarician y te besan
en los labios y en tu sien.

Cuando dejes mis palmares y mi tierra,
peregrina del semblante encantador.

No te olvides, no te olvides de mi tierra,
no te olvides, no te olvides de mi amor.⁵¹

In August 1927, the façade of Mexico City's Teatro Lirico glittered with multicolored lights, banners, and streamers to mark the historic moment when composers and musicians came together to compete for even greater stardom in the "Concurso de Canciones Mexicanas."⁵²

⁵¹ On Yucatecan romantic song and trova, see Miguel Civeira Tabeada, Sensibilidad yucateca en la canción romántica; Jeronimo Baqueiro Foster, La canción popular de Yucatán (1850-1950), Juan S. Garrido, Historia de la música popular en México, 58-9; Yolando Moreno Rivas, Historia ilustrada, Chapter 3; _____, Historia de la música popular mexicana (Mexico: Alianza, Conaculta, 1979, 99-120.

⁵² Juan Garrido, Historia, 60-61.

Tata Nacho won first prize, but Guty Cardenas stole the show. Just twenty-one years old, the Yucatecan troubador sang his exquisite Nunca, with lyrics by peninsular poet Ricardo Lopez Mendez:

Yo sé que nunca
besaré tu boca,
tu boca de púrpura encendida;
yo sé que nunca
llegaré a la loca
y apasionada fuente de tu vida.
Yo sé que últimamente te venero
e inútilmente el corazón te evoca,
pero a pesar de todo yo te quiero,
pero a pesar de todo yo te adoro
aunque nunca besar pueda tu boca.

Overnight, Guty Cardenas conquered Mexico City, recording his songs with fledgling Mexican companies. In 1929, he left for the U.S. where he recorded with Camden Records and then with Colombia in New York at the behest of Mexican Alfonso Esparza Oteo, musical director for Latin America. When Esparza Oteo left Colombia for Camden, Guty took his place. He wrote and recorded over 200 songs animated by the company of Cuban, Colombian, and Puerto Rican musicians. All cut records and mingled with American jazz musicians. In 1929 and 1930, Guty Cardenas toured the United States, singing for President Herbert Hoover and concluding with a gala performance at the Teatro Mexico in Los Angeles. At the same time, he made two of the first Hollywood sound movies: The Daring Lady and The Jazz King.⁵³

⁵³ See among others, Yolanda Moreno Rivas, Historia de la musica popular, 115-117.

Returning to Mexico, Guty Cardenas took to the airwaves of Mexico's new premier radio station, XEW, created by RCA Victor associates, the Azcarraga brothers, and located on the edge of the capital's theater district. Guty had his own show every evening from 8 to 8:30 sponsored by Picot, distributors of U.S.-made anti-indigestion tablets, an enormously popular product in a city now given to an exhausting night life. Doubtless Guty Cardenas took them. Like the rest of the Trova, he was excessively fond of alcohol—it was part of his Bohemian persona. The medicine must have helped him sustain the discipline of his extraordinary work pace. He helped compile XEW's Cancionero Picot, still today Mexico's most popular song book.

A meticulous composer, he framed his songs with the verse of well-known poets, Caribbean and Mexican. Mayanist Antonio Mediz Bolio wrote the lyrics set by Guty to sensual melody and haunting, tropical beat, in Caminante del Mayab, a piece later learned by Mexican school children.

On April 5, 1932, Guty Cardenas worked on proofs of Caminante del Mayab. In the afternoon, he walked to the XEW studios to prepare his evening program. As usual, program announcer Leopoldo de Samaniego held his pistol, necessary accessory of artists, politicians, soldiers and gangsters in those rambunctious years. That night, Guty sang "Para Olvidarte a ti" with a passion that surprised even his colleagues at the studio. It would be his last performance. After the show he walked with friends along Avenida Madero to the restaurant and cantina, Salon Bach, a favorite Bohemian meeting place. Over drinks, they quarreled with a group of Spaniards accompanying the Flamenco singer, Jaime Carbonell "El Marroquin." In the shoot-out that ensued, Guty

Cardenas died.⁵⁴ Just 26 years old, he immediately became a national symbol and legend of romantic tragedy.

Radio contributed mightily to an ascendant musical nationalism and its mestizaje of regional and foreign rhythms, sounds, and genres. Scholars have stressed the importance of government requirements that commercial radio give preference to Mexican music, but technology, profit margins, and publics were critical factors. Emilio Azcarraga, the entrepreneurial wizard of XEW, knew well that to be profitable, radio had to cater to popular tastes. As a technology, radio created a new relationship with its publics—that of the ear. It was not a question of hearing alone for reading aloud was a centuries-old practice. It was a matter of distance between the broadcasting voice and the listener (an absence of real bodies with the inhibiting power their presence implied) that opened space for the imagination, liberty, and intimacy, linked to new sensations of sensuality, awareness of the body, and individualization. Its technology also required new sounds—no longer the robust voices of operas and reviews, but the soft, insinuating voice of the male crooner and the female torch singer.⁵⁵ By contrast, in instrumental music, the sound of chords proved too thin. Radio needed big bands and orchestras.

The driving actor was the public. Radio required and privileged forms of cultural capital forged outside elite educational institutions—those that came from the streets, vaudeville tents and theaters, bars, brothels, town plazas, urban slums, even well-appointed

⁵⁴ Armando Jimenez, Lugares de gozo, retozo, ahogo y desahogo en la ciudad de Mexico. Cantinas, pulquerias, hoteles de rato, sitios de prostitucion, y carceles (Mexico: Oceano, 2000) 82-87.

⁵⁵ Pavel Granados Chaparro, XEW. 70 anos en el aire (Mexico: Editorial Clio y Sistema Radiopolis, 2000) 15-16, 133, 139.

parlors with the proper young lady at the piano.⁵⁶ Both commercial radio and its listeners were caught up in a frenzied moment of change. Radio had to switch performers and repertoires constantly because publics tired quickly and demanded novelty. Radio attracted hundreds of would-be stars to the doors of XEW studios. If a particular performer did not show up, the producer went into the street and picked the lucky person who had been waiting for weeks. One afternoon, remembered Angelina Brushcetta, one of Agustin Lara's wives, "a little mulatto girl appeared at the door. She had a baby in her arms. Poorly but cleanly dressed..she asked the servant if her "paisano" Agustin Lara was in."⁵⁷ Lara received her, listened to her sing and immediately changed her name from Maria Antonia del Carmen Peregrino de Cazarote to Tonya la Negra. She became his lead interpreter on XEW. Soon, she toured Mexico, the United States, and Latin America. It was stories like Tonya's that sparked the imagination and dreams of thousands of young people, dreams of success that intertwined with and engraved in them notions of Mexicanidad. They saw themselves and their desires in the stars. It helped that the 1930s and 1940s were a period of audience participation. Performers were attentive to their fans.⁵⁸ XEW programs were open to the public. Its studios held up to 800 people each. Thousands auditioned to perform on "La Hora del Aficionado," modeled after the U.S. Amateur Hour, or "La Hora del Calcetin Eterno,"

⁵⁶ The authors wish to thank Rafael Alcerica for his illuminating into this creation of new cultural capital through the mass media in Mexico. See also Granados Chaparro, XEW, 199.

⁵⁷ Granados Chaparro, XEW, 99.

⁵⁸ Interviews with Consuelo Villegas Barron and Luz Maria Villegas Barron, Mexico City, July 16, 2002.

for which mothers, youngsters in hand, waited for hours outside the XEW studios to launch their children's careers.⁵⁹

We choose here the Mexican bolero, the mariachi and the Cancion ranchera bravia to illustrate the intersecting processes shaping Mexican musical nationalism. With the bolero, Agustin Lara and other composers and lyricists—Gonzalo Curiel, Alfredo Nunez de Borbon, Luis Alcaraz, Jose Sabre Marroquin—brought the poetry of the Porfirian salon to the twentieth century brothel, nightclub, movie theater, restaurant, bedroom, kitchen, and patio of the vecindades, where immigrants crowded together making new lives in the big city.⁶⁰ Carlos Monsivais has argued that the bolero popularized Mexican salon lyricism, but it was this poetry expressed through the Caribbean rhythms and melodies that whispered love and desire over the Mexican radio. The palm tree, its branches gently swaying in the tropical breeze, became the voluptuous body of woman. Lara wrote and sang:

Hay en tus ojos,
El verde esmeralda
Que brote del mar,
Y en tu boquita
La sangre marchita
Que tiene el coral.
Y en las caciencias,
De tu voz divina,
La rima de amor
Y en tus ojeras

⁵⁹ Granados Chaparrlo, XEW, 101-4, 119-20.

⁶⁰ Carlos Monsivais, Mexican Postcards, 176-7; Amor Perdido, 61-86; see also Yolanda Moreno Rivas, Musica popular, 134-53; Granados Chaparro, XEW, 71-105; Pablo Duenas, Historia documental del bolero mexicano (Mexico: Asociacion Mexicana de Estudios Fonograficos, 1990).

Se ven las palmeras
Borrachas del sol. ⁶¹

In long-distance serenades of longing and unrequited love, Lara sang to his lovers, ex-lovers, and the women who wrote to him. ⁶² Above all, he sang to prostitutes:

Cada noche un amor,
Distinto amanecer diferente vision,
Cada noche un amor
Pero dentro de mi solo tu amor quedo. ⁶³

Lara sang to the modern urban woman. Indeed, he helped to shape her, to liberate her body from corset and confessional. He won hearts, writes Guadalupe Loaeza, because he "treated ladies like prostitutes and prostitutes like ladies." ⁶⁴

Lara united upright feminists and Damas Catolicas in indignant protest. In 1934, at the Congress of Intellectual Women against Prostitution, one delegate proposed boycotting Lara's music. Another suggested that it would be more politic to invite him to participate in the Permanent Commission of the Congress against Prostitution. In 1936, the SEP banned his music from the schools as "immoral and degenerate" and published a pamphlet instructing mothers to keep his songs away from their daughters. ⁶⁵

⁶¹ Mario Arturo Ramos, Agustin Lara: Cien Anos, Cien Canciones (Mexico: Oceano, 2000) 83.

⁶² Granados Chaparro, XEW, 78.

⁶³ Ibid., 46.

⁶⁴ On women's reception of Lara, see Granados Chaparro, XEW, pp. 82, 100-106.

⁶⁵ Moreno Rivas, Historia, 143; Granados Chaparro, XEW, 81-2.

Lara was the stark opposite of the state reformer's and the Catholic's model Mexican. An angry prostitute had scarred his face. He was married nine times—twice to movie star Maria Felix. He chain-smoked and was addicted to cognac, absinthe, and marijuana. Yet between 1935 and 1945, this prolific poet dominated Mexico's airwaves and became, in Monsivais' words, "the minstrel of the national soul." He sang on XEW's wildly popular Hora Azul and his own show, La Hora Ultima. Emilio Azcarraga would let no one touch his piano. Fresh bouquets of gladiolas, carnations, and roses graced it each evening as he played to a packed studio.⁶⁶

Despite censorship and prohibitions, young girls heard Lara—with or without their parents' permission, often through the "sirvienta" who cleaned house to the sound of radio. They wrote him love letters from all over the republic. When El Colegio de Amor, one of XEW's most popular programs, announced a competition, "Senoritas, Agustin Lara wants a singer. You can be the one selected," four hundred women showed up the next day at XEW's doors.⁶⁷

Lara's music liberated urbanizing Mexico from a stultifying Victorian and Catholic morality. In the burgeoning, dancing, singing city, he helped to legitimize and broaden the public space of pleasure—that had been banished in the Porfiriato to a subterranean bordello culture, frequented by rich men who tried to keep their wives and daughters confined to parlors, salons, and the Church. Lara sang to men and women of the necessity and the joy of sensual and bodily pleasure as sources of emotional intimacy. He made such pleasure socially tolerable, but he did not liberate it from sin. It remained a

⁶⁶ Information from Carlos Monsivais, "Amor perdido," 61-2, 79-83; "Postcards," 178-83; Granados Chaparro, XEW, 71-105.

⁶⁷ Granados Chaparro, XEW, 100-1.

"pecado." Lara's music, as Carlos Monsivais has suggested, preserved women as objects of desire, essentially sexualizing the Virgin.⁶⁸ His lyrics never transcended a basic, ancient misogyny: women were the source of original sin, the downfall of men, their victimizers. Lara's shaping of a modern Mexican masculinity was certainly as important as his influence on women. His music romanticized male adultery and irresponsibility, cloaked in the glamor of poetic bohemianism. If Lara spoke to urban women of their sensuality, it is likely that many learned a deeper lesson--to take charge of their bodies, loves, homes, and children for which, as they learned, they would ultimately be responsible.

Fearing that the bolero would dominate the radio at the expense of their own understanding of Mexican popular music, many classicists and folklorists accused Lara of producing a non-Mexican music, far from the "spirit of the people," a weak imitation of that heard in Paris cafes and Harlem clubs. "A child in Toluca has confessed to never having heard music other than Lara's," Manuel M. Ponce moaned, "They are killing vernacular music."⁶⁹ Lara responded: "In twenty years, I have produced more than 600 songs and in all of them, I have been able to do something for Mexico. I don't care if, when my songs are sung in Norway, Sweden or Russia, they mention my name just as long as they know it as Mexican music...They criticize my modest melodies that are the product of my inspiration. But I am convinced that for more than twenty years I have been working tirelessly to do something for Mexico; the good name of my beloved patria is what interests and preoccupies

⁶⁸ This argument is first presented in Amor perdido and more fully developed in Postcards.

⁶⁹ Moreno, Musica popular, 142-5.

me."⁷⁰ In Latin America, the U.S., and elsewhere Lara's music, like that of other Mexican boleristas, became identified as Mexican music. The big bands of Artie Shaw, Jimmy Dorsey, and Glen Miller played them. Frank Sinatra sang Alberto Dominguez' Frenesi and Perfidia and they soared to the top of the U.S. Hit Parade. Couples of Rick's café in Morocco danced to Perfidia in the film Casablanca. In Argentina, the bolero gained space alongside the tango. Even in Brazil, people liked it although they preferred the samba. Above all, in Mexico, it became identified with the new nation. By no means did it stamp out vernacular music, but it enjoyed a wide audience. The writer Salvador Novo told of a visit to Arandas, the heart of Catholic Jalisco:

We went to the house of the Municipal President who had
A radio and had arranged rooms for us. While we were eating,
I admired the walls full of calendars, the table full of
drinking glasses and sliced bread. A fat senor came in and
sat down. He was going to sing some songs for us on his guitar.
He asked the Minister of Education what he wanted to hear
and the Minister said, "A corrido, a local song." The man
raised his eyebrows and began to sing Agustin Lara's "Senora
Tentacion."⁷¹

Lara celebrated the city and a new modernist sensual aesthetic. Ranchero music, which dominated radio in the 1940s and 1950s, celebrated rural Mexico—increasingly as a stylized counterpoint to the city, an evocation of nostalgia, and a unifying nationalist motif. More sexually repressed than Lara's boleros, it expressed longing for a mythical countryside—devoid of exploitation, want, conflict, and sin,

⁷⁰ Ibid., 144-5.

⁷¹ Granados Chaparro, XEW, 93-4.

populated by kind-hearted hacienda owners, gallant macho lovers, fully clothed virgins, and happy peons. If Lara's music idealized the dangerous, seductive city, ranchero music made the Bajio, the heartland of the anti-government Cristiada, the nation's "idyllic soul."⁷² It iconized the rural subject as morally sincere, loving, trustworthy, and valiant in contrast to the degenerate city slicker. While it affirmed the still strong rural character of the country, it was also a music that negotiated the transition to urban life. Perhaps for many (including Lara's listeners), it represented a moral compass in an urban world that seemed to have none.

Ranchero music, particularly ranchera bravia, came to be associated with mariachi bands. While mariachi is an ensemble of sones popular in central Jalisco, western Michoacan, and part of Nayarit, the first mariachis in Mexico City came from central Jalisco. In 1926, the Mariachi Coculense moved to the capital where it made its first recordings. In 1933, the group performed at the Chicago's World's Fair and in the Mexican movie, Santa. The Mariachis Vargas achieved even greater renown. Founded in 1898, they dominated the airwaves in the 1930s under Silvestre Vargas' direction and in 1937 made the first of 2,000 movies. Originally consisting of vihuelas, violins, harps, tambor and tambora, the Mariachis acquired their emblematic sounds in the 1930s when they incorporated trumpets. They also adopted charro costume. Although they hailed from a region passionately opposed to the anti-religious policies of post-revolutionary governments and never part of the revolutionary upheaval, they were immediately incorporated into the repertoire of an emerging official national culture and

⁷² Moreno, Musica Popular, 181-229, Hugo de Geijertam Grial, Popular Music in Mexico (University of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque, 1976); Ricardo Perez Monfort, Estampas del nacionalism popular mexicana, 127; Joy Hayes, Radio Nation (Univ. of Arizona, 2000) 73-4.

memory--performing at political and commemorative events and banquets. President Cardenas had mariachis accompany him on his political campaign and invited the Mariarchis Vargas play at his inauguration.⁷³

The mariachis acquired trumpets in response to the popularity of U.S. big bands, new sound technologies, and public demand. They became interpreters of the ranchera bravia. In the 1930s, Mexican cinema, its composers (Manuel Esperon and Ernesto Cortazar), its singing stars (Tito and Pepe Guizar, Jorge Negrete), and its instrumentalists (mariachi bands) transformed the sweet bucolic ranchera of the 1920s. They mestized it with huapango elements (the falsetto, lyrical duels, and distinct rhythms) and gave it a new sound of triumphalist bravado.⁷⁴ The unexpected marketing success of the 1936 film, Alla en el rancho grande, in Mexico and Latin America created a new icon, the singing charro, the galan clad in tight black pants, silver-embroidered vest, and oversized sombrero strutting, writes Yolanda Moreno, like something between a fighting cock and an effulgent peacock.⁷⁵ While he sang of the joys of the hacienda--courting the modest maiden, raising his pistol at the slightest offense to his honor, downing copas of tequila in the cantina filled with singing peons--, the charro also celebrated Mexico. Jorge Negrete, star of the 1947 version of Alla en el rancho grande, gained fame and fans for his "Mexicanidad."

Yo soy mexicano, mi tierra es bravia,
Palabra de macho que no hay otra tierra
Mas linda y mas brava que la tierra mia.
Yo soy mexicano y a orgullo lo tengo.

⁷³ On mariachis, see among others, Moreno Rivas, Musica Popular, 182-3.

⁷⁴ Leon Aguilar, Los trovadores, 171-91.

⁷⁵ Moreno, Musica popular, p. 81 with reference to Jorge Negrete.

Naci despreciando la vida y la muerte
Si echo bravatas tambien las sostengo.
Mi orgullo es ser charro valiente y bragado
Traer mi sombrero con plata bordado.
Que nadie me diga que soy un rajado.
Correr mi caballo en pelo montado.
Pero mas que todo ser enamorado.⁷⁶

This aggressive, gay, decidedly machista music had its female counterpart in the songs of Lucha Reyes. The former member of the all-female Trio Garnica Arsencio lost her voice while touring Europe. She returned singing from the depths of her throat in a style never before heard in Mexico. She "lavished her voice, coughing, moaning, crying, laughing, cursing"-- and stopped in the middle of a number to take a drink "because she had a knot in her throat."⁷⁷ Singing of love, abandonment, and torment, she came to personify the temperamental, passionate, strong-and tragic "mujer mexicana bravia."⁷⁸ She committed suicide in 1944. Dozens of female vocalists took up her style.

In 1947, Asi es mi tierra, a program dedicated principally to rancharo music, became XEW's most popular show. Its dominance was fitting to this decade of buoyant demographic growth and urbanization presided over by a conservative, official politics that tried to dissolve the sharp divisions and conflicts of the recent past in an exuberant fiesta of Mexicanidad. Jorge Negrete brought the ranchera bravia to its heights. He synthesized the modern machismo and

⁷⁶ Song of Manuel Esperon and Ernesto Cortazar, Sebastian Verti, Parati: Canciones Inmoratales de Mexico. Homenaje a Juan Gabriel (Mexico: Editorial Diana, 1996).

⁷⁷ Moreno, Musica popular, 190; Garmabella, Pedro Vargas, 178.

⁷⁸ Moreno, Ibid.

ideological mestizaje of the new political class to which he belonged. A former army officer, he was first head of the government-affiliated National Actors' Association. A modern Hispanista and skilled charro horseman, he had also studied to be an opera singer. In his fine baritone voice, he sang as the ultimate charro--loyal, forever in love, a faithful, Catholic son, a brave cowboy-gentleman. He symbolized the compromises of the new ruling class as well as the sense of invigorating triumph Mexicans felt at finally having entered a moment of flourishing modernity--without having sacrificed traditional values, having overcome the Revolution's tragedies to enjoy its achievements. When he died in Los Angeles in 1953 of a damaged liver, his adoring public sang the song he had made famous:

Mexico lindo y querido
Si muero lejos de ti
Que digan que estoy dormido
Y que me traigan aquí...
Que me entierren en la sierra,
Al pie de los magueyales
Ya que me cubra esta tierra
Que es cuan de hombres cabales.⁷⁹

The Mexican president's airplane flew Jorge Negrete's body home. Over 10,000 mourners crowded into the airport to receive it. Many more paid their respects as his body lay in state at the headquarters of the National Actors' Association and later at the Palacio de Bellas Artes.⁸⁰

Conclusion

⁷⁹ Verti, 94.

⁸⁰ Moreno, Musica Popular, p. 221.

In the 1920s and 1930s, music united a severely divided nation. Indeed, it made the nation. It was a medium the Catholic shared with the Jacobin, the entrepreneur with the ejidatario, the Dama Catolica with the prostitute.⁸¹ In rural communities, it brought together teachers and suspicious townfolk. It captured the imaginations of thousands of children: if they had to endure the insipid memorization of national wars and presidents, they also became enthusiastic initiates into the nation as they danced the jarabe tapatio and the Yaqui Deer Dance. It was not the work of state cultural engineers and workers alone, but a complex process involving demographic movement, technology, market expansion, and social struggle, as well as artistic technique, performance, and demand, all creatively seized upon by cultural entrepreneurs within and outside the government at a particular moment in the formation of the Mexican nation-state.

But as this essay has stressed, Mexican musical nationalism did not begin with the Revolution of 1910. It probably began with the secularizing opening of the late eighteenth century that culminated in the Wars of Independence. Admittedly, we detect it as a process from the perspective of hindsight. It could have taken quite distinct paths, fragmented and died a still birth as it did in other parts of Latin America. It was paradoxically strengthened by foreign invasion, investment, technology, commerce, and aesthetics. It developed in creative tandem with American nationalisms, particularly those of the United States and Cuba. Like them, it drew heavily from Europe but also came to depend upon relatively autochthonous creativity. It drew in transnational trends and Mexicanized them, so much so that between 1920 and 1950, they were hardly recognized as anything else.

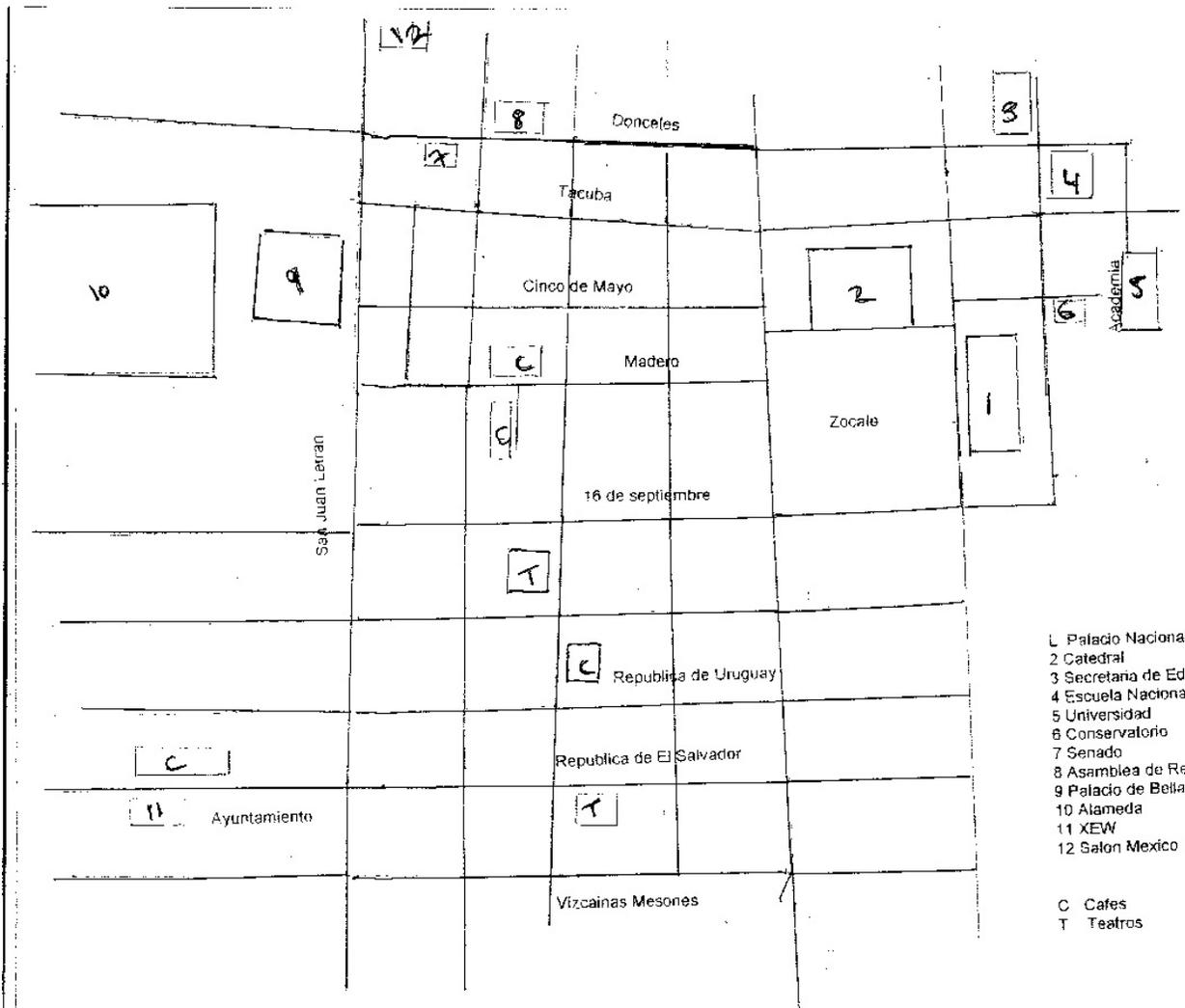
⁸¹ In Postcards, Monsivais suggests this unification with reference to the bolero, but we believe it should be extended to other genres.

The revolutionary process, the cultural policies of the post-revolutionary state, and the development of recording, radio, and film effected a maturation in music at all levels. The work of state-supported ethnomusical research and the attraction of radio, recording, and film had a cascading effect on musical production and performance in regions and communities. In order to conquer Mexico City and at the same time capture local publics, regional musicians broadened, deepened and defined their repertoires. Urbanization stimulated regional music and performance—in cafes, plazas, nightclubs, and radio stations. It also fostered a music of nostalgia for the patria chica left behind. Indicative of the process was Jose Lopez Alavez's "Cancion Mixteca." A band musician from Huajuapán de León, Oaxaca, Alavez went to Mexico City in 1906 to study at the Conservatory. He stayed, playing piano for movies, clarinet in city bands, and reportedly introducing the foxtrot to Mexico after President Obregon sent him on a trip to the U.S. in the early 1920s. But he did not forget his native Mixteca:

Que lejos estoy del suelo donde he nacido
Intensa nostalgia invade mi pensamiento,
Y al verme tan solo y triste cual hoja la viento
Quisiera llorar, quisiera morir de sentimiento.
O, tierra del sol,
Suspiro por verte,
Ahora que lejos
Yo vivo sin luz, sin amor

The Cancion became Oaxaca's second hymn after the waltz, "Dios Nunca Muere," and the anthem of the entire Mixteca region of Puebla, Oaxaca, and Guerrero. An expression of Alavez's urban nostalgia, it became an expression of regional, local, and ethnic pride as did the triumphalist mariachi music of Guadalajara and the huapangos of the Huasteca. Musical nationalism did not destroy local and regional

identity or dignity. It reconfigured them within new national subjectivities in a mobile world. Today, in the United States, immigrants from all over the Mexican republic sing the Cancion Mixteca.



- L Palacio Nacional
- 2 Catedral
- 3 Secretaria de Educacion Publica
- 4 Escuela Nacional Preparatoria
- 5 Universidad
- 6 Conservatorio
- 7 Senado
- 8 Asamblea de Representantes
- 9 Palacio de Bellas Artes
- 10 Alameda
- 11 XEW
- 12 Salon Mexico

- C Cafes
- T Teatros

ⁱ Bicicletas and Marco.