

## The Politics of Performing the Other: Curating an Early Music Concert

By Ryan Koons & Elisabeth Le Guin

"Early music" is the term generally accepted for the study and presentation of pre-modern and early modern European musics, with special attention to period performance practices including Gregorian chant, Josquin, Monteverdi, Vivaldi, the Bach clan, Porpora, and Handel. The list goes on up through early Beethoven, though claims have been staked as far forward as Schoenberg (Kenyon 1988). Issues of cultural representation or, more importantly, mis-representation, rarely arise with this repertoire: the marketing of concerts, artists, and recordings remains typically and unambiguously Eurocentric.

Designing and implementing a concert with music from the nexus of Indigenous American and European colonial interactions brought us face to face with that Eurocentrism. Entitled "Imagining the New World," the 2015 winter UCLA Early Music Ensemble (EME) concert forced us to confront politics of representation, "authenticity," accuracy, and the very real potential to insult Indigenous peoples, all the while attempting to create a musically compelling performance.

This essay presents a dialogue on the processes of creating this concert, and on the fine lines between politics and performance between EME Director and UCLA Professor of Musicology Elisabeth Le Guin (ELG), 2014-15 EME Managing Director and ethnomusicology doctoral student Ryan Koons (RK), and later on, Chris Goertzen (CG), who reviewed our article for this volume and is currently Professor of Musicology at Southern Mississippi University.

ELG: After doing the administrative going-in-circles dance for over a decade, I was able to revive the UCLA EME as a standing ensemble in 2009. (There had been a twenty-year hiatus; the 1989 fracturing of UCLA's then-Music Department into three departments had caused the ensemble to be discontinued.) Since its rebirth, the EME has drawn an increasingly diverse group of musicians from across UCLA and the greater Los Angeles community. I am titular Director; the Managing Director, the post Ryan has held during the 2014-15 academic year, is a year-long teaching assistantship with extraordinary responsibilities, culminating in conceiving, researching, organizing, rehearsing, and directing the group in a formal concert.

RK: Part of the Managing Director's audition process involves a program proposal. I am a Native Americanist ethnomusicologist and my primary research derives from a decade-long ethnographic collaboration with the Florida-based Muskogee-Creek Native American community, Palachicola Tribal Town.

ELG: And you were the first ethnomusicology student to hold this TAsip, to which any graduate student in the UCLA Herb Alpert School of Music may apply.

RK: My proposal for the 2015 winter quarter concert outlined a program that musically portrayed something of the complexity of the colonial era. The repertoire encompassed: 1) excerpts from baroque operas, such as Henry Purcell's *The Indian Queen* and Jean-Philippe Rameau's *Les Indes galantes*; 2) music written by Indigenous peoples in the New World, such as the substantial body of sacred and instrumental works written by Guaraní, Moxo, and Chiquitano peoples from the Bolivian Jesuit *reducciones* ("mission towns"); and 3) some of the first pieces composed or published in the Americas, like the Peruvian Quechua hymn "Hanaq Pachap Kusikuynin," the Nahuatl hymn "Dios Itlaçontzine" from México; and "Membertou's Song," the first transcription and setting of a Native American song by a European. Other pieces, such as "Ahey for and Aho," from a 1614 British masque with Native American characters, or Jean-Baptiste Lully's "Recit de l'Europe," which features singers portraying Europe, Asia, Africa, and America, also treat Indigenous peoples, topics, or politics.

I wanted to feature music by or about Native Americans as cultural "Others." This concept became the foundation for "Imagining the New World." Much of the repertoire, especially pieces by European composers, was downright ethnocentric. Many pieces exhibited Europeans' cultural appropriation, exoticization, and blatant ignorance of Indigenous peoples, attitudes that continue to plague the realities and traditions of Native Americans to this day. Yet these pieces combined to present a historically accurate, if deplorable, side of the colonial narrative. Although uncomfortable, we ought not shy away from this history. We chose to meet it head on and attempt to educate our audience through this music.



The UCLA Early Music Ensemble performs its concert "Imagining the new World" in the Powell Library Rotunda on March 7, 2015. Photo by Henry Lim.]

ELG: By virtue of what we are, we were in a good position to do something like this. Like most early music ensembles, the UCLA EME operates at the margins of "standard" repertoire of so-called Western Classical Music (WCM), playing and singing music from before the "common era," generally conceived to begin around 1750. (The studied blandness of the terms I have placed in scare quotes is itself telling.) We are thereby in a slightly better position to ask such questions of ourselves than, for example, the UCLA Philharmonia, a student symphony orchestra unambiguously dedicated to the central repertoires of WCM.

However, I do not mean to suggest that ethical considerations have not crossed the radar screens of the major institutions of WCM, such as those symphony orchestras. In the last fifteen years, a body of academic and public controversy has arisen over certain beloved canonic or mainstream works that contain ethically problematic representations of Otherness. The most notorious case of all, in fact, is "early music": J.S. Bach's *St. John Passion* (1740-49) contains prominent and overtly anti-Semitic passages. From the symphonic repertoire, Antonin Dvorák's ninth symphony, the so-called "New World" symphony of 1893, appropriates and "invents" Negro spirituals and Indian themes as presented in Longfellow's 1855 narrative poem, *Song of Hiawatha*.

RK: Representing or co-opting objects, ideas, or practices from another culture or group ties into situational power dynamics. The more power borrowers have, the more easily they can appropriate from the disempowered and the fewer repercussions they suffer. Countless examples abound, from exoticism in WCM (Born and Hesmondhalgh 2000; Taylor 2007) to the illegal sampling of a recording of an Indigenous Taiwanese Amis song in "Return to Innocence," the official song of the 1996 Atlanta Olympics (Chang 2010). Other examples include Indigenous Nahua adopting European concepts of the Other in colonial-era New Spain (Klor de Alva 1997), and the seemingly ever-present legal battles waged around copyright infringement of popular music songs (Hamm 1989; Snyder 2015).

ELG: Public discourse about instances like these has initiated a lot of immoderate rhetoric, but also some useful and thoughtful summaries of the options available to the would-be concert presenter of ethically questionable material. These options range from the radical (never perform potentially offensive compositions), to various compromises (bowdlerization or censorship through strategic cutting), to the interpretive (symposia, copious program notes). For further reading on these options, see Braatz 2004; Marshall 2012; Tabachnick 2014; and Taruskin 1995.

I should mention that the UCLA Philharmonia, under its current director Dr. Neal Stulberg, has made efforts to address the notorious ethnocentrism and conservatism of symphony orchestra programming. Notably in April 2011, the orchestra made its Disney Hall debut playing "A Celebration of World Music," in which the orchestra presented symphonic works influenced by Latin jazz, Arabic and Chinese classical musics, and shared the stage with a mariachi band. The result was artistically interesting, though it did nothing—could do nothing—to interrogate the cultural structures embodied in a concert hall (even one that looks like a space ship).

RK: Ethnomusicology as a discipline has a long history of scholarship on "musicking" across cultures (Small 1998). Ethnomusicologists have written on musical appropriation (Apolloni 2014; Feld 1996; Meintjes 1990), archiving cultural materials (Seeger 1986, 1996), copyright (Chang 2009/10; Seeger 1992), performance (Saeji 2012; Shelemay 1996), and pedagogy (Bailey 2008; Fung 1995; Titon 1995). Ethnomusicologists making the music of cultural Others takes a starting point with Mantle Hood's "bi-musicality." This classic research method calls for the researcher to learn how to play or sing the music he or she studies, learning the music from the inside (Hood 1960). Incorporating this method, ethnomusicologists have long taught the music of cultural Others in academic institutions (Solís 2004). Despite a sizeable literature (the above citations are representative, not comprehensive), we surprisingly lack a substantive dialogue around the rights to teach and perform these musical traditions and the politics of representing these cultures through our pedagogy. Ted Solís's (2004) edited volume on world music ensembles approaches some of these questions, especially Ricardo Trimillos's (2004) essay in that volume. However, as a discipline, we appear to have taken for granted our permission to teach and perform music from other cultures. Do we have the right to do so?

ELG: I believe that we need to ask this question much more often, and that we need to ask it also in the general context of WCM performance. The importance of this question derives from the way it invites us to consider which cultures we consider "ours," which we consider Other, and why.

RK: American Indian music, perhaps more than others, has a connotation of being "off-limits." Many Indigenous communities consider songs to be the property of specific individuals, groups, or even whole communities. One cannot use, perform, or hear these songs without first acquiring permission. Obtaining these rights often necessitates an exchange of gift, such as tobacco, cloth, seeds, foodstuffs, or feathers. However, this kind of access and permission does not easily cover syncretic music or music that results from interactions between two or more cultures. Much of the repertoire from our concert, "Imagining the New World," fit into this latter category. European composers wrote certain pieces based on their direct or indirect interactions with Native musics. Native American composers wrote other pieces within clearly Christianized and Europeanized colonial contexts. Other pieces featured imagined Indigenous characters and have no connection to American Indian performance practice. We therefore could not seek permission for most pieces.

In an effort to ameliorate this situation and to undermine or offset the ethnocentric perspectives of the Europeans who composed or collected the repertoire on our concert, we invited Indigenous perspectives and peoples into the musical process. These collaborations occurred at different points during the project. Several members of the ensemble were themselves Indigenous and/or have relationships with Indigenous communities. A Palachicola elder helped me brainstorm certain repertoire for the concert. The primary form of Indigenous involvement in the project took the form of pronunciation coaching. In addition to the more typical English, Spanish, and French, the ensemble sang pieces in Guaraní, Nahuatl, Quechua, and Souriquois/Mi'kmaq. I was able to consult with a native speaker over Skype in creating a recording of Nahuatl pronunciation. Neither language coach for Guaraní and Quechua were native speakers, but both were scholars with long-time relationships with the Indigenous peoples who speak those languages. (Our language coaches for English, French, and Spanish were also native speakers.) We also consulted archival and field recordings of related Indigenous music. The Souriquois/Mi'kmaq piece presented a different challenge, discussed below.

Because much of the repertoire was of such a sensitive or problematic nature, we went with the "interpretive" strategy Elisabeth mentioned above, and gave a lot of weight to the program notes. We also tried to incorporate as many points of view into these notes as possible. The resulting texts present a rich series of



perspectives: our program note collaborators hailed from art history, ethnomusicology, linguistic anthropology, and musicology. All conduct professional research on Native topics, several are members of Indigenous communities, and/or most maintain close relationships with them.

These program notes do not shy away from presenting colonial history in all its aspects. Instead, they uncover positive and negative sides to European-Indigenous relations, historically and in the present day. For example, Tongva/Gabrielino art historian and San Gabriel Mission museum board member Yve Chavez writes on the "Alabado," a Spanish-language hymn widely used to convert natives in the seventeenth-century California missions. She speaks of the sense of heritage in continuing this song tradition to this day, while acknowledging the bitter aftertaste implicit in the song's history of forced conversion (Chavez 2015).

Musicologist Alejandro García Sudo touches on a similar topic in his notes on the "Bolivian Sonata Suite," a compilation that we made of movements from different sonatas by anonymous Indigenous composers. In their South American mission towns, Jesuits also used music as a tool of conversion, teaching Guaraní and other Native groups how to play, sing, and compose in European styles. Although lost when Spain expelled the Jesuits from South America in 1767, many compositions by Indigenous composers have resurfaced in archives across the continent. In the Chiquitos region of Bolivia, this music now brings tourists and participants to festivals devoted to this repertoire. Schoolchildren learn to play it at an early age; several have pursued further musical studies in prestigious schools around the world. Despite its fraught history, these compositions now form an essential part of Chiquitos heritage and livelihood (García Sudo 2015).

In addition to incorporating Native American perspectives and histories, we faced the very real problem of interpretation. Performing music with fraught histories opens the likelihood of discomfiting or offending the audience. Fear of this possibility can too easily result in musically uninteresting interpretations, when the performers attempt to "play it safe." Performances wherein respect rests on "normative" and "neutral" concert protocols—the "transparent" performer, silent audience, performers wearing only black and exhibiting little emotion—actually do a disservice to the repertoire and the people and histories behind it. Comfort does not necessarily equal respect; in cases of colonial histories and repertoire, we argue that the opposite is true.

ELG: As the Director of the EME, I have found myself increasingly perturbed by this question of comfort, with reference to the cultural differences created by the passage of time and by colonialism. Some of what early music ensembles perform can sound distinctly Other to ears steeped in the carefully constructed and policed normativities of WCM. Additionally, the cultures from which that music derives are themselves Other (Jeffery 1992): how many ensembles or audience members have direct experience of courtly life? Of life before capitalism or colonialism? How many actually speak the languages—Latin, Renaissance and Baroque Italian or French, for example—in which so much early music was written?

RK: As contemporary European and Euro-American early musicians, we take for granted our ability to perform the repertoire that falls under the heading of "early music." Perhaps we construct ourselves as part of the same lineages/cultures as the composers and original performers of these repertoires.

ELG: Yet alienating for many, even those who imagine themselves within this lineage, is the unthinking propagation of what I call "WCM concert protocol" as a norm for public presentations of early repertoires. Ryan, you summarize it well: "the 'transparent' performer, silent audience, performers wearing only black and exhibiting little emotion." I will go further, and describe it as an anti-dialogic dynamic, presuming a reflective, physically passive "consumer" mentality in audience members, and a correspondingly control-oriented "producer" mentality in performers. This protocol has become as much a historic artifact as any of the strange old repertoires and practices we dedicate our ensemble time to rediscovering and learning.

WCM concert protocol was not in regular use anywhere before about 1820. It owes its peculiar congeries of restrictions and liberties, exclusions and privileges, to the culture of early Romanticism in Western Europe, and to the early years of Western reification and commodification of professional musicking. It was efficiently concentrated and expressed in the modern conservatory system of WCM education, a system consolidated shortly after the French Revolution that persists to this day with remarkably little modification. Interestingly, the consolidation of WCM concert protocol occurred when the Spanish, French, and British colonial enterprises in the Americas were decisively coming apart through a series of native and criollo revolutions. At the same time, the British Empire in India was entering its heyday. The complexly coeval relations between the definitive establishment of WCM concert protocol and the radically shifting relations between Western Europe and its colonies is a compelling topic that scholars are only just beginning to explore (see, for example, Davies 2014).

Today, a great deal of expert, beautiful, and ingenious work on pre-1750 repertoires goes on before silent, respectful, bourgeois audiences who listen with consuming, earnest, mid-19th-century ears. Or, just as likely, audiences who feel themselves unable to achieve this kind of listening: generations of undergraduate students have told me that the restrictive atmosphere in the concert hall itself, more than the music, keeps them away from WCM events, including early music.

RK: We interrogated standard concert protocol in our interpretation of Lully's "Recit de l'Europe" from his ballet *Flore* (1669). The piece features four singers portraying four continents: "l'Europe," "l'Asie," "l'Afrique," and "l'Amérique." L'Europe begins with a recitative; her companions then join her as a kind of back-up choir in singing about the importance of love. L'Europe can easily sing of the importance of love between nations when she holds the reins in colonial relationships; the involvement of the other continents, all of which housed European colonies, begins to read as coercive. Yet the music sounds typically exquisite, a little gem of French Baroque movement and declamation. We challenged ourselves to make it interesting, and to appreciate its beauty, while acknowledging its problematic nature.

We found a possible avenue of approach in humor. Rather than take the piece seriously, we made fun of it. We assigned the part of l'Europe to an excellent countertenor, a man who sings in his falsetto as a soprano or alto; women sang the other parts. This casting allowed us to present the colonial dynamic through gender categories. By assigning l'Europe to a countertenor, a voice type now usually heard as lacking some of the vocal authority of, for example, the more "normative" sopranos and basses, we poked fun at the ridiculousness of the piece. We were aided in our goal of humor by the music itself. Several moments of "Recit de l'Europe" are so saccharine sweet as to be campy. We hoped that combining campy music with a countertenor and other singers each wearing ostrich feather "crowns" would make hilarity inevitable.



Countertenor Patrick Bonczyk sings l'Europe in "Recit de l'Europe." Photo by Henry Lim.



**Caption: Alto Morgan Woolsey and soprano Shuai Ren sing as l'Afrique and l'Asie, respectively, in "Recit de l'Europe." Photo by Henry Lim.]**

ELG: Discomfort became inevitable too. One of our singers went through a crisis about the possible implications of those ostrich feathers shortly before the performance. And the audience's laughter was insecure, tentative....

RK: In this situation, we were promoting discomfort specifically for the purposes of educating our audience. By including another piece, "Fôrets paisibles," the final number of Rameau's opéra-ballet *Les Indes galantes*, in our concert, we wanted to trace the history that led to its composition. We began our "Rameau Suite" with a recording of a Shawnee Stomp Dance, exemplifying the type of performance Rameau witnessed in 1735. After aligning themselves with French interests in a bid for survival, several Mishigamaw elders from the Illini Confederacy traveled to Paris to sign a treaty with France. While there, they performed several pieces from their traditional repertoire. Taking certain features from the performance, most likely the rhythm and call and response pattern, Rameau first composed the harpsichord solo, "Les Sauvages" (1727). He later used the solo as the foundation for the orchestral and choral pieces, "Danse du grand Calumet de paix" and "Fôrets paisibles" in *Les Indes galantes* (Browner and Koons 2015; Savage 1983).

Our methods contrasted with a 2005 production of Jean-Philippe Rameau's *Les Indes galantes* by the Parisian ensemble Les Arts Florissants (Rameau 2005), which exemplifies an extreme approach we decided to avoid. Their interpretation of "Fôrets paisibles" features dancers wearing buffalo heads cavorting behind singers dressed in pseudo-Plains fringed buckskins. The soprano soloist wears a war bonnet, and both she and the baritone soloist engage in stylized arm motions vaguely reminiscent of the chicken dance and, later, of ancient Egyptian art ("Les Indes galantes, Les Sauvages"). We showed a portion of this piece to several EME members who were horrified at the treatment of Indigenous cultures.

ELG: That production was designed by Blanca Li, a Spanish choreographer living in Paris; clips from it may be found on YouTube ("Les Indes galantes, Les Sauvages"). Li's work has a comic edge, and I think that this

choreography may have been an ironic response to the lyrics of "Fôrets paisibles," which, like "Récit de l'Europe," praise the idyllic peacefulness of savage life, etc.

RK: Where we staged the compositional process as it traveled from the American Indian to the European context in our "Rameau Suite," Les Arts Florissants staged a spectacle. While YouTube viewer responses are scarcely a scientific measure of anything, it is interesting that many viewers of the Arts Florissants production on YouTube communicated delight in the production, including UCLA Choctaw ethnomusicologist Tara Browner, one of our program note authors (Koons and Browner 2015). Although she noted the high camp nature of the production and expressed her enjoyment of the interpretation, other YouTube commentators articulated their shock at and disappointment in the production.

ELG: I suppose an argument can always be made for campiness. But irony or camp directed toward Others—not to mention oppressed Others—will always have something of the cheap shot about it, no?

RK: Out of all our repertoire, "Membertou's Song" presented unique difficulties. In 1606/07, the Frenchman Marc Lescarbot witnessed and later wrote about and transcribed three songs sung by the Souriquois chief and shaman, Membertou, in present-day Nova Scotia, Canada. Thirty years later, the missionary Gabriel Sagard-Théodat published a four-voice arrangement of Lescarbot's transcription (Bloechl 2005). As the first transcription and arrangement of Native American songs by Europeans, the pieces have great historical significance (Levine 2002). However, the circumstances of the music required us essentially to invent a performance practice.

More a curio or museum piece, "Membertou's Song" lacks a performance history. Lescarbot wrote his transcription in solfège notation. While it accurately portrays pitch values, solfège provides no information whatever about rhythmic values. Language was an additional quandary. The Souriquois were the ancestors of modern-day Mi'kmaq peoples. Although clear linguistic connections link the two, we could not easily ascertain correct pronunciation, nor was I successful in my attempts to contact several Mi'kmaq speakers and linguists. It seems likely that the songs Membertou sang and Lescarbot transcribed were part of a healing and/or ritualistic event (Spinney 2006:66). As such, it would be remarkably inappropriate for us even to attempt to "re-create" them, even if that were possible. The multiple historical lenses through which the pieces filtered before reaching us place "Membertou's Song" somewhere between Indigenous and European cultures. The piece might better be considered an imagining of what Membertou sang.

These circumstances suggested a European art song-style performance rather than a "re-creation" of something Indigenous. We treated Lescarbot's original transcription as a kind of incipit, singing each syllable as a distinct quarter note. Our pronunciation reflected the French orthography. We sang Sagard-Théodat's arrangement as though it were art music, following the melodic rise and fall of the soprano line for dynamic interpretation. The piece also features a number of falling shouts, cries, or glissandi. Lescarbot writes, "This song being ended, they all shouted He-e-e-e" (Sagard-Théodat 1896-1901:291-292). As with the performance practices of other Woodland American Indian cultures, this shout ends all three songs and functions not unlike a coda. The ensemble worked for a long time to create heterophonic shouts not unlike those I have witnessed during my fieldwork with Palachicola, a distantly-related Woodlands group. Our invented performance practice allowed us to present the piece in concert. However, the piece lies at so many removes from the original as to derive from another world.

ELG: I find it provocative to think about the "other worlds" that arise through attempts to represent Otherness. They are neither temporally here nor there, but a third element. Morally speaking, they problematically lack the license of fiction to tell untrue things in order to construct a higher truth. What we were forced to construct in this concert became at best a shaky mirror that reveals our own habits of thought. The shakiness and discomfort attending that mirror are difficult things to deal with in the context of a formal concert, especially because concerts require that we subsume everything under the imperative of "being convincing."

RK: In her analysis of cultural ownership, law scholar Susan Scafidi (2005) distinguishes between appreciation and appropriation. She notes that cultural borrowing, if conducted with permission, can be beneficial to both the source community and the borrower. However, appropriation damages a community more often than it helps.

Scafidi draws out a number of instances of misappropriation, many of them case studies involving Indigenous peoples. For example, in 1984, a photographer for the *Santa Fe New Mexican* newspaper photographed a private Pueblo of Santo Domingo ceremonial dance from the vantage of a low-flying plane. In addition to trespass, violation of the Pueblo's ban on photography, and invasion of privacy, this act represented a worst-case scenario of cultural appropriation, wherein the external use or copying of a cultural product harms or



destroys the intangible aspects of the original (Scafidi 2005:103). As with most American Indian sacred repertoires, outsider access—especially uninformed outsider access—may weaken or destroy the meanings of the event. Over the course of my field research on Indigenous ceremonial music, I have often heard access to ceremonial activities by uninformed outsiders compared with children unknowingly sticking their fingers into electrical sockets and getting shocked or worse. In addition to the spiritual repercussions, music can provide an important means by which Indigenous peoples constitute and mobilize their identities; inappropriate use of that music consequently endangers their identities and senses of self (Stokes 1994).

The situation surrounding the original transcription of "Membertou's Song" relates to the experience of the Santo Domingo Pueblo. Most likely, Lescarbot heard something he was not meant to hear, wrote down something he ought not to have, and negatively affected the original as a result. Where does the EME performance lie in relation to this history, especially given what we know and/or can assume of the original circumstances? Although a delicate situation, our choices to move into an art music interpretation, use French pronunciation, and realize what can only be a half-accurate transcription due to the lack of rhythmic detail may sufficiently alter the circumstances. Perusal of field recordings and the applicable literature suggests that "Membertou's Song" as we performed it differs significantly from contemporary Mi'kmaq performance practice and song form (Tulk 2009). Because the song cannot but differ heavily from the original circumstances, we deemed it safe enough to perform our interpretation of the song.

The power dynamics surrounding "Imagining the New World" placed us as directors, and the EME more generally, in the position of power. As the directors of the ensemble and the concert, and the performers of the music, we had the power to decide how the music sounded. Without exception, the people whose compositions we performed are now deceased.

ELG: Yes, the cultures from which we borrow are completely at our mercy; the people involved cannot express any opinion whatever of what we say about them, how we represent them. Simply by their irrevocable pastness, they are excluded from our efforts and silenced as effectively as if we had colonized them. Does the non-reciprocity of this power dynamic mean that we are *necessarily* appropriating from the past? Is there any moral wiggle room? Indeed, many post-colonial theorists suggest that "history-making" is another type of colonial relationship (See for example Ahmad 2004; Foucault 1984).

RK: By performing a concert where most of the repertoire derives from heavily appropriated histories and misrepresentations, we and the EME might easily be accused of appropriation. However, descendents of many of those involved in the original composition and performance of these repertoires are alive today. These descendents include both the European/Euro-American and the Indigenous heirs. We attempted to ameliorate the power dynamics of the situation by inviting members of those descendent groups into the process of preparing, performing, and curating the concert. While we did not have the temporal or financial resources to redistribute the power dynamics as much as we wanted to, we succeeded in greatly improving them. We performed music that rarely receives play time, and we made substantial efforts to incorporate the multivalent stories, perspectives, and histories tangled in the music into our performance. We attempted to create a space for conversation, dialogue, and education around these issues. These issues are uncomfortable. No matter where one stands, no matter how intimate or distant one's connection to histories of colonialism, we find it discomfiting and often painful. But, as novelist Dorothy Sayers has asked, "is your or my comfort of a very great importance?" ([1936] 2012:365).

### Some Wish Lists

RK: We could have done more. Seven weeks is a remarkably short time in which to implement an ethical and musically compelling concert of this nature. There were several instances where time forced us to focus on musical and interpretational aspects over ethics. In an ideal world, several parts of our preparation would have differed. Collaborating with Indigenous native speakers and musical practitioners would ideally have involved more than several conversations and the creation of pronunciation recordings. Instead, we would have liked to invite tradition bearers into the rehearsal space to present on and lead the students in making music of contemporary Indigenous source communities. While we succeeded in raising awareness in the ensemble about some of the politics and ethics behind the music, we would have liked to foster additional conversations with more Indigenous peoples themselves.

Although not strictly in the purview of the EME, this program would ideally have taken place as part of a seminar-ensemble combination. For example, Elisabeth and I together and/or with other UCLA faculty might have designed a seminar probing the histories and issues enfolded into the repertoire. This added venue would have



created the space for dialogues that interrogated the repertoire and would have given us the ability to devote more of the rehearsal time to making music. Rather than essentially trying to do two things at once, this structure would have allowed for greater depth and breadth on the material.

ELG: I wish that in presenting "Imagining the New World" we had had time and resources to explore other, more dialogic relations with our audience. I would like to know what might have happened had we gotten that audience off its collective butt, deliberately erased the proscenium, and obliged them to participate physically and sonically in what we were doing. The models for that participation might have been to some degree derived from Indigenous practices (the circle or line dance, call-and-response...). The very real discomfort that such experiments would undoubtedly have produced would have had a special, and especially useful, edge to it in the context of the discomfort that we were actively exploring.

We did graze the "edge" of that discomfort when we invited the audience to sing the "Alabado" with us. Though not many sang (that I could see or hear), we momentarily managed to rupture the WCM concert-protocol dynamic. I experienced this moment, which occurred at the beginning of the second half of the program, as a decisive one in the success of the concert; after it, we began to feel that we had the audience "on our side." Before, throughout the first half, they were slow and hesitant to clap at the end of pieces. Since applause is one of the few forms of audience participation that WCM concert protocol allows, Ryan and I had begun to worry that they were offended.

They seemed not to be, at least, not by the end. In a moment unlike any I have experienced in forty years of giving WCM concerts, after the final applause had died down and the audience had begun to disperse, some people in the front rows re-initiated applause so vociferously that they got the entire crowd clapping again; we had to race back out to take another, happily disorganized collective bow. What if we could have harnessed that most unusual, vivid, "outside-the-frame" energy? That is what I would like to do with EME concerts in general; this one pointed the way with unusual clarity.

At this point I want to invite briefly another person into our dialogue: the peer reviewer who read and commented on this essay, Professor Chris Goertzen (CG). He was not present at the concert, but he raised some excellent concerns.

CG: Might presenting fewer pieces have led to a more successful presentation of complexities? (...) By trying to do so much in one session, did you undercut your aims?

RK: While we could have done more, we could also have done less. In an attempt to represent a wide range of repertoire, we very likely overwhelmed our audience. A more easily consumable concert from the audience's perspective might have focused on any single category of the repertoires we included. Perhaps the Indigenous-European music of just North America or just South America, of just one region, or just first compositions and publications in the New World. Focusing our lens more tightly might have necessitated fewer program notes, less interpretation, and more depth of understanding. However, audience response overall suggested our success in communicating our aims and music.

ELG: I am trying to think of an adventurous, original concert, conference, or seminar that didn't in some way try to bite off far more than it could chew. Overdoing it seems like a permanent liability in any academic enterprise. Maybe the most interesting way to address Professor Goertzen's observations, which I think are on point, would be to ask Ryan how he might design a "lite" version of this concert if the opportunity arose.

RK: A "lite" concert! While I think I find the concept rather charming in the abstract, I am firmly of the opinion that the issues we addressed in this concert ought not be presented "lite." Conceptualizing these issues—addressing colonialism, ethnocentrism, appropriation, and empowering and publicizing Indigenous peoples and voices—lightly is dangerous and has resulted in the continual ignorance of and disregard for Native peoples, their histories, and perspectives (Dunbar-Ortiz 2014). Much of the poignancy and power of "Imagining the New World" derived from the diversity of material we covered. Colonization and its continued aftereffects did not occur only in one isolated place in the Americas, but throughout the Western Hemisphere and beyond. Performing repertoire from across colonized Indigenous America and colonial Europe brought that concept home to our audience. Colonization was and is an overwhelming reality and I think attempting a "lite" concert around the topic actually does a disservice to those involved: colonized peoples, their histories, the repertoire, the performers, and the audience. Presenting colonialism "lite" strays too close to revisionist history, perhaps not unlike the move of a recently published US history textbook that refers to African slave populations as "workers," suggesting that slaves were merely economic

migrants (Dart 2015).

CG: Might it be a good idea to insert a piece or two entailing these sorts of controversy into (somewhat) more conventional early music programs in the future? I am responsible for the music history sequence where I work. I recently introduced the topic of madrigals, and explored how scatological many of the texts are, and thus why we ought to be encouraging audiences at least to snicker when these are sung. That probably worked for a few students, but I suspect that once again I will have just convinced many of them that I have a nasty mind. And this was presenting two short pieces of music in a 50-minute session, employing a format where lots of explanation is expected.

ELG: I know exactly the sort of situation you are describing here—undergraduates can be so startlingly prudish! Yet I am not sure I agree with this proposed solution, for several reasons. I think that the uncontested, Eurocentric repertory on such a hypothetical concert would inevitably emerge as normative and pretty thoroughly undercut the project of promoting "creative discomfort."

RK: I have actually witnessed this undercutting firsthand. Several years ago I sang "Membertou's Song" in a concert of francophone repertoires. Although the accompanying spoken program notes attempted to address the history of the piece and discomfit the audience, any "creative discomfort" got lost as soon as we began singing the typically French baroque song that followed. Having experienced that undercut goal, I was determined not to lose such a potentially moving moment in "Imagining the New World."

ELG: Any truly new information or perspective is going to be overwhelming to us; no matter how necessary or overdue, if it is unfamiliar, we probably cannot assimilate it all at once. Rejection or just shutting down mentally/emotionally are very common reactions to this kind of overwhelm. But weeks or even months later, we may find ourselves thinking differently about those same matters. We may even imagine we "discovered" this new information or perspective for ourselves; my former cello teacher William Pleeth used to call this kind of pedagogy "planting depth charges."

RK: In preparing this concert, we chose to balance respect for Indigenous perspectives with education about the music, tackling the issues the music raised rather than ignoring them or "playing it safe." Our efforts did not necessarily absolve us from the accusation of cultural appropriation, but promoted understanding of and respect for the repertoire on the part of the audience and the ensemble. If we have been able to promote greater understanding and positive change, the project has been worthwhile.

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## Mestizaje and African heritage in Afro-Caribbean music, Veracruz, Mexico

By Christian Rinaudo

Rolando, a young cultural promoter for the Veracruz Cultural Institute (IVEC), deplores the fact that the public only sees the annual Afro-Caribbean International Festival as an occasion to enjoy the performances. This public clearly constructs a symbolic boundary between "them" (the Afro-Caribbean performers) and "us" (the people of Veracruz, Mexico). As he explained to me, "The people who saw the concerts would say: 'Hey, what about going to watch the blacks dancing', whereas they themselves could also be identified as colored people."

This comment is rather significant as it highlights the way in which the issue of African heritage in Mexico is perceived. As Christina Sue points out, "during the presidential regime of Porfirio Díaz (1877-1880, 1884-1911), racialized categories were incorporated into the nation-building process and the *mestizo* was deemed the national symbol of Mexico" (Sue 2009:115). After the Mexican Revolution (1910-1920), José Vasconcelos developed the concept of 'Cosmic race,' which further reinforced the need for cohesion. (Vasconcelos 1925). In doing so, Vasconcelos echoed the *Indigenismo* of Manuel Gamio (Gamio 1992) and laid the groundwork for 'integrationist' cultural nationalism (Hoffmann and Rinaudo 2014). Since then, it has been widely assumed that this national ideology of *mestizaje* has helped generate a strong pride in mixed-race status among the citizens of Mexico.

In Mexico, the issue of *mestizaje* has mainly arisen in debates about the process of assimilation that was implemented during the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. *Mestizaje* first concerned Indians and Spanish people, and as such, the issue came to prominence when the discussion turned to the question of Indians. Starting in the 1980s, a relative re-Indianization was carried out on the basis of a formal recognition of the Indian population. At the same time, the national ideology of *mestizaje* was also considered. Although the ideology of *mestizaje* was interpreted as a motor for forced cultural homogenization, and as the key element of a national narrative, it ignored the importance of other demographic phenomena (Viqueira 2010). In particular, populations of African origin were largely disregarded until the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>[1]</sup> In 1989, the national program, "Our Third Root," (*Nuestra Tercera Raíz*) was launched, and various academic initiatives began to reveal the importance and diversity of the contribution by people of African origin to the Mexican nation (Carroll 2001; Hoffmann 2004; Martínez Montiel 1994; Muhammad 1996; Velázquez and Correa 2005; Vinson III and Vaughn 2004).

It is also since the 1980s that musical traditions associated with this African heritage have been examined in Mexico, first with a short article on *afromestiza* music (Moedano 1980), then with more complete ethnomusicological studies dealing with this issue and detailing the geographical regions and musical styles in which the African diasporic legacies were identifiable (Chamorro 1996; García de León 2002; Pérez Fernández 1990; Ruiz Rodríguez 2007). In these studies, Afro-Mexican music and dance are seen as a contribution to the national process that Aguirre Beltrán called "Afro-mestizaje" (Gonzalez 2004; González 2010; Pérez Fernández 2003), or like a form of resistance that survived the Holy Inquisition of New Spain (Díaz-Sánchez and Hernández 2013; Hernández 2014). Still, few studies have sought to understand the social uses of music and dance categories, and stereotypes linked to the African legacy. As Rolando's comments about people's reactions to the Afro-Caribbean Festival suggest, symbolic boundaries are indeed important. Therefore, I will use an analytical framework based on symbolic boundaries to examine *mestizaje* and African heritage in music and dance. Symbolic boundaries are "conceptual distinctions made by social actors to categorize objects, people, practices, and even time and space" (Lamont and Molnár 2001:168). As such, symbolic boundaries are tools with which individuals and groups carve out definitions of reality. They are the outcome of the representation of a social world that music and dance enable us to document. I will focus in particular on cultural public policies and on the discourses and practices of performers.

### An empirical approach

In contemporary Veracruz, despite its long history as a port of arrival and trade of enslaved Africans<sup>[2]</sup>, there are neither collective activities aimed at forging a consciousness of belonging to a common social group that would self-identify as black or Afro-descendent, nor organizations trying to speak and act on behalf of populations of African origin, as is the case in other regions of Mexico (Lewis 2012; Lara Millán 2008). Here, the idea of the existence of a specific group of Afro-Veracruzans holds little meaning in the urban areas, where inhabitants mostly identify themselves via class distinctions or regional references (Hoffmann 2008). And the term *jarocho*, which is used to designate—often indiscriminately—inhabitants of the south of the State of Veracruz, the Sotavento coast and the city of Veracruz itself, refers more to the *mestizaje* issue and its various Spanish, indigenous and African roots, than to a putative black identity.

And yet in recent years it is in this context that the popular music of Veracruz and its region has highlighted a black or African cultural dimension. On analyzing this process, one first has to question the accuracy of the totalizing terms that describe a popular culture as black or African. In a famous text, Stuart Hall explains that the “black” from which a black cultural policy originates should not be considered as an essence, but as “an ensemble of distinct and historically defined black experiences that contributed to producing an alternative repertoire” (Hall 1992:21-33). For all this, he does not question his own use of the terms “black repertoire,” “black experience,” “black expressiveness,” “black aesthetics,” and “black subjectivity” when observing the diverse character that such subjectivity could bring with it: “It is on the diversity of the black experience and not its homogeneity that we must focus our creative attention.” In other words, the diversity Hall refers to is limited to the “variety of black subjective disparities,” which depends on the black subject’s social location, i.e. gender, class, sexual orientation, etc. So, Hall’s questioning should be rephrased in the manner of Peter Wade, when in his study he wonders in what way the Colombian coast’s commercial music is “black” (Wade 2000; Wade 2011) or, as formulated in answers and comments on Phillip Tagg’s open letter (Raibaud 2009; Tagg 1989), or else in the heading of an issue of *Volume!* journal (Anonymous 2011) which attempts to deconstruct racial categories in music: “Is there such a thing as black music?”

Answering this question entails looking into social uses of categories and stereotypes linked to African heritage. In contemporary and urban Mexico, such uses are deemed to be those that appear in the historical transformation processes of mestizaje and regional identities, but also those that emerge in concrete situations such as can be observed in urban areas where the ethnic dimension is not always present, and can also take different meanings depending on the context, ranging from an improved image to a condemnation, and from the expression of a spiritual quality to the manifestations of exclusion.

With this in mind, the investigation carried out between 2007 and 2012 in Veracruz consisted of studying when, how and why ethnic boundaries are traced, maintained, made known, asserted, denied and praised. In particular, I looked into the history of categories while taking into account the specificities of those using them: academics, representatives of cultural institutions, cultural promoters, musicians, dancers, etc. The aim was to report on the conditions of emergence, diffusion, and appropriation or rejection of categories such as black, brown (*moreno*), Afro-mestizo, Afro-descendent, Afro-Caribbean, not including those designating local categories such as jarocho, to mention but one; for the latter, Ricardo Pérez Montfort clearly showed the conditions in which its primary use as a category of mestizaje has been forgotten (Pérez Montfort 2007).

My ethnographic approach also takes into account contexts, or moments of more or less solid expressions of groupness<sup>24</sup>, which can be defined in terms of culture, i.e., the social uses of categories linked to the color of the skin (Glenn 2009), or to a putative African origin: the “third root,” when defining cultural policies, the actors who insist on the African roots of the city and its inclusion within the Caribbean area, and the individual and collective displays of a relationship with Africa and the Caribbean. Particular attention is also paid to the management of physical appearance (Lyman and Douglass 1973), to the different ways of walking, dancing and dressing which draw on globalized and relocated registers of what can be socially defined as a black culture (Sansone 2003). In this approach I consider bodily expression to be a key tool for understanding social reality. Dance, along with the impression management of performers, the social aesthetic, and corporal practices and representations, are viewed in their mutual interplay and transformation.

Thus, my analysis was based on the hypothesis that such phenomena, although at times lacking substance and inconsistent in certain situations, in fact play an important role in maintaining ethnic boundaries. Apart from cases where a consciousness of identity forms against a backdrop of the ideology of mestizaje, other relationships between mestizaje and ethnicity can be observed and are also socially important (Rinaudo 2012). For example, there are those which develop into power relationships, caused by the distinctions that are forever emphasized and reproduced between the “smart set”: light skinned, well dressed, living in residential neighborhoods, patronizing trendy restaurants and discotheques, and the poor: ordinary people, Indians, blacks, peasants and workers, as referred to by Guillermo Bonfil Batalla when describing the divide between “imaginary Mexico,” which is modern, with an urban culture, cosmopolitan, heir to the Spanish conquest and its civilization projects, and “deep Mexico” (Bonfil Batalla 1990). Otherwise, the relationship between mestizaje and ethnicity will always invoke the consideration, justification and reassertion of the idea of mestizaje and the categorization and organization of its various roots and related populations into a hierarchy.

One of the methodological approaches adopted to tackle the issues was to restore the social meaning given by those concerned to ethnic definitions from among other possible definitions (by gender, generation, social status,

etc.). In other words, one has to take Moerman's words seriously whereby "ethnicity is not [...] a skin in which individuals are sewn, but a garment among others in their wardrobe; it is not 'a full time job', but a practical task which is sometimes carried out, a role which is sometimes played, a reflex sometimes provoked" (Moerman 1994:135). From this point of view, in an urban environment marked by the presence of a middle class that endeavors to make the social distance vis-à-vis working classes visible, another important principle for the investigation was to take into account the fact that ethnic definitions are often embedded in a logic of social distinction and responses to social distinctions.

Therefore, the purpose of this urban fieldwork was to highlight how the black or African cultural dimension in popular music is handled from a sociological perspective. This perspective enables us to detect what is occurring in concrete situations and yet it is sufficiently panoramic to allow us to perceive how ethnic definitions are linked to other social identifications. From a strictly methodological viewpoint it is necessary to draw on all kinds of sources in the various areas in which distinctions linked to the color of the skin, physical features and the attribution of cultural characteristics are made conspicuous. During the fieldwork, I spent much time observing what E. Goffman called *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (Goffman 1956) in the urban scenes and the cultural practices of the inhabitants, tourists, and passers-by. I gave special attention to the activities of the musicians and dancers, to the attitude of the public and to the social interactions in street festivals, club performances and private parties. Using my experience in recording, and my experience as a respected ethnographer and live sound engineer, I was accepted into the various musical environments of the city: the son jarocho<sup>[4]</sup> ensembles which gathered each month on the occasion of the *fandangos*<sup>[5]</sup> organized in the Cultural Center of Popular Music, called CaSon; the *son montuno* and *danzón* musicians who played for tourists and aficionados in the restaurants and public places of the city; salsa groups performing in festivals and teaching in the Veracruz Cultural Institute (IVEC); *reggaeton* artists gigging in the nightclubs of the seacoast; *chunchaca*<sup>[6]</sup> bands playing in suburban private parties, etc. Initially, my ethnographical work consisted in participating in the daily life of the cultural promoters, policy makers, music and dance performers, in attending the rehearsals and recording sessions, and in contributing to the life experiences of these actors. Next, I started to conduct more formal interviews with the aim of retracing the life paths of each of the above, thus acquiring a sensitive, even intimate form of knowledge (Le Menestrel 2012).

At first, it was mainly at the level of cultural policies described in terms of "third root" that the issue of the African presence was debated and specific positions were asserted by the various local actors. Hence, after going over the main elements that contributed to the implementation of a cultural policy embracing the Afro-Caribbean dimension, I will look at the narratives of Veracruz's musicians before carrying out the ethnographic description of a cultural program. This is to try to understand how the African dimension of mestizaje is expressed.

## Implementing an Afro-Caribbean cultural policy

In his work on popular culture and Mexican nationalistic stereotypes, Ricardo Pérez Montfort clearly showed how in Mexico, in the years 1920-1930, the construction of national cultural symbols was achieved at the expense of the wide diversity of forms of regional expression:

"The diversity had to sacrifice itself when looking for the representation of the 'typically Mexican'. [...] The Charro and the China Poblana dancing a *jarabe tapatío* progressively became the Mexican image par excellence. This image seemed to be a synthesis of 'Mexicanness.' Huastecos and Jarochos, Yucatecos and Guerrerenses, Jaliscoillos and *norteños* fought to feature in the national representation. [...] But at the time of defining the 'Mexican people' itself, they were under the yoke of the Charro and the China, and of Mariachi music" (Pérez Montfort 2003:130).

The years 1970-1980 marked the end of that pre-revolution period and of a centralist and homogenizing cultural nationalism (Jiménez 2006). It was the beginning of a process of cultural decentralization spurred on by the federal authorities, and the setting up of Departments, Institutes and Councils of Culture in all the country's States. The Veracruz Cultural Institute (IVEC) was created in 1987 as "a decentralized organization with a legal personality and its own holdings," "with headquarters in the port of Veracruz," and with the general mission "to support, to promote and to spread cultural activity by means of the affirmation and consolidation of local, regional and national values, and by giving impulse to the arts"<sup>[7]</sup>. Following the foundation of the IVEC, the directors encouraged a definition for the main trends of the public policy, and managed the implementation of a decentralized cultural policy in the State of Veracruz (García Díaz and Guadarrama Olivera 2012). The outcome of this process was to promote an Afro-Caribbean definition of the region that could be identified as such by three aspects.

The first aspect was to foster rural *son jarocho* and *fandangos*, both characteristic of the “Afro-Andalusian Caribbean” (García de León 1992). The origin of these practices, which have become a widespread cultural component in the country, goes back to colonial times. *Son jarocho*, often described as the outcome of the mixing of three roots—Spanish (baroque and Andalusian music), African (rhythms and percussion) and Indian (the themes)—underwent a process of commercialization and folklorization in the 1940s that caused important changes, both as regards music (increased tempo, instruments transformed, etc.) and as regards the representation of what imposed itself as an element of national folklore, dropping the historical relationship with “blackness” along the way:

“The dress and accessories worn by those who represented the so-called ‘jarocho’ had no longer anything to do with the rural world and the coast’s popular areas. From then on, the ‘jarocho dress’ was a very elaborate and costly spotless white outfit similar to those worn by the hispanophile elites of the port and Veracruz old haciendas. [...] Such an image of *son jarocho* imposed itself definitely in 1940 in the repertoire of stereotyped regional representations when a group from Veracruz took the words and music of *La Bamba* as a leitmotiv for a political campaign between 1945 and 1946” (Pérez Montfort 2001:156-157).

In this context, according to I. Cardona, “young musicians, historians and anthropologists, in their majority originating from the region, began to look for and to remove from forgetfulness the old rural and non-professional *jaraneros* who are well-known in the traditional *fandangos*” (Cardona 2006: 396). Gilberto Gutiérrez, leader of the Mono Blanco group, and Director during this period of the Traditional Music Department at the IVEC, implemented the policy of removing the commercial *son jarocho* and promoting a *son jarocho* based on the idea of combining the three roots. The *Sones jarocho* LP, recorded by Mono Blanco with Arcadio Hidalgo, a bohemian musician who was then the focus of renewed attention, is a good example of this process of reviving the almost lost rural style of *son jarocho* playing and dancing.





**Sones jarochos** Arcadio Hidalgo y el grupo Mono Blanco, LP, Discos Pentagrama, LPP-050

The second aspect of this policy was to restore the prestige of *danzón* and *son montuno* in Veracruz—two musical and dance styles of Cuban origin introduced at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century via the permanent communication that existed between the ports of Havana and Veracruz, and also via the presence of a small Cuban community. This led to their being quickly adopted in Veracruz's working-class areas and city squares (García Díaz 2011) to the extent that they became one of the city's main attractions mentioned in tourist guides. This movement, initiated at the end of the 1980s, made it possible a few years later to create a Son Montuno Festival, then the Festival Internacional Agustín Lara, as a major event, and also to organize numerous other activities aimed at showcasing the artistic manifestations of what was called the Veracruz Afro-Caribbean tradition by certain culture promoters (Figueroa Hernández 2002), such as the *Noches de danzón*, the Afro-Cuban dance and percussion classes, and the salsa, *son* and *danzón* workshops.



Poster of the First Son Montuno Festival, 1996 (personal archive)

Finally, the third aspect of this policy was to initiate an academic reflection on the Caribbean region and its African heritage by associating it with a national program launched in 1989 to promote the “third root” of Mexican mestizaje. This move began with two academic conferences held in 1989 and 1990, entitled “*Veracruz también es Caribe*” (Castañeda 2004; Muñoz Mata 1990). These events were organized by the IVEC to encourage, via the presentation of research work, a representation of Veracruz as a region that had cultural leanings towards the Caribbean. According to Y. Juárez Hernández, manager of the Caribbean Studies Center of the IVEC, “Veracruz has participated in a common Caribbean culture that is reflected in customs, music, dance, feeding, rites, and in a

cultural syncretism product of the Indigenous, black and European mestizaje” (Juárez Hernández 1990: 7). At the same time, a similar process occurred in Cancún, in the State of Quintana Roo, as early as 1988, with what was called the International Caribbean Cultural Festival. But what became a characteristic of Veracruz’s cultural policy was to have associated this regional inclusion in the Caribbean with the Our Third Root national program, whose objective was to study and enhance the image of the African presence in Mexico (Martínez Montiel 1993).

This unifying of the definition of a cultural policy focused both on the inclusion of Veracruz within the “Caribbean cultural area” (Juárez Hernández 2006) and on the local implementation of this program, which in 1994 resulted in the creation of the Afro-Caribbean International Festival, considered at the time as a “national priority project” and backed by the government of the State of Veracruz (Rinaudo 2011). The presentation in the first edition of the Festival justified this move as follows:

“The emergence of social groups in the cultural life of the country, with new proposals and alternatives that respond to the consolidation and creation of more and more complex cultural identities, confirms the multicultural and multiethnic nature of our Nation. The recognition of new realities between Indigenous and racially mixed groups in both rural and urban contexts, in the cultural formation of Latin America, entails the recognition of such deep and ancestral roots as the Indian and European roots: our Third Root, of African origin, which was formed during the European colonization, by means of the incorporation of black slaves into the conquered territories and which, when mixed with the rest of the population, contributed new and rich cultural elements that can enhance the continent, particularly with the magnificent contributions from the Caribbean. In our country, a black influence exists in states like Guerrero, Yucatan, Oaxaca and Tabasco, even in states of the north of the country like Coahuila. But perhaps the greatest influence is in Veracruz. Hence, it is extremely important to encourage action that pushes us toward Afro-Caribbean integration through the recognition of common cultural roots that unite us and fortify us as countries, when we value and incorporate our national project, our Third Root... our black origin.”[8]

Thus, this festival is the outcome of the implementation of a cultural policy, which in turn is the result of academic reflection carried out during that pivotal period of the history of Mexico and Latin America in the course of which the issues of diversity, multiculturalism, cultural heritage, memory and recognition of minorities, decentralization and cultural globalization appeared in public debates and events. This policy is characterized by a deep ambivalence: on the one hand, it insists on the recognition of an African heritage which is supposed to be part of “us” (“our” “third root” of national mestizaje); on the other hand, it dramatizes, in the iconography and in the choice of the shows, a blackness of a distant “other” with whom the local population does not identify.



Poster of the Third Afro-Caribbean Festival, 1996 (personal archive)

It is possible to concur with C. Sue that such a policy of institutional promotion of the “third root” has not succeeded locally in forging a community feeling based on Afro-descent (Sue 2013). But we can also advance the hypothesis that all those years during which the “third root of Mexican mestizaje” was promoted via academic conferences, exhibitions and numerous concerts mixing guest groups from the entire Caribbean area and local music groups were not ineffective. For example, from the outset, the various actors involved in the implementation of this program unanimously agreed to criticize the dominant position of the local conservative elite that denied any form of recognition of a common heritage linked to African origins and Veracruz’s cultural proximity with the Caribbean. This is explained well by the IVEC’s first director, Ida Rodríguez Prampolini:

"When we inaugurated the first exhibition on the relationship between Veracruz and Cuba where the black population was obviously prominent, my own childhood friends, who were damned reactionary, criticized me: 'Why are you doing this? What we have tried to forget, you come and remind us.' And that was how the Veracruz upper class reacted, all with their curly hair, all of black race from three generations back and denying it, it was awful and really upsetting" (Interview, May 2008).

From this point of view, thirty years of government policies centered on rural son jarocho and the tradition of fandangos, on Afro-Cuban music, on the Caribbean as a specific cultural area and on the "third root of mestizaje", have profoundly modified the cultural legitimization criteria. Furthermore, they have helped the area to move beyond a historical period (1930-1970) characterized by the denial of African heritage and by initiatives to whiten the jarocho identity's stereotypes, to a period where the African root and mestizaje now form part of the representation of local society.

## Mestizaje and African heritage in discourses on Afro-Caribbean music

Contemporary local historiography accurately describes the various influences which have contributed to forging cultural expressions, such as fandango and son jarocho in the "Afro-Andalusian Caribbean" (centered on cattle and animal husbandry, but not removed from city life<sup>[9]</sup>), and an urban popular culture characterized by the appropriation of Cuban music (*danzón*, *son montuno*, *bolero*, etc.) and more widely, Afro-Caribbean music (Malcomson 2010; Figueroa Hernández 1996).

The impulse of this new standard aimed at enhancing the image of African heritage and *mestizaje* has resulted in a certain ambivalence with respect to the inclusion/exclusion of blackness. What can we learn from the discourses of the region's musicians? What is their awareness of this heritage? What meaning do they attribute to it? How do they express it in their own musical projects?

For example, Gilberto Gutiérrez, leader of the Mono Blanco group that initiated the movement to restore the traditional son jarocho, explains what these questions mean to him:

"In the eighties, it was very important to become aware of the "third root," as it is called nowadays, but not at the time. Don Arcadio<sup>[10]</sup>, who was black, was not perceived as such, perhaps because of the visual consciousness people had of son at the time, perhaps because all that was officially thought of as a white world and because, let's say, that racially speaking, the existence of blacks was sidestepped [...]. And so we started becoming aware of this and feeling that we had African roots... and I don't remember how it exactly happened, but suddenly we began speaking about it and saying that son jarocho, and flamenco, and African music... in fact we didn't know much about what we were saying, but at least we began to be aware of all that, of the fact that Africa existed. ... And when the *Al primer canto del gallo*<sup>[11]</sup> record was released, we streamlined our music by using fewer string instruments and leaving only percussion, as a way of assuming the African aspect and to make it sound African..." (Interview, January 2009).

This quotation bears testament to Gutiérrez's need to embrace African heritage and be rid of the cliché of a "white world" associated with the jarocho culture. To undertake this legacy and "make the music sound African" was an opportunity to unwhiten son jarocho.

This issue is also prevalent in the career of Patricio Hidalgo, another musician who has become essential to the movement for restoring traditional son jarocho; he is Don Arcadio Hidalgo's grandson and has initiated a cultural project called Afrojarocho:

"Blacks have played an important part in the history of Mexico, and not only in the Sotavento region. ... We have Yanga who can be said to have been the first black liberator of the Americas, we have also Malanga blacks near the town of Veracruz, my grandfather Arcadio Hidalgo who lived through the revolution, with his poetry, his jarana, his playing fandango ... my grandfather's father was also black, he sang *décimas* and played *jarana* ... my father was also a musician and was also black ... so, there is this black element in the family ... for example, people said that my grandfather Arcadio was the last black troubadour in the Sotavento ... so, what do we do with our Afrojarocho project? [...] We appropriate the subject which has been ignored in order to debate it by playing, singing..."<sup>[12]</sup>

The subject Patricio Hidalgo is appropriating in this project is not only the long ignored presence of a population of



African origin in the region, but also the inclusion of son jarocho and fandangos on a path of social revolt going back to the time of slave rebellions. What also comes out of this project is the recovery of a musical form, the *conga*, which is described as being part of the region's cultural heritage and as an additional piece to include in this heritage of social activism and collective mobilization:

"The conga is a genre which has remained alive in a small repertoire... We have the Conga del Viejo... which had lost its words and conga rhythm... we wrote new words, we gave it back its rhythm and accompanied it with jarana, tambourine, quijada and marimbol in a group that we formed and that was called Chuchumbé... And how did the Conga del Viejo come into being? According to Francisco Rivera Ávila, known as Paco Pildora, a Veracruz chronicler, it was composed collectively by dock laborers in the port of Veracruz, as an action of social protest [...] because they lived in the worst social conditions and were exploited, and during the Christmas festivities, they used to go round demanding better living conditions to the rhythm of conga, the Conga del Viejo [...]. We see at the moment that people are interested in the conga... in Oaxaca, a conga was composed also as a protest against the situation Mexico is in [...]"[13]

**Video: *Patricio Hidalgo y el Afrojarocho*, Sacbé Production, Mexico, 2012**

It is interesting to note that although this narrative about the origins of son jarocho may, as in the cases mentioned here, insist on its African heritage by giving it a particular meaning, it is nowadays presented in the many festivals, fandangos and workshops held in Mexico, the United States and Europe as a practice derived from the mixing of Spanish colonizers, African slaves and their descendents, and the region's indigenous populations. In this sense, projects attempting to present this music as more African or to explore the mix of Afro-Caribbean sounds present in both son and conga[14] have been designed to include this practice within the framework of a popular fusion occurring in the Afro-Andalusian Caribbean area rather than to try to make it black music.

This way of emphasizing the African dimension of a popular and anti-establishment mestizaje, which is characteristic of the region, can be found in the discourse of Veracruz salsa[15] and son montuno musicians who, since the Afro-Caribbean Festival was created, have started using categories that underline this heritage while continuing to associate the term salsa with the concept of the commercial music put forward by the North American recording industry at the beginning of the seventies. For example, Cheo, a *Son de esquina* pianist, who I met in the IVEC music Master classes, relates how the term imposed itself as a category of mestizaje even before this type of music was defined as Afro-Caribbean:

"In April 1982, I was fortunate to attend a show here in Veracruz by the Sonora Veracruz and Melón who had invited Johnny Pacheco, and I was able to listen to the interview he gave on the radio where he said at the time about the definition of the term salsa: 'we in New York are dealing with so many ethnic groups, so many races, that to be able to market the name of something which encompasses everything, we gave it the name salsa, and from now on, salsa encompasses all forms of native music from Venezuela, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico'. [...] Nowadays, you'll meet traditionalists who will tell you, 'No, that's Afro-Caribbean,' and if you tell them, 'But it's salsa,' they tell you 'Yes, but it's Afro-Caribbean.' ... Why Afro-Caribbean? Because nearly everything was born in the Caribbean via the African slaves who arrived and settled there, and from there the Afro-Caribbean was created." (Interview, January 2008).

Gonzalo, the percussionist from the same music group as Cheo, describes himself as *moreno* (brown) and introduces himself as a person from a working-class background who spent his childhood in a working-class neighborhood in the north of Veracruz. He provides details about the aspects of the Mexican context in which the *salsero* movement was born and explains:

"For me, personally, the fact that this kind of music is played sits alongside the idea of street corner, of 'salsa brava'... because when I heard what made a group like Las Estrellas de Fanya[16], who worked out the name 'salsa', come into being, I was fascinated and I understood the need for the Latin American people to express themselves in this way. [...] It's what we are ... because here in Mexico sometimes it seems that there is not even a

definition of a mixed race. ... White is 100% white, black is 100% black and Indian is 100% Indian, and what of all of us who are neither white, nor black, nor Indian? What are we? We are nothing? Because I am neither white, nor black, nor Indian, I am a bit of all these [...] and therefore, just like salsa which is a mix, that's our race." (Interview, January 2008).

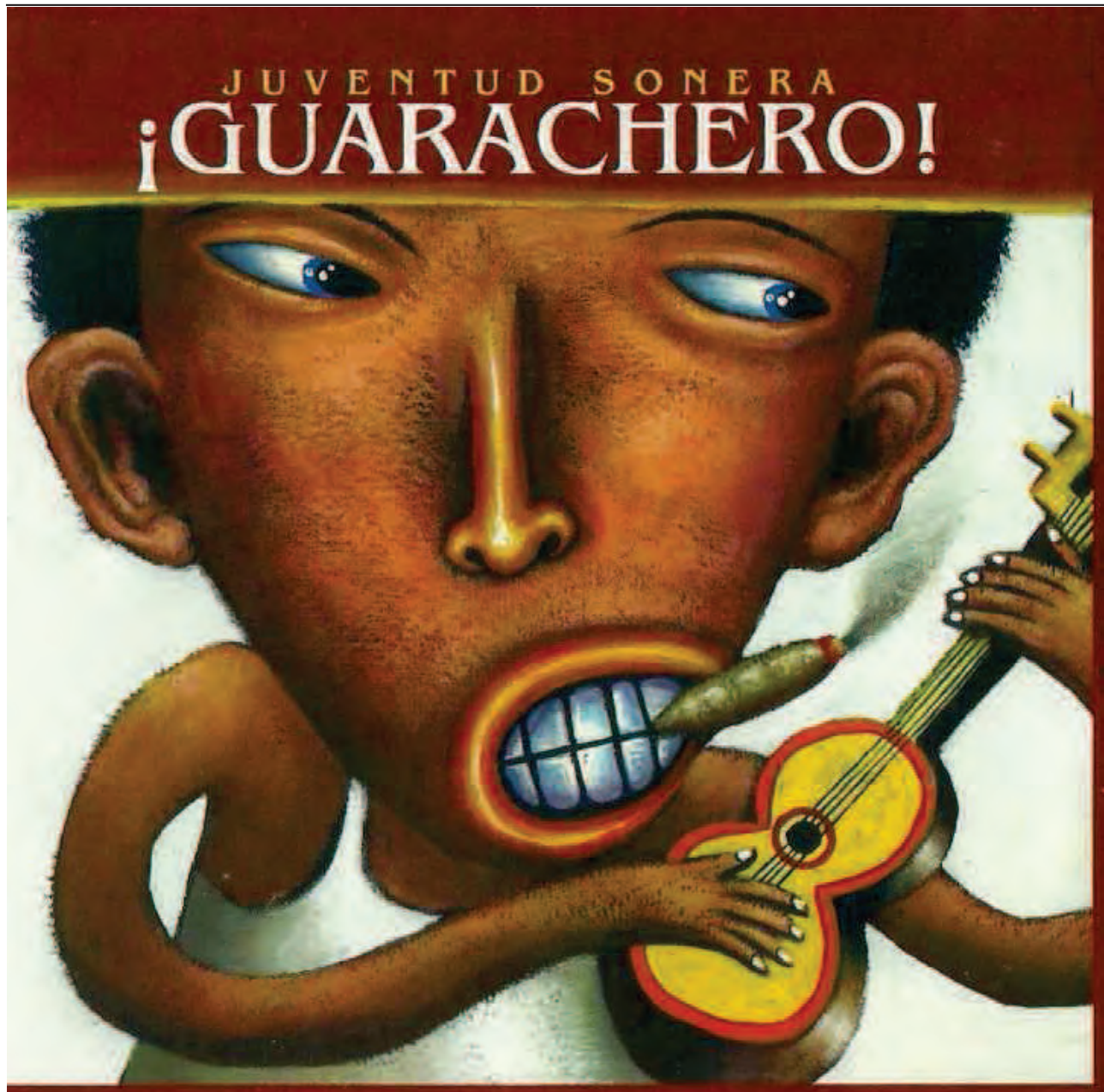
These words help us to understand how various dimensions are linked together in the issue of mestizaje. The first refers to asserting a form of cultural expression with various influences, yet marked by its African heritage. Here, the term salsa, often disparaged by an intellectual elite who point to the commercial side, gives its name to one of the aspects of this transnational cultural movement in that it does not attempt to set black music and white music against each other, and it fully embraces this mix as experimented with in Latin American working-class neighborhoods. As for the Afro-Caribbean label, it also stresses a cultural heritage bound to the history of the slave trade. In other words, the African cultural heritage is what gives this mix a special color.

But at the same time, Gonzalo's words raise another question, formulated in terms of identity ("what we are"). Here, it is no longer a question of mestizaje, but of the existence of a *mestizo* population resulting from the mix, referred to here as the identification of Gonzalo as "moreno" (Sue 2009), and that the color of the skin between the polarization of white and black makes the person "invisible" (Raibaud 2009:171). Hence, Gonzalo's analysis is an attempt to link the cultural mix and the racial mix ("I'm neither white, nor black, nor Indian"), and to adopt at the same time the "not very commendable" African influences of this music and the fact of being part of a "we" that is neither white, nor Indian, nor black, but according to his formula, "a bit of all these."

## Expressions of African heritage and symbolic boundaries

This emphasis on African and Afro-Caribbean heritage, and on mestizaje, can also be observed in urban public places where the performances of musicians and dancers can play on these different roots and the social issues they arouse. In order to try to understand this phenomenon, I will examine a cultural event called *Noches de callejón*, which took place every weekend between 2007 and 2012 at the Portal de Miranda, a pedestrian walkway opening onto Veracruz's main square in the very heart of the old city center.

This cultural event was initiated by Luis Figueroa, the Juventud Sonera group's artistic director, singer and guitarist, whose original project, inspired by the release of the film *Buena Vista Social Club*, was to rehabilitate the tradition of son montuno which has been in existence in Veracruz since the end of the twenties.



CD ¡Guarachero! Gobierno del Estado de Veracruz, IVEC, SEC, No de catálogo APCD 1381, 2004

Although it was only granted temporary authorization by the local council, it has become one of the city's cultural events, attracting an audience of regulars from working-class neighborhoods. Being located at the crossroads of tourist routes and residents' evening strolls, this scene of urban life in Veracruz is a meeting place for passers-by who are interested in what is happening, and for a circle of acquaintances composed of more or less assiduous regulars who greet the musicians on arrival, form small sociable groups, start dancing, engage in conversation, etc. For all this, the latter do not form a homogenous social group. Most are between 16 and 30 years old, but there are also older people who come alone or as couples. Some come from nearby working-class neighborhoods; others live in the poor areas of the outskirts or belong to a local cultural elite that appreciates this kind of music and urban atmosphere. Also present are Veracruz musicians who play son jarocho, son montuno, salsa and other Caribbean music, rap and reggaetón, and foreign musicians passing through Veracruz who join the group and share a moment of musical conviviality with the band's permanent members.

When the Juventud Sonera group plays, a form of expression united by the sharing of certain cultural references,

the codes of which can be interpreted and given a meaning, can be observed among the Portal de Miranda regulars, although the reactions are different between the young and the not so young, the men and the women, and the dancers and the musicians. The issue is not so much to define oneself as black, but to dance certain rhythmic sequences by exaggerating body movements and choreographies relating to the Afro-Caribbean world and the transoceanic dialogue; like Afro dancing, these result from repeated exchanges between artists, intellectuals and politicians brought together by the same desire to celebrate black cultural heritage (Capone 2011).

More often than not, these performances are identified both by the public and the musicians as different from the more classic ballroom dancing styles. Progressively, a circle forms around the person who starts a performance of this type, the public shouts encouragement, the regulars exchange comments and the musicians come out of their routine and play improvisations and more vigorous solos. Some people are regular performers, like Jaina, a 20-year old woman who lives in a working-class neighborhood of Veracruz, and whose skin color and features are not particularly identified as black; she regularly launches into a performance when the musicians play Carlos Oliva's *Pelotero a la Bola*. At the end, one of the musicians always thanks her, gives her name to the audience and interjects a comment of the kind "*qué bárbaro como baila esa negra*" [17]. Those asked about Jaina's performance think that her style is inspired both from that of "cabaret rumberas" and from erotic dances practiced in table dancing, combining sexuality and Africanism in a stereotyped manner.

Other individuals may launch into performances, such as Doña Caro, an elderly woman of modest means who usually dances for tourists near restaurants in the old center, and sometimes goes to the Portal de Miranda to have fun at the end of the evening. In her case, both the regular onlookers and the musicians describe the way she dances as Creole. This category is used locally to designate the Caribbean's rural traditions, the origins of *son*, the combination of Spanish guitar and syncopated rhythms brought over by African slaves. So, not only does the performance of this woman arouse the admiration of this informed public, but it is also described as a living expression of Veracruz's Afro-Caribbean heritage.

Young boys and girls from the city or the region who are regulars of less conventional cultural venues, but who often attend this program, may also give themselves to this game of self-expression, combining emblematic elements of the black Caribbean (dreadlocks, beard, dress color and style) and ways of moving and dancing which are again described as forms of expression belonging to an African cultural heritage, although in a different style. Lalo explained this to me in a street conversation [18]:

"I like to come here at the end of the evening, when there is that special atmosphere, when everyone plays the game of bringing out the black [he laughs].

— Do you define yourself as Black?

— No, but we are all descendents of Blacks in some way, aren't we? So, when you hear this music and immerse yourself in this atmosphere, you inevitably start moving in a certain way ...

— What way precisely? Can you clarify?

— Not really, I can't see myself. ... But if you take the others, Ricardo for example, he feels it like the Jamaicans, you see, reggaeman, calmly [...], as for Fallo, he'll be super influenced by the rap movement, hip hop [...] and Sara, my girlfriend, she goes for this Afro dance things, it's another style." (April 2008, rough transcription).

Another element comes out of these observations: the expression of African heritage is often combined with a social boundary i.e. a person chooses to distance him/herself from the distinctive practices that demarcate the organization of nightlife in Veracruz. For example, in an informal discussion held in one of the old center's brasseries, Paco, a young artist who is a regular of Veracruz's various nightlife venues, explains this link in his own words [19]:

"I personally prefer to come here [Portal de Miranda] rather than go to the trendy discotheques on the sea front. First, here it's live music and it's free, you're in the street ... you can move around, go for a beer, go and see what is happening elsewhere. ... Let's say that it's more in line with my *callejero* [street] frame of mind. ... That's the real Veracruz spirit... isn't it? And above all, what I can't stand trendy places, it's the super-codified way of dressing, walking, speaking ... looking at others, getting comments on your clothes, the crowd you mix with ... well, they are not all like that, you have friendlier places, more open, let's say, but usually it's like that.



— And here, how is it?

— Well, in a place like here you do what you want, you don't ask yourself whether what you do will be appreciated or not, you even almost enjoy doing the opposite, speaking badly, dressing badly, doing everything that will be judged as 'bad' by the 'good' people...

— Meaning?

— Going to street events, not being with a girl who spends her time getting ready before going out. ... When Julia [his girlfriend] dresses a bit smartly, with a dress, high heels, nail polish, I tell her watch out, you are becoming "trendy," and we laugh...

— And is there a link between listening to this kind of music and Afro-Caribbean influences rather than other influences?

— This music is a reminder of the past, with slaves, pirates, smuggling, all this nightlife of the port, dock workers, popular bars around the market ... and even though I personally also like other kinds of music and atmosphere, I like the idea of leaning towards what the 'good people' reject more than anything else." (June 2008, rough transcription).

The idea here is sharing certain cultural practices so that they can be converted into signs (Hebdige 1979; Ranci re 2008). These signs, one might say, do not only reflect a popular culture, but also a way of life that is far removed from the standards set by the best society. In other words, they are signs of non-alignment with the "good people" who patronize certain trendy bars and speak with a lisp<sup>[20]</sup> in order to accentuate the social gap, or who have decided to desert the center of Veracruz to favor more intimate areas of the neighboring commune of Boca del R o, where nowadays youngsters from good families meet up with the strong urge to increase the social distance via a wider spatial gap. Finally, these signs, by containing sexually explicit body movements, mark out a common distance from those who are also called "decent" people, one of the characteristics of whom is to make the moral distance with ordinary people obvious, and to erase whatever may appear as signs of Africanism in how people show themselves to others.

Here, the display of physical features, postures, body movements and aesthetics drawing from the various cultural registers that evoke African heritage, is a method used to state one's empathy with this street culture. It re-interprets the ethno-racial boundaries in its own way and keeps an elective relationship with Africa and the black Americas alive. It is also a way of placing oneself in a class relationship, which is expressed via signs attributed locally to the various origins of mestizaje. Dancing while "bringing out the black," just like "speaking with a lisp," are social markers which are brought about by the local representation of mestizaje. This representation can be more or less accepted or denied, and the associated cultural and physical features can be more or less conspicuous or masked, blackened or whitened, and Africanized or Europeanized. It is in this sense that the expressions of such Africanism, which are observed in these contexts, do not appear *in spite of*, but *because of* the representation, which consists in permanently referring to one or the other of these various roots, and leads individuals to position themselves socially, physically and culturally vis- -vis a so-called African heritage.

## Conclusion: mestizaje and social distinction

Two concluding elements emerge from this analysis. The first refers to the issue of mestizaje as it occurs in Mexico. In this context, the question of how we understand the link between the history of slavery and the populations "of African origin" is activated or not, asserted or not, used politically or not, does not arise in the same terms, whether it is part of a militant posture of racialization aimed at "getting out of mestizaje" like on the Pacific coast, or whether it consists in reasserting, as in the case of Veracruz, the cultural hybridization of the region's popular music while insisting on the racialized origins of cultural expressions which are identified with mestizaje (Hoffmann and Rinaudo 2014). This is what Peter Wade perceived: "As is always the case when discussing mestizaje, music is considered as a symbol of fusion, of overcoming differences, but the representation of this symbol implies a constant reminder of the difference" (Wade 2000:66). In the Veracruz region, the "third root" national program has provided the opportunity to draw up cultural policies that focus on the integration of Veracruz within the Caribbean area while emphasizing forms of cultural expression that are largely identified with mestizaje. By doing so, it has contributed to a switch from a historical period characterized by the denial of African heritage to another, in which the African root of mestizaje has become part of the representation of society. This change does

not mean that such a representation is unanimously accepted, but that from now on it imposes itself as a legitimate standard against which the local community can be defined. And for those in concrete situations, it is a matter of positioning themselves vis-à-vis this standard, which they accept or refuse, assume or put up with, and vis-à-vis the specific dimension of the representation of mestizaje—the so-called African root.

This African root leads us to consider a second concluding element, namely that the way social actors are made to position themselves vis-à-vis such an origin of mestizaje is interwoven into the logic of social distinction and counter-distinction. In Veracruz, just like in other Mexican cities, social distinction based on physical appearance, color of skin, the way one dresses and behaves, occupation, places patronized or avoided, the use of public or private transport to travel around town, is an everyday phenomenon. Therefore, one understands how, faced with injunctions to distance oneself from “ordinary people,” forms of counter-distinction may also develop according to the same dual register—social and racial. In this sense, the expressions that celebrate African cultural heritage as observed in popular music are less the product of a militant rhetoric against the backdrop of the ideology of mestizaje than of the assertion of a way of life based on another interpretation of mestizaje and its so-called “roots”—whether these are image-enhancing or belittling.

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[1] An important contribution regarding the supposed disappearance of the African-origin population was first formulated in the 1940-50s by Mexican anthropologist G. Aguirre Beltrán who defined a "black" population (Aguirre Beltrán 1972; Aguirre Beltrán 1989).

[2] The history of the population of African origin in Mexico began with the first conquistadores and continued with

the introduction of the slave trade to make up for the drop in the indigenous population as a result of the conquest. The highest number of enslaved people from Africa was brought in during the first period of the colonial era, between 1580 and 1640 (Aguirre Beltrán 1972). During this period, 30,000 enslaved people arrived at the port of Veracruz alone, and 100,000 at all Mexico's ports on the Atlantic coast (Ngou-Mve 1999).

[3] According to Brubaker's terms, the notion of groupness refers to a happening, something that happens—or does not happen—in the social world, which crystallizes or does not succeed in crystallizing (Brubaker 2002).

[4] According to Loza, "son jarocho is a song and dance form originating in Veracruz, Mexico. The genre is a stylistic amalgam of influences derived from the Spanish colonizers of Mexico, from Africans taken to New Spain as enslaved people, and from the indigenous population of the southeastern region of Mexico. Initial development of the form occurred during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries" (Loza 1992:179). Also see Pérez Fernández 2003; Sheehy 1979

[5] According to A. Hernandez, "the *fandango* is the communal-musical gathering of musicians, zapateado dancers, and sometimes poet-vocalists in *son jarocho* culture" (Hernández 2014:5). Also see García de León 2006; Pérez Montfort 1992.

[6] The chunchaca is a kind of Mexican cumbia from the state of Veracruz with presence in Tabasco, Campeche, Chiapas, Yucatán, Quintana Roo. Junior's Klan, and Los Flamers are the more famous bands following this style.

[7] *Programa Nacional de Cultura 2007-2012*, Concejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes, México, 2007.

[8] Veracruz Afro-Caribbean Festival 94, June 1994, *General Guide for the Event* (IVEC Archive).

[9] As explained by A. García de León, these expressions are nourished by continuous exchanges between ports and their hinterlands: "The Caribbean that I call *Afro-Andalusian* is where '*campesinos*, *jibajos* and *guajiros* genres were produced, which *all* appeared in rural hinterlands of these port complexes open to international and colonial trade. Their expressions have that in common as well as numerous other characteristics: they are musical and poetic genres cultivated by farmers/cowherds and Afro-mestizo fishermen resulting from a mix of three ethnic origins: Spanish (mainly from Andalusia), black and Indian; generally connected with rearing and who had constituted strongly mixed-race cultural niches from the 17<sup>th</sup> century: *guajiros* in Cuba, *jíbaros* in Puerto Rico and Saint-Domingue, *llaneros* in Colombia and Venezuela, *creollos* in Panama, *jarocho*s in Veracruz" (García de León 1992: 28).

[10] Don Arcadio Hidalgo, a legendary musician in *son jarocho* circles, was nearly 90 years old when he joined the Mono Blanco group at the end of the seventies.

[11] Mono Blanco, *Al Primer Canto del Gallo*, Discos Pentagrama, LPP 124, 1989, Mexico.

[12] Extract from the documentary *Patricio Hidalgo y el Afrojarocho*, Producciones Sacbé, Mexico, 2012 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r70mWuOpWXU>).

[13] Extract from the documentary *Patricio Hidalgo y el Afrojarocho*, Producciones Sacbé, Mexico, 2012.

[14] See also Mono Blanco's record, Matanga, *Round Whirled Records*, 2009.

[15] For a social and cultural history of salsa in the Veracruz region, see Montalvo Torres 2009.

[16] Compilations produced by the Fania Records label following the concert given in August 1971 at the Cheetah in New York, and which made salsa a commercial genre.

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[17] “This black girl dances like a barbarian!”, a comment recorded in June 2009.

[18] Lalo is a 23-year old man from a working-class neighbourhood of Veracruz, who plays percussion and sings with his pals on urban transport when he needs money. I met him and some of his crew when they played some of the most well known songs of son montuno and other pieces of Cuban music every night in a restaurant located just beside my house. We met regularly in the night spots of Veracruz or on the *malecon* where many street musicians and artists come together after work to have fun and play in jam sessions.

[19] Paco is a bohemian photographer, as he calls himself, and one of the key figures of the Veracruz working class portraiture. I met regularly with him and other members of the regional creative *avant-garde* in the cultural areas of the city and in the most popular *cantinas* of the port area.

[20] The expression “*hablar con la zeta*” is used to designate the Spaniards who pronounce the sounds “c” and “z” differently from the sounds “s”, which is not done generally in Mexico, except to evoke one’s Spanish origins with a touch of snobbery.

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## The Sonic Structure of Shango Feasts

By Ryan J. Bazinet

The Orisha religion began in Trinidad sometime in the middle to late-19<sup>th</sup> century, originating with several thousand indentured laborers (free, not enslaved) from the areas in present-day Nigeria. (The religion was long known as Shango in Trinidad, but many worshipers now prefer the name Orisha.) Based on the veneration of a pantheon of Yoruba spirits known as *orishas* – with attendant spirit possession, animal sacrifice, and drumming and singing—Orisha bears strong resemblances to the Yoruba-derived religions in Cuba (Santería) and Brazil (Candomblé). As in those places, Trinidad Orisha musicians use three drums. But while Cubans play *bata* drums, and Brazilians play Dahomean-derived peg-style *atabaques*, Trinadians use a trio of *bembe* drums with bent sticks. Very similar *bembe* drums can be observed in Nigeria today.

Like elsewhere in the diaspora, Christianity plays a central role in Trinidad Orisha—though some Orisha shrines since the late 20<sup>th</sup> century have spearheaded a more “pure” Orisha practice that renounces Christianity. Historically, the Yorubas in Trinidad syncretized their *orishas* with the saints of the local (French) Catholic religion.<sup>[1]</sup> As Orisha practitioners in Trinidad maintained their Christianity over generations, many became Spiritual Baptists (an Afro-Protestant faith native to the West Indies), such that “Shango-Baptists” remains a common (if derogatory, in the eyes of many) moniker on the island. (The Spiritual Baptist connection remains strong, and the setting of the Orisha ethnography below is a Spiritual Baptist church.)

Being one of three main Yoruba-derived faiths in the Americas, Trinidad Orisha has received the attention of several anthropological studies.<sup>[2]</sup> These include a Herskovitsian study on the high degree of Africanisms found in Orisha (Simpson 1965); a study of syncretism in the religion (Houk 1995); a biographical sketch of the well-known Shango leader, Papa Neezer (Henry 2008), and a study of the sociopolitical legitimization of the religion (2003); studies of spirit possession in the Orisha religion in relation to trance practices of Spiritual Baptists and Hindus (Lum 2000 and McNeal 2011, respectively); and studies of Yoruba language retentions in Trinidad (Warner-Lewis 1994; 1996). However, while at least one of these anthropologists performed Orisha drums as part of his methodology (Houk 1995), no scholar has written specifically about Orisha music.<sup>[3]</sup> When one considers that drumming and singing are nearly ever-present during Orisha rituals, it becomes clear that the study of Trinidad Orisha music is long overdue in African diaspora scholarship.

In this audio essay I look specifically at the “feast”—the main, annual event held by an Orisha congregation—to explore the idea that music during Orisha rituals is much more than ancillary. Rather, Orisha feasts can be understood as sonically structured. In that sense, Orisha music and ritual are inseparable. While individual Orisha songs are typically brief, taking a wider view reveals long-form structures and a more complex relationship between Orisha music and time. Along these lines, Michael Tenzer argues that a useful concept in world music analysis is periodicity, which “orients us in music and a much larger hierarchy of time that connects to experience both at and beyond the scale of human lives” (Tenzer 2006:25). The Orisha feast periodicities herein described might be categorized as 1) hymn time; 2) Litany time; 3) drumming and ring march time; 4) manifestation time; 5) offering time; and 6) time for giving thanks. In Tenzer’s terms, Orisha music “orients” its participants in the feast, signaling the progression through different periods of the ritual, and, beyond the scale of participants’ lives, to the historicity of their tradition.<sup>[4]</sup>

The recordings included in this essay were made by me in June 2014, using a Zoom H4N handheld recorder, at an Orisha feast at the Mount Moriah Spiritual Baptist Church in Brooklyn. This church was something of a home base for me during my fieldwork, especially during the summer in 2011 when I was a regular *umele* drummer in the Orisha scene in Brooklyn. The *umele* (derived from a Yoruba word in Nigeria denoting an accompanying drum) is the smallest of the three standard *bembe*-derived Orisha drums, all of which are played seated with either one or two curved sticks. Drumming in Orisha can easily involve 4 to 6 hours of continuous work, usually in the middle of the night. While this was tiring, the central rituals of Orisha—namely spirit possession and animal sacrifice—are carried out mere feet from the drums (the drums being a focal point of the religion). Being a drummer at these ceremonies gave me a front row seat for the proceedings and enabled a unique perspective of Orisha ritual and structural development. Although I was not a drummer when I made the present recordings, this perspective aided me while I was attending as an onlooker, singing participant, and ethnomusicologist with recorder in hand.

While these recordings were made in Brooklyn rather than in Trinidad, for the purposes of this article they can be



considered representative generally of the genre “Trinidad Orisha music” (see Bazinet 2013). Though the context of this feast is somewhat different from a Trinidadian version (indoors rather than outdoors, as would be the case in Trinidad), the music is the same. I make this statement with confidence not only based on my own frequent travels to Trinidad and to Orisha feasts there, but also due to the fact that several of the singers and drummers recorded herein split their time between Trinidad and Brooklyn, as do many other transnational West Indians. In Brooklyn, Trinidadians use music—from Orisha to soca—to recreate home in the diaspora (Bazinet 2012).<sup>[5]</sup>

In the pages that follow, I present recordings of key moments as well as, when possible, some of the best<sup>[6]</sup> performances captured from the feast. The feast happened over a period of four nights and subsequent mornings (beginning on the night of Tuesday, June 3<sup>rd</sup>, and finishing on the morning of Saturday, June 7<sup>th</sup>) and while the recordings are not presented in strict chronological order, they do give a sense of the overall progression of the ritual’s constituent songs and spiritual rites. At times I include transcriptions of music and Yoruba words, the latter of which might be thought of as “Trinidad Yoruba,” defined by scholar Maureen Warner-Lewis as “a dialect of Yoruba, though outside the approximately twenty metropolitan varieties located in Nigeria and neighboring countries” (1996:14). I have written the lyrics phonetically according to the pronunciations as I hear them, giving translations when available. Though I am an ethnomusicologist and not a linguist, I have endeavored to accurately render the dialect of Trinidad Yoruba, and more generally to present the songs in a manner faithful to the masterful musicality of the Trinidadians I work with. In order to frame these musical moments and to provide a further sense of the progression of the feast, I begin with a description of this week-long celebration.

## I. ETHNOGRAPHY OF A FEAST

### Tuesday night

First night of the feast, Ogun Night It is a warm June night, and some 25 people are gathered in a Spiritual Baptist church basement in Brooklyn. This space serves as the *palais*, the Afro-Trinidadian term for the Orisha worship space. Of the people gathered, fewer than 10 are men. The gender divide evens out as the night goes on and the overall numbers swell to around fifty. Fifty isn’t very much for an Orisha feast, but this is the first night, and the first night at Mount Moriah is always a little quiet. Leader Michael, the presiding *mongwa*,<sup>[7]</sup> says he likes it like that. More intimate. Later, too many people will come simply to gawk at the possessed worshippers. But no matter, for there is work to be done, spiritual work, each and every night of the feast. Because this first night is known as Ogun Night, everyone is supposed to wear red or green, traditional colors for Ogun in Trinidad. The work of this night is to call Ogun, that he might come, receive the offerings, and bless the feast. There are going to be a lot of songs for Ogun.

After a Litany lasting more than forty minutes (Leader Michael’s knowledge of this introductory section is broad), the drummers lay down the beat, accompanying the calling songs which begin with the typical Ogun Rotation, starting with “Ogun Onire,” continuing through “Ajaraja Ogun O,” “Ogun Yeye Arima Lesa,” and on down the line. All Ogun songs, for nearly an hour. One might expect that the drummers get tired, and in fact they do spell one another. In this case, drummer Earl Noel’s big brother Donald is visiting from Trinidad, and as he is wont to do, he waits for Earl to get the feast warmed up, taking over the center drum from Earl after a while. Towards the end of the Ogun set, Leader Michael stops the drummers and begins singing a new song, in a faster tempo, and on cue the drummers pick up the new beat. People start, as they say, to get “shook up.” Then, maybe fifteen minutes into this new rhythm, Leader Michael switches deities, now singing for Mama Leta<sup>[8]</sup> instead of Ogun:

Mama Leta O / Mama Leta

Mama Leta O / Mama Leta

Mama Leta O / Mama waloje<sup>[9]</sup>

This is a popular song in a lively rhythm, and the energy level is high as everyone sings along and claps. After maybe ten minutes of various Mama Leta songs in this rhythm, Leader Michael stops the drummers again, starting a new Mama Leta song, but now back in the main, slower rhythm. *Mama Leta, koriko kara!* The drummers pick up the beat. Almost immediately, two middle-aged women start to hold their heads and call out in raspy shrieks (“Oy!”), and the drummers encourage them; Donald, now taking over for Earl, strikes the head of the center drum with such force that I feel sure it will break. It holds, for now. If anything breaks it is the resistance of the two women against the spirit possession, and they both fall headlong into what is known as a “manifestation” of Mama Leta: attendants rush to tie brown sashes across their foreheads, and the two women, now fully embodying the elderly

spirit of the mother of the earth, begin to move about the room, slowly and hunched over, like old women. This weeklong feast will be filled with spirit possessions, or manifestations, like this one, in which individuals submit their being to the spirit of an *orisha*, fully “becoming” that orisha for a period of one to several hours, before returning to themselves. These Mama Leta manifestations get things off to a good start.

After more Mama Leta songs, aimed at pleasing the old woman spirit, Leader Michael suddenly gets taken over by the spirit of Ogun—evident because he starts to swing his arm about in a slashing motion, as though he were holding a cutlass. On cue, another *mongwa*, Leader Gordon, takes over singing, and switches orishas yet again, this time back to Ogun. *Ogun berele amio, Ogun berele!*<sup>[10]</sup> Singing for Ogun continues, until Ogun himself (now dressed in a red sash) stops the music, at which point he begins to speak—*leve, tout monde!* (it is common for the orishas to speak in French-Creole)—demanding everyone to rise. It has now been roughly two hours since the start of the Litany, and the Rotation has covered only Ogun and Mama Leta, a reminder that the feast is a weeklong process, and it unfolds slowly.

The offering of goats for Ogun is about to begin, and the drumming will resume, but I am tired, and decide not to stay. As I head home, I consider what a treat it is to attend a feast led by Leader Michael Osouna, who comes from Trinidad to Brooklyn to carry on this feast each year. Michael is a bigtime calypsonian in Trinidad—sobriquet Sugar Aloes—and so attending his feast is a bit like having front row tickets to a great concert. Moreover, Michael is not only an excellent singer with a sharp and distinctive voice, he also knows more Orisha songs than any other song leader I have heard. With him in fine form, the opening night went well, and I can tell: it is going to be a good week.

### Wednesday night

Second night of the feast. Osain Night. Everyone is supposed to wear yellow, Osain’s color of choice. When I arrive, around midnight, a man and a woman are in the kitchen, cooking some of the four goats from last night’s offering. The opening prayers won’t begin until 1:00 am, with the Litany starting at around 1:40. The *mongwa* Dexter begins things tonight, though Leader Michael is by his side. (This is a good thing, because during his recitation of “Baba O,” Dexter stumbles in the order of orishas, and Michael must remind him to sing for Oya next.) Dexter’s Litany is relatively short. The Ogun Rotation starts at 2. There will be fewer Ogun songs tonight, because Ogun doesn’t come on a Wednesday night, which belongs to Shakpana, Erilay, Yemanja, and most importantly, Osain. Oftentimes, on a Wednesday night feast, there will be four different Osains at the same time. Osain is an old medicine man, and when he comes, it is to heal; he might do this by rubbing oil on someone’s ailing knee, or by giving you a big gulp of overproof rum.

Tonight, though, it is Shakpana who manifests first, on a woman—as is often the case. She comes on cue: right at the beginning of the Shakpana songs, which begin after nearly one hour of singing for Ogun and Mama Leta. Shakpana arrives at about 3:00, on a stoutly built, light-skinned Afro-Trinidadian woman wearing cornrows and a rainbow-colored dress. Various lead singers, called *chantwells*—Michael, Gordon, Brooks—lead the congregation through the rotation of calling (during which Shakpana comes), pleasure, work, and dismissal songs. They just start to sing songs for Osain when Shakpana returns to the heavens, leaving the Trini woman to collapse in the arms of her fellow congregants. It is 3:30 am. The drummers take a break. Later, Osain will manifest. Then it will be time to prepare for the offering to Osain of goats and fowl. If this feast were in Trinidad, there would also be an offering of the South American turtle known as *morocoy*, a favorite of Osain’s, but this animal is not so easily found in New York.

### Thursday night

Third night. Shango Night. The *mongwa* will kill sheep and fowl tonight, the sheep covered in robes of red-and-white (for Shango) and green-and-white (for Oya, Shango’s wife). Tonight’s musical structure will include the full cycle of songs, from Ogun to Shango, with an emphasis on Shango songs during the offering and during Shango possessions, the sonic structure mirroring the ritual emphasis on Shango. While earlier in the week, it is primarily the main members of the church who come, beginning Thursday, and continuing on into Saturday morning, many more from the local Orisha population (mainly Trinidadians) will pass through. This means bigger crowds for singing, and it also means more drummers and lead singers. On this night, the *mongwa* Dedan comes. Dedan, who is young, good-looking, and strong of voice, is everyone’s favorite lead singer. When he sings it is with maximum effort, his voice coming from deep within his chest, the veins popping out on his forehead. Once Dedan arrives, Leader Michael turns things over to him. When Dedan begins, he stands in the center of the crowd, shouting at the people between lines—“vibration, man!”—and they respond by singing with vigor, reaching a new level of intensity, a new plateau in the feast. The music is sweet.

## Friday night

On the final night of the feast, Friday, there are more people than there have been all week, though that isn't necessarily a good thing for the music; sometimes a crowd encourages passivity, laxity. Early in this night's proceedings, the singing gets weak at times. A number of the people just stand there watching. Leader Michael yells at the crowd, chastising their lack of participation. It doesn't move them, though, for everyone seems to be waiting for two rounds of spirit possessions. The first round comes when Shango manifests on four different individuals—three men and one woman—and performs the standard feat of fire-eating (swallowing burning wicks dipped in olive oil), and blesses the congregants by rubbing a smooth thunder stone in a plate of olive oil, then rubbing the oil all over each person's face. The second round comes much later, when the sun is coming up on Saturday morning, and Ogun manifests on Leader Dedan. This signals that the end of the feast is nigh: during this manifestation, he pulls the sword from the ground where it has been "planted" in front of the drummers for the duration of the feast. When this late-feast Ogun comes, he takes over the *palais*. He dances with the sword, fiercely, and enjoys the singing of the crowd. He directs a few young boys to take a turn at the drums, encouraging them, the next generation, to play and learn. He tosses to the drummers bottles of wine and Forres Park rum (the Trinidad brand), as gifts for their service during the week. When he finally leaves, and Leader Dedan falls to the ground before the sweating drummers, the music stops, and Dedan is slowly revived back to consciousness. But he is not himself just yet: rather, he asks for candy, sucks his thumb, speaks in a high-pitched voice, and answers to the name Frankie, for Ogun's place on his body has been taken by an intermediary, child-like spirit known as a *rere*.

There is a break in the feast, and people eat food—roti and curried goat. There is more work to be done—implements need to be cleaned (Shango's shepherd's rod, Yemanjá's oars), more prayers need to be said—and many participants will stay at the church throughout the day, well into Saturday evening, playing hand drums and having a good "lime."<sup>[11]</sup> By noon, I am exhausted, and I go home to sleep.

## II. THE MUSIC OF AN ORISHA FEAST

While the previous pages describe an Orisha feast experientially, I next explain the logic and structure of Trinidad Orisha songs, making reference to specific recordings from the feast to illustrate my points. The above ethnography describes the day-to-day progression of a typical Orisha feast, implicitly demonstrating the way music tracks ritual development; in contrast, the analysis below shows more explicitly the present argument regarding the inseparable relationship of music and ritual in the Orisha religion of Trinidad.

### Hymn Time

Each night of the Mount Moriah feast begins with Christian prayers and hymns.<sup>[12]</sup> This is true of most Orisha groups, since there is considerable overlap between Orisha and Spiritual Baptist church memberships. According to some participants, this beginning part of the feast is simply called "the Baptist part." In terms of the relationship between musical and ritual time, I call this section of the feast "hymn time." It includes the singing of two kinds of Baptist hymns, the first plaintive, the second more lively, intermixed with Christian prayers recited in English. On a typical feast night, congregants begin slowly to gather a little after 11:00 pm. It is silent in the palais at this point, but not for long. As midnight approaches, the mongwa encourages the assembly to join him in the palais by starting an old Baptist song, such as "Oh God, Our Help in Ages Past," an early 18<sup>th</sup> century hymn written by the so-called "Father of English Hymnody," Isaac Watts.

### Audio example 1: "Oh God, Our Help in Ages Past"

In this example, Leader Michael leads the chorus in the usual Baptist lining-out style, singing each line quickly just before the slowly metered response. The chorus sings in a style that might be described as heterophonic with some added harmonies in homorhythmic texture, while the drummers play rolling patterns in free meter. After a few more similarly plaintive hymns, Michael then leads the assembled in the recitation of Christian prayers, such as the Apostles' Creed, the Our Father, the Hail Mary, Psalms 23, 34, 121, 1, and 4, the Hail Holy Queen, and Glory Be to the Father, but also including (non-Christian) esoteric prayers from the Sixth and Seventh Books of Moses, in homage to the Trinidadian spiritism known as Kabbalah.<sup>[13]</sup>

Next is a second group of hymns, livelier than the first, with handclapping and a cheerful beat played by the drummers, as in the example, “See Me Through, Lord Jesus, See Me Through.” While the free meter Baptist hymns are characterized by long texts and dirge-like melodies, the faster “See Me Through” is composed of just a single verse, in which an *aaba* verse form is repeated over and over, while the drummers play a steady rhythm (which, in the Orisha context, would be identified as the faster, secondary *rada* beat used in dismissal songs—see below). Lyrically simple songs like this one exist mainly as oral traditions, rather than as written ones.<sup>[14]</sup>

#### Audio example 2: “See Me through, Lord Jesus, See Me through”

#### Yoruba Prayers: The Litany

After about 30 minutes, the Christian hymns and prayers are finished, and are then followed by the Litany, a set of sung prayers exclusively in (Trinidad) Yoruba language. With the shift away from English, the Litany signals the transition from Baptist to Orisha, from Christian to Yoruba, into what might be thought of as the true beginning of the feast. Leader Michael explains that the Litany should be approached in a calm and humble manner, appropriate because the point is to prepare for the *orishas*, to request their presence at the Orisha service:

Litany is not to be jovial. When you're doing the Litany there's a sort of calmness. Not melancholy, but devotion, calmness, humility about it. Because you are asking that they [i.e., the orishas] put their presence in. So it's a supplication. You are asking with reverence.... So when you doing a Litany, you don't have drum and glorifying. No.

#### “Irawa”

The song beginning the Litany is “Ye Irawa, Irawa O,” which has been translated as “please come, let our journey be blessed” (Aiyejina *et al.* 2009:133).<sup>[15]</sup> “Irawa” functions as a sonic marker signaling the start of the feast. Before it, and along with the hymn singing in English, people are often milling about, involved in a range of activities, for example, preparations for the feast being made by church mothers. Sometimes, drummers do not even enter the palais prior to the singing of this song. But when “Irawa” begins, the congregants and the drummers snap to attention, the mongwa's high, plaintive, and solo syllable “Ye!” piercing the air, announcing the start of the feast.

#### Audio example 3: “Ye Irawa, Irawa O”

The melody of “Irawa” outlines a gradually descending contour, with stepwise motion and arpeggiations through notes aligning with the diatonic Western major scale.<sup>[16]</sup> It spans more than an octave, spun out over several phrases corresponding to five lines of poetry, and its length and range are unlike most Orisha songs. Distinct harmonies are not a regular feature of Orisha music, which tends to promote unison singing, but in the excerpted performance of “Irawa” the congregation often creates parallel melodies. A second chantwell can be heard leading the responses, becoming something of a second leader, filling in the melodic gaps with a quasi-lining out style of singing. Between the congregation's harmonies, the shifting focus on multiple lead singers, and the rolling drums in free meter, “Irawa” is a striking musical example. (In the following notation, the bar lines divide the five lines of text, while the note durations approximate the relative rhythm of this free flowing musical work.)





Figure 1. "Ye Irawa, Irawa O"

The song also structures coordinated movement: during four repetitions of the song, the members turn and face one of four directions, symbolizing east, west, north, and south. When the mongwa begins singing "Irawa," he stands before the drummers, and the congregants rise to their feet and do likewise. The mongwa recites the five-line stanza, which is then repeated exactly by the congregation, in harmony, four times total (four calls and four responses). For the first repetition, the congregants face the drummers, along with the singing mongwa. Second, the entire congregation turns their bodies to face to the back. Third, they face to the right. For the final repetition, the assembled face to the left.



Figure 2. Facing the drummers during “Irawa,” mongwa in yellow cap at left

### “Baba O”

The next sonic marker in the Litany is the song “Baba O.” The lyrics praise the orishas, calling out “*baba*/father,” “*mo juba*/I praise you.” In performance, “baba” is replaced by a different orisha in each repetition of the verse, until each of the orishas is named in order. Brooklyn mongwa Gordon likens it to the recitation of Catholic prayers, saying that this verse “is a form of doing the rosary, where you call the orisha one by one.” The “Baba O” sung for Ogun is as follows:

Ogun o

Mojigbe rele

Ogun o, ni wolo, eri jaja

Orisha roko arimole

Ogun o, mojiḡbe rele

Ye shole abakuso

The elasticity of the “Baba O” format is such that an individual mongwa can insert his personal style and preferences into its repetitions. For instance, the more syncretic-minded might sing for La Divina Pastora (the Catholic “black Virgin” whom Trinidadian Hindus call Sipari Mai), whilst those with an interest in Afrocentric

innovations might sing for Eshu (rejecting the Christian-centric Devil associations) or for the Nigerian Ifá divinity, Orunmila, who was not traditionally known in Trinidad. In this way, “Baba O” is a flexible prayer-song, allowing for the divergent inclinations of song leaders, its unique periodicity enabling the expression of certain traditional, historical, and even political allegiances. Congregants can also make their own inclinations heard during the “Baba O.” In addition to simply repeating the words, congregants accompany the “Baba O” responses with sounds and actions that express their recognition or endearment towards the particular *orisha* being named. For instance, when the *mongwa* sings the name of Mama Leta, congregants might bend down briefly to touch their fingers to the ground, in acknowledgement of the deity’s connection with the earth. When Shango’s name is called, congregants call out with the ululations known as *sababo*.

#### Audio example 4: “Baba O”

“Baba O” is a six-line stanza outlining a pentatonic major scale (5 6 1 2 3 5), and featuring prominent arpeggiations and melodic leaps including several thirds, a descending fourth, and two descending sixths. Unlike “Irawa,” with its stepwise scalar passages, “Baba O” relies on greater usage of intervallic leaps and skips, and while the melody of “Irawa” soars into the high range, “Baba O” features much more emphasis on the lower register. In the following notation, I have divided the free meter verse into six phrases, with phrase-endings determined (as in “Ye Irawa, Irawa O”) by a long-held final note. At the end of the second phrase, note that this melody includes an example of melisma, uncommon in the mostly syllabic Orisha repertoire.



Figure 3. The call to the orishas, “Baba O”

#### “Sheri Egbo”

Following “Baba O,” *mongwas* add a number of free meter verses to their individual Litanies, such that a Litany can be quite long. The Litany from which this is excerpted lasted 45 minutes, completing its structural arc finally with the next example, “Sheri Egbo.” One *mongwa* translates this song as “sharing the oil around the place,” for “egbo” means oil, and because the song accompanies libations. In the song, a dozen or so central members of the congregation take in their hands the liquids on the floor before the drummers, surrounding Ogun’s sword—oil, honey, milk, molasses, cologne, water, a goblet, a calabash, candles, and so on. Leader Gordon explains the “Sheri Egbo” procession around the palais, this giving of libations, as recognition of the “motherland.” (And given Gordon’s location, in Brooklyn, one might wonder whether the motherland referred to is Africa, or Trinidad.)

You go to the four cardinal points. You have to give that libation because you are calling. You have to remember now, you are not in your motherland, or where you would consider, where your foreparents come from. So you go to the four points. And then you call.



Figure 4. Ritual liquids in front of the drums; Ogun's sword in the ground at left

#### Audio example 5: "Sheri Egbo"

As the sung repetitions of "Sheri Egbo" continue, the chosen congregants carry their items to the ritually important locations in the worship space, which includes the *chapelle* (a small room, adjacent to the palais, housing various ritual objects) and the four corners, representing the four cardinal points, east, west, north, and south. When they have made the rounds, they return to the area of the sword, and begin to sing the opening group of songs for Ogun.

#### The Drumming Begins

At the close of the Litany, the congregation begins a new group of songs, with drumming accompaniment. These songs are for Ogun. Whereas the preliminary sections of the feast were performed in free meter, now the drummers start to beat in time, using the primary Orisha rhythm that drummer Earl Noel calls "straight Orisha." The songs are performed in medley-style, one short song after another. The local term for these groupings is "Rotation." (In Cuba, the equivalent term is *tradado*.) Songs progress in certain orderings, with typical progressions from song to song, and over a longer period of time, with typical progressions from orisha to orisha. As drummer Junior Noel puts it, "It's like the alphabet, from A to Z. You have a Rotation." Generally speaking, the Orisha song "alphabet" progresses from Ogun to Shango—the two most important orishas in Trinidad—interspersed with songs for Mama Leta, Shakpana, Raphael, Oshun, Ibeji, Erilay, Yemanja, Osain, Oya, and a few others. A full progression of songs for all the orishas can take several days. But each night of the feast, songs begin with Ogun.

The opening Ogun songs follow a standardized progression, consisting of four minor key songs that modulate to major usually around the fifth song. The minor key tonality distinguishes these first Ogun songs, departing from the preliminary music (Christian hymns and Yoruba Litany songs), which was all in a major key, the tonal shift helping to signal a progression in the ritual.

In the accompanying recording, following the Litany, Leader Michael pauses to lead a brief recitation of the Christian prayer, "Glory Be," before beginning the minor-key "Ogun Onire," a song whose lyrics refer to Ogun's mythical associations with the location of Ire in Nigeria. In the audio example, the percussion enters with the second repetition, first the drummers (the heartbeat of the *bo*, followed by the high-pitched, rolling *umele*, and finally Earl Noel playing the center drum—or *bembe*—which "speaks"), then intermittent handclapping, and eventually the gourd-shakers called *shac-shacs*. The songs move on to the minor-key "Ajaraja Ogun O" (1:37), "Feregún Abani" (2:31), and "Ogun Lalala Urele" (3:24), then finally modulating to the major-key "Ogun Yeye Arima Lesa" (3:48). The following transcription includes the opening song melody and the main drum parts of the primary Orisha rhythm, which might be characterized as a swinging 4/4 beat rhythm with syncopated triplet accents throughout.



## Audio example 6: Opening Ogun Songs

The musical score is arranged in two systems, each with four staves. The first system includes Chantwell, Center, Umele, and Bo. The second system includes Chw, Ct, Um, and Bo. The Chantwell part is in 4/4 time and features a melody with triplets and a final note. The Center part is in 4/4 time and features a melody with triplets. The Umele part is in 4/4 time and features a complex, fast-paced melody with many triplets. The Bo part is in 4/4 time and features a melody with triplets. The Chw part is in 4/4 time and features a melody with triplets. The Ct part is in 4/4 time and features a melody with triplets. The Um part is in 4/4 time and features a complex, fast-paced melody with many triplets. The Bo part is in 4/4 time and features a melody with triplets. The lyrics for the Chantwell part are: "Ya wa — O gun o ni re i lo de i lo". The lyrics for the Chw part are: "muo O gun o ni re i lo de ba O gun o".

Figure 5. First Ogun song: "Ogun Onire"

With the opening Ogun Rotation, not only does the drumming begin in earnest, but also members of the congregation start to move in a ring, in a kind of dance which only occurs at this point in the feast. In terms of the sonic structure, I call this "ring march time." Elder drummer Mr. Burton describes the march thusly: "And then you beat the drum. Then people would make the rings, and then they walk around the rings." The ring march is performed by the same group of twelve congregants who carried the ritual liquids throughout the *palais* during "Sheri Egbo" at the end of the Litany. Still holding the items, these congregants circle the area in front of the drums, in a single-file marching dance—left-right-right-left, 1-2-3-4. When the *chantwell* changes to a new song, the dancers spin around, touch the ground, and reverse the direction of the circle, now moving the ring in the opposite direction. Throughout the first several Ogun songs, this ring continues in the same fashion, changing direction with each new song, the dancers literally embodying and enacting the concept of "Rotation." One by one the dancers return their ritual items to the mongwa standing in the center of the ring. When all items are returned, dancers blend back into the congregation, which normally coincides with the major-key modulation to "Ogun Yeye Arima Lesa."

Similar circular introductory dances have been noted by researchers in Igbogila (Nigeria), Bahia (Brazil), and among the lyesá in Cuba (Drewal 1989: 227; Delgado 2001), suggesting that this dance has deep transnational roots.



**Figure 6. Making the rings for Ogun's songs**

Like participant movement toward the four corners and the four directions, the ring march is one of several coordinated music-directed movements in the early part of the Orisha feast. After it, singing for Ogun continues, but there are no more group dances at the feast. Now, the main action in the feast is spirit manifestation, for which song rotations with drumming will continue for hours, being interrupted occasionally by a spirit who wishes to speak to the congregation. The music can be organized into three main song types: those for before, during, and at the end of spirit possessions.

### Song Types for Spirit Possessions

Maureen Warner-Lewis has found that Trinidad Yoruba songs are not homogeneous; they historically encompassed a range of genres and purposes (1994; 1996). In the main part of the Trinidad Orisha feast, song types are organized with the aim of orchestrating spirit possessions—manifestations—by encouraging their onset (“calling” songs), attending their duration (“pleasure” or “work” songs), and bringing them to an end (“dismissal” songs). Leader Gordon explains some of these types as follows:

There are songs for calling. That is why, when we start, we start with certain songs, calling songs. And you will find if Ogun want a pleasure or a dance, you give him pleasure song. It have song for, also, too, when they're working. Like if Ogun come and he want to anoint his children, who he know is under his head. ... And then again sometimes you change it up, because you need that vibration. When you are carrying on a prayers you need that vibration. So you find, instead of singing a calling song you might go to a pleasure song, and just through that pleasure song, the vibration does start to bring out, and would help call that manifestation that was supposed to come.

Similarly, Leader Michael told me, "It's through the vibration now, you get a connection to the outer world, where the spirit world is, and they could come forward." In musical performance, this vibration is achieved in part through the collective attention of the congregation, as people clap, singers shout, and drummers whoop and strike their instruments with apparently inextinguishable energy. But aside from such willed energy, many songs which are considered "calling" types also have an inherent tendency towards the creation of that vibration through the manipulation of musical time, as shown in the example of the popular Ogun song, "A Gaile, Etuma Gaile."

## Calling Songs

This example of a calling song is comprised of two alternating Ogun song-phrases, one four bars in length, and one a single bar. In the recorded performance, during four-bar sections the sung lines allow more sonic space, which Earl, the center drummer, partially fills by playing longer phrases. The one-bar phrases are immediately denser, however. In the first transition to the single bar phrase (0:38), note the instant change in energy. On one side of the palais, a woman starts screaming, while someone else sings a long-held, slowly rising note. On the other side of the palais, a man shouts, "Go, go, go, go!" Earl begins to play the center drum in shorter drum bursts, interspersed with drum rolls aimed at enhancing the energy. After several repetitions, Leader Michael returns to the four-bar song, granting a respite, from which he works the group back to the one-bar call.

### Audio example 7: "A Gaile, Etuma Gaile"

Chantwell's call	Choral response	Number of bars
A gaile, etuma gaile	<i>A gaile, etuma gaile</i>	4
Ogun onire	<i>Gaile!</i>	1

**Figure 7. Regressive bar structure in the Ogun song "A Gaile."**

This type of long-to-short regressive bar structure makes the music seem as though it is getting faster.<sup>[17]</sup> A chantwell who notices congregants in a pre-possession state (individuals getting "shook up": experiencing tremors, holding their heads, shouting out exclamations) might choose to begin a song sequence progressing toward a song with short phrase lengths, thus maximizing the feeling in the palais. Or, the chantwell might simply repeat the one-bar song over and over, unrelenting until the manifestation is enacted.

Long-to-short structural song progressions are found throughout the repertoire of Trinidad Orisha music. The chantwell exerts total control over the length of time each song is sung, switching to the next song when he (or, occasionally, she) feels it is the right time. In all cases—for Ogun, Shakpana, Osain, Erilay, Yemanja, and others—these long-to-short progressions can be used, by the effective chantwell, as foundations for enhancing the vibration and calling the orishas. Through the use of calling songs like "Gaile" and others, the chantwell can lead Orisha devotees to spirit possessions; in other words, the structure of Orisha music leads the congregation towards manifestation of the orishas, which might be thought of as the primary goal of the Orisha feast.

## Songs for Pleasure and Work

Sometimes spirits manifest to dance, and in that case the chantwell leads the group in a pleasure song for the orisha who dances before the drums. But nearly always, when an orisha comes, it is to work, as in the case of the following example, beginning with a song for Shango's wife, Oya, moving to two songs for Shango ("Yeye Aniro," "Shango Tete Malaw"), and then back to Oya.<sup>[18]</sup> When this performance was recorded, Shango had manifested on three different people. The "work" in this case involved the mongwa anointing the congregation with oil, dipping a "thunder stone"—a mango-sized very smooth stone commonly found at an Orisha *palais*—in a plate of olive oil, then placing the stone on each congregant's forehead, making the sign of the cross and rubbing the oil all over the face and scalp of the individual. The music in this example accompanied that activity.



**Audio example 8: “Ye Oya, Emi Oya”/“Ye Ye Aniro”**

The remarkable performance begins with Leader Michael’s voice, being strongly supported by popular chantwell Leader Dedan, whose rhythmic shouts (“*sing the thing!*”) make him almost like a second chantwell (the secondary functions mirrors Gordon’s role during the Litany, discussed above). Dedan also sings in a *doption* style (a sort of rhythmic hyperventilating which hip hop fans might think of as Spiritual Baptist beatboxing). Meanwhile, in the congregation, people sing and clap loudly, including a syncopated *tresillo* clap [?. ?. ?]. Others whoop, shout, moan (“*ay-ay-ay!*”), bluster with their lips, make high-pitched twittering noises, and play the *shac-shacs*. The drummers—led now by Brooks at the center drum—lock into a solid and fast ostinato pattern, supporting the voices and allowing them to take center stage. The whole performance is one of unified ecstasy, and musical mastery, the hard-won results of singing for hours. All this combines into a musical tour de force, a kind of peak in the feast (and it is no coincidence that the music and ritual reach this peak simultaneously). This example perhaps best represents what made me fall in love with Trinidad Orisha music: the collective musical power and joy practically demand that one sing and clap along. In that moment I wished that I was playing the drums rather than holding my digital audio recorder.

**Dismissal Songs**

The peak of a spirit possession must eventually end, which is the function of the following song type: dismissal songs. While the previous example detailed a Shango possession at the end of the week, this example considers a dismissal song for a manifestation of the spirit Shakpana, which took place earlier in the feast (chronologically speaking). The recording begins at the end of a long Rotation of pleasure songs for Shakpana (who was manifesting on the woman in the rainbow dress on the Wednesday night of the field journal above). Shakpana had been in the palais for quite a while, and it was time to move on. This was indicated, for one thing, in the fact that the woman dancing Shakpana was repeatedly pointing at her chest with two thumbs, then up to the heavens with her forefingers. So the lead drummer, Leader Brooks, signaled for an end to the pleasure song “Koriwo,” and immediately started the dismissal song (“Majangwe”) for Shakpana.

**Audio example 9: “Ye Shakpana, Tini Majangwe”**

The musical score for "Ye Shakpana, Tini Majangwe" consists of four staves. The top staff, labeled "Chantwell", contains the lyrics: "Ye Shak pa na ti ni ma jan gwe tini jan gwe a ri wo ti ni ma jan gwe tini jan gwe i bo la ro ye". The second staff, labeled "Center", shows a rhythmic pattern with notes and rests. The third staff, labeled "Umele", shows a complex rhythmic pattern with many notes. The bottom staff, labeled "Bo", shows a simple rhythmic pattern with notes and rests.

**Figure 8. “Ye Shakpana, Tini Majangwe”**

In the recording, listen to how Brooks takes advantage of the momentary silence to begin softly singing the quick and oddly metered tune, with its syncopated rhythms extending over 14 bass beats (written in my transcription as a pickup bar of 2/4 followed by three bars of 4/4). Note the new *rada* rhythm.<sup>[19]</sup> Upon the first repeat, the congregation starts to sing and clap vigorously, and shortly after that, the drums come in. Perhaps due to the challenge of singing this rhythmically complex song and also playing the lead drum, Brooks’ voice drops out shortly after the drums begin, and chantwell Steve takes over, soon after which (about 1:00) the Shakpana-dancer



calls out in a gravelly shout, perhaps in recognition that this song signals it is time for Shakpana to leave. Still, Shakpana did not leave right away, and after a few minutes of singing this song, Brooks stopped the drums, waited for the singers to stop, and began singing for the next orisha in the cycle, Osain, switching back to the primary Orisha rhythm. Nearly ten minutes later, the Shakpana dancer finally collapsed into the arms of nearby congregants, apparently unconscious. Musical structure and ritual behavior conspire to transmit the following message: Shakpana's time at the feast was over; it was time to give attention to Osain.

The song performance can be considered typical of dismissal songs at an Orisha feast. Such songs are clearly delineated by the drumming rhythms: while, up to now, nearly all songs have been played in the primary Orisha beat, dismissal songs are mostly played in the fast, secondary *rada* rhythm. (This is the same beat as in the Baptist song "See Me Through," above.) The abrupt rhythmic change makes audible the impending end of the possession. Dismissal songs are often relatively short, as shown above when the musicians chose to move on with songs for the next spirit in line, Osain.

### A Song of Thanks: "Mo Dupwe"

So far, I have described preliminary Christian and Yoruba prayers and songs, the beginning of the drumming with Ogun songs, and the song types that accompany spirit possessions. There are other songs for animal sacrifices (i.e., "offerings"), which I won't describe in detail here, but which involve a basic continuation of the drumming and singing. As I made clear in the ethnographic section above: feasts are slow-developing, and after the Litany, the drumming goes on all night. But as with spirit possessions, eventually the drumming must stop. The congregation offers thanks to the orishas in a final song, "Mo Dupwe."

In Yoruba, "mo dupe" means "thank you." (In this song, the "pwe" sound can be understood as part of the local dialect of Yoruba.) Similar to the "Baba O," this song is repeated as each orisha's name is inserted into the verse. It is a simple song in a major mode with a straightforward sentiment, and is sung normally at the end of Thursday night, aka Shango night (really Friday morning), when the offering stage has been concluded, and the feast is ready to move on to the celebratory Friday night session. Like the songs of the Litany, "Mo Dupwe" is performed without drumming accompaniment – thus providing a sonic return to the feast's opening – and loosely in the following metric arrangement. [20]



Figure 9. "Mo Dupwe"

### III. CONCLUSION: SONG AS STRUCTURE

This audio essay has provided descriptions in word, image, transcription, and audio files, of the logic, sound, and types of Orisha songs. This descriptive work is important and necessary because, first, unlike the music of closely related Santería in Cuba, Trinidad Orisha music is not particularly well understood in the field of ethnomusicology. Second, these descriptions support an analytical framework suggesting that, in the Orisha religion, songs are central to the structure of Orisha rituals. Looking at Orisha music in terms of its large-scale periodicities (Tenzer 2006) reveals a simultaneity of musical and ritual time in the religion.

Beyond lending shape to ritual structures, the periodicities of Orisha music—the introductory moment I call "hymn time," the flexible "Baba O" verses—can be seen as providing space for Orisha's eclectic syncretism (Houk 1995), important for Orisha society because nearly all Orisha worshipers are also Christians: Catholic, Anglican, or Spiritual Baptists (this last affiliation is especially strong, explaining the common moniker "Shango-Baptist"). "Hymn time" allows for the expression of allegiance to Christ (not that Christianity is completely confined to this introductory moment, as shown in the brief recitation of "Glory Be" before the Ogun songs in the example above). The "Baba O" allows for the expression of a range of allegiances.

Orisha music periodicities also delineate clear boundaries, keeping traditional Yoruba time and space intact, as in the distinct shift from “hymn time” to “Litany time” and the accompanying immediate transition from English to (Trinidad) Yoruba. The Orisha song repertoire is a vehicle of Yoruba language retention in Trinidad, as in lyrics making specific references such as praise, oil, Ogun origin myths, and thanks. Even if that language is in a local (Trinidadian) dialect, it is still recognizable as Yoruba (Warner-Lewis 1996). Retentions are also embodied in participant movements during “ring march time,” honoring the directions and marching in a ring, the latter of which has been specifically noted historically across the diaspora. Retentions further exist in the basic duality of the overall ritual structure, which begins with prayers (or prayer-songs) and moves on to songs with drumming accompaniment, a form echoed in the *rezos-cantos* ritual structure of Cuban Santería (Manuel and Fiol 2007). The interrelationship of music and ritual in the Orisha religion—in which musical and ritual development are coterminous—enables the survival of a 19<sup>th</sup> century oral tradition in the modern and transnational 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The maintenance of ritual structures through music can link people through history, illustrating a “hierarchy of time” extending “beyond the scale of human lives” (Tenzer 2006). In this way, the performance of Orisha music connects the present generation with previous ones; the Brooklyn diaspora with Trinidad; and Trinidadians with orisha devotees in Cuba, Brazil, Benin, and Nigeria. Though non-ethnomusicological academic studies do not often take music seriously, this study suggests that music is centrally involved in the process, practice, and experience of African diaspora culture, as exemplified by the Orisha religion of Trinidad.

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## Notes

[1] Though a British colony, French Catholics dominated European settlement on the island beginning in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. As an example of Yoruba-Catholic syncretism, in Trinidad the *orisha* Ogun, god of war and iron, is also called St. Michael – who is depicted on old lithographs with an iron sword fighting demons. Each *orisha*/saint is associated with certain colors and offerings, though these often differ throughout the diaspora; the red for Ogun in Trinidad is not used in Nigeria, for instance.

[2] These studies can be contextualized within the ever-expanding body of literature on African-derived religious formations in the Atlantic world. Recent examples in this very broad field include Peel 2000, Mann 2001, Clarke 2004, Falola and Childs 2004, Law 2004, Matory 2005, Palmié 2008, Apter and Derby 2010, Sofela 2011, Forde and Paton 2012, Parés 2013, and Putnam 2013.

[3] This omission can be contrasted with the considerable body of musical studies on Santería in Cuba, including Altmann 1998, Velez 2000, Manuel and Fiol 2007, Villepastour 2010, and Schweitzer 2013. Meanwhile, descriptive studies of Yoruba-derived music in Brazil are limited (similar to studies of Trinidad Orisha music); one of the few descriptive studies is Barros 1999.

[4] In her study of Moroccan Gnawa music, Maisie Sum uses periodicity as an analytical concept to approach "the correlation between ritual and trance phenomena, and distinguish subtleties between sacred and secular musical processes" (2011:80). While Sum is mainly looking at the relationship between micro and macro musical periodicities within the performance of a single musical work in different contexts, my own study is focused on large-scale periodic structures and their correlation with sacred ritual development.

[5] Readers can compare my Brooklyn recordings to Trinidadian recordings such as *Songs of the Orisha Palais* [1] (2005), or any of Ella Andall's Orisha CDs, such as *Shango Ba Ba Wa* [2] (2004).

[6] "Best," in this case, refers to moments of greatest collective participation, strong vocal or percussive performances, or moments when the singers were closest to me and my hand-held audio recorder, providing greatest clarity and definition between the vocals and the drums.



[7] In Yoruba, *mongba* means priest. In Trinidad, this word is pronounced as *mongwa*, *mongba*, *amambwa*, and other variations. *Mongwa* is the variant I hear most often. Most often, Orisha worshipers refer to their priests using the Baptist term, Leader.

[8] Orisha practitioners say that Mama Leta is equivalent to the Yoruba *orisha* Onile.

[9] Transliterations are all my own.

[10] "Ogun asks for me" (Warner-Lewis 1994:44).

[11] Trini slang for hanging out with friends and family.

[12] In the structure of beginning in prayer without drumming, later moving on to songs with drumming, Trinidad Orisha music mirrors the structure of its diasporic relative, Cuban Santería, which begins with *rezos* (prayers) and moves on to *cantos* (songs) (Manuel and Fiol 2007:49).

[13] The Trinidad Kabbalah is not associated with Judaism, but rather with books of magic circulated in the Caribbean in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. See Owen Davies, *Grimoires: A History of Magic Books*, Oxford University Press, 2010.

[14] See Glazier 1983; Williams 1985; McDaniel 1994.

[15] The song is very old, having been part of Shango tradition in Trinidad since at least the 1930s, when the Herskovitses recorded Andrew Biddeau singing it in Laventille as part of their historic Trinidad recordings. And if it was there in the 1930s, it would logically date to the century prior, contact between West Africa and Trinidad having been cut off after about the 1860s. See the final track on Smithsonian Folkways CD HRT15020, [The Yoruba/Dahomean Collection: Orishas Across the Ocean](#) [3].

[16] In general, when I say "major" and "minor" I am referring to the 3rds (and sometimes 7ths), not to be confused with Western major and minor tonalities. Generally speaking, researchers have noted the minor melodies of Shango songs (e.g. Warner-Lewis 1996), but during my dissertation research, I compiled a database of nearly 200 Trinidad Orisha songs, more than 70% of which I characterize as outlining a major mode. I have never heard practitioners speak about major or minor tonalities.

[17] Regressive bar structure is also part of the form of the opening Ogun Suite. In the first three songs ("Ogun Onire," "Ajaraja," and "Feregun Abami"), the song bar lengths regress from 6 to 2 to 1, and during the one-bar "Feregun," people often begin to shout.

[18] Songs for the husband and wife Shango and Oya are often grouped together.

[19] The term almost certainly originates with the Trinidad Rada, a Dahomey-derived Afro-Trinidadian religious group who worship *vudunos*, not *orishas*. (See Carr 1955.) Smaller than Orisha, the Rada persist in the practice of a single Trinidadian family – the Antioines of Belmont. One of their main drum rhythms closely resembles the so-called *rada* rhythm of Orisha.

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[20] “Mo Dupwe” is not included in my group of Brooklyn 2014 recordings, but a version of it can be heard on the CD *Songs of the Orisha Palais* [1] (2005).

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**Links:**

[1] <https://itunes.apple.com/us/album/songs-of-the-orisha-palais/id714089447>

[2] <https://itunes.apple.com/us/album/sango-ba-ba-wa/id253976938>

[3] <http://www.folkways.si.edu/the-yoruba/dahomean-collection-orishas-across-the-ocean/world/music/album/smithsonian>

## De La Copla Flamenca a La Canción Indie: Intertextualidad y Relaciones Sociales a Través del Análisis de Distintos Modelos de Adaptación Musical

By Fernando Barrera

### Conceptos preliminares y acotación terminológica

La particularidad de este artículo, realizado desde el ámbito de la Musicología, pero en el que confluyen aspectos de otras disciplinas, como la Antropología o la Sociología, justifica la revisión y aclaración de algunos términos controvertidos. Por ello definimos en este epígrafe los conceptos “hibridación,” “género musical,” e “*indie* en España,” así como la motivación que nos llevó a utilizar estos términos y no otros.

### Hibridación

Cada vez resulta más común acudir a términos como globalización o glocalización para explicar la creciente tendencia a la homogeneización cultural, siendo el segundo una versión ampliada del primero en la que se refuerza la idea de fusión local como paso previo a la globalización (Robertson 1994). En cualquier caso, ambos aluden a los innumerables “acuerdos interculturales” observables en la actualidad a nivel mundial. Según Peter Burke, en este momento no es posible hablar de hermetismo, de pureza en el siglo XXI, puesto que “todas las tradiciones culturales de hoy están en contacto, en menor o mayor medida, con tradiciones alternativas” (Burke 2013:141).

Dicho esto, es preciso matizar qué término se utilizará por defecto en este artículo para definir los procesos culturales que permiten la existencia de esa querencia global, formada por la suma de distintas culturas locales. Esto no es fácil, puesto que, como afirma el propio Burke en relación a la categorización de estos intercambios entre culturas, “vivimos en una jungla terminológica en la que los conceptos luchan entre sí por su supervivencia” (2013:89). De esta forma, es fácil encontrar multitud de denominadores asociados a estos procesos de unificación, caso de hibridismo cultural, crisol, traducción, etc. Estos conceptos son adoptados o se basan en ideas procedentes de diversos ámbitos, algunos tan dispares como la Economía o la Zoología. En este artículo, dado que todos estos términos no terminan de explicar los casos analizados, se utilizará la palabra “hibridación,” que según Gerhard Steingress:

no es un fenómeno exclusivo de la globalización, sino la expresión de la dinámica de la cultura misma. . . . Su carácter propio consiste en destruir y reorganizar de manera simbólica los distintos tipos de “otredad,” excluidos por parte de la cultura establecida, una recreación que tiene lugar en los nuevos espacios multiculturales y sus peculiares situaciones de contacto. (Steingress 2013:8)

### Género musical

Tradicionalmente, el concepto de “género musical” ha sido utilizado por la Musicología para definir y diferenciar una obra musical basándose exclusivamente en determinados aspectos como el timbre, el texto utilizado en la partitura, la forma de la composición o la ejecución de la misma; es decir, atendiendo de manera exclusiva a características formales e intrínsecas de la creación musical, elementos especificados por el compositor sobre el papel pautado. Este tipo de clasificación conduce a pensar que cada género es un concepto hermético y homogéneo, y por tanto una obra de arte se convierte en un acto relativamente determinado: solo así se puede clasificar con facilidad (Samson 2013).

Sin embargo, este uso tradicional, aplicado con buenos resultados a la música culta, resulta impreciso al ser empleado para la clasificación de músicas populares, ya que muchas de las creaciones asociadas a esta categoría ni siquiera necesitan partituras para ser ejecutadas. Además, una misma obra, dependiendo del intérprete o su ejecución, podría considerarse dentro de un género u otro, e incluso, perteneciente a varios géneros de manera simultánea, algo inconcebible en el ámbito de la música clásica.

Por ello, para este artículo se aceptará una definición alternativa del concepto de género musical, concretamente la propuesta del musicólogo italiano Franco Fabbri, quien considera que los aspectos formales de una creación son importantes, pero también otros elementos que influyen sobre lo musical y completan la propuesta de género

utiliza de manera recurrente por la Musicología tradicional (Fabbri 2006). Fabbri potencia el análisis de los factores sociales que rodean y condicionan el hecho musical: el contenido ideológico de una creación, el comportamiento de los participantes vinculados a un género musical y el modelo de distribución comercial y protección jurídica de una obra, entre otros.

## Indie en España

Finalmente, resulta necesario definir el concepto de música indie en España. Este denominador polisémico puede aludir tanto a los aspectos formales de las obras como a elementos ajenos a la partitura. En primer lugar, se usa para referirse a cuestiones comerciales, siendo “indie” en España artistas y creaciones que funcionan al margen de compañías multinacionales. En segundo lugar, también serían “indies” músicos cuyo sonido se asemeja al de bandas anglosajonas formadas en la década de los años ‘80, caso de My Bloody Valentine o Dinosaur Jr. Estas formaciones se caracterizan por conceder especial importancia a la armonía y la textura, prescindiendo en muchos casos de la melodía y restando protagonismo a voz e instrumentos solistas.

De esta forma, se unen bajo un mismo denominador bandas como los planetas, que poseen un sonido cercano al de bandas indie internacionales, con formaciones como Pony Bravo, indies o independientes en sentido comercial. Entre estas formaciones no existe diferenciación por clase social, grupo étnico, género o rango de edad. El argumento o denominador común usado por prensa y público para agrupar a todas estas bandas relacionadas con la etiqueta indie se localiza en la actitud de estos artistas, quienes aparentemente promueven una creación libre de condicionantes comerciales (Barrera Ramírez 2014).

Dado que “la actitud” es un elemento difícilmente objetivable, basándonos en la definición de género de Fabbri, en este trabajo nos limitaremos a aceptar que existe un género indie en España, definido por prensa y público como grupo social, en el que se agrupan numerosas bandas como Los Planetas, Pony Bravo y Sr. Chinarro, y que aparecen reseñadas de manera recurrente en publicaciones de tirada nacional especializadas en dicho género como *Rockdelux* o *Mondosonoro*.

## Flamenco y música indie

Formalmente, el flamenco y la música indie o independiente pertenecen a dos categorías claramente diferenciadas en el ámbito de la Musicología. El primero de estos géneros se inserta en el grupo de las músicas populares folclóricas, mientras que el segundo se vincula al conjunto de las músicas populares urbanas. Sin embargo, a pesar de pertenecer a dos ámbitos diferentes, estos géneros han encontrado una vía de creación común en Andalucía: la hibridación. Esta fusión genera una suerte de simbiosis cultural que reporta múltiples beneficios para estas músicas. Por una parte, facilita a los artistas flamencos llegar a un público mucho más extenso del habitual. Por otra, permite a los intérpretes de música indie—género de origen anglosajón diversificado por músicos, prensa y usuarios españoles—utilizar determinados elementos folclóricos en sus creaciones, dotándolas de un significado particular propio.<sup>[1]</sup>

Con el objetivo de localizar esos recursos flamencos utilizados en el género urbano, para este artículo se han analizado algunas de las producciones más sobresalientes de música indie española de la última década (según prensa especializada): *La leyenda del espacio* (2007) y *Una ópera egipcia* (2010), de Los Planetas; *El fuego amigo* (2005), *El mundo según* (2006) y *¡Menos samba!* (2012), de Sr. Chinarro; *Si bajo de espaldas no me da miedo y otras historias...* (2007), *Un gramo de fe* (2010) y *De palmas y cacería* (2013), de Pony Bravo; *Homenaje a Enrique Morente* (2012), de Los Evangelistas; y *Romancero* (2009) de La bien Querida.

Musicalmente, en estas producciones de indie fusionado con flamenco se mantienen formaciones instrumentales similares a las de otros géneros urbanos como el rock, con guitarras eléctricas, batería, bajo eléctrico y voz. Este esquema solo se modifica de manera puntual para introducir algunos timbres asociados al flamenco, caso de la voz de un cantaor o el uso esporádico de la guitarra flamenca. De igual forma, se repiten formas sencillas prototípicas de los géneros urbanos como la ya clásica ABAB, en la que se alternan estrofas y estribillo, aunque muchas veces presentan pequeñas modificaciones (Barrera Ramírez 2014:129-138).

Por el contrario, existen numerosos elementos importados del flamenco que diferencian estas producciones urbanas de otras del mismo género desarrolladas fuera de nuestras fronteras. Muchas de las melodías interpretadas por las bandas españolas de música indie en las producciones anteriormente citadas son adaptaciones de grabaciones realizadas por cantaores flamencos. En otros casos, las melodías se basan más en un palo que en un cantaor concretamente. En la misma línea, muchos de los ritmos utilizados en estas



grabaciones emulan compases flamencos como el de las bulerías, las seguiriyas o los tientos. Respecto a las armonías, cabe señalar que muchas de estas bandas insertan en sus producciones la cadencia andaluza o frigia y alternan de manera recurrente acordes importados de determinados palos del flamenco, sobre todo de las *cantiñas*, por su carácter festivo y fácilmente asimilable por el público (Barrera Ramírez 2014:227-229).

Sin embargo, a pesar de la importancia de los recursos musicales anteriormente descritos en relación con la hibridación del indie y el flamenco, resultan de especial relevancia en el estudio de estas fusiones determinados factores que sobrepasan lo estrictamente musical. En primer lugar, uno de los elementos más atractivos para el análisis de estos casos de transculturación reside en los métodos utilizados para dar forma a las letras de las canciones. En segundo lugar, en relación a estos artistas, sobresale la tendencia actual a desarrollar una estética flamenca, fusionando prendas de vestir actuales con batas de cola o sombreros cordobeses. De igual forma, se aprecia una querencia hacia el flamenco similar a la que sufre el género musical indie en otros ámbitos artísticos, caso del cómic o el cine. Por último, hay que subrayar el contexto globalizador que rodea a estos músicos, marcado por el momento tecnológico que vive el mundo occidental. Esto está modificando la actitud de los compositores e intérpretes ante la creación artística, facilitando la aparición de una mentalidad abierta que permite derribar cualquier tipo de barrera y unificar en una misma obra elementos a priori absolutamente dispares.

### Modelos de adaptación de coplas flamencas

El estudio de los discos y de los artistas que los produjeron (Los Planetas, Pony Bravo, Sr. Chinarro, Los Evangelistas y La Bien Querida) ha sido realizado a través de entrevistas personales, análisis formales de las creaciones y el vaciado de prensa[2]. Dicho acercamiento nos ha permitido comprobar que estas bandas juegan con cuatro modelos diferentes, o niveles de adaptación, para componer los textos de sus canciones de indie folclorista.

En primer lugar, existen diversos ejemplos de lo que podríamos denominar *modelo simple de adaptación de letras de origen flamenco al indie*. Muchas de las bandas analizadas reutilizan textos extraídos íntegramente de adaptaciones de coplas realizadas por otros intérpretes flamencos. Por ejemplo, Los Planetas, en su disco *La leyenda del espacio*, cuentan con canciones como “Si estaba Loco por ti,” anteriormente utilizada por el cantaor “Fosforito”; o el fandango “Ya no me asomo a la reja,” que pertenece originalmente al disco *Esencias flamencas*, de Enrique Morente. La letra original de este último ejemplo, perteneciente a Morente, ha sido interpretada por otros artistas, como “El Niño Almadén” o “Cobitos.”

Origen de la letra de “Ya no me asomo a la reja” de Los Planetas.

Ya no me asomo a la reja , Fandango adaptado por Los Planetas	Fragmentos de la letra utilizados previamente por otros cantaores
Como moro soy más moro.  Como cristiano, cristiano.  Como bueno soy más bueno.  Como malo soy más malo.  Soy más malo que el veneno.	“Como moro soy más moro  y como cristiano soy más cristiano.  Como bueno soy más bueno  y como malo soy más malo.  Soy más malo que el veneno.”[3]
Después de haberme llevado  toda la noche de jarana.  Después de haberme llevado  me vengo a purificar  debajo de tu ventana  como si fuera un altar.	“Después de haberme llevado  toda una noche de jarana  me vengo a purificar  debajo de tu ventana  como si fuera un altar” (Blas Vega 1982:1).

<p>Ya no me asomo a la reja que me solía asomar.</p> <p>Ya no me asomo a la reja, me asomo a la ventana que cae a la soledad.</p> <p>No sé si me iré a Ubrique o me iré a Grazalema.</p> <p>No sé si me iré a Ubrique o a Alcalá de los Gazules, o al Adorno que es mi tierra.</p> <p>No se si me iré a Ubrique.</p> <p>De oro barcelonés un anillo te prometo.</p> <p>De oro barcelonés si dices por la mañana ese que canta quién es por la noche en tu ventana.</p> <p>Ya no me asomo a la reja que me solía asomar.</p> <p>Ya no me asomo a la reja, me asomo a la ventana que cae a la soledad.</p>	<p>“Ya no me asomo a la reja que me solía asomar.</p> <p>Que me asomo a la ventana que cae a la soledad.</p> <p>De orillo barcelonés un anillo te prometo si dices por la mañana ese que canta quién es de noche en tu ventana.</p> <p>Después de haberme llevado toda la noche de jarana me vengo a purificar debajo de tu ventana como si fuera a un altar.</p> <p>No me vaya a Grazalema.</p> <p>No sé si me vaya a Ubrique o me vaya a Grazalema.</p> <p>A Alcalá de los Gazules o al Adorno que es mi tierra, o si me vaya a Ubrique” (Morente 1988:3).</p>
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Otro ejemplo de este nivel de adaptación de coplas flamencas al indie lo encontramos en la canción “Ninja de fuego,” de Pony Bravo. Compuesta y escrita por Antonio Quintero, Rafael de León y Manuel Quiroga e interpretada por voces como la de “La Paquera de Jerez,” Juanito Varea o Manolo “Caracol,” la adaptación de Pony Bravo presenta numerosas similitudes respecto a la composición original, aunque eliminando algunos versos y alterando el orden de otros. Como se aprecia en la siguiente tabla, se trata de una versión sui generis.

Comparativa de las letras de las canciones “La niña de fuego,” de León, Quintero y Quiroga, y “Ninja de fuego” de Pony Bravo.

<b>“La niña de fuego,” original de León, Quintero y Quiroga</b>	<b>“Ninja de fuego,” interpretada por la banda indie Pony Bravo</b>
La rosa de fuego	La luna te besa tus lágrimas puras
de tu caballera	como una promesa de buena ventura.

me ha dejao siego.	La niña de fuego te llama la gente
Con su primavera	y te están dejando que muera de sed.
me huele a jazmines tu piel de aceituna,	Ay niña de fuego, niña de fuego.
me saben tus besos a nardo y limón.	
¡Ay, niña de fuego!	Dentro de mi alma yo tengo una fuente
	para que tu culpa se incline a beber.
Mujer que llora y padece,	Ay niña de fuego, niña de fuego.
te ofresco la sarvasión,	
te ofresco la sarvasión.	Mujer que llora y padece
El cariño es siego...	te ofrezco la salvación, te ofrezco la salvación.
Soy un hombre bueno que te compadece...	
¡Ay, niña de fuego!	Y si el cariño es ciego
	yo soy un hombre bueno que te compadece.
La luna te besa tus lágrimas puras	Anda y vente conmigo
Como una promesa de buenaventura.	niña de fuego, niña de fuego.
La niña de fuego te llama la gente	Yo soy un hombre bueno,
Y te están dejando que muera de sé.	yo soy un hombre bueno.
¡Ay, niña de fuego!	
Dentro de mi alma yo tengo una fuente	
Para que tu curpa se incline a bebé.	
¡Ay, niña de fuego!	
¡Ay... ay! ¡Anda, vente!	
¡Ay...! ¡Ay, niña de fuego! (López-Quiroga 2005:62)	

Por último, también resulta llamativa la versión que el cantaor Enrique Morente hace de su propia canción “Que me van aniquilando” en el álbum de Los Planetas *Una ópera egipcia*. El cantaor utiliza la letra original, aparecida en el disco *Despegando* (1977), aunque reordena las estrofas y elimina la estrofa “Como yo era escribano . . .” (Morente 1977:9).

Fragmentos de las letras de las canciones “Que me van aniquilando” (1977), de Morente y “Que me van aniquilando” (2010), de Los Planetas y Morente.

“Que me van aniquilando,” de Enrique Morente	“Que me van aniquilando,” versión de Los Planetas
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<p>Como yo no era escribano ni yo sabía lo que pasaba dijeron que hacían justicia viendo yo que nos maraban.</p> <p>Que me van aniquilando la gente anda diciendo y sigo por mi camino, que las nubes las destruye el viento.</p> <p>Eres tú como la caña, la caña criada en Umbría, que a todos los aires les hace, les hace su cortesía.</p> <p>Lo de ayer ya se pasó y lo de hoy va pasando. mañana, nadie lo ha visto, mundillo vamos andando.</p>	<p>Lo de ayer ya se pasó y lo de hoy se va pasando. mañana nadie lo ha visto; mundillo vamos andando.</p> <p>Que me van aniquilando la gente anda diciendo y sigo por mi camino, que las nubes las destruye el viento.</p> <p>Eres tú como la caña, la caña criada en Umbría, que a todos los aires les hace, les hace su cortesía, mare.</p> <p>Que me van aniquilando la gente anda diciendo y sigo por mi camino, que las nubes las destruye el viento.</p>
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Al recurso anteriormente descrito se suma un segundo nivel de composición de textos indies basados en coplas flamencas preexistentes. La antropóloga Cristina Cruces Roldán lo denomina *modelo microcompositivo de coplas sueltas flamencas* (2008:184). Se basa en usar a conveniencia fragmentos de letras tradicionales, uniéndolas libremente e introduciendo fragmentos propios si fuera necesario, confeccionando con ellas los versos para una nueva canción. En *La leyenda del espacio*, de Los Planetas, encontramos multitud de ejemplos en los que las letras están compuestas a partir de distintas coplas extraídas del cancionero popular usado habitualmente por cantaores flamencos como Antonio "Mairena," Manolo "Caracol," "Camarón," Enrique Morente o José Menese (Llanos Martínez 2007). Valgan de muestra los versos "Y a mí que me importa que un rey me culpe/si el pueblo es grande y me adora," que aparecen en "La verdulera," canción interpretada con anterioridad por cantaores como "Mairena," "El niño Almadén" o "Pericón de Cádiz"; o "que vaya acelerando/que la que yo más quiero/me está esperando," pertenecientes a la canción "Deseando una cosa," que ya emplearon en sendas cantiñas los maestros "Onofre de Córdoba" y "Fosforito." El resultado final se puede observar en la siguiente tabla comparativa de la canción "La que vive en la carrera."

Comparativa de las letras de las canciones "La que vive en la carrera," de Los Planetas y versiones anteriores de otros cantaores.

La que vive en la carrera, granainas adaptadas por Los Planetas	Fragmentos de la letra usados previamente por otros cantaores
La que vive en la carrera.	"La que vive en La Carrera,



<p>Esa señora lo sabe, la que vive en la carrera, La Virgen de las Angustias si yo te quiero de veras. Si yo te quiero de veras.</p>	<p>La Virgen de las Angustias.  La que vive en La Carrera,  esa señora lo sabe si yo te quiero de veras" (Vega 1982:11).</p>
<p>Un sereno se dormía en la cruz blanca del barrio.  Un sereno se dormía y la cruz le daba voces: sereno que viene el día. Sereno que viene el día.</p>	<p>"En la cruz blanca del barrio  un sereno se dormía y la cruz le daba voces: sereno, que viene el día" (Cruz 1964:1).</p>
<p>No sabes lo que te quiero  Granada del alma mía.  Te quiero porque te quiero, que tu eres sucia alegría.  Tierra de arte y misterio,  el vergel de Andalucía.</p>	

Un tercer nivel de adaptación consiste en actualizar textos de coplas flamencas clásicas, introduciendo pequeños elementos que relacionan la letra original, atemporal, con alguna noticia reciente. Podría denominarse *modelo de actualización de coplas flamencas*. Se aprecia en canciones como "Zambra de Guantánamo," de Pony Bravo, cuya letra se basa en los versos "¿Qué quieres de mí?/si hasta el agua que bebo/te la tengo que pedir," que ya fueron utilizados con anterioridad por el dúo de cantaoras Fernanda y Bernarda de Utrera en unas bulerías (Fernanda y Bernarda 1997:4), o más recientemente por Estrella Morente (2006:3) en la zambra aparecida en su disco *Mujeres*, por citar un par de ejemplos. No obstante, a diferencia de las versiones anteriores, la banda indie introduce delante de los versos las siglas CIA, transgrediendo el uso habitual de la letra y dando sentido al añadido del título de la canción "de Guantánamo": "CIA ¿qué quieres de mí?/si hasta el agua que bebo/te la tengo que pedir." Gracias a estos pequeños detalles, Pony Bravo se separa de la línea más conservadora de adaptación flamenca presentada en los modelos anteriores por Los Planetas, desgranando en cada una de sus letras humor e ironía, sin rehuir temas espinosos como la política o la religión, tratados con absoluta naturalidad, sin caer en manidos clichés, analizando de una forma muy personal la actualidad del mundo que les rodea.

Por último un cuarto nivel de creación de textos flamencos no consiste en adaptar textos a la música indie, sino todo lo contrario. Partiendo de una estructura musical folclórica, se crea una letra totalmente nueva que se encorseta perfectamente en una determinada forma folclórica. Este último podría denominarse *modelo de composición adaptada*. Este es el caso de la sevillana "La plaga," de Sr. Chinarro, aparecida en el disco *¡Menos samba!* (2013). En este ejemplo, Antonio Luque interpreta unas sevillanas en do menor. Exceptuando el timbre y la letra de esta canción, la adaptación que la banda hace de este género es casi literal. De esta forma se pueden encontrar paralelismos entre la celeberrima sevillana "El adiós," de Amigos de Gines, por citar un ejemplo, y la canción de la banda indie Sr. Chinarro.

Tanto la sevillana de la agrupación folclórica como la de la banda liderada por Antonio Luque se mueven recurrentemente entre los grados primero y quinto. Este juego de acordes son utilizados de manera habitual en las sevillanas (Fernández 2004:123). La única diferencia patente entre las secuencias de acordes utilizadas por Sr. Chinarro y Amigos de Gines es que los primeros utilizan el segundo grado como paso previo antes del cierre, y los segundos fluctúan entre el cuarto y el primer grado. Asimismo, la curvatura de la melodía de Sr. Chinarro se asemeja a la utilizada por Amigos de Gines en “El adiós.”

Las diferencias entre una sevillana tradicional y la versión indie se encuentran en el ritmo, puesto que en el ejemplo urbano se utiliza un compás de 4/4 y en el folclórico de Amigos de Gines, uno de 3/4; y en la letra, que abandona temas recurrentes en este tipo de composiciones, como el amor, la amistad o la fiesta, para realizar una crítica a los avances tecnológicos, la política mundial y la sociedad. “La vida no es mejor con artilugios/Con artilugios hoy ni en los molinos hay refugio/y el gigante quiere paz, ¡qué subterfugio!/Todos los inventos fueron y son militares/desde la catapulta al Internet, ya lo sabes” (Sr. Chinarro 2012:1).

### Flamenco y culturas urbanas

La tendencia musical descrita anteriormente de artistas y bandas asociados al género indie en España hacia el flamenco y el folclore de Andalucía, y la utilización de estos modelos para la adaptación de sus letras resulta cada vez más clara. A los casos anteriormente analizados (Los Planetas, Pony Bravo, Sr. Chinarro . . .) hay que añadir otros, como Grupo de Expertos Solynieve, Manu Ferrón o La Bien Querida.

Sin embargo, la adaptación de letras flamencas no es la única vía de hibridación fuera de lo estrictamente musical para las bandas de indie españolas. En algunas bandas como Grupo de Expertos Solynieve el sonido no se asocia de manera exclusiva con el flamenco. Estas formaciones presentan rasgos del folclore de Andalucía en el sentido más amplio del término. Por ejemplo, sobresale la utilización del “habla andaluza” para reforzar la asimilación del género internacional a través de la cultural local. Este recurso ya fue utilizado por Los Planetas en *Una ópera egipcia* en canciones como “Soy un pobre granaíno,” donde el cantante pronuncia el vocablo “granaíno” en lugar de “granadino.” También en ese corte puede escucharse el empleo de la glosolalia “leré leré” en la última estrofa. Este recurso, que consiste en interpretar una serie de sílabas sin sentido aparente, se utiliza habitualmente en el flamenco.

Otra variante en la hibridación del indie y el flamenco se aprecia en la joven formación sevillana Orthodox. Aunque esta banda posee un sonido cercano al del subgénero *doom metal*, con guitarras muy distorsionadas que ejecutan acordes de quinta—más conocidos en el mundo del *metal* como acordes “de poder”—y baterías pesadas y contundentes, el público clasifica su propuesta como indie por lo experimental de su música.<sup>[4]</sup> Al igual que Grupo de Expertos Solynieve, esta agrupación presenta rasgos propios del folclore local. Pero la banda no se centra en el flamenco, sino en la Semana Santa de Sevilla. De hecho, su primera grabación se llama *Gran Poder*, igual que la famosa imagen procesional de “La madrugá” de la capital andaluza. Como parte de su particular acercamiento al folclore local, Orthodox también ha introducido elementos propios del flamenco, aunque de una manera diferente a lo analizado hasta ahora. La banda sevillana colabora con el bailar Israel Galván, poniendo en escena un arriesgado proyecto que combina el baile, el canto, interpretado por Fernando “Terremoto” y el abrigo instrumental de la banda de doom metal, seguida por público indie (Castellano Gutiérrez 2008).

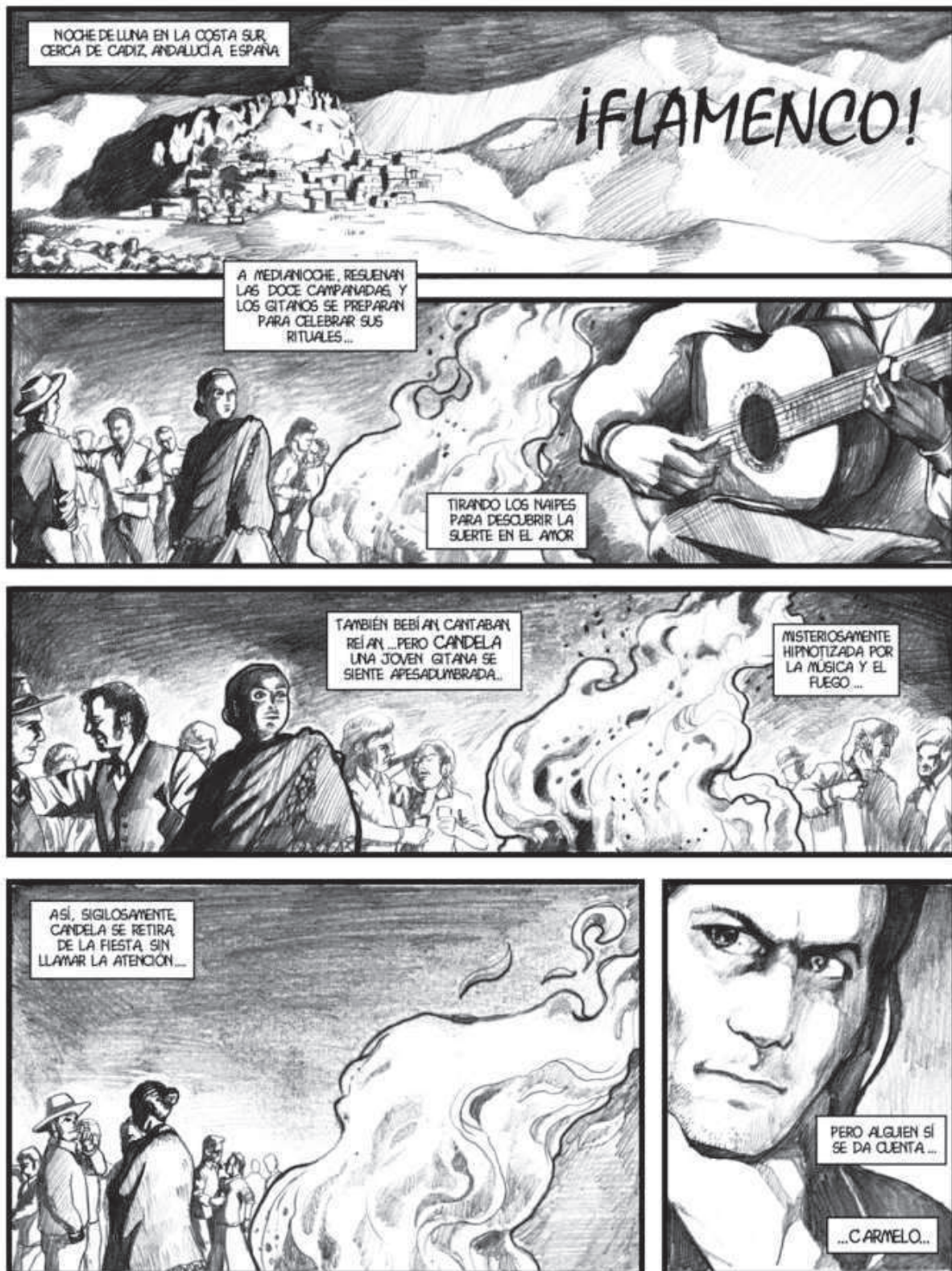
Asimismo, una de las tendencias más interesantes realizadas desde el indie hacia el flamenco se puede observar en La Bien Querida. La banda introduce en algunas de sus canciones elementos importados del flamenco. Dichos recursos se aprecian en el ritmo de “Siete medidas de seguridad” y la armonía de algunas canciones, caso de “El zoo absoluto”; también en el uso de recursos tímbricos como palmas de marcado sabor flamenco en la canción “De momento abril” (La bien querida 2009). No obstante, el aspecto más interesante en relación con el flamenco de La Bien Querida reside en la forma de vestir de la líder de la formación, Ana Fernández. La artista bilbaína suele ir ataviada con una bata de cola durante sus actuaciones.



Portada del disco *Romancero* de La Bien Querida.

Finalmente, es necesario mencionar que la querencia de la música indie española hacia el flamenco encuentra su réplica en otras manifestaciones artísticas asociadas a esta misma etiqueta. En la actualidad, muchos ilustradores y novelistas gráficos están publicando, en pequeñas editoriales, dibujos y cómics relacionados con el mundo del flamenco. Sobresalen las viñetas de Santos de Veracruz, ilustrador que acompaña habitualmente en directo a la banda de fusión Muchachito Bombo Infierno—que realiza algunos dibujos sobre el mismo escenario—o el trabajo colectivo *Flamenco y cómic*, compuesto por biografías ilustradas de cantaores y tocaores en las que participan dibujantes como Carlos Pacheco o Cristina Vela. Asimismo, resultan llamativos los trabajos realizados fuera de España, caso de la genial novela gráfica *Buscavidas*, creada por Christophe Dabitch y Benjamin Flao e inspirada en un cantaor de Utrera, Sevilla. También son interesantes publicaciones como *¡Flamenco!*, del chileno Rodrigo Elgueta o las ilustraciones de Emily Nudd y Dan Hallett.







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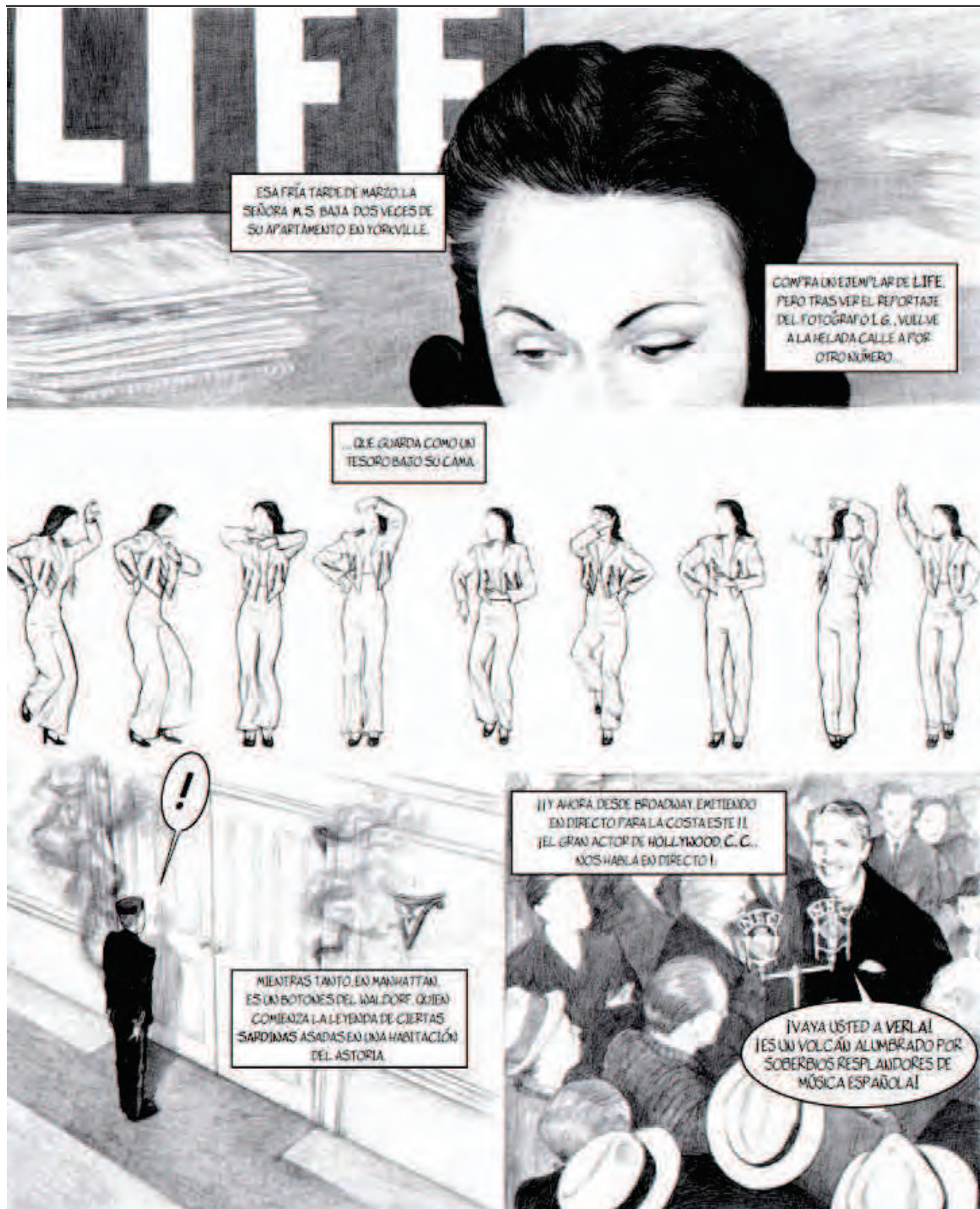
Sobre estas líneas, la primera página del cómic *¡Flamenco!*, de Rodrigo Elgueta. Esta publicación, inspirada por la obra *El amor brujo* de Manuel de Falla, resulta realmente interesante por dos motivos. En primer lugar, porque se trata de un cómic sobre flamenco, género musical popular folclórico asociado a Andalucía, realizado por un dibujante de Santiago de Chile. Esto refuerza la idea de hibridación en la actualidad, no solo entre culturas distantes, sino también entre disciplinas dispares. Además, es valorable señalar que, a pesar de esta distancia física entre el artista y el objeto en torno al cual gira su creación, Elgueta reproduce con habilidad el habla de la región occidental de Andalucía en sus viñetas. La razón de este dominio del habla de dicha zona tiene su origen en una estancia de estudios de dos años que Elgueta realizó en España. Lo mismo ocurre con los autores de *Buscavidas*.

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En segundo lugar, *¡Flamenco!* es un cómic totalmente independiente, autoeditado por Elgueta a través de su propia empresa, Platino. Este tipo de acciones al margen de grandes compañías ha sido analizado con anterioridad en el caso de grupos andaluces de música indie como Pony Bravo.

Bajo estas líneas puede consultarse la primera página del capítulo dedicado a Carmen Amaya, aparecido en el libro *Flamenco y cómic*. Una vez más, al igual que con el creación de Elgueta, este libro inédito se ha realizado de manera independiente, aunque es posible que acabe siendo publicado por la Junta de Andalucía, el principal órgano rector de la Comunidad Autónoma de Andalucía.

Las ilustraciones del capítulo del ejemplo han sido realizadas por la jienense Cristina Vela, artísticamente conocida como Cristina Vela. En esta breve muestra se narra una pequeña parte de la biografía de Carmen Amaya, concretamente su paso por Nueva York, haciendo alusión a algunas anécdotas, como sus famosas sardinas cocinadas en una barbacoa en la suite del célebre hotel Waldorf Astoria.



Página extraída de “Carmen Amaya,” ilustrado por Cristina Vela (VVAA 2013:36).

### Músicos de nueva generación: actitud abierta ante la creación artística

Los géneros englobados bajo el concepto “músicas populares” se caracterizan por una enorme diversidad y una

capacidad de transformación muy rápida. Esta potencialidad viene dada, especialmente en el caso de las músicas populares urbanas, por su estrecho vínculo con la sociedad y su evolución. Todas las tendencias apreciables en la población, aunque sean minoritarias, presentan una réplica en los géneros musicales populares; y querencias relacionadas con la música, por ejemplo, los sombreros utilizados y los bailes interpretados por el cantante norteamericano Pharrell Williams, una de las cien personas más influyentes de 2014 según la revista Time, son utilizados y reproducidos poco después por la población en una suerte de simbiosis cultural.

Vivimos un momento marcado por fuertes intercambios culturales a nivel global, propiciados, entre otras cosas, por la aparición de Internet a lo largo del último cuarto del siglo xx y el desarrollo de las nuevas tecnologías digitales dedicadas a la producción, almacenamiento y difusión de la información. Dichas transformaciones están favoreciendo el nacimiento de una cultura universal, formada por la unión de elementos provenientes de distintas regiones, sobre todo occidentales. Partiendo del concepto de glocalización, lo plural formado desde lo particular, la idea de heterogeneización aparece como sustituto de la tendencia generalizada de homogeneización (Robertson 1994:25-44).

Para comprender cómo todos estos condicionantes histórico-sociales han influido en la composición de los grupos de indie andaluz, citaremos una vez más a Pony Bravo. Su característica más sobresaliente radica en su forma de entender la creación artística como una acción global en la que no solo la música es importante, sino también todos los aspectos que la rodean: producción musical, financiación, difusión, etc. A diferencia de otras bandas, centradas en la composición e interpretación, incluso en lo segundo de manera exclusiva, Pony Bravo posee su propio sello discográfico, distribuye su música, realiza sus propios anuncios en formato audiovisual, edita sus videoclips y diseña su cartelería. Por tanto, su creatividad se manifiesta a distintos niveles que van más allá de la música en sí misma. De esta forma, la libertad que desgranar en su composiciones, en las que confluyen influencias tan dispares como el flamenco, la psicodelia norteamericana y el *reggae*, también se aprecia en la política comercial de la banda y las formas de difusión utilizadas.

Para ejemplificar esta intertextualidad podemos comentar brevemente uno de sus carteles.





Cartel de un concierto de Pony Bravo en el Auditorio de la Cartuja de Sevilla[5].



Las composiciones de los posters están formados a modo de *collage*, fusionando elementos dispares que, de alguna forma, poseen relación con la banda. Por lo general, Alonso introduce distintos componentes que aluden a la cultura andaluza, en especial a la imagen que proyecta la ciudad de Sevilla hacia el exterior, como mujeres vestidas de mantilla o personajes populares como el humorista Chiquito de la Calzada o el empresario Manuel Ruiz de Lopera—antiguo presidente del Real Betis Balompié, equipo de fútbol sevillano—combinándolos con iconos mundiales como Michael Jackson o George W. Bush.

En el ejemplo mostrado sobre estas líneas se aprecia una Sevilla inundada por el cambio climático, en la que el arco de la Macarena se encuentra junto a la Giralda, dos monumentos religiosos en la realidad situados a 2,5 kilómetros de distancia. En primer plano aparece una cofradía sobre una góndola,<sup>[6]</sup> en la que la imagen de la Virgen ha sido sustituida por El Curro, mascota de la Exposición Universal de Sevilla '92, y el personaje japonés de ficción Ultraman. Esta superposición de elementos transpuestos en el espacio y el tiempo está directamente relacionada con una tendencia mundial conocida como *mash-up*—la unión de elementos aparentemente dispares para crear una nueva obra—que es apreciable en los carteles, portadas de discos y música de Pony Bravo. La elección de estos símbolos no es arbitraria, ya que todos están íntimamente relacionados con la vida de los intérpretes; son iconos que aparecen de manera recurrente en su día a día en Sevilla, con los que rememoran su infancia o asociados a su equipo de fútbol.

La actitud con la que afrontan sus creaciones también se aprecia en su manera de entender el funcionamiento de la industria musical. Pony Bravo ha apostado por la creación de su propio sello, El Rancho Casa de Discos, en el que poder manejar sus proyectos artísticos con libertad. Igualmente, su música se distribuye de manera gratuita con licencias Creative Commons, lejos de las restricciones impuestas por las grandes multinacionales.

## Conclusiones

A lo largo de este artículo se ha estudiado, de forma empírica, la fusión de la tradición andaluza y la modernidad internacional en muchas de las producciones discográficas actuales aglutinadas bajo el género indie en España.

Sin embargo, aunque el objeto de estudio en torno al cual gira esta investigación es el hecho musical, hemos decidido enfocar este artículo desde una perspectiva holística, abordando el contexto que rodea y consecuentemente en el que se producen estos discos, así como el impacto social que tienen. Por tanto, para esta investigación hemos buscado todos los factores no musicales que intervienen en estas hibridaciones. Esto nos ha permitido constatar que la tendencia observable a la hibridación entre el género musical independiente y el flamenco, se ha manifestado en otras formas de expresión artística asociadas al concepto indie.

En primer lugar se han analizado los textos de los discos más importantes de la última década creados por artistas y bandas asociadas al indie de raíces andaluzas. Esto nos ha permitido constatar que existen cuatro modelos diferentes de creación lírica basada en coplas flamencas:

- 1- Modelo simple de adaptación de letras de origen flamenco al indie. Consiste en copiar literalmente versiones de coplas populares interpretadas con anterioridad por cantaores flamencos.
- 2- Modelo microcompositivo de coplas sueltas flamencas. Se basa en usar a conveniencia fragmentos de letras tradicionales, uniéndolas libremente, confeccionando con ellas los versos para una nueva canción.
- 3- Modelo de actualización de coplas flamencas. Consiste en actualizar textos de coplas flamencas clásicas, introduciendo pequeños elementos que relacionan la letra original, atemporal, con alguna noticia reciente.
- 4- Modelo de creación adaptada a la música. Partiendo de una estructura musical folclórica, se crea una letra totalmente nueva que se encorseta perfectamente en una determinada forma folclórica.

En segundo lugar, hemos podido constatar que algunos artistas asociados al indie andaluz, como La Bien Querida, están absorbiendo elementos propios de la estética flamenca. Por tanto, en este caso ya no se trata de hacer música con reminiscencias del flamenco o un cierto sabor andaluz, sino que el músico vive de flamenco.

Por otra parte, se aprecia una réplica del movimiento musical en el mundo de la novela a gráfica. En los últimos años, se han publicado un gran número de historias relacionadas con el flamenco, como *Buscavidas*

(2011), de origen francés e inspirada en un cantaor aficionado de la localidad sevillana de Utrera; *Flamenco y cómic* (2013), realizada por varios autores, en la que se pueden leer pequeñas biografías de personajes del mundo del flamenco; o *Flamenco!*, del ilustrador chileno Rodrigo Elgueta.

La concurrencia de estos elementos permiten comprender la existencia de una categoría musical indie española definida por la prensa y el público, un género configurado socialmente.

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[1] A pesar de que el flamenco se asocia de manera recurrente con Andalucía, la tendencia del indie hacia el flamenco en España no se circunscribe al ámbito geográfico de dicha Comunidad Autónoma. Hay artistas como La Bien Querida que, a pesar de no ser andaluza, fusiona su música con Flamenco. Sin embargo, la mayoría de artistas que fusionan indie y flamenco, caso de Sr. Chinarro, Los Planetas o Pony Bravo, son de Andalucía.

[2] Estas entrevistas están publicadas en la Tesis *Hibridación, globalización y Tecnología. Flamenco y música indie en Andalucía (1977-2012)* (Barrera 2014: 312-401)

[3] Fragmento de la malagueña "Soy más cristiano que moro," atribuida al cantaor "Enrique Mellizo," posteriormente utilizada por otros cantaores como Manuel Celestino Cobos "Cobitos" (Cobos 1965:1).

[4] Información facilitada por Orthodox a través de su perfil en *Bandcamp*. Consultado el 11 de febrero, 2014. <http://orthodoxband.bandcamp.com/> [6].

[5] Los carteles normalmente son diseñados por Daniel Alonso, cantante de la banda.

[6] En este contexto, el término "cofradía" alude a una reunión de devotos cristianos que procesionan, generalmente vestidos con túnica y antifaz, junto a una imagen religiosa.

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[6] <http://orthodoxband.bandcamp.com/>



## The “Dancing Queens”: Negotiating Hijra Pehchan from India’s Streets onto the Global Stage

By Jeff Roy

As we snaked through a neighborhood on the outskirts of Lucknow, I imagined what our course trajectory would look like on Google Maps. Rounding the corner of an impossibly narrow gali, our colorful parade of six—three hijras (male-to-female transgender), two kothis (effeminate male) and myself (appropriately named ‘gay gora,’ or gay white man)—attracted the attention of several young roadies. A group of excited children nipped at our heels while two young men swooped in to bear the dholak (two-faced membranophone) and harmonium, which had begun to cramp our queerish style.

After a couple minutes of fraternizing with the young men, Saumya-guru detached from the group and knocked on the door of the house of a family whose son had recently married. A middle-aged “Auntie” appeared at the door and smiled nervously, but after a brief exchange—in audible to my ears—it became obvious that we were not welcome. Saumya insisted that the *badhai* was for Auntie’s own good, and with the signature hijra clap (two stiff palms with fingers splayed), barged into the abode’s foyer. The group advanced. Saumya made her way towards an 80-something-year-old grandma sitting on a couch and whispered something into her ear. Making a big show of it in front of Auntie, she blessed Grandma with a light tap on the head. *Saumya got what she wanted*, I thought, as Auntie began to pour a tall glass of chilled water into her cup.

Once our nerves had settled, Saumya’s floral-dressed *chela* (daughter, literally ‘disciple’) stepped in to lead the troupe through three traditional folk and *filmi* songs. The harmonium carried her song melodies, while the *dholak* and “signature claps” from two other *chelas* provided a groovy cross-rhythmic structure to support her dance. The performance was well received by its youthful audience, which by then had multiplied exponentially and amassed outside the foyer threshold. Their young eyes twinkled as the dancer twirled her *Salwar Kameez* to the jangle of her *gungroos* (ankle bells). The performance benefactress, in the corner standing with arms crossed, was less than impressed.

It is here that my recording stops. What I remember is that Auntie’s basket of offerings were too modest for Saumya’s taste. I remember clinging onto my plastic chair handle as Saumya argued her case. The walls began to shake as Auntie retorted in crude Hindi: “You don’t even belong in this neighborhood. You bring your kind somewhere else!” Indeed, I thought. *What would our return time on Google Maps be if we ran? Is there a setting for that?* After a tornado of curses, we left deflated and defeated.

This article is not a Bollywood thriller, although it may engender feelings of vulnerability and fear that characterize the experiences of being hijra in India. Worrying about hurt feelings is not a luxury that most hijras—a casteless and classless queer minority—generally have. For many, *badhais* (ritualistic music and dance) are the only available means of revenue aside from sex work and bar dance. This has been the practical reality for hijras for nearly two centuries. South Asia’s so-called “third gender” have faced legal persecution for the past 153 years. In 1861, the British colonial government criminalized “unnatural sex” via Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC)—a law that was recently reinstated after a brief respite between the years 2009 and 2013. Section 325, issued in the same year as 377, outlawed “emasculatation” on the grounds that it could cause someone “grievous hurt.” Then, in 1871, the Criminal Tribes Act (CTA) was issued, calling for the “registration, surveillance and control of certain tribes and eunuchs.” The act defines these individuals along a number of parameters, including those who:

(A) are reasonably suspected of kidnapping or castrating children, or of committing offenses under Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code; (B) appear dressed or ornamented like a woman, in a public street or place, or in any other place, with the intention of being seen; and (C) dance or play a music, or take part in any public exhibition, in a public street or place or for hire in a private house (Emphasis, mine). (Collection of Acts Passed by the Governor-General of India in Council of the Year 1871, in Reddy 2005:26-7).

Encoded within these parameters was the (irrational) belief that crime was inborn and/or inherited through clan affiliation. The potential for criminal behavior and its codification were inscribed onto the bodies of the criminal lower castes, thereby providing the justification for the regulation and surveillance of labor that these bodies produced (see Reddy 2005). The parameters outlined in the CTA not only underscore a particular colonial anxiety surrounding the alleged practice of stealing and castrating children, but also that of hijra performativity embodied vis-à-vis the practice of *badhais*. Since hijra music was something that contradicted or subverted colonial authority over all Indian bodies, its subjugation was necessary to facilitate the continuation of another seven decades of

colonial rule. Sadly, the marginalization of these people and their practices continues today, seven decades after Indian independence.

This chapter attempts to revitalize some of the endangered practices and discourses surrounding hijra performativity through an investigation of the specific ways in which hijra music is being re-contextualized from its liminal spaces in the streets and onto the public stage. While the current reality does not bode well for the continuation of hijra badhais as we once knew them, newly emerging transgender ensembles like Mumbai’s “Dancing Queens” are introducing new possibilities for hijra performativity and empowerment. I argue that, established within a reconstituted urban Indian context, new adaptive strategies are predicated on the exchange of devalued ways of encoding hijra difference for updated, modern ones based upon the distinctly LGBTIQ discourse of *pehch?n* (acknowledgement of the self, or ‘identity’). The Dancing Queens’s staging of *pehch?n* empowers hijras through a global transgender lexicon while simultaneously renewing particular preexisting performance repertoires of homo-sociality.

Central to the translation of hijra to transgender is India’s HIV/AIDS Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) industrial complex, which emerged in the mid-1990s through organizations such as the Naz Foundation in Uttar Pradesh and the *Humsafar* Trust in Mumbai. Supported by the global LGBTIQ movements, UN AIDS Development Programmes, among others, these organizations are responsible for outreach programs based on notions of individual empowerment and the proliferation of globally endorsed identity categories. I am referring mainly to the universally accepted constructs of “men who have sex with men” (MSM)—which in India include “male-assigned” hijras and *kotis/kothis* (a social classification used for gay men and/or gender queer individuals who live on the periphery of the hijra community)—and English language markers of gender and sexuality.

LGBTI, and in particular, Q (*queer*) are employed mainly among India’s educated, English-speaking middle class both to serve as a catch-all meant to encompass gender and sexual expressions that lie outside of the (Western-derived) heterosexual matrix, as well as to mediate the verbal slippage between local constructs. However, it is the re/appropriation of Hindu-Urdu monikers of queerness that has recently gained steam among Indian-based LGBTIQ organizations as a means of reaching out to the general public. This effort is housed discursively within the notion of *pehch?n* (????? and ?????, pronounced p?t??n), an Urdu word with Persian etymology that signifies “identity,” “recognition,” or “acknowledgement.” The term was appropriated in 2010 by the nationwide India HIV/AIDS Alliance to designate a program exclusively devoted to MSM, transgender and hijra clients. As of 2015, Project Pehch?n operates across 17 states with five sub-recipients (SRs),<sup>[1]</sup> and at least 200 sub-sub-recipients (SSRs) in both urban and rural areas. In addition to providing sexual, reproductive health, and HIV services to an estimated 4.5 Lakh (450,000) of MSM, transgender and hijra community members, the program also empowers its participants through community-driven advocacy and arts initiatives.<sup>[2]</sup> It is here that I begin to draw connections between the use of *pehch?n* as a socio-political designation for empowerment programs, and as locus of knowledge of self, “coming out,” and identity (trans)formation. It is specifically through the act of staging *pehch?n* that the term is awarded its dual significance and discursive weight.



**Figure 1: Members of the Dancing Queens at the 2013 Mumbai Queer Azaadi March;** photo by the author, February 2, 2013.

This article foregrounds the social organization and personal narratives of Mumbai’s Dancing Queens against the backdrop of a staged concert which was held in December 2012 during Mumbai’s 2012-13 Pride festivities called “Rhythm of India.” A performance group comprised mostly of hijras yet operated by members affiliated with the Humsafar Trust and under the LGBTIQ banner, the Dancing Queens provides opportunities for individuals to express *pehch?n* while also functioning as a vehicle through which to disseminate “*pehch?n*” in the socio-politicized sense of the term. Ultimately, this article illustrates how—through the staging of new and old repertoires, choreography, (gender) theatricality, and the discursive employment of “*pehch?n*”—the group liberates the hijra body from the post-colonial socio-political “closet,” challenging “closed” modes of hijra identity with the embrace of a respectable middle class, secular, and transgender/queer frontier.

Accordingly, I trace the emergence of *pehch?n* through the analysis of the relationship between vocal and dance parts, conventions of performance and staging, the status of performers within and outside of the performance context, and my placement in all of this. In elucidating the voice as a metaphorical locus of hijra subjectivity, I combine observations derived from my own experiences working with and video documenting the Dancing Queens for over four and a half years during periods between 2010-15. Film links are embedded in the text to provide an interactive component to reading; otherwise they can be viewed in their entirety using the following link: <http://www.ethnomusicologyofthecloset.com/dq> [1] (password: DQ4321). My use of film in this case seeks to illustrate an “emic” perspective of the ways music and dance phrase movements of self (re)presentation, to disrupt the established “ethnographic imagination” by raising further questions about the nature of ethnographic “authenticity,” and to allow project participants to “speak out” for themselves. If queer is [truly] “connected to emotions as much as it is a body of theory” (Rooke 2010:26), then it becomes necessary for us to experience it using our own senses and interpretive mechanisms. Moreover, as documentarian Werner Herzog explains, “sometimes images themselves develop their own life, their own mysterious stardom.”<sup>[3]</sup>

### The *Izzat* of *Badhais*

An (ethno)historical investigation of these discursive transformations requires that we first examine what came before. *Pehch?n* can be seen as an extension, in some respects, of *izzat*. A Farsi word originally denoting notions of “honor,” *izzat* was appropriated and applied by anthropologist Gayatri Reddy (2005) as a means of interpreting aspects of the organizational structures and identity formations of hijras in Hyderabad. *Izzat* is seen as currency (social capital) through which hijras and *kothis* craft their identities and negotiate their relative status (Reddy 2005:40). In this case, *izzat* influences the ways in which *badhai* hijras define themselves in relation to other hijras—those, for instance, who engage in commercial sex work or bar dance. According to Reddy, “*badhai* hijras, or ritual practitioners, consider themselves (and are generally considered by most hijra sex workers as well) to be the more respected hijras—those with *izzat*” (ibid.). The implication here is that *izzat* applies to abstinence and spirituality, and that those who are abstinent and spiritual (or at least perceived to be) possess more *izzat*. Nevertheless, Reddy’s appropriation of *izzat* is more expansive than the erotic. Whereas the Mediterranean notion of “honor” takes on a communal as well as “libidinous” dimension, Reddy argues that hijras’ use of *izzat* has a moral valence that “derives strength precisely from its diffusion beyond the axis of sex/gender to encompass a range of other hierarchical domains, including kinship, religion, and class” (Reddy 2005:43). Therefore, rather than restricting its meaning to “honor,” Reddy translates the term *izzat* to “respect.”



In accordance with Reddy’s use of the term, *izzat* can therefore be seen as something that provides structure to the central organizational and pedagogical system that lies at the center of hijra badhai’s social and economic vitality. I would suggest that *izzat* may have bearings on badhais in at least six ways: (1) spiritual meanings and associations encoded within the badhai ritual (religion); (2) relationships held between members of the badhai troupe (kinship); (3) learning within the *guru-chela* (mother-daughter, literally ‘teacher-disciple’) relationship (kinship); (4) rapport held between members of the badhai troupe and the general public (kinship/class); (5) the badhais troupe’s overall social stature and whether or not it reflects that of the surrounding community (class); and the (6) overall quality and reception of the badhai performance. As I explain further, the relative degrees of *izzat* also accordingly carry financial implications, depending on the affluence of the particular neighborhood or jurisdiction government by the badhai troupe. In other words, the more *izzat*, the more money received.

### *Izzat and Religion, Kinship, Class*

The centuries-old and (relatively) lucrative practice of badhai is conventionally known to serve as performative blessings of fertility and financial prosperity for willing patrons at weddings, births (of male children), or store openings. Badhai songs are also frequently performed at initiation ceremonies, religious pilgrimages, and other interregional hijra gatherings. In these cases, the music calls to and/or conveys spiritual significance on behalf of the Mother Goddess—who takes the form of *Bahuchara Mata* or *Bedraj Mata*—while also serving the functional purpose of providing social cohesion. While devotion to the goddess reflects a Hindu-based belief system, the central organizational and pedagogical system surrounding badhais is Muslim-derived. For many hijra communities, adherence to Islamic values are performed through various customs including praying, saying *namaz*, participating in the pilgrimage to Mecca (the *Hajj*), the celebration of *Muharram*, circumcision rites, and burial practices, and other customary rules of practice (Reddy 2005:102). The larger social organizational structure—the *ghar?n?*—also stems from Islamic elements.

The term *ghar?n?*, literally “of the house,” is an Urdu term employed in Hindustani (North Indian) music nomenclatures referring to a “family tradition” or “stylistic school and/or members of that school” (Neuman 1990:272).<sup>[4]</sup> The basis of the Hindustani *ghar?n?* is the *ust?d-shagird silsila*, or *guru-?i?ya parampar?* (the Muslim and Hindu equivalents to the teacher-student relationship, respectively). In this apprenticeship system, aural learning consists not only of “an elaborate ritual of instruction” known as *tal?m*—an Urdu term roughly translated as “instruction” (Neuman 2004:102)—but also of aural osmosis. Students are expected to spend time with their teachers in contexts outside the immediate purview of the music lesson in order to passively absorb aspects of a professional musician’s life. The “lesson,” therefore, not only structures music learning but implicitly “of being a musician” (Neuman 1990:58). In many cases, students work around the house or run errands, receiving lessons in return, or to access other aspects of his professional life. This type of “service” inherently linked to the learning process, has conventionally been associated with a “feudal” (pre-modern) system of learning wherein the teacher is “the owner of the ‘land,’ or the holder of information, and the student is the laborer that cultivates it” (Qureshi 2002:92). Whether “feudal” or not, “service” can be seen as a form of social capital—an *izzat*—employed by students and their teachers within the *ghar?n?* structure.

Like Hindustani *ghar?n?*s, hijra *ghar?n?*s possess specific repertoires of beliefs, customs, and pedagogical practices based on the *guru-chela* relationship. The display of *izzat* is demonstrated in a variety of “services” and strengthens the bond between mother and daughter. Accordingly, *izzat* often determines a *chela*’s social status among her hijra sisters and the larger inter-*ghar?n?* community. While Hindustani music *ghar?n?*s are conventionally founded upon pedigree (consisting usually of men with ties to a common ancestor), hijra *ghar?n?*s are comprised of gender non-conforming individuals from a diverse range of religious, caste, class, ethnic, language, gender and sexual backgrounds. “Membership” is determined less by one’s (previous) identity background and more upon one’s willingness to acquiesce to the primacy of the *guru-chela* and to assume an identity based on new parameters of identity. In this case, therefore, the demonstration of *izzat* becomes even more paramount to a *chela*’s “membership” and social status within the *ghar?n?* (see Video 1 for an aural explanation of *ghar?n?*s and badhais from Abheena, a hijra guru).

Badhai troupes, a product of the larger social organization of the *ghar?n?*, reflect, perform, and produce theses value systems. Since badhais are generally regarded as possessing greater *izzat* relative to other hijra socio-economic practices, participation within badhais depends largely on the performance of *izzat* within the *ghar?n?*. The performance of *izzat* within the badhai troupe itself is reflected in the hierarchy of performers and division of badhai earnings, although this is more so the case with Muslim-affiliated hijra *ghar?n?*s than Hindu ones. While conducting fieldwork in Kanpur, I helped a Muslim hijra guru named Zehra divide the earnings her badhai



troupe received that day. The divisions were made largely along hierarchical lines—the lead singer received double the amount of earnings from her badhai counterparts. This is not always the case, however. I have observed other *gurus* divide earnings amongst their chelas and non-hijra instrumentalists equally.

Izzat is also performed through emphasis on instrumental/vocal parts within the badhai. In a performance ensemble ranging from two to six individuals, the centerpiece of badhai music and worship is the *dholak*—the instrument with the most izzat. Dholaks are traditionally accompanied by the harmonium, a lead singer and small group of supporting singers. If dholak and harmonium players (usually male) are hired from outside to perform badhais, the roles these players assume in the larger organizational structure of the badhai troupe become secondary to the lead singer, a hijra chela (who receives the largest share of earnings, aside from the guru herself). In general, the lead singer constitutes one who is skilled in vocal performance, knows the songs by memory, and holds a high position on the social hierarchy relative to the supporting singers. Her musical ability is measured according to a number of factors including, but not necessarily limited to the maintenance of proper intonation, projection of voice using a high-nasal tonal quality, command of rhythm, command of the signature clap, and command of song lyrics and overall repertoire. Because of her musical prowess, she possesses more izzat.

Izzat is also constituted within the musical/lyrical content of badhai songs. When badhai hijras sing, they call on *Bahuchara Mata* to listen to their words. At least in theory, the performance of izzat through these songs elicits the goddess’s presence. Forming a prayer in the rhythmic structure of a *tihai* (three groups), the lyrics in the following excerpt of the badhai song “Asha Natoru” (‘Don’t Break My Hopes’) performatively invokes the roles hijras play as spiritual intermediaries between the Mother Goddess her patrons:

*Mileko bakko mai re,*                      I’m yearning to meet you,

*Jisi ki lodh lagavi re,*                      That is all I want,

*Gale mein aaj samao re*                      Through my throat (voice) you sing

The literal translation of the final line of the stanza, “Through my throat you sing,” calls the Goddess to inhabit the body of the singing hijras. Incidentally, the entire song invokes some level of izzat in the form of blessings, pleas, illustrations of *puja* (prayer), family, personal suffering, and hope. These values are constituted vividly in the song’s *gat* (chorus):

Meike bhavan bade dur,                      The Goddess’s house is very far,

*Meya more assa natoru*                      *Don’t break my hopes*

In other words, by traveling “very far,” hijras demonstrate a type of “service” which grants them social capital for them to call upon the Goddess to hear their song (see Video 2 for a rendition of the song).

This type of reverence is also reflected in the dance repertoire, which is modest and conservative. Izzat in dancing is achieved by those possessing a strong knowledge of the song and dance repertoire, the ability to *abhinay* (expressive gestures in the body’s upper-half), and even a physical attractiveness and/or gender “passability.” Although dancing is usually shared by several chelas, it is customary for the guru to take part in some of the dancing if she is present. The social and spiritual significance of the guru—her supreme izzat—makes her involvement in the performance especially auspicious.

### **From Izzat to Pehch?n**

The izzat gained through the performance of badhais has been on the decline for decades, as urban displacement of lower-class areas by a largely secular or moderate middle class are continuing to force hijra ghar?n?s to change their strategies of revenue. This is placing pressure on the ghar?n? system, and consequently the pedagogical strategies of the gurus and chelas within, to change. While sex work and bar dance have for some time served as substitutes for badhais in some ghar?n?s, many within the hijra community are either leaving the ghar?n? system in search of other forms of employment, and/or working to change it from the inside-out. Many hijras regularly voice their concerns about the “unchecked” power of the guru over her chelas. While at the 2013 *Koovagam mela*, an interregional transgender religious festival in Tamil Nadu attended by tens of thousands of individuals, I met a Christian *thirunangai* (transgender) named Catherine, who like her Muslim sisters, were celebrating alongside her largely Hindu family. “We want a society of cooperation and respect,” she said to me. “For this, we

need to abolish *jam?t* (meaning the ghar?n? system). In her view, it is the lack of izzat (respect) embedded within the enforced practices of sex work and, to a certain extent, badhais, that is responsible for perpetuating the “exploitation” of chelas by their gurus.

This transgender migration from the ghar?n? can be attributed to the rise in regular employment opportunities and education provided by and housed within India’s HIV/AIDS NGO industrial complex. In a video-recorded interview, Abheena Aher, the Dancing Queens founder, thanked HIV/AIDS NGOs for “providing sources of empowerment” for transgenders (see Video 3 for the excerpt):

Slowly because of this NGO sector, CBO sector, a lot of hijras are starting to come out [...] and that is slowly opening up that entire closed community that we had. Slowly people are starting to come out. They are seeking their own jobs. They’re balancing [...] both acts together. I am doing a full-time job in Delhi, at the same time I’m also linked with my ghar?n?. (Interview, March 2, 2013)

While the extent to which the rise of the HIV/AIDS NGO sector is changing the “traditional” *ghar?n?* system still remains to be seen, Abheena is articulating that a gradual shift is taking place within the *hijra* community. This shift is predicated on the exchange of a lexicon of exclusivity, liminality, and overall “closed-ness,” with codes and signifying systems of inclusivity, self-assuredness, and openness. Accordingly, I would add that central to this discursive shift is the translation of izzat—a form of “respect” nonetheless associated with the maintenance of closed systems—with pehch?n—a form of self-recognition and empowerment associated with being “out.”

The rest of this chapter concerns the ways in which pehch?n manifests performatively through the Dancing Queens, Mumbai’s premiere professional transgender dance contingent. A formal organization housed literally within the boundaries of the Mumbai-based HIV/AIDS NGO Humsafar Trust, its diverse membership skirts the boundaries between “traditional” hijra ghar?n? and modern transgender lifestyle, and in some cases subvert the ghar?n? system entirely. In doing so, the Dancing Queens reflect, perform, and produce pehch?n through formal initiatives of equal opportunity and inclusivity (through the hosting of auditions), the fostering of talent (rehearsals and performance), and individual empowerment (advocacy). (See Video 4 for an aural description of the Dancing Queens.)

## The Group

The Dancing Queens consists of a wavering number of nearly 20 individuals. They comprise a mix of transgender individuals (including hijras), gay men (including kothis and *panthis*, “straight”-acting men), transmen, lesbians, and even *jogtas* (male-to-female transgender individuals from the Maharashtra/Karnataka border), many of whom serve as auxiliary members for their cultural shows. During their off-season, Abheena takes part in the group’s administrative affairs, especially those that do not require her physical presence. (Now based in Delhi, managing the *Dancing Queens* from close up has become impossible). Urmi serves as the producer/co-director of the group, taking part in the group’s managerial functions including the choreographing of dance pieces and the managing rehearsals and auditions. The group is also assisted by Sachin, a kothi representative from the Humsafar Trust.



**Figure 2: Members of the Dancing Queens at their auditions; photo by the** author, October 5, 2012.

Over the eight years of its development, the Dancing Queens’s membership affiliation underwent a discursive transformation reflecting a larger emphasis towards gender and sexual inclusivity. These are illustrated in the following descriptions, which were published in 2009 and 2011 (respectively) on “Mumbai Pride’s official weblog”: “Dancing Queens is coming together of 20 male dancers who impersonate as women and perform dance numbers of all time famous Diva’s of Hindi Cinema” and “‘Dancing Queens’ is a performance by drag queens of *Aamchi Mumbai*” (translated from Marathi as ‘Our Mumbai’).<sup>[5]</sup> In 2015, an updated description of the group was published in a local journal advertisement of their pride performance:

Dancing Queens is a Mumbai-based LGBTQ dance troupe. Every year as a part of the Mumbai Pride Festival, Dancing Queen brings the spirit of Dance and Joy to the queer community. Under the Dancing Queens banner, members of the LGBTQ community bring their talent to the forefront in the form of different dance forms under different themes.<sup>[6]</sup>

The differences between these two statements, highlighted by a terminological shift from “female impersonators” and “drag queens” (published in 2009 and 2011, respectively) to “LGBTQ dance troupe” (published in 2015), illustrate the group’s interest in gender and sexual inclusivity. In addition to reflecting gender and sexual inclusivity, these changes are also perhaps representative of a larger shift in discourse within Mumbai’s—and other Indian—pride organizational committees from using terms normally associated with early (1990s) queer theory and early feminism, to global contemporary lexicons. (See Video 5 for an aural explanation of the Dancing Queens membership.)

In another video I produced in 2012 through Fulbright-mtvU, Abheena explains how inclusivity is part of the group’s mission:

I think Dancing Queens is all about bringing the bridges together between homosexual, heterosexual, asexual, ‘b-sexual,’ whatever sexual community that you find it across. Here, we just tell people that is, ‘Forget about your sexuality, forget about gender, just come and see this different world that you have not seen yet. And see that these people are also extremely normal and don’t judge them anymore. Just let them have the same space that you have in life. And that is what Dancing Queens is all about. (Interview, October 2, 2012)

In this case, *pehch?n* is expressed through notions of self-awareness (by ‘forgetting about gender’), feelings of normalcy surrounding issues of sexuality, and camaraderie (as opposed to traditional kinship associated with the *hijra ghar?n?*).

*Membership and the Audition Process*

Notions of camaraderie are constituted through an unconventional approach to the guru-chela relationship. At the heart of the group is the relationship between Abheena and Urmi. The two met over ten years ago when Urmi joined the Humsafar Trust as an outreach worker. Abheena, who was serving as the organizations chair of outreach and development, immediately took Urmi under her wing because she “looked too thin to be out there in the field.” The way their relationship blossomed thereafter is best expressed in an interview with Abheena and Urmi, her eldest daughter (See Video 6 for excerpt):

It’s more than just a guru-chela relationship. I don’t think it has much to do with that, because I never treat her as my disciple. I never treat her as my *chela* because I treat her equally. And she also makes sure that she respects all the freedom and all the kinds of opportunities that I provide her. [...] Sometimes I’m her friend. Sometimes I’m her lover. Sometimes I’m her husband. I don’t know what exactly. That’s the kind of relationship that we have together and that makes us bonded to each other and keep both of us grounded. (Interview, March 20, 2013)

The pedagogy of equality that Abheena applies to her guru-ship is also reflected in the Dancing Queens organization. As a chair/mother of a formally recognized performance organization, Abheena appropriates and subverts the power dynamic implicit within the traditional hijra guru-chela relationship by cultivating legitimate opportunities for members to join. Through a formal audition process, Abheena is able to cultivate an initiative based on equal opportunity, inclusivity, and a fostering of talent. Notions of camaraderie are constituted by the group through the staging (and meta-staging) of auditions, where prospective dancing queens dance in front of judges for the chance to become Abheena’s “daughters.”

The Dancing Queens holds auditions on a yearly basis, although this is no science. I was able to record an audition in October 2012, which was held in anticipation of two performances scheduled to take place in conjunction with 2013 Queer Azaadi March. A description of their audition announcement was published on a website hosted by the group Gaysi: The Gay *Desi* (a colloquialism for ‘Indian’), a Mumbai-based queer online publication that also hosts yearly open-mic events in coordination with the Queer Azaadi organizational committee. An excerpt from the announcement makes explicit appeals to individuals (homosexual, heterosexual, bisexual, transgender, queer, or otherwise) who “believe in the spirit of the Dancing Queens” and who have the “commitment and talent” to be part of their “family.”<sup>[7]</sup>

The audition was attended by an audience of about 20 individuals associated with the NGO, and judged by five experts on music, dance, and all things LGBTIQ, were called in to take part in the judging process. Among the judges included Mangala Aher (a trained *Bharatanatyam* dancer who also happens to be Abheena’s biological mother), Suhail Abbasi (founding member of the Humsafar Trust), Pallav Patankar (Director of HIV Programs at the Humsafar Trust), a director of Marathi film who will appear unnamed, and Laxmi Narayan Tripathi (transgender activist and *Bharatanatyam* dancer). The judges evaluated contestants according to a number of variables including: (1) “basic dancing ability, facial expressions and awareness of the stage”; (2) “presenting face and energy while dancing”; (3) openness and outness as an LGBT person; (4) ability to volunteer in administrative affairs if needed; (5) awareness and understanding of the Dancing Queens mission; and (6) overall commitment to dance as an art form.<sup>[8]</sup> The judges’ emphasis on “openness and outness as an LGBT person” as well as “awareness and dedication to the Dancing Queens mission” articulates the importance of pehch?n not only in theory, but also as a practical standard used to evaluate talent potential and membership affiliation. This contradicts with conventional ghar?n? systems, which determine membership on an individual, relational level. As opposed to izzat, which grows gradually through the production of various forms of “service” to the family, pehch?n is a moral standard that gurus—and a chosen body of judges—employ as a principle for membership.<sup>[9]</sup>

*Rehearsals and Concerts*

In addition to being reflected through an audition process, pehch?n is performed in rehearsals and concerts. The planning of rehearsals and concerts follows a progressive sequence as follows:

Stage 1: Brainstorming about the concept (Abheena, Urmi and Madhuri)

Stage 2: Conceptualization of songs and plan of execution

(Abheena, Urmi, and Madhuri)



Stage 3: Finalizing the “look” of the dancers and dancing sequence (Abheena)

Stage 4: Selection of dancers (Abheena Urmi, and Madhuri)

Stage 5: Editing of songs (Rohit and Urmi)

Stage 6: Rehearsals and choreography (Abheena, Urmi, Madhuri, and Naren)

Stage 7: Final directions and stage set-up (Abheena)

Stage 8: Final rehearsals and dress rehearsals (everyone)

Stage 9: Show (everyone)

Stage 10: Party and evaluation of the show for improvement (everyone)<sup>[10]</sup>

Rehearsals are generally held two to three months before a concert is scheduled and taking place inside the Humsafar Trust drop-in space, and are scheduled at fixed intervals of time—usually two to three hours—since time blocks are coordinated with other support group sessions and rehearsals for other performance groups. Following a typical general progression, rehearsals are more sparsely spaced in the leading three months before the performance, and become more frequent in number during the “dress rehearsal” period leading into the performance.

When Abheena is out of town, Urmi manages the rehearsal logistics and the teaching of chosen choreography. Dancers treat her as students treat their instructors, and Urmi handles the responsibility professionally. Although a number of dancers may in fact be Urmi’s daughters (even her husband has participated in the past), she approaches her responsibility with an air towards egalitarianism. As a group with a social message, upsetting the ideology of egalitarianism would be to upset the disciplinary grounds upon which the LGBTIQ ideals are founded.

Concert spaces are generally chosen according to their availability, proximity to the Humsafar Trust, and whether or not the managers of the space are receptive to the goals of the group and the larger aims of the Queer Azaadi movement. In Mumbai—and other Indian cities—it is common for LGBTQ and in particular transgender-sponsored events to be denied access to performance, club and bar venues, because of concerns about their sexual proclivity and/or association with the hijra community. Therefore, as a gender and sexually-inclusive performance group, the Dancing Queens must navigate societal stigmas associated with both homosexuality and transgenderism. In addition to these larger social concerns, a concert space is also chosen based on the availability of an elevated stage, reasonably large audience space, and dressing room. More often than not, the Dancing Queens dressing room is fortified by a volunteer “bouncer”—Sachin, or an employee or volunteer from the Humsafar Trust—who prevents unknown admirers of the group from entering without permission. The dressing room provides a liminal “holding cell” for items and performers intended for staging, while also preventing the unwanted gaze—benign or otherwise—from intruding in on relatively private, intimate affairs of inter-performer social bonding (see Figures 3 and 4).



**Figure 3: Urmi applying her make-up backstage at the 2012 “Rhythm of India”** performance by the Dancing Queens; photo by the author, October 2, 2012.



**Figure 4: Photo of the author backstage at the 2012 “Rhythm of India”** performance by the Dancing Queens; photo credit Ryan Ballard, October 2, 2012.

## Music and Dance Content

Songs and dance numbers are chosen by Abheena and Urmi along a number of attributes. These may include their relevance towards the larger mission to educate and empower, what is “in vogue” at the moment, what may seem visually attractive, and what advances the Dancing Queens’s aims of inclusivity. Music consists of a wide range of material, ranging from Bollywood numbers to Marathi, Punjabi, and even Kannada folk song. Styles of dance range from sanitized versions of *Lavani*—a Maharashtran folk dance that has a tradition of cross-dressing—to heteronormative forms like *Garba*—a Gujarati dance literally meaning “womb” performed during Navratri celebrations. Out of the five performances I have seen, however, visible markers of the *dholak*, harmonium, or dance associated with badhais, are not included.

More often than not, song items are chosen *after* a concert theme has been identified. The theme for an eight-year anniversary performance in January 2015 was entitled “The Journey of Dancing Queens,” and featured a reflexive look at the group’s “humble beginning as Lavani performers” and its eight-year transition into an eclectic LGBTIQ dance contingent. An excerpt from the description of the performance reads:

This year’s theme is “The Journey of Dancing Queens”. The members of the troupe will take us back to time to their humble beginning as lavani performers and gradually growing into a dance troupe performing Bollywood hits in varied dance forms in a time span of 8 years. At this years dance show we will get to see dance forms like Lavani, Bollywood, Classical, *Mujra*, Ballet, Salsa, *Bhangra* and many more. This is an event you surely do not want to miss!<sup>[11]</sup>

Other performance themes reflect an equal interest in genre diversity. The title for the December 2012 performance was “Rhythm of India,” and featured an eclectic array music and dance including (in order) *Mujra* (North Indian courtesan dance), *Dandiya* and *Garba* (both Gujarati folk dances), modern *Bhangra* (Punjabi folk dance), Lavani, Belly Dance, *Jogappa/Jogta* (male-to-female transgenders of the temple) folk dance from Karnataka, and classic and contemporary Bollywood.

## Performance Structure

Concerts are advertised and open to the public. They are ticketed in the range of around 100-500 INR (Indian Rupees), or depending on the circumstances, whatever the attendee is able to give. “Photo chelas” like myself may be admitted for free, although they usually donate to the cause. Concerts are hosted by one or two MCs holding microphones, and generally begin with a prayer followed by a short speech. At the December 2012 concert, Abheena and Sumit, a young *paanthee* associated with the Dancing Queens, began the evening with a short prayer to Ganesh. This was followed by a four-minute speech highlighting the Dancing Queens’s mission statement, a description of previous performances, a *sher* (short poem), and an appeal to the audience. The performances that followed conformed more or less to the chosen genres, and ranged from two to three songs per genre. Table 2 in the Appendix contains a transcription of the event to accompany the summary.

The first number consisted of a set of three songs interwoven into one *Mujra* (a courtly dance genre from North India conventionally performed by women and/or kothis). The dance featured two alternating leads (Urmi and Madhuri), alternating groups of back-up dancers in elaborate North Indian dress, and a musical tapestry consisting of the Bollywood songs “*Sun Lo Tum Chilman Uthegi Nahin*” (‘The Flame Will Not Rise’) from the film *Kisna: The Warrior Poet* (2005), “*Kaise Mukhde se Nazre Hataun*” (‘I Can’t Take My Eyes Off of Your Face’) from the film *English Babu Desi Mem* (*English Sir, Indian Madam*, 1996), and “*Tohfa Kabool*” (‘I Accept Your Gifts, but...’) from the film *Ghungroo* (1983).<sup>[12]</sup> Urmi and Madhuri’s gestures sensually exhibited *abhinay*, following the choreography of the original numbers. The dancing contained some elements of eroticism, but none that transgressed the heteronormative boundaries already established in the Bollywood versions. In these cases, Urmi and Madhuri were not “impersonating” female dance or dancers queerly or satirically (like a burlesque), but performing the queer on a constative transgender platform.

Although *Mujra* itself can be considered distinctly *queer* repertoire (kothis regularly perform this genre of dance especially in Uttar Pradesh and other areas in North India) the lead dancers identify as transgender and/or transsexual. In both cases, therefore, it would be inaccurate to say that these transgender women were cross-dressing, dragging, and/or “female impersonating”—all essentialist terms based on the primacy of heteronormative notions of the gender binary. Judith Butler came across this very “theoretical conundrum” in the documentary film *Paris Is Burning*, which featured a transsexual performer character alongside “female impersonators.” In her resulting essay entitled “Gender is Burning” (1993), Butler posited that transsexuals



exceeded the framework of gender performativity—and therefore queerness—because of their “desire” to be non-performative. Accordingly, Madhuri and Urmi are performing gender by *constituting* on the surface that which is already there inside of them—the (constative) identity of trans-womanhood. For the two dancers, it is the “bodies that matter” in their gender narratives, not their *subversion* of them. I would extend this postulation further, however, to suggest that the staging of their “gender non-performative” performance in an LGBTIQ context constitutes *pehch?n* not only through the constitution of their identities, but also through the performative subversion of the queer. In other words, as non-performative transgender dancers in a gender performative context, Urmi, Madhuri, and the Dancing Queens are *queering* the queer, and in doing so, validating their transgender identities (see Video 7).

Transgender *pehch?n* is also constituted on the hand through the group’s appropriation of heteronormative dance. The *Mujra* was followed by folk dances traditionally associated with (heterosexual) marriage: *Garba* (a word derived from the Sanskrit word for ‘womb’ for a Gujarati folk dance performed during the festival of the Goddess *Navratri*), *Dandiya* (a Gujarati folk dance performed after *Garba* during *Navratri*), and *Bhangra* (a Punjabi folk dance associated with the harvest). The inclusion of a diverse range of performative modes and traditionally heterosexual folk genres in particular utilize the strategy of appropriating and disrupting established codes of heteronormativity. The postmodernist interest in reworking performance material already available—something which has been achieved in countless other queer performances from Pratibha Parmar’s film *Khush* to the entirety of Madonna’s persona—provides the Dancing Queens an opportunity to critique notions of transphobia, homophobia, racism, and sexism. In these heterosexual contexts, therefore, it is through the appropriation of heteronormative codes and signifying systems that provides the Dancing Queens leverage for the constitution of transgender *pehch?n* in front of an LGBTIQ audience. As opposed to the *Mujra* and *Lavani*, in these cases, transgender performers are not subverting the queer, but positioning themselves alongside.

In a later scene, *pehch?n* is staged in an explicitly politicized tone. Approximately 30 minutes into the performance, immediately following the *Bhangra* performances, Abheena and Sumit immediately interject with (loosely) rehearsed playful banter that also happens to be informative. Appearing as though he were disappointed with something, Sumit enters the stage shouting, “This won’t work. This won’t work!” Abheena responds: “Why wouldn’t this work?” Sumit then goes on to explain how the audience saw performances from north India and Gujarat, but still have not seen *Lavani*, a folk genre from Maharashtra. Then, Abheena explains to Sumit that she happens to be wearing a *Lavani* outfit, and Sumit calms down. This transitions into an anecdote about Abheena’s coming out story and specifically, how her mother accepted her identity as a transgender woman after years of denial, which then leads into a statement about the “Dancing Queens initiative” (see Video 8):

One of the initiatives of Dancing Queens is that the LGBT community, sexual minorities, we want that their parents accept them. There are many LGBT people who have suicidal tendencies because their parents don’t accept them. Do you know that it took ten years for my mother to accept me for who I am? (See time marker 29:46 in Appendix).

After this rather explicit display of “*pehch?n*,” the performance resumes with *Lavani* dance and a special performance from Abheena’s mother, Mangala Aher. Here, *pehch?n* and “*pehch?n*” are constituted simultaneously by Abheena’s dancing biological mother.

The second half of the performance progresses into slightly more provocative music and dance forms. Following the *Lavani* performances by Abheena and other hijras (which constitute *pehch?n* in similar ways to the *Mujra*), a relatively sexually provocative Belly Dance is performed, followed by a traditional Jogappa/Jogta folk dance from Karnataka called *Karaga* (which from a queer perspective is even more conservative than *Garba*), and then a series of old and new Bollywood numbers. The event eventually concludes with a disco song from the 2012 hit movie *Student of the Year*. Ultimately, while the inclusion of (homo)sexually-charged music and dance suggests a reversion to disempowering music and dance forms, their staging within a largely queer space and its presence alongside heteronormative folk genres represents a larger (queer) strategy of appropriating mainstream notions of unacceptability. The staging of traditionally illicit forms alongside heteronormative folk genres therefore appears not so much to shock (for the sake of shocking), but to “stage alongside” (for the sake of education) while also serving the group’s larger initiative of inclusion.

## Preliminary Conclusions

The transgender identity of the Dancing Queens is evident in the group’s various performative manifestations of *pehch?n*. I have constructed a table (see Table 1) to further illustrate the ways the group translates hijra



badhai—wherein the organizational emphasis izzat is performed—to staged forms of transgender performance—wherein pehch?n is constituted. While differences between the performance forms may be as stark as those between hijra and kothi performance (see Morcom 2013), this list contains some notable distinctions. Among them include the use of political rhetoric as a means of making visible the traditionally invisible, performing for non-profit fundraising as opposed to personal gain, assuming managerial and pedagogical structure that are distinct from one another and separate from traditional family-based structure, the emphasis on musical talent, the emphasis of transgender over hijra, and the spirit of inclusiveness and eclecticism.

Table 1

	<u>Hijra Badhai</u>	<u>The Dancing Queens</u>
<b>Organizational Emphasis</b>	<i>Izzat</i>	<i>Pehch?n</i>
<b>Performance Context</b>	Private houses, streets	Public Stage
<b>Performance Length</b>	15-30 minutes	1-2 hours
<b>Performers</b>	4-5	3-10
<b>Repertoire</b>	Regional badhai folk, filmi songs	Wide-ranging, except badhai
<b>Content/Meaning</b>	Highly religious, auspicious (implicit)	Political, LGBTQ equality (explicit)
<b>Instrumentation</b>	Acoustic, <i>dholak</i> , harmonium	Recorded
<b>Presence of Sexuality</b>	Not explicitly sexual	Sanitized codes of sexuality
<b>Pedagogy</b>	Mother/daughter relationship	Teacher/student relationship, rehearsal
<b>Social Context</b>	<i>Ghar?n?</i> , familial way of life	“Modern <i>Ghar?n?</i> ” and/or a formal extraction
<b>Social Organization</b>	Hierarchic structure with explicit rules and systems of rewards/punishments	Managerial structure, “democratic”
<b>Membership</b>	Case-by-case basis	Auditioned, formal process
<b>Function</b>	Primary source of income	Fundraising initiative
<b>Income</b>	Rs. 500 - 10,000 / performance	Rs. 10,000 - 50,000 / performance
<b>Class</b>	Classless/Very Low	Middle Class
<b>Demographics</b>	<i>Hijras</i> and some <i>kothis</i> of heterogeneous caste/religious backgrounds	Mostly <i>hijras</i> , <i>kothis</i> , <i>panthis</i> , other transgender, heterogeneous caste/religious backgrounds
<b>Religion</b>	A mix of Hindu and Muslim customs	Secular / Hindu ideology
<b>Participation in Mainstream Society</b>	Renouncers, social outsiders	Mainstreamers, social outsiders
<b>Visibility</b>	Visible but secretive	Visible and transparent

These differences make it possible to distill the ways izzat translates into pehch?n, which are constituted in the

following list:

- Whereas izzat denotes “honor” or “respect,” pehch?n denotes “identity,” “recognition,” or “acknowledgement.”
- Whereas izzat connotes respect for others, pehch?n connotes respect for the self.
- Whereas izzat manifests through belonging, pehch?n is constituted through difference.
- Whereas izzat is socially granted (through ‘service’), pehch?n is individually fostered.
- Whereas izzat is something gradually gained (or lost), pehch?n is something one has or does not have.
- Whereas izzat is based on exclusive membership, pehch?n is based on inclusivity.
- Whereas izzat is subjectively perceived, pehch?n is objectively judged.
- Whereas izzat is a social currency that governs the relatively closed occupational system based on (semi-)hereditary membership, pehch?n is applied within an open occupational system based on the individual.
- Whereas izzat is the socio-cultural capital that may determine one’s social rank within ghar?n? hierarchy, pehch?n is a tool employed by all hijras regardless of social stature.
- Whereas izzat “empowers” a hijra community through notions of spiritual reverence and superstition, pehch?n empowers the individual.
- Whereas izzat is something rarely discussed yet implied within the social organization of badhais, pehch?n is explicit part of their socio-political agenda and discursive power of LGBTIQ identity politics.
- Whereas the socio-linguistic roots of izzat is derived from notions of sexual abstinence and/or denial, pehch?n is derived from the embrace of open discourse surrounding sex and gender identity.
- Whereas izzat is reflected, performed and produced through badhais, pehch?n is reflected, performed and produced through staged, eclectic performance forms.

## Applying an (Ethno)historical Model to Hijra Music and Dance Practice

How are we to understand both the performance and discursive practices of the Dancing Queens in relation to what is already “known,” or at least written, about “dancing queens” in India?

The practice of men playing women’s roles in theater—a distinctly “queer” approach to transgender—is nothing new to South Asia. Patanjali’s grammatical text, the *Mahabhasya* (150 BCE), describes male actors who play females as *bhrukumsa*, one who “flutters his brows.” And the *Natyashastra* (2-4th century CE), South Asia’s ancient music and dance treatise containing forms of Hindustani and Karnatak music, mentions *rupanusarini*, the “imitation” of men and women taken roles in the opposite gender (Hansen 2002:163). The most popular transgender performance forms in Bombay before the British takeover in 1818 were *Tamasha*—a Persian word signifying “entertainment” or “show”—which incorporated earlier styles such as *Gondhal*, *Ovada*, and *Turra-Kalagi*, as well as Lavani; *Nachya Poryas*—dancing boys—were also popular, and courtesans are said to have learned their melodies and dance movements from them (ibid.:166). During Indian nationalism, as new forms of gender representation began to emerge under the rise of respectable Indian woman, drag performers were gradually displaced from the stage. Today, gender non-conforming practices surface subtly in mainstream film and drama, and through illegal, or recently legalized, illicit forms like bar dance and badhai.

The term “Dancing Queens” is a vestige of Mumbai’s long held tradition of bar dance. A simple Google search of “Mumbai’s Dancing Queens” will yield a series of article results related to the subject. For instance, an *Afternoon Despatch & Courier* article entitled “Mumbai’s Dancing Queens” published on July 17, 2013—around the time the Supreme Court lifted the ban on Mumbai’s dance bars—contains a description of bar dancing life (without

mentioning our Dancing Queens). A *Daily Mail* article entitled “Dancing Queens Makes a Comeback” published on July 16, 2013, contains a journalistic ethnography of bar dancers (still with no reference to our group).<sup>[13]</sup>

Through the appropriation of the term “dancing queens,” the group positions themselves *against* and/or subverts illicit forms of drag performance, and in doing so, leverages their dance as a counter narrative to the degeneration of the queer and hijra community. The group even functions as a sort of rehab for “fallen hijras” through pehch?n. In her budding days as a dancer, Abheena recognized the visceral appeal of music and dance in “overcoming the initial jitters people feel on the mention of sexuality” and founded the Dancing Queens to provide a professional outlet for musically inclined transgender women.<sup>[14]</sup> In one of the first interviews I conducted with her, Abheena explained that although she bar-danced in the “drag style” for some time, “I was at a stage where I needed a different kind of audience; I needed an audience that would appreciate me for who I am”:

I started to realize the kind of guys I would attract, but I was not comfortable with it. The reason why I did it is to have that kind of thrill. It’s a different kind of feeling. After a while I realized that it as not worth it, because once you remove that makeup, you get a different kind of reaction. All the attraction is gone. [Bar dancing] was a humiliation for the real talent that I have. Ultimately talent is something which will only cherish if people appreciate it. If I don’t get my appreciation, I won’t get satisfied. (Interview September 9, 2010)

Abheena translates her personal experience to her Dancing Queens daughters. Just as bar dance failed to “click” with her, Abheena recognizes that its form impedes efforts to cultivate pehch?n.

Through the staging of queer repertoire within an LGBTIQ context, the Dancing Queens moves away from the socially transgressive mode of badhai performance, sex work, bar dance (and other forms of “service” associated with disempowering displays of servitude to the guru) towards a middle class, secular, and politically-charged frontier. In doing so, the group subverts hijra customs through a reconstitution of the guru-chela relationship. But, while the Dancing Queens is *queering* (subverting) the hijra through various means, as non-performative transgenders in a gender performative context, they are also *transgendering* the queer. That is, they are bringing their hijra (and kothi) daughters and sisters into the queer domain.

Ultimately, transgender pehch?n is achieved through the group’s appropriation of both hetero- and *homo*-normative codes and signifying systems. This provides the Dancing Queens leverage for the empowerment of their dancers as well as a vast array of repertoires that make it possible to attract large, diverse audiences in order to disseminate their messages. If making explicit the implicit, staging the liminal, or of “outing” the once “closeted” is reified in the Dancing Queens performance, then as their audience, we are not only enjoying a carefully choreographed show, but also witnessing the emergence of a new hijra out of the historical closet and onto the global stage. She is a finely dressed hijra, a proper hijra, a respectable hijra, and one that identifies her pehch?n in modern terms.

## Appendix

Table 2 - Transcription of “Rhythm of India”

Time Code	Details	Song Titles	English Translation and media links
0:00	Song	<i>Tera Pyaar Pyaar Pyaar</i>	“Your love”
0:15	Prayer	<i>Vakratunda Mahakaya Suryakoti Smaaprabha</i>	Traditional prayer to Ganesh commonly performed to start all kinds of ceremonies <a href="http://greenmesg.org/mantras_slokas/sri_ganesha-vakratunda_mahakaya">http://greenmesg.org/mantras_slokas/sri_ganesha-vakratunda_mahakaya</a>
0:42	Dialogue		Welcome everyone to the 7th year celebrations. Please clap. Do you know meaning of Dancing Queens? Our aim to create awareness about sexual orientation. Sometimes talking about these issues of homosexuality, transgender cause is not palatable to the public. And so our aim is to talk about these issues through

Table 2 - Transcription of “Rhythm of India”

			<p>of dance, so people can come and interact with us, and work towards non-violent issues.</p> <p>Every year has a theme. What’s the theme this year. In the past we’ve done the 60s, 70s, tribute to the 60’s heroines. What do you hear in your heart? ... has rhythm. We have so many dances in India, so many rhythms and so many cultures. Celebrating Rhythms of India.</p> <p>- Our first introduction -</p> <p><i>Is Ada se Baath Ki</i></p> <p><i>Ki Dil Chura Gaye</i></p> <p><i>Hum Toh Samjhe The Boot</i></p> <p><i>App toh dhadkan suna gaye</i></p> <p>“You spoke with such an elegance That you Stole my Heart I took you for a silent-one And you spoke with your heartbeat instead”</p> <p>(audience claps)</p> <p>So Let’s start with our favorite, <i>Mujra</i>.</p> <p>(audience claps)</p>
4:35	Song	<i>Sun Lo Tum</i>	<p>“The Flame Will Not Rise”:</p> <p><a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tH7QQAduxh8">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tH7QQAduxh8</a> [3]</p>
8:30	Song	<i>Kainse Mukhde Se Nazre Hataun</i>	<p>“I Can’t Take My Eyes Off Your Face”:</p> <p><a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=htf6V2df9xQ">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=htf6V2df9xQ</a> [4]</p>
11:50	Song	<i>Tohfa Kabul Hain Humein</i>	<p>“I Accept Your Gifts But...”:</p> <p><a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sIO8Lv-64g4">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sIO8Lv-64g4</a> [5]</p>
16:04	Dialogue		Excellent performance. People are busy, they’ve been practising for weeks.



Table 2 - Transcription of “Rhythm of India”

			credible.
16:37	Dialogue		Now we move from <i>Mujra</i> , the choice of the <i>Nawab</i> ’s (royal land owners) Now we move west to Mumbai which has <i>Dandiya</i> and <i>Garba</i> .
17:21	Song	(unclear)	
17:45	Song	<i>Dholida Dhol</i>	“The <i>Dhol</i> ,” a <i>Gujarati</i> Folk Song: <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FT04Cvaes60">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FT04Cvaes60</a> [6]
19:13	Song	<i>Odhani Odhu Ude Jayee</i>	“My Scarf Flies in the Air,” a <i>Gujarathi</i> Folk Song: <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ih5iipp-JcA">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ih5iipp-JcA</a> [7]
20:00	Song	(repeated)	
23:07	Dialogue		Please clap!  Some jokes about <i>Sardarje</i> and now going back to the north to <i>Punjab</i> ’s
24:10	Song	<i>Ek Omkar</i>	<a href="http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ik_Omkar">http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ik_Omkar</a> [8]: <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xxob7YNUM14">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xxob7YNUM14</a> [9]
24:50	Song	<i>Bari Barsi Khatan</i>	Traditional Punjabi Wedding Song
26:15	Song	<i>Hulle Hula Re Hulle</i>	Traditional Punjabi Wedding Song
27:31	Song	<i>Bhootni Ke</i>	<a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JKbmf9RHDtY">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JKbmf9RHDtY</a>
29:46	Dialogue		Sumit: Abinaji, this won’t work.  Abina: What wouldn’t work?  Sumit: No no no this absolutely wouldn’t work.  Abina: But why? I’ve shown you such beautiful dances, so many whistles claps, so what wouldn’t work?  Sumit: Many whistles, good. Claps, good. We’ve seen dances, very good like to ask you now. So we saw the <i>Mujra</i> ?  Abina: Yes, we saw the <i>Mujra</i> . Say Salam Alaikam!  Sumit: Adaab adaab adaab...  Abina: Yes, did you like her, the one who performed <i>Mujra</i> ?  Sumit: Yeah yeah, what excellent <i>Mujra</i> that was. Wasn’t it guys?  Abina: Focus focus Sumit, we are conducting a show over here.

Table 2 - Transcription of “Rhythm of India”

			<p>Sumit: Yes yes, focus focus. So we did the garba afterwards?</p> <p>Come look here! So we did Bhangra there as well?</p> <p>Abina: Yes.</p> <p>Sumit: Ok so where are we now?</p> <p>Abina: Mumbai.</p> <p>Sumit: So we are in Mumbai and why have you not shown me any Lavan</p> <p>Abina: gasps</p> <p>Sumit: See see, how beautiful is the saree, what delicateness!</p> <p>Abina: Thank you!</p> <p>Sumit: so should we have the Lavani or not?!</p> <p>(audience cheers)</p> <p>Abina: Ok ok, but I'd like to say something first. One of the initiatives of D is that the LGBT community, sexual minorities, we want that their parents There are many LGBT people who have suicidal tendencies because they don't accept them. Do you know that it took ten years for my mother to accept I am?</p> <p>Sumit: Guys, this is a very big thing that it took ten years, to understand h have any suggestion for how to proceed?</p> <p>Abina: Yes, I do have some advice, a suggestion. I talked to my mother a that we always think about what brings about change in a society. So peo once an Indira Gandhi is born, Jhanci's Ki Rani is born, that will change th thought, if we want to instill change, why not start at home.</p> <p>Sumit: Yes, that is very correct.</p> <p>Abina: So Sumit, do you know that there is a surprise item in this perform</p> <p>Sumit: Oh yeah? Yes, we like surprises don't we?</p> <p>Abina: Guys, do you like surprises? Ok, so keep watching!</p> <p>Sumit: Please clap, DQ presents Rhythms of India.</p>
	Song	<i>Mala Zao Dya na Ghari</i>	<p>“Let Me Go Home, It's Midnight”:</p> <p><a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EVRzHpDwSP4">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EVRzHpDwSP4</a> [10]</p>
37:09	Song	<i>Disla Ga Bai Disla</i>	<p>“I Saw Him, I Saw Him”:</p> <p><a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ICiUi_LKkoM">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ICiUi_LKkoM</a> [11]</p>
40:00	Song	<i>Kakhet Kalsa Gavalala Valsa</i>	<p>“The Pot of Water is in Your Arms, But the Village is Searching for it,” a M Lavani song</p>

Table 2 - Transcription of “Rhythm of India”

43:18	Dialogue		Coming up is belly dance!
43:51	Song	<i>Maiya Maiya</i>	“O Mother, O Mother”: <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-0V_4q7v0HY">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-0V_4q7v0HY</a> [12]
45:40	Song	<i>Aga Bai Halla Machaye</i>	“Oh Dear, There is Cacophony in My Heart”: <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VQIn_3NYa1Q">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VQIn_3NYa1Q</a> [13]
46:30	Song	Instrumental	
48:03	Dialogue		(audience claps)  Have you guys had some food? Then scream louder!  Now we are presenting something different, about the performer, she is a fasten your seat belts. We are moving towards the South now.  But first a <i>Sher</i> -  You are that kind of a bird...  ...birds take flight and that sky is all that they know...  But you guys are those birds  For whom even the sky seems not enough!  (unclear)  The next dance is from Karnataka.
50:30	Song	<i>Mundi, Mundi Viyagane</i>	Folk Music from Tamil Nadu <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W4ZttHrEnso">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W4ZttHrEnso</a> [14]
53:45	Dialogue		second part of the <tamil dance>
54:54	Song	(unclear)	Instrumental Folk Music
57:15	Dialogue		And now some Bollywood numbers
57:45	Song	<i>Aa Re Pritam Pyare</i>	“Come Here, Oh My Dear”: <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DwOFjXP3BqY">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DwOFjXP3BqY</a> [15]

Table 2 - Transcription of “Rhythm of India”

1:00:00	Song	(repeated)	
1:00:35	Song	Aa Ante Amalapuram	<a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=htnO7XWage0">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=htnO7XWage0</a> [16]
1:01:55	Song	Naka Muka	
1:04:05	Song	Mere Photo Ko Seene	“Glue My Photograph to Your Heart”: <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6Y5SDIsUALs">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6Y5SDIsUALs</a> [17]
1:05:55	Dialogue	(unclear)	
1:07:50	Song	Party Abhi Baki Hai	“The Party’s Not Over Yet”: <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yb9FUnmoGEY">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yb9FUnmoGEY</a> [18]
1:09:50	Song	Disco Song from <i>Student of the Year</i>	“Crazy for Disco”: <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mcl6ZErM49Q">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mcl6ZErM49Q</a> [19]

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## Notes

<sup>[1]</sup> These include the *Humsafar* Trust, Solidarity and Action against the HIV Infection in India (SAATHII), the South India AIDS Action Programme (SIAAP), Sangama, and Alliance India Andhra Pradesh (AIAP).

<sup>[2]</sup> See the SAATHII organizational website for a description of the program: <http://www.saathii.org/projects/pehchan> [20]

<sup>[3]</sup> *Grizzly Man*, directed by Werner Herzog, at time marker 40:00.

<sup>[4]</sup> I have observed the word *ghar?n?* employed in relationship to hijras in all of the research sites visited including urban Mumbai, Lucknow, Chennai and surrounding secondary sites in Kanpur (Uttar Pradesh), Surat (Gujarat), Kalyan (Maharashtra), and Koovagam (Tamil Nadu). The term is also documented in Gayatri Reddy’s 2005 landmark ethnography *With Respect to Sex*.

<sup>[5]</sup> See the following pages for a description: <https://queerazaadi.wordpress.com/2009/07/29/fund-raising-event-dancing-queens-on-saturday-1-august-2009/> [21], <https://queerazaadi.wordpress.com/2011/01/26/28th-january-2011-performance-by-dancing-queen/> [22], and <https://queerazaadi.wordpress.com/2011/01/24/26th-january-2011-ek-madhavbaug-dancing-queens/> [23]

<sup>[6]</sup> See the following page for a description: <http://www.justdial.com/events/Mumbai/Dancing-Queens-Presents-The-Journey-of-Dancing-Queens-Woh-7-Saal/EV625423> [24]

<sup>[7]</sup> See the following page for the excerpt: <http://gaysifamily.com/2012/10/03/dancing-queen-auditions-mumbai/> [25]

<sup>[8]</sup> These parameters are based on the audition sheets held at the time, and later revised in an email from Abheena Aher which was received on February 27, 2015.

<sup>[9]</sup> The film can be viewed in its entirety on the Fulbright-mtvU website: <http://fulbright.mtvu.com/jroy/2012/11/06/welcome-to-mumbai/> [26]

<sup>[10]</sup> These parameters are based from an email from Abheena Aher which was received on February 27, 2015.

<sup>[11]</sup> See the following pages for the description:

<http://www.justdial.com/events/Mumbai/Dancing-Queens-Presents-The-Journey-of-Dancing-Queens-Woh-7-Saal/625423> [24]; <http://www.dnaindia.com/mumbai/report-mumbai-pride-festival-is-here-celebrate-with-pride-2055839> [27]

<sup>[12]</sup> The original Bollywood numbers in their respective order can be viewed through the following links: (1) <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tH7QQAduxh8> [3]; (2) <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=htf6V2df9xQ> [4]; (3) <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sIO8Lv-64g4> [5]

<sup>[13]</sup> See the articles on the following links:

[http://www.afternooncd.in/city-news/mumbais-dancing-queens/article\\_86491](http://www.afternooncd.in/city-news/mumbais-dancing-queens/article_86491) [28]; <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/indiahome/indianews/article-2366212/Dancing-queens-make-comeback-Supreme-Court-gives-green-light-Mumbais-dance-bars.html> [29]

<sup>[14]</sup> See original quote in this article:

<http://www.dnaindia.com/lifestyle/report-dancing-queens-go-from-fringe-to-centre-stage-1364682> [30]

**Source URL:** <http://www.ethnomusicologyreview.ucla.edu/journal/volume/20/piece/872>

#### Links:

- [1] <http://www.ethnomusicologyofthecloset.com/dq>
- [2] [http://greenmesg.org/mantras\\_slokas/sri\\_ganesha-vakratunda\\_mahakaya.php](http://greenmesg.org/mantras_slokas/sri_ganesha-vakratunda_mahakaya.php)
- [3] <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tH7QQAduxh8>
- [4] <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=htf6V2df9xQ>
- [5] <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sIO8Lv-64g4>
- [6] <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FT04Cvaes60>
- [7] <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ih5iipp-JcA>
- [8] [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ik\\_Onkar](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ik_Onkar)
- [9] <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xxob7YNUM14>
- [10] <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EVRzHpDwSP4>
- [11] [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ICiUi\\_LKkoM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ICiUi_LKkoM)
- [12] [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-0V\\_4q7v0HY](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-0V_4q7v0HY)
- [13] [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VQIn\\_3NYa1Q](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VQIn_3NYa1Q)
- [14] <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W4ZtHrEnso>
- [15] <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DwOFjXP3BqY>
- [16] <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=htnO7XWage0>
- [17] <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6Y5SDIsUALs>
- [18] <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yb9FUnmoGEY>
- [19] <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mcL6ZErM49Q>
- [20] <http://www.saathii.org/projects/pehchan>
- [21] <http://queerazaadi.wordpress.com/2009/07/29/fund-raising-event-dancing-queens-on-saturday-1-august-2009/>
- [22] <https://queerazaadi.wordpress.com/2011/01/26/28th-january-2011-performance-by-dancing-queen/>
- [23] <https://queerazaadi.wordpress.com/2011/01/24/26th-january-2011-ek-madhavbaug-dancing-queens/>
- [24] <http://www.justdial.com/events/Mumbai/Dancing-Queens-Presents-The-Journey-of-Dancing-Queens-Woh-7-Saal/625423>
- [25] <http://gaysifamily.com/2012/10/03/dancing-queen-auditions-mumbai/>
- [26] <http://fulbright.mtvu.com/jroy/2012/11/06/welcome-to-mumbai/>
- [27] <http://www.dnaindia.com/mumbai/report-mumbai-pride-festival-is-here-celebrate-with-pride-2055839>
- [28] [http://www.afternooncd.in/city-news/mumbais-dancing-queens/article\\_86491](http://www.afternooncd.in/city-news/mumbais-dancing-queens/article_86491)
- [29] <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/indiahome/indianews/article-2366212/Dancing-queens-make-comeback-Supreme-Court-gives-green-light-Mumbais-dance-bars.html>

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[30] <http://www.dnaindia.com/lifestyle/report-dancing-queens-go-from-fringe-to-centre-stage-1364682>