Somos Colombianos en Nueva York/
We are Colombians in New York:
An Ethnography of a Colombian Musicians
Community, 1995-2010

By

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The act of migration puts into crisis everything about the migrating individual or group, everything about identity and selfhood and culture and belief.
—Salman Rushdie

The most interesting way to think about cultural identity is to focus on the complexity of the question.
—Sarah Sze

As flowers turn toward the sun, by dint of a secret heliotropism the past strives to turn toward that sun which is rising in the sky of history.
—Walter Benjamin

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ABSTRACT

Somos Colombianos en Nueva York/ We are Colombians in New York: An Ethnography of a Colombian Musicians Community, 1995-2010

Jorge Arévalo Mateus

This dissertation examines the social production of musical and cultural identity mediated through performance and the development of *communitas* among a subset of Colombian cohort musicians in the New York City diaspora between 1995 and 2010. Through an ethnomusicological analysis of ethnographic and historical data, I discuss social phenomena involving transnational migration, musical performance, and intercultural aesthetic interaction for processes of cultural production and identity formation. I argue that the evolution and efflorescence of this cosmopolitan musicians community reflects both an entry of new modes of Colombian musical expressions into the pan-Latin/o urban soundscape and the transformation of *Colombianidad*, or sense of Colombian identity, among its members to an unprecedented degree.

Through the conceptual and theoretical frameworks of interculturalism and performance, augmented and supported by indigeneity and music and violence as discursive tangents, the study focuses upon details of musical form, nuance, and contestations and tensions associated with the construction of a particular diasporic Colombianness. Documenting selected key individuals, organizations, and institutions involved with the creation, production, and performance of traditional, neo-traditional, and contemporary new Colombian musics in New York City, I
discuss the historical and cultural contexts as well as the strategic multiplicities in which the social production of music is embedded and manifested. Focusing upon the contemporary musical practices of the musicians, the dissertation investigates performance, reception, and tropes of self-representation at local, translocal, and transnational and global levels. As new generations of New York Colombian musicians achieve status and garner spaces for new Colombian musics among Latin/o and world musics, I expose transformations within the diasporic Colombian community through its resolute socio-cultural resilience, underlying interculturality, and desire to represent themselves.
INTRODUCTION

Personal history with the material and subject matter

During the final decade of the century, and well into the start of the twenty-first, Latin, world, and experimental musics were undergoing tremendous change, a result in part of transnational migration and nomadic global movements by diverse groups of young cosmopolitans.¹ In one of countless world music blogs appearing on the Internet every day, one recent Public Radio International feature about M.A.K.U. Sound System, a young band described as coming out of the “thriving Colombian music scene across New York,” provides clear evidence of the extent to which Colombian music and musicians are successfully navigating their entry into the real and virtual global soundscape.² This dissertation investigates the influx and emergence of this new wave of Colombian musicians that, since arriving in New York City between 1995 and 2010, are significantly impacting local Latin/o music scenes, altering the cultural and intercultural soundscape. Young Colombian men and women are contributing to the evolution and development of Colombian musics through intercultural musical practices performed in New York City and their growing presence within global networks and media circuits are reconfiguring the urban global center, claiming a space for new Colombian musics while redefining Colombianidad—that is, a sense of Colombian identity—on a previously unseen

scale. Representations of Colombian identity are thus being shaped through socio-musical production. What this process signifies for the Colombian musician community is at the center of this dissertation. I use the term “community” to designate individuals, organizations, and institutions involved with the creation, development, production, and presentation of Colombian traditional, neo-traditional, and contemporary new musics in New York City. It is a community defined as much by its cosmopolitan modernism as by national and cultural heritage, shared experiences of migration and transnational movement, and efforts to achieve equal status for Colombian musics among other Latin/o and world musics.

My research is motivated by several areas of inquiry around questions of identity, community, and the transnational movements of people and musical practices in and through diasporic and intercultural multiplicities (or multiple identities), I pose them here as questions: What are the social, political and economic conditions or dynamics that enable, encourage, or even empower musicians to affirm or assert a national (or postnational) group identity in a particular place or space and cultural context through musical processes? What prompts and enables one group of people to advance a concept of postnational-cultural identity and unity within the constantly changing structures of intercultural musical multiplicities? And of central importance, whether raced, classed, ethnically-based, gendered, or regionally and nationally bounded and hierarchically ranked, how does the constructed nature of these
narratives generate distinctly new group (and individual) subjectivities or identities that are marked as “Colombian?”

Through an ethnographically informed socio-historical account of Colombian music and musicians and the formation of a new sense of *Colombianidad* (Colombianness) at the turn of the twenty-first century in New York City, the dissertation aims to (1) document the emergence and growth of the musicians’ community, (2) provide analysis of their musical practices, (3) note the intercultural engagement and negotiation of cultural spaces within and among New York City’s urban local and global music scenes and the cultural group subjectivities and musical genres and experiments that are being created, and (4) assess the cultural significance and transformations in the Colombian diaspora embodied by the community of musicians.

My interest in this area of study stems in large part from my own subject position and intellectual impulse to comprehend diasporic subjectivities formed through such “multiplicities.”

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3 I refer to narratives about Colombian musicians and musics *vis a vis* Latino/a world musics, “modernity” in New York City, the Colombian diaspora and the transnational, cosmopolitan and intercultural multiplicities that characterize and impact upon them in the social environment.

4 According to Slobin (2007), multiplicity occurs when “both individual and group music-making have quickened people's strong tendency to enjoy working with multiple sources” (112). Slobin indicates that musicians today are “Thinking transatlantically”, then “jam together variables from many resource pools simultaneously.” He adds, “All you need to do is replace one instrument, change the voice quality, or displace rhythms, and a perfectly predictable piece turns from generic to provocative, easy to ear-opening” (113, 115). In other words, the availability of musical sources in the modern world are profuse and musicians partake of them in an endless and eclectic variety of ways.
peoples, to find common bonds of horizontal comradeship (Anderson 1991), and to
gain understanding of external and internal political and cultural tensions is
undeniably personal—a way to comprehend the Colombian nation and its/my place in
the world. Perhaps, because of my background as a Colombian-born immigrant to
the United States, a “diasporic subject” and “analyst”, I am one of those people who
think of themselves as “living away from a homeland” and “respond[ing]…
actively…to the fact of separation...” (Slobin 2003:285). My approach to the subject
matter, however, derives from ethnomusicology’s project of investigating cultural
processes of musicmaking as social production and meaningful expressions of
identity, community, and humanity.

My own family emigrated to the US at a time (during the 1950s) when extant
notions of Latininad (Latinness) remained somewhat vague for Latinos/as, who were
still being socially and culturally marginalized and often discriminated against. My
US education provided a view of the promise and potential that democratic,
“multicultural” ideologies hold for (North) American society, inculcating an
awareness of both its advantages and drawbacks. On one hand, the US educational
system provides access to a wealth of resources, materials and educational
opportunities that enable intellectual engagement and development, while on the
other, obvious disparities and differences between North American (and Western)
university systems and institutions and those of South and Central American
countries remains alarming. Noting how some South American education systems
“look to the North American model for legitimacy,” Colombian ethnomusicologist
Ana María Ochoa Gautier calls into question the disparities of such unequal power relationships, suggesting that “we need to interact between our different tendencies and with what the metropolitan history of our disciplines offers us, which implies that we have a dynamic and interactive relationship with different aspects of the studies of popular music in the Anglo-Saxon and European world.”

Critically noting the impact on both intellectual production and epistemological value of such “production,” this dissertation builds upon Ochoa’s recommendation that scholars provide data that considers both “local knowledge” and “fusions” that are actively being presented in a global environment, and that are moving—and always in transition—between and beyond national models or institutional systems of modernity (ibid.).

Ochoa’s “systems of modernity” refers to what she previously termed institutional mechanisms, such as schools, the music industry, etc.

I raise this point to underscore not only the apparent power differentials in US and Colombian educational systems and institutions but to emphasize its personal effect on my own cultural awareness and sense of identity. Although absent from Ochoa’s important commentary, the lingering issue of identity is not solely a matter of dominant, hegemonic epistemological tensions or institutionalized hermeneutics.

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5 “Necesitamos interactuar entre nuestras diferentes tendencias y con lo que nos ofrece la historia metropolitana de nuestras disciplinas, lo cual nos implica tener una relación dinámica e interactiva con las diferentes vertientes de los estudios de música populares en el mundo anglosajón y europeo.” (Ochoa 2001: 54-55, my translation).

6 Paraphrasing Ochoa, the systems through which practices can be validated and the theoretical formulations that make such practices possible (see Ochoa 1996: 177).
Where cultural pluralism and multiplicities are standards of modernity, the question of identity remains central to ethnomusicology and social sciences discourse.

My core argument is that identity, while always fluid and in flux, is perpetually constructed by social environments, histories, and cultures that are actualized through ongoing processes of intercultural contact and performativity. In this dissertation I discuss these key terms with an eye toward identity as socially produced and phenomenologically actualized.

Performativity, which Judith Butler describes as the “fabrications manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means” (Moisala and Diamond 2000: 23), therefore embodies the construction of identity among the musicians. It is a process I examine through the musicking (Small 1998) by Colombian musicians at cultural events, in performance concerts, and on recordings. As actors participating in different scenes, the musicians learn to negotiate and collaborate interculturally; that is, by locating and immersing themselves within the cultural pluralism and musical multiplicity of New York City.

In the modern world, place, lived experiences, and collectively shared values converge in the construction of identity—either as multiplicities or sovereign entities. Viewing performance as a text subject to analysis, the act of exhibiting and expressing individual or group subjectivities through ideologically informed cultural forms and structures is transformative on several levels: it transforms the actors, the audience, and the temporal-spatial spaces they occupy. Each of the dissertation case
studies will show how these negotiations are evident and demonstrated by the confluence of musical aesthetics, practices, and intercultural strategies involved in the conscious construction of identity.⁷

Initially, Colombian music was “foreign” to me—as incomprehensible as the name change I was to encouraged to adopt when becoming a “naturalized” US citizen at the age of nine (i.e., Jorge-George). However, as I began to inquire about Colombians and their music, I learned that there was a sizeable community of Colombians not far from where we lived. While in the process of becoming a legal American citizen (aside from the name-change matter), I found it necessary to maneuver through a combination of insider/outsider strategic ethnic and cultural positions, which have proved useful to my ethnographic approach to the subject matter and my musical entrainment. With the acquisition of English language skills, I realized that I could “pass” for Anglo, while at other times I was occasionally labeled “Latino” (or other pejorative terms); an all-purpose marker used to generally refer to Spanish-speaking males, regardless of country of origin (to say nothing of gender marginalization). Since neither “Colombia” nor “Colombian” was a well-known national or ethnic category at the time (save for “Third World” associations depicted in “First World” television financial appeals, replete with images of starving children in the hinterlands of an impoverished South American nation), my sense of a national identity remained rather indeterminate. Despite the close proximity of the growing

Colombian diaspora in Queens, New York (less than twenty-five miles from my Yonkers, New York home), the presence of Colombians and Colombian culture remained generally unknown to me, that is, until stories of Colombian violence began to appear with alarming frequency in journalistic reportage and popular entertainment media (i.e., Hollywood films). As a result, my interest in music and the images of Colombian violence became inextricably linked, mediated through media and broadcast networks about the so-called “Colombian situation.”

While my desire to delve more deeply into my national, ethnic and cultural background was in large part fueled by my interest in Latin/o musical styles and genres, I was further motivated by an intellectual drive to better comprehend how music could meaningfully manifest ethnic, racial and cultural difference. My goal of expanding my musical horizons was, without a doubt, closely associated to my need to reconcile my own Colombianness in relation to my US “citizenship.” After years of musical training and study in a variety of North American and Western popular, folk, jazz and classical musical traditions, I gained a measure of proficiency which I attribute to socialization, enculturation, and assimilation—products of the “America” I experienced through what I observed, listened to and learned. This educational/entrainment pathway (or route to my “roots”) has resulted in something more or less of a bifocal perspective and/or attentiveness to the heterogeneous cultural multiplicities that demarcate modern American society (related to “multiculturalism” in social science discourse). My experience of becoming an American vis a vis its social, educational, political and economic structures, while
also reacquainting and acknowledging my Colombian identity, provides a bicultural, multifocal perspective from which I am positioned simultaneously as an outsider looking in, and an insider looking outward.

By the time I completed a masters degree in ethnomusicology (Arévalo1998), my knowledge of Colombian, Latin/o and Caribbean musics had substantially increased. After years of active music making, in addition to learning staple repertoires of Latin/o and Caribbean dance musics (salsa, reggae, merengue, bachata, etc.), I learned to play different Colombian rhythms, such as vallenato, cumbia, porros and gaitas. During the 1990s, performing with Jíbaros y Vallenatos, a Brooklyn-based music collective made up of Colombian and Puerto Rican musicians, we played musical hybrids that blended Puerto Rican seis and aguinaldos (música jibaro) together with vallenato and cumbia; these conjoined rural musics would subsequently morph into salsified Afro-Cuban son-montuno dance arrangements. The project’s proposal clearly demonstrated how within New York’s competitive Latin/o music scene, musicians from different national, race and ethnic backgrounds look for strategies that advance each other’s music and commercial interests while retaining musical features representative of their own cultural identities (see Arévalo Mateus 2001).

Encouraged by my research into Queens-based Colombian costeño musical practices (by people from the Atlantic coastal region), such as the varieties of cumbia and vallenato performed at the local Festival de Baranquilla in Flushing, Queens,
I soon realized this represented only the tip of Colombian musical culture in New York City. For example, while the study of the costeño music scene and urban vallenato practices throughout the metropolitan region identified nine working ensembles, with more than twenty-four participating musicians (1998:117), it was during this period in the mid-1990s that an entirely different Colombian music scene began to gradually unfold. Although the older, established costeño musicians in Queens were the most audibly prominent segment of the Colombian musical community at the time, leaning toward coastal and Caribbean popular music and dance styles and genres, by the 1990s the preference for vallenato and salsa could be heard in local community centers and at numerous clubs/restaurants in “Little Colombia,” the commercial corridor that runs along Broadway-Roosevelt Avenue, beneath New York’s infamous numero siete (No.7), the Manhattan-Queens subway line that serves as the main conduit to “the city.” As such, this signaled both a break from the community’s regional adherence to popular vallenato and an acceptance of the larger pan-Latin urban salsa soundscape (see Wade 1993, Waxer 1997, 2002a, 2002b, Washburne 2008). In addition, an emerging new Colombian musical presence was being felt, as a new contingent of young musicians became increasingly active, and could be heard playing at a variety of informal and alternative music spaces in Manhattan, beyond the established scenes in Queens and New Jersey. The marked contrasts between the Queens musicians and the recent arrivals were striking. Notwithstanding race and class differences extending beyond musical preferences and orientation, the musical practices of the established working class Colombian
costeños differed from that of the young musician arrivals. The Colombian immigrant enclave in Queens, for example, was made up of older, mixed race, or mestizo working and middle class Colombians, primarily from the Atlantic coastal region, from cities such as Barranquilla, Cartagena, and Santa Marta. The young, more recent émigrés are primarily from Colombia’s large urban centers: Bogotá, Medellin, Cali. They are primarily white or mestizo (i.e., mixture of indigenous and European ethnicity), from middle and upper class backgrounds, generally well-educated, cosmopolitan and ambitious. Preferring to settle in Manhattan rather than in the outer boroughs, where the core Colombian diaspora remains intact, they look to align themselves with progressive, alternative social and musical outlets as well as new forms of creative expression. Despite generational, race, class, and regional differences however, these young musicians arrived with a fervent passion for traditional Colombian musics that bypassed popular genres that were then being favored by the larger diasporic community. For example, while cumbia was certainly appreciated and listened to by locally based costeños, and vallenato’s popularity was well evident in the music shops along Broadway (in Queens), the new musicians brought bullerengues, porros, fandangos, chirimía, as well música llanera, currulao, and a different understanding of international, world music and global pop styles such as salsa, Latin jazz, and rock. While the findings of my 1998 study demonstrated how the longest running enclave of Colombians in the US prioritized and maintained powerful musical regionalisms in the Colombian-US diaspora, change was imminent. From Barranquilla to Flushing, costeño musical culture continued to hold sway as
representational of “Colombian” culture, while, in effect, rendering other Colombian regions and musical cultures invisible or hidden. One explanation for this is that, in the US context, costeño music was sufficiently “other” so as to serve the political and economic needs of local community leaders and cultural organizations—perhaps a byproduct of the politically sanctioned multiculturalism enacted by the revised 1991 Colombian Constitution, and which extends to the Colombian diaspora. However, with the arrival of new, young musicians from the interior cities, the balance of cultural prominence shifted away from extant Baranquillero and Cartagenero communities, toward a renewed appreciation of folkloric forms that they presented in novel ways. As such, there was little interaction between the young and old Colombian musicians and audiences; not quite a displacement of one generation over another, but rather a coexistence of different musical scenes, although the new Colombians would soon gain a more visible presence.

From more than a decade-long period of observation and participation, conducting interviews, collecting and archiving music material, as well as advocating for Colombian music and musicians via film and broadcast media, interaction with these musicians has enabled my access to individual and group dynamics. The aim of the dissertation project (as outlined below) has therefore been to engage issues of the new community’s evolution/development underscored by real world negotiation of challenges and obstacles, observe the construction of new identity formations, and document the aesthetic cultural products emerging from multiplicities and

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8 The neo-liberal effects of “multiculturalism” have been soundly critiqued; see Turino (2008), Ochoa (2003).
intercultural interactions among the young, cosmopolitan Colombian musicians in New York City.

The NYC urbanscape thus serves as the setting, a site where multiplicities of international musicians gather to locate themselves within the global center and its networks of power, social production, and interculturalism. Interculturalism is a central theme of the dissertation, both in terms of the social processes and cultural interactions that take place between the Colombians musicians I chronicle here and their non-Colombian musical collaborators, that is, those who come from a multiplicity of ethnic and cultural backgrounds. My recuperation and use of the term interculturalism (which I develop in the section “Interculturalism and Identity” in Chapter One below) therefore refers to the negotiations and strategies by which new Colombian musicians interact with musicians from different cultures to establish a new communal identity and musical culture that represents them as actors in the local and transnational globalscape. It is an actively strategic repositioning toward social inclusion, cultural participation, and commercial membership within the urban setting.

After the introductory chapter, wherein I present the main conceptual and theoretical frameworks of interculturalism and performance, the dissertation unfolds to highlight the evolution of the Colombian cosmopolitan musicians community, and the variety of indigenous and hybrid genres brought to, modernized, and urbanized in New York City between 1995 and 2010. This period coincides with the first wave of migration by the new generation of Colombian musicians, moments that register and
document ensuing collective musical activities and practices that have helped to establish artistic and cultural structures of feeling among their cohorts in the Colombian community.

Though explicitly addressed in terms of performance and interculturalism, each case study required a different analytical approach, in part due to differing genre choices and stylistic orientations among the musicians, differences in artistic or aesthetic aims, and varying ambitions, goals and media strategies for commercial success. While certain features are certainly shared among many of the musicians—consciously modern cosmopolitanism, transnational hybridity, a sense of a national belonging—the desire to transform a national identity associated with stigmas and stereotypes of the Colombian nation underlie and coheres with efforts to establish a global presence for Colombia music. In staking a claim for the inclusion and incorporation of Colombian music and musicians into the cultural fabric of New York City and beyond to global networks, the musicians and the music discussed in each chapter focuses on centrally important individuals that have migrated to New York, each of whom through dynamic and creatively focused projects are working to create a presence for distinctly new Colombia musical aesthetics, practices, and beliefs, while becoming part of local and transnational flows of global cultures in the process.

*Colombianidad* / *Colombianness* thus finds unprecedented representation within the city’s heterogeneous cultural sphere, demonstrating a renovated, postcolonial sense of identity that is nonetheless cognizant of the diverse regional/national/international musical forms of Colombian expressive culture that
communicates through the city’s global media networks (see Calle 2012), and which often are aligned more along class lines than by race or region. That is, Colombian musical tastes, for example, are not simply a feature of region or race; people from different class backgrounds may share more musical tastes with socio-economic peers than with either regional or race peers.9

The dissertation traces these subjectivities during a highly formative period of the scene’s evolution. And while both the music scene and community endures beyond the chronological parameters of the study, the dissertation further investigates the social, musical, and aesthetic practices that have been used to develop this new Latin/o community within New York City. Through ethnographic participation and observation, I introduce significant individuals and their music projects, performance venues, and the major events and organizations with which they are involved. The integration of new local/global networks of communications, media technology, and recording industry practices also figure into each section, illustrating not only the diversity of musical interactions on the part of the musicians but providing a glimpse of cultural production and listener-audience market reception.

In the first of three case studies (Chapter Two), I focus on one of the first and arguably most important artist on the contemporary Colombian music scene: Lucía Pulido. Immersed in vocal experimentation, Pulido works with musicians of diverse stylistic, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds, performing traditional Colombian cantos

9 For example, as Pacini Hernández comments, “poor and working class Colombians are not likely to be jazz fans or to gravitate to heavily jazz-influenced music, while middle/upper class Colombians are” (personal communication, June 22, 2012).
de trabajo (or work songs) from her rural birthplace in los llanos orientales (Eastern plains). At a young age, however, Pulido was sent to Bogotá for her education, a transformative experience that informs her art, aesthetics, and identity.

My analysis investigates embodied vocality and memory in Pulidos’ performances through a methodology that incorporate analytical frameworks of performativity and memory (as cognitive processes), which enable Pulido to expand the range of possibilities for vocal innovation and expression. Pulido not only maintains a personal connection with her agrarian roots through the corpus of cantos de vaquería, or cattle herding calls/cries/shouts that she uniquely interprets, I argue that through Colombian musical sources, especially the cowboy songs, Pulido simultaneously adheres to and transcends traditional norms associated with their performance, both contextually and in the service of her vocal artistry. Pulidos’ artistic development and success in the fields of experimental, avant-garde world musics, and intercultural musical collaboration thus combine in a manner that serves the Colombian musicians community, of which she is a central actor. Her vocality provides a template or model of traditional and modern musicking that represents one Colombian woman artist’s intense desire for creative innovation, aesthetic simultaneity, and contemporary artistic relevance in the global sphere.

Chapter Three turns toward New York’s Latin music scene, to examine efforts by pianist, composer, arranger, producer and bandleader Pablo Mayor, from Palmira, Colombia, to achieve significant levels of acknowledgement, representation, and cultural positioning for Colombian music within the orbit of Jazz, Latin jazz, and the
Latin/o big band and dance orchestra continuum. His project highlights the stratification of Latin/o musical culture in the city, as well as the intercultural challenges, strategies, and negotiations required to establish a viable presence within New York’s Latin/o soundscape—the so-called global epicentre of jazz and Latin/o music (Toynbee and Dueck 2011: 201). The chapter focuses on Mayor’s biography, Latin/o music historiography, and hegemonic discourses that surround Latin/o popular music (read Salsa, Dominican, and Afro-Cuban-Puerto Rican musics). Through these discursive fields, I telescope into Mayor’s *Folkore Urbano*, a project that illustrates intervening processes which aim to redraw the symbolic and cultural boundaries of Latin/o music in the city—a strategy realized through the social production of performance, festival organization, pedagogy, community development and outreach. As Dueck aptly notes, “the city is an appropriate subject, it is a destination for migrants, a place of stylistic fusion and encounter, and a point from which music, and stories about it, are broadcast outward to markets and publics” (*Ibid.*). Mayor’s project lucidly demonstrates the coalescence of Colombian musicians around the idea of community and its representational value, as a narrative about the necessary steps taken to attain a global presence for Colombian Jazz in Latin/o and world music markets.

Shifting to the field of traditional Colombian popular music, while maintaining a transnational, cosmopolitan thread, Chapter Four presents Martín Vejarano and his NYC-based ensemble, La Cumbiamba eNeYé (LCE). One of the most dynamic and ambitious group of musicians on the scene, the chapter traces
LCE’s peripatetic musical explorations between New York and Colombia through *gaita* performance—the Atlantic coastal music genre that has achieved local and international success. Vejarano’s project embodies discourses of intercultural transnationalism and modernist revivalism among New York’s Colombian musicians. The ethnographic turn taken here to a multi-sited case study is necessary since it documents Vejarano and his musicians as participants at local festival competitions in rural San Jacinto; as busking street musicians in Santa Fé de Bogotá; and in performances throughout New York’s cosmopolitan venues. Performing *gaita*, LCE’s trajectory draws from local/glocal musical talent, whether in Colombia or New York, underscoring the transnational mobility of traditional costeño musical genres in all its globalizing hybridity. Throughout the dissertation I provide evidence of instances and iterations of interculturality and performativity evident between and among the musicians, as they actively work in New York City (and beyond) to introduce diverse varieties and variations of Colombian musical resources generally unknown to Latin/o or mainstream audiences, resulting in changes to the cultural politics of the community and the urban soundscape.\(^\text{10}\) From Pulidos’ modernized rural, cattling work songs to Mayor’s entertainment-oriented big-band productions of Colombian Latin jazz to Vejarano’s transnational experimentation with *gaita*

\(^{10}\) Non-Colombian musical elements brought into the New York-Colombian projects are instrumental to intercultural processes that are being formed and explored. LCE, in fact, while continuing as an ensemble of primarily Colombians, has also branched off and morphed into a purely intercultural band comprised of non-Colombian musicians save for LCE’s founder and leader, Vejarano. Chia’s Dance Party, named after a moon goddess in pre-Columbian Muiscan mythology, perform traditional and original yet urbanized, and improvisatory forms of *banda pelayera* compositions, primarily fandangos, and porros.
structures, we see the coalescence of individual artistry and community at several
different levels that provide evidence of New York City’s changing public sonic
spaces; a transition proffered by young Colombian musicians as they enter local and
global music networks, transform structures of feeling and meaning, and contest
notions of migrant, diasporic Colombianidad/Colombianess.

These musicians arrive from different regions of Colombia, making pathways
that often traverse through Bogotá before winding across national borders to NYC
and elsewhere. Although they each share different personal backgrounds, their
experiences are filtered through a cosmopolitanism that seems to impel their
transnational mobility. As members of a new musical community, they strive to
establish themselves as working musicians in New York City, representing significant
and uniquely individual examples of Colombian identity formation that shows the
choices, possibilities, and decisions that are available to and that each makes—often
contingent on matters of race, class, and gender, as they create a sense of community
while making music that is Colombian yet transnational and culturally hybrid. The
relationships between these musical migrants and New York City is explicit in the
ethnographic record presented in this dissertation, offering a view into the
rural/urban, local/global (glocal) and transnational complexities that surround
intercultural performances of identity. I now turn to the dissertation’s research
methodology, wherein interculturalism through performance provides the theoretical
foundation and the basis for comprehending the musical practices of the Colombian
musicians community.
Research methodology

The research for this study is based on ethnographic observation, participation, and the performance of musical multiplicities as they unfold in the urban setting of New York City. A site where transnational movements and intercultural networks interact and point to new versions of global musical processes (Slobin 1993, 2007; Stokes 2004; Taylor 2007), musical performances by new Colombian musical migrants arriving since the early 1990s embody and embrace notions and ideologies of Colombian musical “tradition” even as they shed them in a display of creativity, invention, and innovation, altering local Latin/o music scenes and public perception of Colombianess. The performance of Colombian musics, discussed here as ritual performance and performativity (e.g., Taylor 2003; Schechner and Appel 1990), illuminate the important role music and musicians play in the construction of a uniquely cosmopolitan and modern Colombian identity through conscious self-representation. Further, I maintain that the construction of Colombian cultural identity for this specific community is more likely a result of intercultural engagement and transnational cosmopolitanism rather than from invented traditions (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983), imagined communities (Benedict 1991 [2006r]), or strategic essentialisms (Lipsitz 1994, 2007). I argue, alternatively, that although some cultural products can be invented, imagined, and/or strategically positioned as a result of intercultural engagement, the process for the new Colombian musicians community is particularly significant for its outcomes: communal solidarity, creation of new identity and meaning, and the material production of expressive culture.
Pressing into questions of “Colombianness”—that is, Colombian identity as reconfigured in New York City—the dissertation research explores how an urban host space serves as a local, strategic base of operation for these musicians while they work themselves into local networks and global markets. As a musical “laboratory,” the city allows musicians to experiment with world musics of indigenous or local origins, transforming sonic and cultural landscapes. In turn, the city impacts musicians in a number of ways—socially, economically, politically—even as it undergoes its own cultural modifications and transformations. This hyperlocal, dynamic and mutually reciprocal socio-cultural relationship, I argue, not only serves to index the agencies of New York City and the Colombian diaspora, but also illustrates how people create, respond, or resist hybrid musical variants according to local factors. It also marks transformations in local Latin/o cultural politics, even as it points to enduring social factors associated with normative homeland identities—that is, those based on race, class, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, or regional affiliation (cf. Wade 1993, 2000, Béhague 1994, Bermúdez 1994a). In the wake of recent urban, anthropological, and ethnomusicological studies that examine cultural politics and musics of diasporic communities in New York City, I note the centrality of intercultural, postmodern sensibilities in rural/urban spaces and, particularly, how they affect a community’s multiple subjectivities (e.g., Dávila 2004; LaGuerre 2006; Van Buren 2001; Wilcken and Allen 1998; Zheng 1993, 2010).

These issues are, of course, relevant beyond New York City, as shown by the transnational cycling of musicians to and from the homeland, and demonstrated by
the case studies of the dissertation. I document the ethnographic field of the musicians’ community by recording “live” performances, conducting analysis of recorded media, and examining musical style and textual structures. The case studies of the musicians (which form chapters two, three and four) were selected with such parameters as (1) their role and significance to the community’s development, (2) musical and aesthetic practices, in terms of styles, genres, hybrids, and (3) the ideas they generate about the representation and transformation of the Colombian community and cultural identity formation in diaspora and in the homeland.

My research methodology relies on new discursive modes pertaining to interculturalism and diasporic transnationalism as social processes that move beyond what Wade, Bermúdez, Ochoa, and other scholars of Colombian music culture and movements have elaborated upon. My turn to indigeneity as an added theoretical underpinning to fields of performance and interculturalism became necessary to the study for reasons that will become increasingly evident. For example, Deborah Pacini Hernández (2010), speculating about the constituent parts of hybrid musical aesthetics and practices in Colombian cumbia, raises the possibility that at least some transformations may be attributed to the Latin/o American mestizo communities’ indigenous cultural heritage (141). Attempting to explain why cumbia spread mostly/only to mestizo areas of the Americas, Pacini Hernandez posits the importance of subaltern, marginalized subjectivities that generally have been overlooked by Colombian society (personal communication). Cognizant of the dearth of a more systematic musicology of indigenous sensibilities and their contribution to
Colombia’s mestizo musical culture (*ibid.*), indigeneity proffers a response by including a practical framework that looks at culture through an indigenous Colombian perspective. Joanne Rappaport’s (2005) extensive study of the Nasa Yuwe in the Tierradentro (Cauca) region of Colombia and the cultural dynamics between the Nasa and dominant Colombian society shows how the Nasa participate in a discourse with both indigenous and non-Nasa public intellectuals and political actors, as they argue for their indigenous right to retain their cultural identity, with its attending cosmovision of the world intact. Beyond a shared national identity and a history of violence, Nasa interculturality thus serves as an example and model that highlights discursively strategic parallels in social processes, with regards to negotiating intercultural spaces and ethnic pluralism among indigenous and non-indigenous public intellectuals. Even Nasa wordplay about their region’s naming—“Tierradentro” and “Tierrafuera” (Land within, Land without, respectively)—suggests the complexity of balancing an inside/outside, center/periphery bound positioning—a position which diaspora powerfully mirrors, one where community is both within its cultural bounds yet outside national boundaries. For not only do the Nasa, as Rappaport notes, aim to construct a movement that speaks to the dominant society in what appears in the course of mobilizations as a single voice, their objectives emerge out of a heterogeneity of agendas, methodologies, and discourses (16). The Nasa, according to Rappaport, achieve this goal through “Nasa-ness”; that is, lived experiences of their religious belief system in its holistic expansiveness enables them to engage the “other” through double-consciousness (DuBois) and
ethnic pluralism directed from both within and outside their Nasa identity. Hence, Rappaport’s narrative of the Nasa speaks to alterity (the subaltern) and their response to an encroaching modernity: by asserting one’s traditional tribal identity the Nasa affirm a place within the larger social space—evidently, an act of political self representation. The maintenance and practices of indigenous codes of expression unique to Nasa cultural identity, then, are precisely the cultural referents I draw upon in theory, and apply, albeit in a different cultural context. The “frontier” for the Colombian musicians that Rappaport delineates between indigenous culture and the dominant society is New York City and the global cultural gateway it represents. Thus, my resignification of Nasa advocacy for cultural revitalization addresses cultural heterogeneity, political marginalization, and the intercultural negotiations with which the Colombian musicians strategize to develop their community’s presence, cultural identity, and values, while becoming part of the modern world music scene. Not unlike the Nasa, Colombian musicians in New York City are deeply involved in intercultural dialogue with the larger cultural soundscape, here comprised of heterogenous Latin/o, experimental and world musics. Although the mediums may differ—language and music—the performance of music “traditions” (a metaphor in the postmodern sense) seek to establish a unified front of Colombian

\[11\] Rappaport provides a succinct clarification that marks the distinction between inculturation and interculturalism relevant to the discussion: “Whereas interculturalism seeks to appropriate external elements to strengthen an indigenous core culture, inculturation aims at revealing and fortifying those elements of that core that are identified as Christian to strengthen an external belief system” (2005:214); see also Poplawska 2008. Of course, here, I am interested in musical interculturalism, not religious inculturation.
cultural identity and musical expression, recasting Colombian identity within the broad strokes of urban modernity. Less a struggle between culturalism and sovereignty, as in the Nasa case, the Colombian musicians community’s efforts are nonetheless involved with the project to reconstruct Colombian music culture even as they develop a pluralist ethos and a non-hierarchal, horizontal presence. Although perhaps circuitous and oblique in its nomadic, peripatetic directionality, their pathway is nonetheless evident in the strategies applied: e.g., adherence to “traditional” musical practices, cultural experimentation with transregional musics, musical collaboration with musicians of diverse gender, ethnic, race, national and cultural identities, and the (re)negotiation of local/global cultural politics.
CHAPTER ONE

Colombian Musicians in New York City

Historical and demographic data about Colombian musicians working in NYC remains scarce. Biographical information about individual musicians performing with the Latin big bands of the 1950s and 60s is also largely obscured. It was not until the Colombian orchestras of Lucho Bermúdez, Pacho Galán, Climaco Sarmiento and Los Corraleros de Majagual were brought to record in New York during the mid-1950s and 60s that Colombian musicians began appearing with any frequency, and then, performing only at local venues within the ethnic enclaves of the borough of Queens and, later, New Jersey. While a few artists remained in the US to pursue professional careers as musicians, more often than not, because of limited opportunities to play or record Colombian music, they either shifted their musical direction, abandoned their musical goals, or chose to return to Colombia. Local musicians, whether in Queens or in the growing Colombian enclaves of New Jersey and Washington, D.C., remained active, although limited to performing costeño dance band favorites or covers of Colombian pop hits on the local restaurant/nightclub circuit (e.g., Chibcha, Sarabanda). Foncho Castellar y los

12 For a historical overview, see section “Latin Music in New York City” in chapter three, pp.9-30; see also Arévalo 1998 for an ethnographic account of the costeño scene during the 1990s; see also Pacini Hernandez 2010, especially chapter two: “Historical Perspectives on Latinos and the Latin Music Industry”.

13 Migration to the cities of the northeastern corridor of the US was prompted by several factors, including social, political and economic conditions in Colombia. New Jersey and Washington, D.C. communities initially developed as a result of Colombians entering the suburban, middle class, attained by those with privilege and access to university education (see Kassinitz et al. 2008 and Magnan Penuela, n.d.).
Enemigos No.1 de la Tristeza, Yesid Rodriguez’ J&V Mix, and Los Macondos sustained marginal careers local to the New York region. Regular employment for Colombian musicians was more typically attained by those proficient in playing salsa, Latin jazz, or other international popular styles. As a result, individual/collective preferences for Colombian music were supplanted by the adaptive requirements to play pan-Latin musics in order to supplement their income. The main point here is that local musicians often had to operate within informal, intercultural economies that placed them outside of the Colombian diasporic cultural sphere of which they were a part. If one was to survive as a “Latin/o” musician in New York, it required that you enter the pan-Latin-salsa/popular music orbit, often at the expense of playing one’s own regional or national musics. Moreover, Colombian musicians remained generally unaccounted for, or concealed from, official or systematic demographic studies and academic discourses. Undocumented migrants, many of those entering the US either with temporary travel or limited student visas (or illegally), in fact, remain undercounted, further rendering official statistics unreliable.

In this dissertation, I examine the efflorescence and evolution of this new, cosmopolitan music-cultural community. Through an ethnomusicological analysis of ethnographic and historical data I document a variety of social phenomena involving transnational migration, processes of cultural production, performance and intercultural aesthetic interaction. *Colombianidad* (or Colombianness) is reimagined according to the goals of community members that represent themselves as agents of change about popular perceptions of the Colombian nation-state (read:
misconceptions and stigmas). Often characterized (and perceived) as a marginally stable society, in terms of national and civil security (read: violent), these musicians seek to position themselves as a cultural entity separate and apart from negative stereotypical local or national associations. With a marked postnational identity that reflects powerful reconnections with the past, these musicians are advancing forward a new sense of Colombian identity (cf. Vila 2001, Corona and Madrid 2007).

Focusing on these musicians and their musical practices as the unit of study, the dissertation combines an ethnomusicology of musical performance, reception, and modes of conscious self-representation and movement enacted through local/global networks, and contextualized under specific historical, cultural, and social conditions (Zheng 2010:11). Unlike the “small groups [that] tack with the steering to find their way to the communal harbor of their imagination…refus[ing] to take fellow passengers on board”(Slobin 2003: 290), this subgroup of recent arrivals welcomes intercultural interaction, negotiation, and collaboration within and apart from the Colombian diaspora of New York.14

The ethnographic elements of the dissertation explore the makeup of this dynamic musical-cultural subgroup at a particular historical moment and place in time, and with a particular set of aesthetics. The research surveyed where these musicians come from and why they have chosen to live and work in New York City.

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14 Corona and Madrid speak of the “urban and global lounge,” as the site where the focus on urban metropoles—large metropolitan centers such as Paris, London, Tokyo—is not casual since they are the “main centers of distribution, consumption and, often, production of world music”(2010:18).
In particular, I focus on what they bring in terms of musical culture, memory and social identity, and how emergent reformulations enter flows of local, translocal and global cultures. At a time when diasporic musical cultures—particularly Latin/o populations—reflect immense demographic and socio-cultural transformations, the ethnographic data I gathered over a fifteen year period offer a view into questions about the role music plays for the construction of group identity, mapping cultural aesthetics and values, and the (re)contextualization of transnational and flexible citizenship (Ong 1999, 2005; Madrid et al. 2012). A discursive field marked by multiethnic, multiracial, gendered and classed systems that operate within intercultural environments of multiplicities and hybrids (Anderson, 1991; Hannerz, 1996; Jameson and Miyoshi, 1998; Ochoa-Gautier et al. 2006; Slobin, 2007; Solomon, 2006; and, Turino, 2000).

Necessary for gaining an understanding of such processes, Colombia’s history of social violence and civil conflict adds a key discursive function, working as a subtextual underlay of social consciousness prevalent among the musicians themselves—sometimes overtly stated, while other times discreet, unspoken or less apparent. The dissertation, therefore, aims to reveal the anxieties of modernity that play out as a crisis of identity, whether individual or collective, and at local, regional, national or global levels. Moreover, recognition and celebration of the personal and political cultural transformations enacted by the Colombian musicians community in New York City, and their realization of *Colombianidad*, further intends to raise awareness by asking questions about war and its effects on what Judith Butler calls
“ungrievable populations” (see Butler cited in Zukic 2011). While it may appear extreme to call into play the trauma of Colombia’s history of violence in a study about young educated, middle class musical migrants in New York City, I would emphasize the long lasting effects of war on the psyche of all individuals. Moreover, with respect to the fictionalization/performance of violence, digital performance artist and media scholar Naida Zukic suggests that “we all need to pause and think about what is going on structurally, politically and culturally” (Zukic 2011). For ethnomusicology, then, music and its complex relationship to violence/war/conflict is a rich discursive field of inquiry, and the young Colombian musicians that I have worked with in New York City exemplify and embody resolute resilience and the motivating impulses required for political, cultural, and physical survival (cf. Cambria 2012).

The Analytical Context of Colombian music

Corresponding with the remarkable growth of Colombian music within popular, Latin and Latin Jazz and world music networks over the last two decades, the exponential rise in related scholarly literature by ethnomusicologists, social scientists and researchers is perhaps expected. Bear in mind that earlier writings on Colombian music and music history, which precedes the cultural developments discussed herein, inform and contribute to the wider historical picture of the musical movements involved. This literature review, therefore, highlights discourses pertinent to the dissertation while it aims to provide commentary on both social content and cultural context. Before proceeding with a review of theoretical and
interdisciplinary writings and sources, I begin with an overview of general Colombian ethnomusicology literature by both Colombian and non-Colombian scholars through a cartography of the major local, regional and national musical genres and styles. In addition, within each case study chapter, I provide relevant literature and sources that incorporate material specific to that chapter’s subject matter.\textsuperscript{15} I then continue with a discussion of music literature on translocal, transregional and transnational movements by Colombian musics and musicians, and the social and cultural forces that act upon them, as they travel and enter ever-widening regional, national, and global cultural flows. Throughout, I comment on past and current scholarship to discuss its relevance to the dissertation’s themes.

\begin{flushleft}{\textbf{Colombian Ethnomusicology}}\end{flushleft}

For Colombian ethnomusicologist Egberto Bermúdez, the idea of a “national culture” is only a fiction. His belief that “national culture cannot be created in countries born from colonialism, where indigenous and marginalized ethnic and linguistic groups exist,” is succinctly stated: “these are countries with pluralistic cultures and societies, unstable and contradictory, countries internally divided, lacking in autonomy and cultural identity up to the present time (1985: 54).” Sociologist Peter Wade also notes that Colombians often say that Colombia “lacks a true national identity or a proper spirit of nationalism [national sentiment]” (2000, 

\textsuperscript{15} For example, in chapter three, see Latin and Latin Jazz music history literature, pp.139-162.
He suggests that while racial difference (indigenous people and Blacks) has been incorporated into official representations of the nation, it has emerged largely as a means to assert the superiority of whites and mestizos (*Ibid.*). How this plays out culturally in Colombia is evident in recent state-run programs that inclusively promotes Afro-Colombian music as part of the national heritage. While supporting Afro-Colombian cultural expressions through nationally visible public programs certainly advances a degree of cultural awareness, the state’s abdication of its governmental and material responsibilities to Afro-Colombian populations, in effect, maintains the racial and class *status quo* (cf. Birenbaum Quintero 2006). Despite implicit polemics of these positions, music-making and musical expression remains at the very heart of Colombian society—whether regionally conceived or nationally defined as a core cultural feature. From pre-Columbian to colonial and postcolonial eras in Colombian history to the present day, the centrality of music has held significant social, political, and cultural importance and meaning for the people of the territories once known as *Nueva Granada* (see Aretz 1991; Olsen 2002). Aside from invoking the fictive or imagined, Bermúdez’s commentary nonetheless raises a salient question: how can the tripartite confluence of indigenous, European, and African musics—in all their variety and complexity—form, or be understood as forming, a single entity that reflects Colombian “nationhood?” This question, which Colombian

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16 This centralization [was] characterized by intensive peasant colonization of virgin lands and increased integration of the peasantry into national and international markets via a commercial bourgeoisie. It was at this time that the first Academia Nacional de Música was founded (1882), and from about 1887, a national anthem began to be standardized, based on the words by Rafael Núñez and set to music by Oreste Sindici (1837–1904), an Italian immigrant” (2000, fn6, 31).
and non-Colombian music scholars alike have had to wrestle with continually, may account for the broad but generalized scholarship of perhaps [what may be] the most diverse musical heritage of all Latin American countries (Manuel 1988: 50). Colombian identity, therefore, is a complex matter and the issues surrounding music as a marker of national culture can be approached from different perspectives.

**Colombian Musics: The Regional Approach**

In a nation of nearly fifty million people, marked by vastly contrasting topographies and terrains, resulting in powerful local and regional identities, Colombian musics have historically reflected differences in ethnic, race, and class makeup. As in many Latin American nations, early Colombian histories have chronicled colonialist and evangelical missionary accounts of indigenous peoples, with typically rare or derogatory mention of their musics, if at all (see Hernández de Alba 1938, Izikowitz 1935). People of African descent were brought as slaves to port cities such as Cartegana, Baranquilla and Santa Marta to work either in the Atlantic-Caribbean agricultural regions or in the gold mines of the Pacific coast.

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17 Recent demographic data indicates that the present day Colombian population is 58% mestizo, 20% white, 14% mulatto, 4% black, 3% black-Amerindian, and 1% Amerindian (www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0107419.html), accessed March 9, 2008.

18 Prior to the government’s ratification of the “new” Colombian constitution in 1991, that officially recognized the nation-state’s “multicultural” identity, ethnographic and ethnomusicological research into indigenous peoples and their expressive culture was generally rather sparse among both Colombian and non-Colombian scholars. A few exceptions include Whitten 1974, de Friedemann 1980, List 1965, 1983, 1991; see also Aretz 1991, especially pp. 69-91, and Kuss 2004. For a concise overview of historical and regional studies of Colombian ethnomusicology up to the 1990s, see Myers 1992: pp.477-748.
Many were poorly or not documented, a result of deeply embedded racial and religious biases. White Hispanic colonial elites populated the cities of the interior, particularly the capital city of Santa Fé de Bogotá, where they maintained political and economic control of the hinterlands throughout the territories. During the colonial period, due to the lack of reliable means of transportation or communications, the insulated elites not only centralized their power base in Bogotá, they retained close connections with music traditions and folklore associated with their Spanish Catholic heritage. On the other hand, as historian Castro-Contreras writes: “[indigenous cultures] which sustained immediate contact, bearing the brunt force of the Spanish conquerors, were, as a result, forced to either replace or syncretize their corresponding musical manifestations.”

Notwithstanding syncretism, the pressure to acculturate, or small populations, indigenous cultural retentions are still evident in musical practices found among native groups along the Atlantic coast, Sierra Nevada mountains, Pacific coastal river basins, the Andean highlands and the tropical forests of Colombia’s southern regions (see Arévalo 1998, pp. 27-31).

From these beginnings, it becomes abundantly clear that the profusion of early Colombian musics, dances, and musical instruments correspond with distinct yet diverse social formations, interactions, tensions and conflicts, a result of intercultural contact between and among the so-called tripartite cultures. If one considers the

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19 “Las culturas que tuvieron que mantener un contacto más inmediato y soportar el embate del conquistador reemplazaron o sincretizaron sus correspondientes manifestaciones musicales”(Castro Contreras 1999:826, my translation).
number of contributing cultures of indigenous, African, and European peoples, and
the extent of racial, social and cultural interaction and mixture (mestizaje), we begin
to see the complex diversity that informs and comprises Colombian musical culture—
to say little of constructing a “national identity.”

Identity and nation, in fact, are precisely the research focus of Peter Wade’s
work. In his major studies, Blackness and Race Mixture, The Dynamics of Racial
Identity (1993) and Music, Race, and Nation, Música Tropical in Colombia (2000),
Wade marshals a wealth of historical and demographic data to support his thesis
about the complex racial and ethnic makeup of distinctly varied cultural groups in
Colombia, and the hierarchical places they occupy within Colombia’s highly raced
“nationhood.” By calling attention to marked regionalisms, entrenched racial
relations, and migration movements of people within the nation, Wade contributes to
the study of Colombia society through the complex prisms of race and popular music.
Moreover, the importance of his work was its focus on Afro-Colombians, an ethnic
group that has largely been ignored. Nonetheless, while the New Grove (Béhague
and List 1980, Béhague et al. 2001) presents the music of “Colombia” through a
general historical timeline, outlined with sections on Art, Traditional, and Popular
musics, I approach the music literature following the Traditional section’s schema,
where the nation is regionally divided: i.e., Atlantic coastal, Andean (mountains),
Pacific coastal, Los llanos (or plains), and the Amazon (forest). Where my plan
differs is that within each “region” I discuss music linkages or connections to specific
or recurring themes (i.e., race, class, gender, hybridity, urbanism, etc.), while also
paying attention to Colombian musical interactions that crosscut local/regional/national borders and boundaries and enter global and world music spheres. Much of the scholarly literature on Colombia and its music adheres to the geophysical and cultural topography paradigm to explain the racial and ethnic composition and demographic processes involved in the formation of the nation-state.

Along the northern coastal region of Colombia, numerous traditional music genres, styles and forms developed throughout local villages and towns, that would later become highly mediated popular musics. In fact, several of the musical genres and styles discussed here display varied combinations of traditional and folkloric elements that are deemed “popular”—that is, locally and commonly accepted and shared. Colombian anthropologist De Friedemann has written extensively about the centrality of festivals and rituals for the performance and dissemination of Colombian musics throughout Colombia, and it is in this context where “popular” music and dance traditions remain most apparent (See De Friedemann 1993, 1995, Béhague et al. 2001, Castro Contreras 1999, Ocampo Lopez 1990, Zapata Olivella 1962).

*Cumbia*, for example, is without a doubt the most widely diffused music and dance genre performed along the entire stretch of the Caribbean coastline (from the states of Cordoba to La Guajira). In its earliest documented form, *cumbia* was a traditional couples dance, carefully choreographed and following a set structure. It should be noted that the dance was originally part of a *fiesta de cumbia*, also known as a

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20 For a discussion of the “artificiality” of using terms such as *típico, folklórico* or *popular* to describe local and transnational popular musics, see Hutchinson 2011, pp.245-262.
cumbiamba, and, as such, can be regarded as a socially meaningful and embodied expression that symbolically represents the intense cultural encounter and racial mixture between indigenous and African people which constitutes costeño identity. 21 Commenting on the prevalence of Afro-Colombian syncretic musics, Bermúdez writes that these could be interpreted more as “a symbol of cultural resistance and ethnic survival” than a “superposition” of styles (1994a: 232; see also Wade 1993: 91). This reading suggests that a reconsideration and “further reflection on the nature of the concept of syncretism” (ibid.) is always useful. As a cultural process, syncretism allows for mixtures of expressive forms of different and often conflicting transcultural sources that can result in hybrid cultural formations. However, cultural resistance to syncretic products also occurs when individuals or groups contest or reject artificially constructed cultural practices that are considered too far removed from authentic traditions (cf. Hobsbawm’s notion of “invented tradition”, Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983). With race and class as complicating factors, the complexity of syncretic musics are thus further emphasized. Social anthropologist Peter Wade continues to update this enduring thread in the literature, further expounding on blanqueamento/whitening, creolism, and mestizaje in relation to race and class as manifested in Colombian popular music (see Wade 1993:51-65). For example, in cumbia’s folkloric form, a singer leads with Spanish coplas or decimas (i.e., four- and ten-line poetic structures respectively) and a chorus responds with repeated refrains.

21 The costeños of the Colombian Caribbean coastal regions are an amalgam of race, class, and socio-economic categories. They represent a pluralistic Latin-American complex consisting primarily of Spanish, West African, and Amerindian cultural traditions (Arévalo 1998:11).
It is played by one of two ensembles, either the *conjunto de cumbia*, or the *conjunto de gaitas*, depending on locale and the nature of the event. Musical instrumentation for both of these ensembles provides clear evidence of *mestizaje*—that is, the tripartite ethnic and cultural makeup of the performers and instrumentation. Instruments include percussion instruments traceable to African and indigenous sources: *tambor mayor* (lead drum), *llamador* (a single-headed drum that functions as timekeeper), *bombo* (a large two-headed drum, played with two sticks that strike both heads or the frame side of the drum), and *guaches* (tubular rattles)—the drums are of African derivation while the rattles are indigenous. Melodies for each of the ensembles are played on aerophones of distinctly indigenous derivation as well: either a *caña de millo* (or *pito*), a small cane reed clarinet, or a pair of matched *gaitas*, male (*macho*) and female (*hembra*) duct flutes; the *gaita macho* musician simultaneously plays a large gourd maraca (see List 1983, Béhague et al. 2001).

Though cumbia is but one member of a family of related dances and *ritmos* (rhythms) from the Atlantic coastal region that include porros, gaitas, puyas, fandangos, mapales and bullerengues, each of these can be said to show resemblances and structural similarities that form a cumbia complex defined by lively duple-meter and quadratic rhythmic patterns of African derivation. These rhythms, each with its own underlying yet analogous rhythmic framework, are performed according to local practices of different communities, villages, and towns. Porro, or “*hijo de la cumbia*”/cumbia’s son (Orovio 1994:72), with its slightly slower tempo and greater use of melodic variation, was adapted and performed by military bands, in a long-
standing local tradition dating back to the colonial period (Fortich Díaz 1994). In the early 1900s, porro too lent itself to new interpretations. Syncretism between European wind bands (bandas de viento) and porro’s blend of Black and indigenous melodies and rhythms were combined. As a result, and partly due to porro’s less local entrenchment, a pathway was opened for its wider popular acceptance.

With the advent and development of the Colombian recording industry during the early Twentieth Century, primarily in the cities of Medellin and Bogotá, by mid-century, cumbias and porros (also recorded as gaitas by Lucho Bermúdez and Pacho Galan, among other costeño bandleaders) had spread far beyond the Atlantic littoral.22 The social and economic processes that helped promote costeño music’s diffusion and national acceptance outside its race and class demarcated regionalism has been a subject of a great deal of scholarship. For example, from Peter Manuel’s explication of cumbia’s widespread popularity, attributable in part to its musical features—“the tempo is moderate and the modern choreography…is relatively accessible” and “the harmony of the cumbia is simple“(1988:51)—to Fernandez L’Hoeste’s cultural studies analysis of cumbia’s “plasticity,” which, according to his analysis, has enabled cumbia to represent different race and/or class tensions in different local settings, [because] cumbia’s “apparent lack of musical complexity became key to cumbia’s ability to move and change form”(2007: 339). In addition, the widespread

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22 Fusions were especially in vogue during Colombia’s “big band era,” as bandleaders such as Pacho Galan experimented with mixing Colombian and Caribbean musics. Galan’s merecumbe, for example, was a blending of cumbia (always a central component) and Dominican merengue, a different genre altogether from the vallenato ritmo of the same name.
popularity and international diffusion of cumbia (and related genres subsumed under the term) has also been the focus of recent studies that explore its dissemination, resignification, and rearticulation in a variety of regional, national, and international contexts.

Wade (2000) further traces the transformation and development of música tropical, or música costeña, for which cumbia and porro served as central musical resources, to discuss issues of race in the construction of an “imagined” Colombian nation. Wade argues that cumbia, or rather, música tropical, its whitened incarnation, was consolidated as the national music of Colombia after co-optation and recontextualization by power elites, then mediated through recordings, radio and television during the 1940s and 50s. Not only was cumbia promoted as a commercially successful national icon, in fact, subsequently marketed as música tropical, it went on to gain international popularity and success, and, as Wade further points out, “to represent Colombian popular music abroad” (2000:9).

Also forming part of the music culture of the Atlantic coastal region, the town of Valledupar in the state of Magdalena (nominally considered part of la costa) is considered the site of origin for vallenato, the highly popular accordion-driven music which, according to local accounts, developed from a combination of myth and folklore. Generically linked to cumbia, vallenato’s “origins” are somewhat

24 In local parlance, vallenato refers either to the music and its practitioners, or the local populace; see Araújo do Molina 1973; Acosta Medina 1982; Araujonoguera
contested however; regarded by some scholars (e.g., Bermúdez, Ochoa) as a locally constructed product, created during the 1950s and 60 to assert a Valleduparense regionally-based political and cultural identity—rather than a strictly indigenous genre.\textsuperscript{25} Despite vallenato’s celebrated local roots, evident in literary descriptions or journalistic accounts (i.e., heralded by elite intellectuals, including author Gabriel García Márquez), vallenato is primarily associated with the region’s rural, lower class \textit{mestizo} population. For the earlier generation of costeños that migrated to New York City, vallenato remains a popular music favorite, a vital cultural link, and source of identification (Arévalo 1998).

The vallenato ensembles’ original instrumentation, like cumbia and most (but not all) Colombian musics, also hold representational ethnic and racial connotations: i.e., \textit{acordeon} (European button accordion), \textit{caja} (small African drum), and \textit{guacharaca} (indigenous cane scraper). During the annual \textit{Festival de la Leyenda Vallenata} (Legend of Vallenato Festival), held every Spring, vallenato musicians from throughout the region and the nation gather to compete for the crown of \textit{Rey de Vallenato} (Vallenato King). While festival organizers have tried to maintain performance standards of the traditional “folkloric” vallenato, it too has been popularized in a related yet highly commercial form. Significantly, early \textit{Reys de Vallenato}/vallenato Kings, such as Alejo Duran or Pacho Rada, recorded with the

\textsuperscript{25} George List’s research on the flutes of the Ika and Kogi tribes that inhabit the slopes of Santa Marta, just north of Valledupar, suggests the possibility that the flute music of indigenous musicians may have influenced the development of the accordion ensembles which proliferated throughout the region; see List 1991:50-58.
“traditional” instrumental format, eschewing modernized versions supported by then booming drug cartels. By the 1970s however, vallenato artists such as Lisandro Meza and Alfredo Gutiérrez embraced new hybrid forms of vallenato, deploying expanded ensembles with electric bass, additional percussion (congas, timbales, drawn from salsa), and most notably a lead vocalist. Presently, both traditional and modern vallenato, despite regular incursions by other popular musics, continues to be highly popular in Colombia and its diaspora. Vallenato’s national and global popularization, most notably achieved by Carlos Vives, a white artist with connections to the music industry, however, raises not only questions regarding tradition and modernity, it also marks vallenato as a music that serves different social and cultural functions for different consumers. Prompted by these developments, Latin American cultural studies, media and communications, and ethnomusicology scholars began to examine cultural change with respect to issues of tradition and modernity, postmodernity and postcolonialism, the nation-state and national identity (e.g., García Canclini 2004; Martín-Barbero 2004; Ochoa 2004).

Prior to cumbia’s (or música tropical) popular acceptance as the Colombian national music in the mid-Twentieth century however, the majority of published sources indicated that for most of the Nineteenth and well into the Twentieth Century it was not unusual for vallenato song texts to actually name “sponsors”; see Jeremy Marre’s Shotguns and Accordions (1983), a film documentary which highlights (and sensationalizes) social, cultural and local political tensions during a vallenato festival held in the early 1980s. See also Schwietert’s El Acordeón del Diablo (2000); the Smithsonian Channel’s The Accordion Kings (2010); and, Ciro Guerra’s Los Viajes del Viento/The Wind Journeys (2009).

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27 In its “roots” form, vallenato’s accordionist is also the vocalist; this, too, has changed over time, even at the annual Legend of Vallenato Festival.
*bambuco* was regarded as the nation’s true “national” music and dance (Béhague et al. 2001, Castro Contreras 1999). In fact, there are two bambucos. First, there is the music genre and dance that is characteristic of the Andean region, which has been linked to *bundes*—that is, popular dances traced to *wunde* chants of Sierra Leone (De Friedemann 1995: 220). The choreographed elements of the folkloric dance (*invitación, ochos, codos, coquetos, perseguida, and arrodillada*) mirrors the romantic essence of song texts, sung as *coplas,* or couplets, (see Abadía Morales 1995). The movements of the couples symbolically invoke a dynamic courtship, with pursuit, seduction, and conquest, and highly suggestive of colonial period social dynamics. Along with *bambuco,* *pasillos* and *torbellinos,* there are similarly related folkloric dance forms still being performed at present-day festivals and special events. As a set of styles, this genre was one of the most popular forms among white and mestizo population of the Andean interior. Also known as *canción colombiana,* these bambucos were widely composed, recorded and marketed, becoming iconic of Colombia’s “Golden Age” of popular song (De la Espressa Ossío 1997; Miñana Blasco 1987, 2000). Due to their national popularity, particularly among white, urban elites, bambucos competed with the international popular styles of European, Latin American, Caribbean, and North American derivation, flooding the nation during the first half of the Twentieth century.

On the other hand, the Pacific coastal region also claims bambuco, which still remains a relatively understudied musical genre, although scholars have debated the origin of the term for years. Most studies posit white/mestizo origins, as opposed to
Black and/or indigenous roots, while others believe it to be a purely mestizo development of the *altiplano* (Béhague and List 1980: 578, Béhague et al. 2001:144; see Muñoz 2004, Wade 1993: 8-9). Though some scholars acknowledge the presence of African musical and cultural resources, the dispute of bambuco’s origins are less musicological than sociological or ideological, as similarities and differences are debated (see Santamaria Delgado 2008). For example, although the harmonic structures differ in Andean and Pacific coastal bambucos, both simultaneously use triple (3/4) and compound duple (6/8) meters in a disjunct, oscillating hemiola. While Varney’s (2001) musical analysis revises previously held ideas of bambuco’s musical characteristics, the discourse of its racial composition, specifically, what aspects of African or mestizo cultures are foregrounded, or erased, increasingly continues to engage scholars (Hernández Salgar 2007; Muñoz 1999, 2004; Miñana Blasco 1997, 2000; Ochoa 1997). The question of *bambuco*’s “origin” nonetheless highlights the entanglements of race and culture typical of Colombian music discourse. A further review of Pacific coastal musics provides less ambiguous evidence.

Colombia’s Pacific coastal regions are lowlands that extend from the state of Nariño, bordered by Ecuador in the south, up through the state of Choco, which extends along the Panamanian border to the Gulf of Urabá and the Caribbean Sea. Throughout the southwest areas (along the rivers, coastlands, and especially in the urban zones of Buenaventura, Guapi, and Tumaco) *currulao* is the most prominent genre among several traditional musics associated with the predominantly Afro-
Colombian population of the region. Historically, politically and economically marginalized, the people and music cultures of the Pacific coast have largely been ignored by scholars. In recent years however, vigorous efforts have been made to recuperate and document several music styles and genres of distinctly African-derivation. Currulao (not unlike the cumbia complex of the Atlantic coast) is both a dance and a set of musical forms that include abozao, jota chocoana, contradanza, caderona, bambara negra, berejú, makerule and pango, each with its own rhythmic pattern or characteristic melody (Béhague et al. 2001:140). According to Olivella Zapata, currulao became the exclusive dance of both men and women in the coastal areas of this region (1967:94).

Although scholarship on Pacific coast Afro-Colombian music remains sparse, aside from Whitten’s [1974] anthropological study, or Bermúdez’ [1992, 1994a] ethnomusicology of Afro-Colombian syncretism, more recent studies by Birenbaum Quintero (2006), Hernández Salgar (2007, 2009), Feldman (2006), Leon (2007), and Muñoz (2004) point to an increasing interest in exploring the social and historical forces in which race plays a critical role in the construction of socio-musical hierarchies. These scholars are not only expanding the discursive field that Wade (1993, 2000) and Waxer (1997) opened, they consider race and nation in relation to local, regional, and global cultural geopolitics.

Proceeding northward from the Pacific regions, through the Departments (or States) of Choco, Cauca, Antioquia, and Boyacá, a wide variety of indigenous musics are found in the Andean highlands. Unlike the majority of Colombia’s native tribes
(e.g., in the Amazon basin), indigenous music cultures of the Guambiano, Paez, and Chibcha have been somewhat documented. Although all these groups are acculturated to some extent (Béhague and List 1988: 579), indigenous musical practices continue to exist as local and regional folklore. Among them is *chirimía*, which refers to flute and drum ensembles that perform for religious, seasonal, or festive celebrations. In the northern Pacific region however, *chirimía* also refers to a type of wind and percussion ensemble that is widely disseminated, particularly in the northern Choco, and throughout the central Andean regions. Performed by Afro-Colombians, the Pacific coast *chirimía* usually includes clarinets or metal flutes, brass (trombone, tuba), and percussion, as well as a *tambora* (small bass drum), *redoblante* (similar in shape to a snare drum), and *platillos* (cymbals), playing genres such as *jota* and *aguabajo*. The Andean version of *chirimía*, which also uses *tambora* and *redoblante*, instead uses two or three transverse flutes, a bamboo rasp made of cane, and a set of small maracas called *gapachos* (*ibid.*).

On the eastern side of the easternmost Andean range, extending toward Venezuela, the land gradually flattens into an expansive savannah (or plains) known as *los llanos*. The most representative music and dance genres of the eastern plains are *joropo* and *galeron*, each exhibiting distinctly Spanish cultural retentions, particularly in the musical and choreographic traits of *joropo*, which resemble Andean

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28 Olsen (1998, 2002) examined indigenous instruments through a process he calls “ethno-archeology,” in which the intent was to reveal what could be learned about pre-Columbian cultures. List’s (1983 [1994r]) study of local music practices in the village of Evitar includes data collected about the musics of Ika, Kogi, and Arhuaco tribes of the Atlantic coast; see also List 1991:50-58. For Pacific coast tribes, see Béhague et al. 2001 and Tayler and Moser 1960.
styles (Béhague and List 1988, Béhague et al. 2001; Taylor 1960; Zapata Olivella 1967). It is in this region, too, where cantos de vaquería/cattle herding songs are intrinsic to llanero/cowboy culture, although also heard throughout the Colombian countryside (see List 1983; De Friedemann 1995; Abadía Morales 1973; see chapter two, the Lucía Pulido case study below).

From the above review we begin to get a sense of the extent and diversity of musical resources available within Colombia’s national borders, which are as varied as the regional and topographical features of the land itself. The significance for the dissertation is that Colombia’s heterogeneous musical culture—a complex of multiple genres, styles, and practices—is celebrated, perpetuated, and mediated though the intercultural interactions, cultural circuits, and media networks of the global center that is New York City and the world, to which I now turn.

**Colombia and World Musics**

Colombia occupies a geographical space in the Western Hemisphere that continues to be impacted by currents of transnational global flows of people and cultures. Evidence of this may be seen in Colombia’s Caribbean islands of San Andres and Providencia, national territories where the history of British colonialism is still apparent in linguistic and listening practices. Moreover, contemporary pan-Caribbean popular music styles, such as soca, calypso, reggae, bachata and reggaeton, to name a few, are commonplace and further illustrate the extent of Colombian intercultural and global musical interactions in the Caribbean and beyond.
Caribbean Interactions

Of the many Caribbean musical incursions into Colombia, Cuban music has been especially influential (Wade 2000:101). Cuban radio, from its inception in 1922, played an important role in disseminating popular music (Manuel 1988:30). Cuban boleros (slow romantic songs) and genres such as son, guaracha and, later, Afro-Cuban son montuno deeply influenced the development of música tropical on the Atlantic coast during the 1930s and 40s. With Cuban rumba’s international success in the 1950s, aided by the then burgeoning recording industry, Colombian costeño band leaders also began to use local styles (i.e., porros, pasillos, cumbias) to perform big band dance music.29 While there are certainly aesthetic parallels between the Cuban rumbero (i.e., a party-going bon vivant) and the Colombian parrandero, more importantly, as Waxer notes, Cuban music’s “affective power…transcended geographic and cultural boundaries…” (2002: 50; see also Garcia 2006). Colombian record companies such as Discos Fuentes (Medellín) and Sonolux (Bogotá) responded with recordings and tours of música tropical, featuring artists such as Los Corraleros de Majagual, Lucho Bermúdez, and Pedro Laza, among others, that began to circulate through distribution channels of the music industry, reaching Cuba, Mexico, South America, and the United States, especially New York City and Puerto Rico (see Flores 2009; Glasser 1995; Wilcken and Allen 1998).

29 Rumba is a general term for Cuban dance music, resulting from the blending of Afro-Cuban rumba rhythms with big band arrangements. See Manuel 1988: 26-37; Washburne 2008; Garcia 2006.
Salsa, the popular music with Afro-Cuban, Puerto Rican, and Nuyorican “root” sources, is an international style that reflects Caribbean (and its diasporas) values and concerns (Flores 2000, 2009a, 2009b; Garcia 2006; Glasser 1995; Washburne 2008). Waxer (2000a) goes beyond the New York-Cuba-Puerto Rico nexus in current salsa scholarship to focus on a South American case (2000:9). With the city of Cali (and its embrace of salsa) serving as her case study, her concerns have to do with the study of globalization processes—that is, the global within the local—and, specifically, the ways in which the trend toward globalization was manifested and understood as part of Cali’s emerging local reality (Ibid., p.17). In short, Waxer brings together (as she understands the terms) globalization and cosmopolitics to explain Cali’s assertion of difference, achieved by embracing a global genre, then claiming it as their own. Salsa’s racial and ethnic cultural fluidity, together with its widespread diffusion and links to global markets, make it useful for Caleños whom see in salsa a reflection of their own cosmopolitan identity, and in opposition to standard national codings of Colombianness (Ibid.). Waxer maintains that long-standing racist attitudes in Colombia contributed to the primarily mulatto and mestizo Caleño’s rejection of the standard national discourse on race, further explaining why a different (and cosmopolitan) attachment to salsa—a music believed to hold an oppositional subcultural charge—was adopted as Caleño popular culture (cf. Ulloa 1992). The cosmopolitanism that Waxer documents in her study of salsa is

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30 See Ulloa 1992, a mid-1980s sociological study presented from a Colombian emic perspective; Waxer admits that her project is an extension and expansion of the themes planted in Ulloa’s research (Waxer 2002a: 9).
somewhat similar and well evident among the urban musicians I work with (e.g., see chapter 3, Pablo Mayor, a product of the Cali salsa scene). Rather than a subcultural charge however, the inversion is from the local to the global, attesting to a cultural fluidity that extends from the musicians’ identification with contemporary forms of Colombian popular and traditional musics.

Wade (2000), as previously noted, is also interested in transnational frameworks for discussing identity, and, similar to Waxer, approaches his analysis of música tropical with references to British and North American definitions of popular music, constructions of race, and historical research. Each writer thus places a sharp focus on class and cosmopolitanism, relying on mediation processes (via recordings and radio) to situate the highly raced and classed subjectivities of Caleños and costeños, respectively. In my view, both Waxer’s (2002a) and Wade’s (2000) scholarship contributes to the discourse of race, nation and identity in Colombia (and there are many insightful observations contained therein). However, my concern has to do with the tacit rejection of Colombian (i.e., Latin American) discourses on culture, such as those later voiced by post-colonial Latin American scholars Martín-Barbero (2002, 2003) and García Canclini (2004). Martín-Barbero, for instance, advocates for a “new anthropology,” one that is more inclusive of hard sciences, such as biotechnologies, genetics, digital information networks, etc. Canclini, as Santamaria notes, emphasizes the fragmentation and marginalization of local cultures in the globalized world to assert the importance of the local, the national, and the transnational for the construction of new notions of citizenship, identity, and
belonging. In other words, in looking at contemporary processes that drive modernity (media, technology, communications, etc.), we can investigate the ebbs and flows of Latin American cultural politics and social experiences unique to new cultural formations and constructions of identity. My point being that new postcolonial scholarship considers both culture and technology. While such a position acknowledges historical change, it further situates change with respect to the people and places undergoing social and cultural transformations in the present.

**South and Central American Interactions**

For the latter half of the Twentieth century, a mass mediated, popular form of cumbia has been the international calling card for Colombia—even superseding the Andean *bambuco* as its “national” music. In fact, cumbia has been the only music to challenge the hegemony of Cuban styles and artists in *música Antillana* history (Waxer 2002: 50), attaining both a distinctly regional/national and transnational/global profile. Notwithstanding Peter Manuel’s accessible “simplicity” (1988: 51) or Fernández L’Hoestes’ representational “plasticity” (2007: 339), as explanations for cumbia’s World Music success, I prefer to think in terms of cumbia’s malleability—that is, cumbia’s flexibility and capacity to transform and adapt to different cultural contexts and sonic environments. It is precisely the fluidity and intercultural adaptability of Colombian musical forms, such as cumbia, that are

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32 Although *música Antillana*’s boundaries are somewhat blurred, in Colombia, it generally refers to the Spanish Caribbean...[or where] Cuban based styles of the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s [proliferated] (Waxer 2002: 293).
central to this dissertation’s thesis, particularly when articulated by young Colombian cosmopolitans representing a generational cultural shift.

As cumbia crossed national borders, it was increasingly conflated with música tropical, rendering it a thoroughly modern yet somewhat deracialized cultural product. Regardless of its multiple relocations, cumbia has managed to retain a certain identification with Blackness, Colombianess, and lower class identity, which several scholars of Latin American popular music have commented upon. The literature of cumbia and its various transnational/national forms in fact focuses precisely on commonly shared syncretic and/or hybrid musical features and values.\(^{33}\)

To name just a few of cumbia’s transnational variants, there is cumbia villera (Argentina), cumbia chilena and cueca (Chile), cumbia boliviana (Bolivia), chicha and tecnocumbia (Peru), and Panamanian and Mexican cumbia and tecnobanda, which is also centrally important and widely constitutive of numerous local and regional variants, such as conjunto, música norteña, banda, orchestra, even mariachi (see Flores et al. 1999: 311-314; Simonett 2001b; Olvera Gudiño n.d.). There are, of course, numerous global pop versions of música tropical as well (discussed below).

Despite the steady increase of recent literature on cumbia, not until Fernández L’Hoeste’s forthcoming publication has any comparative study of the cumbia complex and its global expression sought to contribute to the discourse of transnational musics and the current state of cumbia’s globalization.

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Global Colombian Popular Musics

Since the early 1990s, when a renewed interest in traditional musics seemed to take hold among young, urban cosmopolitan Colombians wanting to explore their cultural roots, a handful of pop musicians (i.e., Carlos Vives, Tulio Zuluoga, and a host of imitators) emerged as actors in the field of global Colombian popular culture. Vives, for example, achieved World Music status and recognition with successful record sales and concert tours, performing a hybrid style of music that blended cumbia and vallenato with rock. Although clearly a white, middle class male from the Atlantic coast region (giving him at least a modicum of authenticity credentials), Vives’ music represents yet another recent version of Colombian música tropical. As such, it serves as an alternative to the Caribbean-influenced, Afro-Colombian salsa dura (hard salsa) of artists such as Joe Arroyo, Fruko, Guayacan, among many others.³⁴ Vives’ impressive success nonetheless helped to prompt a “roots” music revival, motivating urban youths to rediscover, valorize and revive authentic música folklórica.³⁵ Furthermore, Vives provided proof that Colombian popular musics, such as vallenato, could be incorporated and developed in ways consistent with local sounds, and yet meet expectations or global production, foreshadowing musical

³⁴ Since the 1960s, Joe Arroyo, Julio Ernesto Estrada (“Fruko”), and Los Corraleros de Majagual have been considered the prime exponents of Afro-Colombian música tropical, an antecedent to the Colombian salsa bands which emerged in the 1970s; see Waxer 2002a, 2002b.
³⁵ Carlos Vives is especially credited for popularizing vallenato, fusing it with cumbia (“mother cumbia,” vallenato, and son) and other modern sources, thus creating a hybrid form that continued ongoing historical and neo-liberal processes of blanqueamiento/whitening, under the guise of progressive multiculturalism.
developments that New York Colombian musicians would attempt to emulate in a variety of ways.

Coincident with Colombia’s new multicultural policies—the new Constitution was ratified in 1991, and, ironically, advocated most powerfully for indigenous and Afro-Colombian social and ethnic groups—the movement to “share Colombian music with the world” has more recently become most evident in the international success of Colombian pop artists such as Shakira and Juanes, neither of whom are either indigenous or Black. María Elena Cepeda (2010), for example, is interested in the so-called Latin boom of the 1990s. She investigates the Miami music scene and how its prominence as a Latin music center of production and consumption intersects with issues of transnationalism, gender, and Colombian identity. Her focus is on popular music and her work remains one of the few interdisciplinary studies to consider the ethno-racial and gendered complexity of Colombian identity. Moreover, Colombian rock as well as numerous local (picó, champeta, terapia, música carrilera), regional (reggae, merengue, soca, reggaeton), and global (salsa, samba, World Music) popular music styles, while offering some expression of resistance and/or identity, also figure into a complex network of local, translocal and transnational resources (see Castro Contreras 1999; Cunin 2000, 2006; Dennis 2006, 2007; Fernández L’Hoeste 2004; Waxes 2002c).

In the area of popular music and culture, despite the progressive mandate of the 1991 Colombian Constitution, issues of race, class, and gender in Colombia (and its diasporas) remains deeply embedded—perhaps even obscured (Birenbaum
And yet, the increased visibility of Colombian music and musicians via real-time and virtual media networks, while documenting the cultural progression of the movement of local and regional musics into the modernity of Colombia urban centers, provides evidence of the bridging of Afro-Colombian traditional and popular music with mainstream global pop and world music taking place. In Colombia, this clear and significant shift is marked by the efforts of the so-called ”New Colombia” music movement—young musicians working to bring together local and regional musical cultures that were once kept separate and are presently being brought together under a banner of intracultural collaboration.

Entreprenuerial world music record labels, such as Cumbancha, World Music Network, Putumayo, Soundway Records and Analog Africa have clearly picked up on this development of the Colombian music scene. For example, in Jacob Edgar’s travel-vlog series “Music Voyager,” the second season of the series is described as follows: “Music Voyager travels to Colombia, a country that has shaken off the troubles of the past and is thriving with renewed energy and optimism. Home to cosmopolitan urban centers, sparkling Caribbean beaches, stunning landscapes and beautifully preserved Spanish colonial architecture, Colombia is also a global hot spot for music. Drawing on a wealth of traditional music styles, as well as international, rock, hip hop, salsa, reggaeton and more, young musicians are creating exciting new...
fusions that bridge the past and the future."

In Colombian urban centers, this social-cultural music phenomenon is the subject of recent studies such as Chris Dennis’ research into Afro-Colombiano Hip Hop, that examines the literary/textual elements in the rap lyrics of Choquibtown, the genres most successful practitioners (2006, 2007, and forthcoming publication; see also Hernández Salgar 2009), and ethnomusicologist Simon Calle’s (2012) doctoral dissertation, a multi-sited study that investigates the Colombian “fusion” music movements in Medellin, Bogotá and New York City through the frameworks of network theory and musical practice. This outpouring of recent scholarship points to the efflorescence of Colombian music area studies, a disciplinary field that is arguably developing alongside a Colombian music superculture.

**Colombian Music and Violence**

Given present day conditions of ideological and ethnic conflict, ethnomusicology is increasingly engaging themes of violence as discourse, exploring social and cultural relationships between violence and music in a variety of ways. Colombia’s sociopolitical history of violence and its relationship with music, while lending itself to this discourse, remains comparatively unexamined and under-

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36 The six 30-minute episodes in Colombia feature performances by progressive rockers Aterciopelados, Latin tropipop star Fonseca, electrotropical leaders Bomba Estereo, Sidestepper and Systema Solar, as well as tradition bearer Totó La Momposina, salsa icons Joe Arroyo, La-33 and Grupo Niche among others. In these exciting, entertaining and informative episodes Music Voyager “explores the roots and the branches of Colombia’s vast and fertile musical family tree” (www.musicvoyager.com), accessed 2/17/12.
theorized (as opposed to the anthropological study of “violence,” for example). Recent Colombian ethnomusicology scholarship however highlights the relevance of the rapidly growing body of work around music and violence for Colombian-based research. Colombian ethnomusicologist Ana María Ochoa Gautier has begun to address this discursive gap. According to Ochoa Gautier, music and violence can be approached theoretically from one of two possible positions: viewing music as offering solutions for ending violence, or as inciting violence (Ochoa Gautier 2006). Colombian-American ethnomusicologist Michael Birenbaum Quintero (2006) approaches his analysis of Colombia’s Pacific coastal peoples and musical practices instead from an activist position, locating himself as an ethnographic observer in the midst of a violent field. Arguing that Colombian state cultural policies, in effect, force local musics to remake themselves into “folkloric” performances in order for music to mediate between public and private discourses, Birenbaum Quintero suggests that this is precisely what the nation’s “multicultural” policies intend: to apply a facile “music = peace” formula that sets out to improve communications between public and private spheres—that is, by “valorizing” Pacific coastal Afro-Colombian music as a symbol of integration, such policies in reality perpetuate race and class marginalization that has historically marked the region. Both Ochoa Gautier’s and Birenbaum Quintero’s perspectives are nonetheless critical to consider, particularly since they pertain to issues examined in this dissertation. Drawing upon this scholarship, I thus aim to strike a balance between meta-theory (post-structural and post-colonial) and an “in-the-trenches” ethnographic-activist position in order to
address questions of music, race and violence in the context of the global city and contemporary, intercultural musical practices—topics central to Colombia and, indeed, throughout Latin cultural historiography. Moreover, as an underlying yet significant theme of the dissertation, the relationship between music and violence serves as a historical and conceptual thematic subtext from which social, cultural, and political circumstances, entanglements and challenges faced by Colombian musicians are examined. That diasporic communities experience particular kinds of violence in the host nation (read: US) on a daily basis—perhaps indirectly, or, at least, in different forms than in the homeland—neither minimizes nor diminishes their impact or the effects that these may have on individuals or the community. The question of how a social history of violence in Colombia is experienced by new generations of young Colombians in diaspora—and expressed through music, whether overtly or implicitly—is especially pertinent to the dissertation. The music-violence dialectic, therefore, is analytically useful here, both in application and in its relation to the multiplicity of (socio-cultural) identities, which are, of course, constructed but not strictly according to standard parameters of race, class, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, or the regionalisms evident in the anthropological and ethnomusicological scholarship about Colombian identity and the nation-state (e.g., Ochoa 2006; Birenbaum Quintero 2006; Wade 2000, 1993). With violence serving as both subtext and metaphor for lived experiences—how individuals engage, or disengage, with social and historical realities of their lives—the dissertation further explores cognitive and psychological processes and effects involved with the negotiation and representation of memory,
meaning and identity via musical concepts, aesthetics and expression (Araújo et al. 2008; Cambria 2012; Stokes 1994; Zbikowski 2002). Colombian musicians in New York at times address the issue of Colombian violence subtly or explicitly, calling for peace or making statements in song texts and lyrics or during performance events. Music and violence, as the dissertation will show, is a discursively contained yet clearly embodied aspect of performance and cultural identity that emanates discreetly among the members of the community.

**Diaspora**

Since the dissertation focus is upon a diasporic, transnational community of Colombian musicians, I now turn briefly to a bibliography that elucidates concepts of diaspora, transnationalism, identity and interculturalism. Cognizant of the varied and often contradictory (even confusing) definitions that these terms present, in asking what is diaspora, and to whom does it refer? I am mindful that multiple meanings exist, and that this multiplicity [as such] makes it hard to pin down (Slobin 2003:291). As Thomas Turino notes, diaspora “encompasses the twin concerns of transnational processes abroad and ethnic identity politics at home” (2004: 3), to which, García Canclini’s comment, “The transnationalization of culture brought about by communications technologies, their reach, and their efficacy are better appreciated as part of the recomposition of urban cultures, along with the migrations and tourism that softens national borders and redefine the concepts of nation, people and identity” (1995:10), gives a sense of the multiple strands of media and movements that are
involved in shaping colonial/post-colonial and national/post-national identities (see
Corona and Madrid 2007).

In recent ethnomusicology scholarship (e.g., Slobin 1994, 2007; Solomon
formulations for the term diaspora continue to appear as the “classic” programmatic
statement to diaspora studies (Solomon 2006:2). 37 Outlining the contours of diaspora,
the term refers to “immigrant, expatriate, refugee, guestworker, exile community,
overseas community, ethnic community” (Tölölyan 1991: 4) and their transnational
dispersion. Circular flows of people and ideas back to the sending region are no less
important aspects of diasporas, and well evidenced by two of the case studies
presented below (chapters two and four). Recent studies bolster the relevance and
importance of transnationalism to the circularity of diasporas; e.g. Flores (2009b),
(2003), Vertovec (2004). In any case, therein lies the essence of diaspora: people
moving from “homelands” to foreign “host” nations (usually at least two)—the
suggestion of necessary or forced movement is implicit; deterritorialized
uprootedness and displacement is inherent. The open-endedness of this definition
however has raised problems about the term’s usage, and academic attempts to refine
its conceptual and ideological boundaries have been many. Thomas Solomon (2006),

37 “Today, the term “diaspora” is widely used in scholarly discussions to describe
“the exemplary communities of the transnational moment” (Tölölyan 1991:5), or
“that segment of a people living outside the homeland” (Connor 1986:16), formed by
immigrants, alien residents, refugees, and ethnic and racial minorities” (fn5 in Zheng
1993:3).
for one, provides a recent overview of hybridity and diaspora within ethnomusicology’s discursive practices, highlighting the shifting use of terms in either a material or metaphorical sense. Advocating for ethnographies of production, mediation, consumption and reception, he shows particular concern for subjectivities that are ignored. Building upon Levitt’s notion of “remittances”, Flores (2009b) further develops the multivalent aspects of diaspora and its ties to transnationalism. His theorization of “cultural remittances” helps explain processes of remigration from host to source nations, while emphasizing expressive culture as the currents related to class and race hierarchies.

Sociologist Robin Cohen (1997), discussing the dispersion and movements of people, considers different examples of global diasporas, classifying them according to different constituent historical, sociological and cultural circumstances and elements: e.g., the “classical” Jewish and Greek diaspora; “victim” diasporas: i.e., Africans and Armenians; “labour” and “imperial” diasporas: Indians and British; “trade” diasporas: i.e., Chinese and Lebanese; and, “cultural” diasporas: i.e., the Caribbean case. He also considers Sikh and Zionists diasporas in relation to the notion of “homelands,” and, finally, he explores diasporas in the age of globalization, as well as the types and future of diasporic movements, including what he calls “panic migrants.”

In any case, it appears that in the modern world diaspora and globalization are somehow linked, at least in ways that connect the particularities of

[38] Cohen concludes that “Globalization and diasporization are separate phenomena with no necessary causal connections, but they “go together” extraordinarily well” (175).
diasporic social formations with the universalizing forces of globalization. For the diasporic subjectivities discussed herein, then—which can be regarded as both cultural and transnational—I maintain that features such as race, class, power relations and especially hybridity inform and shape the restructuring of subcultural, cosmopolitan identities.

As a condition of diaspora, transnationalism and its effects are thus central to the discourse of migration studies (Aparicio and Jáquez 2003; Gilroy 1993; Hannerz 1992; Kearney 1995). Calling attention to what he identifies as the Black Atlantic, Gilroy (1993) describes it as “a transnational space born out of the terrors of the slave trade, in which black people’s double consciousness about being simultaneously self and other has given rise to a particularly cosmopolitan approach to expressive culture” (cited in Waxer 2002: 24). While cosmopolitan Colombian musicians exemplify this move toward strategic essentialism (Lipsitz 1994)—acknowledging and celebrating their Afro-Colombian racial and traditional musical roots—they manifest a global mestizaje that is nonetheless represented as Colombian, pluralist, and culturally experimental. As Pacini Hernández notes, Gilroy “pointed to wider musical exchanges among blacks in the Americas, Europe, and Africa, arguing that the diaspora—the Black Atlantic—constitutes a cultural system, which has encouraged a transnational identity based more on the shared experiences of displacement, exile, and oppression than on the specific experience of slavery” (1996: 43), or, as I would argue, strictly Blackness. As a result, Gilroy expands the scope of the African diaspora, mapping Africa above and beyond Cohen’s “victim diasporas”
to encompass intradiasporic stratifications of power (Monson 2000:5) as well as racial and cultural consciousness, in order to challenge essentialist racial and ethnic absolutism. He suggests that racialized subjectivity may be seen “as the product of social practices that supposedly derive from it” (Gilroy quoted in Monson 2000: 4).

The analytical usefulness of Gilroy’s claims, then, are particularly effective when discussing the Colombian-US diasporic-transnational context because of the agency given to “diasporic subjects” in the face of highly unequal power relations (i.e., colonial and postcolonial) within ever widening networks of transnational and global forces.

For the moment however, let us consider the increasing complexity of intercultural interactions in so-called “cultural” diasporas (i.e., the Caribbean). As Cohen notes: “The first and most evident problem in seeing Caribbean peoples as any kind of diaspora is that they are not native to the area” (1997: 137). He explains: “the peoples of the Caribbean may be thought of as parts of other diasporas—notably the African victim diaspora, the Indian labour diaspora, and the European imperial diasporas” (Ibid.)—clearly an attempt to neatly bundle people and tie up their lived experiences into relational categories. When the Caribbean diaspora extends to non-Caribbean locales (such as global cities), identity, according to Cohen, becomes even more “problematic.” The Caribbean cultural theorist Stuart Hall, asking, “What makes African Caribbean people already people of a diaspora?” (1990: 235), offers the following explanation: “A conception of identity that is by necessity heterogeneous and that lives with and through, not despite, difference; by hybridity.
[Therefore] Diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference” (Ibid., 235). Moreover, “diaspora cultures…mediate, in a lived tension, the experiences of separation and entanglement, of living here and remembering/desiring another place” (Clifford 1997: 255). Thus, we can observe how diasporas are constructed and do a great deal of work, even as discourses of diaspora branch off in several directions, where they start to “resemble a tangled thicket of terminology” (Slobin 2003: 285; see also Slobin 2007). Nonetheless, from these diverse critical orientations we can begin to comprehend how the discourse of diaspora among scholars responds to issues of identity, transnationalism, displacement, deterritorialization, race, hybridity and difference. Let us now take a closer look at interculturalism and its utility for the Colombian musician’s community in the construction of cultural identity through intercultural musical practices.39

**Interculturalism and Identity**

With regards to Latin American and Caribbean intercultural socio-musical interactions, scholarly literature about transnationalism (Aparicio and Jácquez 2003; Hannerz 1996; Smith and Guarnizo 1998), hybridity and identity (García Canclini 1995; Hall 1990; Leonard 2005; Pacini Hernández 2010), globalization (Appadurai 1996; de la Peza 2006; Dennis 2006; Inda and Rosaldo 2008), and multiplicity

39 “By exploring how differences are ‘narrated’ in relation to diverse and even divergent worlds of music, we begin to understand more about the role that music can play in contemporary intercultural contexts while nevertheless insisting that this story is specific and unique” (Diamond 2000:132).
(Slobin 2007) requires contextually bound critical analysis. Emphasizing the local, Ana María Ochoa believes that “local musics are increasingly mediated by intercultural social, political, economic and aesthetic relationships” (Ochoa 2003: 46). It would appear that those mutually transformative relationships—occurring between local, traditional folk and modern world musics—have in fact become the hybrid musical norm, which today circulates through and across national, global and cultural borders and boundaries. Pinckney’s (1989) study of the incorporation of Puerto Rican folk music into Latin jazz, Scully’s (2008) investigation of the American “Folk” music revival and commercialism, and Berrian’s (2000) research on French Caribbean popular music and creole culture each exemplify what sociologist Juan Flores regards as the “fusions and crossovers, [without which] there would be no creative invention” (2009a:183). As Flores is careful to note: “it is not the music industry but the communities themselves who impel and catalyze those irreversible breakthroughs and interchanges” (Ibid.). In its new formation, the Colombian musicians community and their “interchanges” therefore provide clear examples of crossover fusions of traditional/folk and modern/global musics, which both elucidate and restore the musician’s sense of social and cultural identity. What may appear as just ongoing processes of cosmopolitan adaptation and grassroots creativity (Ibid., 30)

40 “De este modo, las músicas locales se están mediando cada vez más desde un orden intercultural de relaciones sociales, políticas, económicas y estéticas” (Ochoa 2003: 46), my translation.
actually entail a deeper synthesis of cultural relations within and outside of the community itself; a redefinition of local/global culture, and their position in it; and, a cultural politics of communal solidarity that transcends race, region, gender and class.

In recent years interculturalism has resurfaced as an analytical concept and term used in the social sciences with a variety of applications. For sociologist Orlando Patterson, intercultural refers simply to the “capacity and willingness to interact with persons of other cultures, sub-cultures or ethnicities…It goes beyond multiculturalism, which has come to mean merely the willingness to tolerate other cultures without necessarily having any real interest in, or engagement with, them” (personal communication, October 10, 2011).Ethnomusicology, too, has similarly resurrected the term, revitalizing and inflecting its discursive function by emphasizing the interplay and/or interaction of different social and cultural subjectivities. Mark Slobin (1993) positions interculturality as a somewhat peripheral, multivalent and tangential ancillary to his highly influential terms supercultural and subcultural. With a variety of usages, from interlocked world sound systems to global media networks, from dynamic diasporic/homeland dyads to affinity or joint aesthetic, transregional musics, interculture, for Slobin, is too vague, yet essentially a cross-

41 Orlando Patterson is professor of Sociology at Harvard University and author of the forthcoming Bringing Culture Back In: New Approaches to the Problems of Black Youth (Harvard University Press).
42 The 2011 Society for Ethnomusicology annual conference included a dozen papers with the keyword term “Intercultural” in the title, October 16-20, 2011. Despite the term’s multivalent uses, it has been long been prevalent in ethnomusicological literature, such as Kartomi and Blum’s Music Cultures in Contact: Convergences and Collisions (1994) and Cynthia Tse Kimberlin and Akin Euba’s Intercultural Music edited series (1995), volumes 1 though 6.
cutting trend (12). Recognizing that interaction among intercultures goes on among all possible players and that interactive patterns of various sorts, fluid, ambiguous relationships and interlocked world sound systems are all in play, cross-subcultural diasporic groups, as a result, can almost instantaneously invent a tradition (*Ibidem* 107; Hobsbawm 1983). In spite of the term’s generally misconstrued vagueness however, in the modern world interculturalism appears to be linked to new identity formations, suturing disparate cultural practices in perhaps not a seamless yet nonetheless interwoven fabric. As I further argue, my use of *interculturalism* highlights social dynamics occurring between young Colombian musicians and non-Colombian affiliates that reconfigure cultural expression in meaningful ways to the multiplicities involved. That is, interculturalism is recuperated to describe what occurs on the ground, at the level of culture. The meanings that emerge for transnational musical migrants and subalterns in search of a place, space, and status is evinced not only in the political, economic, social and cultural sphere but in the reconstitution of that ephemeral concept: identity. Thus, interculturalism prompts us to examine what the cultural flows to and from source and host nations are; what the contexts and contents of cultural relations taking place among heterogenous individuals and groups are; and, what impact these relations have upon the cultures and identities of sending and receiving societies.

Identity studies traditionally have offered practical modalities and ideological or aesthetic insights into how music works as social behavior and production—that is, as a basis or foundation from which identity is both constructed and made
meaningful. Also seeking to elucidate and clarify complex processes of identity formation within and across cultural and geopolitical boundaries, identity studies may tack in several directions. In one area of inquiry, for example, how a national or communitarian identity is constructed and impacted upon by a multiplicity of narratives, when actualized through musical performatives, is examined. While in another, cultural identification through the act of naming is investigated, whereby individual actors or collective groups self-consciously choose markers of identity that serve to name the community, orient its social and cultural production, and direct the social and cultural positioning of its constituency: Nueva Colombia or “New Colombia” serves as a case in point.43 By Nueva Colombia, I refer to a set of cultural movements in the areas of art and music—the humanities, in general. As such, these movements are suggestive of an emerging Colombian identity driven by discourses of modernity, globalization and multicultural/ethnic/racial/class/gender politics. In the dissertation, I will use the term Nueva Música Colombiana (new Colombian music, or NCM) to refer to expressive musical practices by a new generation of Colombian musicians. The cultural formation labeled NCM is marked by its recuperation and revitalization of popular folkloric and indigenous Colombian musical genres, which are then juxtaposed alongside modern, cosmopolitan styles from popular Latin popular to jazz, world, and experimental sounds. Associated with Colombia as the source nation, I foreground and extend the so-called NCM movement to include

processes of globalized transnationalism evinced through the migration (and remigration) of young Colombian people and new Colombian musical culture as it manifests in New York City’s through local and global networks (see Calle 2012; Muñoz Velez 2007; Ochoa 2008; Ochoa Gautier and Botero 2009; Pacini Hernández 2010; Santamaria 2007). A major characteristic of NCM in the NYC context is the variety and complexity of musical genres and styles on display, signaling both the vibrancy of the community and the revivalism of traditional and popular Colombian sources. As these new Colombian musics develop, I argue that they evolve and change into distinctly urban and global sounds, replete with New York inflections, nuances, and sensibilities, and therefore an expression of an altering transnational diaspora that moves between locales and locations, and places and sources of origin and hostland.

In more recent formulations, identity—often attached to diaspora, transnationalism, globalization—is increasingly impacted by so-called multiplicities in action—that is, when enmeshed and interactive multiple identities are operative, as evidenced by ethnic pluralism and culturally or aesthetically driven musical movements (Slobin 2007). Presenting an alternative and a challenge to prevailing identity theories, which have long held sway for ethnomusicology, musicology and the social sciences, I argue for performativity and interculturalism as a combined methodological apparatus that looks at identity in relation to community based social performance practices, formal and aesthetic expressive procedures, and the emergence of subjectivities and how they are mapped onto the macro cultural sphere.
(see Radano 2006). As analytical frameworks through which music and culture can be seen to operate, the performance of self by intercultural subjects working in a diasporic Latin/o context allows us to recognize, locate, comprehend and celebrate emergent group identities and their cultural production. Pablo Vila (2001) states as much: “Musical practices construct an identity anchored in the body, through the different alliances we establish between our diverse and narrativized imagined identities and the essential imagined identities that different musical practices materialize.” Vila thus believes that individuals are continuously establishing distinct alliances at the level of different, individual identities [and] through values that are represented or acted out by diverse musical practices (ibid., 33).

**Cultural politics and the performance of Colombianidad in New York City**


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44 “Las prácticas musicales construyen una identidad anclada en el cuerpo, a través de las diferentes alianzas que establecemos entre nuestras diversas e imaginariaidentidades narrativizadas y las imaginarias identidades esenciales que diferentes prácticas musicales materializan” (Vila 2001: 35), my translation.

45 “los individuos están continuamente estableciendo distintos alianzas en el nivel de sus diferentes identidades a través de los valores representados o actuados por diversas prácticas musicales" (Vila 2001: 33), my translation.
the city’s capacity for global outreach through local/global media, communication networks, and transnational movement and circulation (cf., Assman and Conrad 2010, Curry 2009, Pacini Hernandez 2010, Phillips and Reyes 2011, Van Buren 2001, Wilcken 1998, Zheng 2010). As Toynbee and Dueck note, cities are “sites of musical encounter, wherein various migrating musical styles compete or fuse, are mimetically appropriated, and undergo further translations” (2011: 13). For young Colombian musical migrants, New York City’s rich linguistic, cultural, and media resources promote a musical interculturalism that demonstrates the mutability and plasticity of indigenous Colombian forms of music as they undergo transformation within the diasporic urbanscape.

New York City’s undisputed place of prominence as a global center of culture, commerce and industry has long been a destination for migrants, musical or otherwise. For arriving young Colombian musicians, whose musical practices, sensibilities, and aesthetics are examined in this dissertation, the metropolis is a cultural intersection that serves as both destination and site for the realization of musical, social, and economic aspirations and goals. The city’s urban and musical geography offers a place where the creation of new networks of social production of expressive cultural forms can emerge and shifting identities are possible (see Berrios-Miranda and Dudley 2008; Krims 2007). The constant mixing of different race, class, gender and ethnicity transforms the city and its inhabitants, as cosmopolitan sensibilities, transnational flows, and a tendency toward intercultural hybridity circulate between and among diverse populations. The notion of a homeland, or
hostland, thus becomes a flexible, transnational construct, as people develop networks of social relations through intercultural engagements and transdisciplinary aesthetic phenomenon (Curry 2009: 27) manifested as ever-evolving cultural expressions (see LaGuerre 2006; Turino 2000; Warikoo 2004; Yudice 2003).

As the geographic and cultural locus of the study, this chapter introduces New York City as a site that has played a significant role for Colombian musical migrants since the mid-Twentieth century, where cultural encounters and engagements reveal transformations in Colombian values and identities in its diasporic and transnational communities. However, as ethnomusicologist Tina Ramnarine writes: “diasporic music-making should not be understood as merely the result of population movements, the settlements of diasporic groups and cultural contact in the multicultural society. Diasporic music-making can be understood in the ordinariness of creative production, as musicians working as individual agents in their everyday environments, making musical choices that suit them and their audiences” (2007: 7). The choices Colombian musicians make requires aesthetic and cultural interaction, flexibility, and negotiation. Following Toynbee and Dueck’s notion of “translations”—“that is, in ‘doing’ another’s music you have to bring it across into your own system of conceptual and aesthetic categories, in which it makes sense and has values” (2011: 8)—this dissertation considers the potential significance of cultural “transfers” or “remittances” emanating from the diaspora, with a broad view [and global perspective] of culture that embraces the collective, ideological, as
well as artistic (Flores 2009: 9). “No other city,” where a transnational reality is especially prevalent as among its pan-Latin/o and Caribbean populations, as Tony Fletcher comments, “undergoes such constant transformation with every new generation of immigrants,” and “no other city can claim to be so powerfully driven by capitalism and yet so obsessed with community” (2009: xii). Despite the audacity of this claim, this chapter begins by considering New York as a foundational and cultural locus, a place that produces spaces in which music continues its own transformations” (Krims 2007:155), where distinctive blending of people and cultures impacts and is impacted by the influx of Colombian musicians as they enter its complex and ever changing musical landscape. It is precisely in such locations, where formations of communities are observable among diverse populations and “where the force of change, in the character of the object world (read, musical objects) as well as the speed of life, tends to concentrate...[and] where at the same time cultural innovators practice their vocations on products for both localized consumption and distribution to more remote places” (Ibid.,154).

46 “Translation,” in Toynbee and Dueck’s formulation,“is a creative move...one with the potential to transform musical practices and sounds into ones that operate or signify in ways quite distinct from their old context.” (Toynbee and Dueck: 2011: 8). Further, the authors note that translations concerned with “fidelity to the original context” are less so for “vernacular” than for “scholarly” ones (Ibid., fn3p17).

47 This is an essential concept for understanding Appadurai’s (1996) theoretically related “production of locality,” which Toynbee and Dueck revamp as “Translation”; that is, to characterize the ways that new objects and practices are integrated, accommodated, and elaborated when they are appropriated in a new context (2011: 12). This new context, exemplified here by New York City’s glocal urban setting, is part and parcel of the contemporary age, which Phillips and Reyes detect as having seen a gravitational shift that while not utterly eliminating the nation-state as a center of cultural gravity has seen a pull toward more complex transnational processes.
Before shifting our focus to the Colombian musical subculture and its musical practices however—in particular, the transnational hybridity that mark its intercultural strategies—it is necessary to begin first with a brief overview of relevant demographic features of the Colombian population of the region, as well as the subset group, or micro-community of musicians with whom I have worked in this study; a small but significant community—in terms of cultural impact—that can be viewed as existing and operating both apart and within the larger Colombian diasporic populations of New York and the homeland itself.

Despite that the number of Colombians emigrating to New York City and throughout the northeastern US during the 1950s and 60s averaged approximately more than 3000 new arrivals each year in New York State alone, the power dynamics of asserting a national or Latin/o identity, or the specificity of Colombianess, has remained socially, politically and economically circumscribed.48 By 1970, with some

48 As Waxer cogently argues, “Latin” is a problematic term, since it collapses the social and cultural differences among Latin Americans in a way that can perpetuate oppressive stereotypes, i.e., the notion that “Latins” are all the same (1994:140); however, as she also points out, the term’s ambiguity reflects the fluidity of its transnational character (ibid.). I would add that the term also omits racial realities associated with “Latino/a” identity, which is itself a cultural construction. For example, according to the Inter-American Foundation, Latin Americans of African descent, for example, are thought to number 150 million; a conservative estimate (Grassroots Development: Journal of the Inter-American Foundation, V28 n1:1). Moreover, Pacini Hernandez writes, “…the differences in musical preferences and practices between Latinas/os residing in various regions of the US (and hailing from different regions of Latin America), between longtime residents and newer immigrants, as well as between young and old, are profound indeed, and express in powerful ways unique to the different communities how Latinas/os perceive themselves in relation to their sending societies in Latin America, to other Latino
27,000 first- or second-generation Colombians living in New York City, 1,200 of them non-white” (Orlov and Ueda 1980: 214), the subsequent and steady increase in Colombian migration throughout the 1980s is generally attributed to persistent domestic civil and political turmoil, and its brutalizing effects on the Colombian economy. The resulting internal displacement of people from rural to urban centers that followed corresponds with the dispersion of heterogeneous populations to external diasporas. The demographics of these movements by Colombians from different regions—conscious of the attendant complexities of racial mixture that Wade examines (Wade 1993, 2000)—are useful for providing a sense not only of the growth of the Colombian population within the New York diaspora but what may have impelled significant outmigration by Colombian musicians.

According to the 1990 United States Census Bureau, the number of Colombians throughout New York State was 107,377, with 84,454 residing in New York City alone. In Queens County, where the highest concentration of Colombians are still located, there were 63,224 (Arévalo 1998:1). A more recent study by the Center for Latin American, Caribbean and Latino Studies (CLACLS, 2008), indicates that 97,580 Colombians, representing 4.2% of New York City’s total Latino communities, and to the larger US society of which they are now constituent parts” (Pacini 2007:51); see also Pacini Hernandez 2010, especially pp.153-159. While I employ the term “Latin@” throughout the dissertation, I recognize that gender (i.e., “Latina”) is inseparable from the ethnic construct. The 2010 New York State Census: http://www.census.gov/geo/www/guidestloc/pdf/36_NewYork.pdf; accessed 1/1/12.
population of 2,335,341, reflects a decline of 11% from 109,710 in 2000. Therefore, to some extent, migration from Colombia appears to have somewhat subsided. Significantly, in 1990 Colombians were the third largest group of Latinos in the City behind Puerto Ricans and Dominicans. By 2000 they had fallen behind Mexicans and Ecuadorians to become the fifth largest Latino national subgroup (ibid; 2010 Census figures are not available at this writing). Among the CLACLs study’s conclusions, the study suggests that immigration patterns from Colombia have either declined or ended altogether (10). Nonetheless, most of the young musicians that are part of this study migrated to New York City during the early to mid-1990s. They, in turn, have been followed in subsequent years by a slow yet steady stream of new arrivals, together constituting a small but significant fraction of an ongoing migratory pattern that represents an entirely different contingent of transnational migrants from those of previous decades. In one of the study’s most relevant findings, an “important pattern that emerges among Colombians in New York City between 1990 and 2008 appears to be a slowing in immigration from Colombia and the continued growth of the domestic-born Colombian population” (23). This is further supported by the fact that many of the musicians documented in this dissertation first gained entry into New York City, or other US cities (e.g., Boston, Chicago, Newark), through established familial connections and relationships. In other words, they have particular advantages, such as established contacts and relationships that gain them

entry into the US without some of the issues regarding their status as “legal” (or illegal) migrants, or as suspicious eternal “tourists.”

Citizenship rates among the foreign-born Colombian population moreover increased steadily since 1990 at the rate of approximately 20% every decade. This steady rise in naturalized citizens also suggests that foreign-born Colombians have been able to successfully navigate the process of becoming legal participants with US citizenship, and as a group will be able to influence electoral results in the areas of higher concentration within the City (domestic-born Colombians, of course, were all citizens) (ibid.). Since, several of the musicians in this study entered the US either as “students” or through established family ties, many of the later arrivals entered with temporary “tourist” visas, then subsequently applied for permanent resident status (e.g., “green card”). That is, it appears that with the increasing naturalization of foreign-born Colombians, and the increase in the domestic-born population in the city, an increasing percentage of all Colombians were officially US citizens—nearly 25% in 1990 and almost 52% in 2008 (ibid.). Conversely, nearly half of the population are neither US citizens nor accounted for. Many, if not most, of the first wave of Colombian musical migrants that arrived in the early 1990s, while fitting the profile of “students” with familial ties to the Colombian community, in fact, are often independent actors operating from their own volition and desire to migrate to New York City.

We must also consider the social, political, and economic circumstances,

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50 Marion Magnan Penuela’s reference to “suspicious eternal tourists” is discussed in terms of sociabilities and mobilities experienced by Colombian middle-low class migrants to New York; that is the stigma of being associated with the culture of drug trafficking (n.d.: p.4).
events, or forces which have encouraged outmigration of young Colombian musicians, prompting them to leave for cosmopolitan world cities such as New York, Berlin, and London, among others. Access to educational opportunities (through familial connections) clearly offers one viable explanation, particularly for those from privileged class backgrounds. My research data is based on a population sample comprised primarily of white and mestizo, middle- to upper-class cosmopolitan men and women from larger Andean cities such as Bogotá, Medellin, and Cali. Socioeconomic differences between the young musician arrivals and the established working class costeños (mentioned above) is particularly evident at the level of social mobility and available resources; recent migrant musicians generally have greater access to resources and are thus able to realize such goals as higher education.

Another possible scenario suggests a combination of factors. For one, the ratification of the new Colombian constitution in 1991—and particularly two new elements among its points of change—held ramifications for cultural transformations in Colombian society during the decade that followed: (1) territorial autonomy for long marginalized ethnic and racial groups—that is, indigenous tribes and Afro-Colombians—was formally given recognition, obtaining a generalized tone of multiculturalism by the state, and (2) “Tutelage action” (similar to the Amparo laws), which provides for individuals to assert their rights to protection under the law when at “imminent risk.” Thus, the new governing document appears to reflect a national trend toward cultural acknowledgement and reconciliation, the adoption of an international human rights paradigm, and greater social and civil security for all
(despite that neoliberal economic forces were simultaneously undermining the newfound sense of national security). In this somewhat progressive social environment, Colombian youths found themselves engaged in the national project at the level of political and cultural revivalism. Liberated from centralized institutional and political hegemonies, and the persistent social and civil violence that historically has bedeviled the nation, they increasingly and willingly confronted the state and its surrogates in spite of continued violence against social activists. Nonetheless, a renewed and deeper regard for and valuation of Colombia’s cultural (and natural) resources became evident. In particular, musical expressions of subaltern ethnic and racial groups gained attention and acknowledgment among middle class youths involved with the populist struggle for peace.

In the early 1990s, the Colombian peace movement was evident throughout the nation but coalesced primarily in larger metropoles, wherein cities such as Bogotá, Cali, and Medellin became cauldrons of traditional and hybrid musical activity as young musicians often performing at political demonstrations, rallies and events revitalized popular, local and regional musics from gaita to cumbia, currulao to zafras. Their exposure to long marginalized musics resulted, in part, from the large number of *dezplazados* (displaced people) that relocated to urban areas in search of protection from endemic local or regional violence. Among them were musicians from the hinterlands with musical knowledge of a variety of traditional and popular Colombian musical genres and styles. Once inaccessible and regionally isolated from urban centers, these music experts became teachers for urban youth interested in
learning previously remote indigenous and traditional popular musics. Motivated by a novel sense of cultural discovery—and perhaps even national pride—young cosmopolitan musicians with a postnational consciousness began migrating to global cultural centers such as New York, Berlin, and London during the late 1980s and early 1990s. With resources to travel freely, and familial connections to gain entry, these young cosmopolitans had the means, opportunities, and ambition to access media and communication networks within the intercultural spaces of these central nodes of capitalism. While the so-called Nueva Colombia music movement took root within the nation, some musicians chose to remain in Colombia (see Santamaria 2007). Others opted to leave however, bringing knowledge of Colombian musical genres into the spheres of world music and jazz to audiences in urban global centers such as NYC. The cultural and representational value assumed by young musicians, who deem themselves appropriate carriers of Colombian musical traditions, is undoubtedly just one of the most problematic aspects of this transnational phenomenon. As sociologist Elizabeth Jelin notes: “transnational and international actors have much to say about what goes on inside nation states” (2011: 61), to which I add that translocal and national processes—and here, I refer to both the Colombian state and host US—also have considerable impact on actors themselves and the roles they decide to take on as so-called transnational cultural emissaries.

Although the musicians in this study were certainly not the first to arrive in New York City, the city’s historiography of Latin music points to the earlier presence of Colombians on the scene, while also raising questions of ethnic and racial
hierarchies among its Latin/o populations. Hence, the dissertation focuses upon contemporary Colombian social practices through musical production and performance in NYC by this new contingent of musicians and the musical genres and styles they bring with them, as well as the transnational cultural remittances that Flores (2009b) describes as cultural products that, in turn are recycled back to the homeland. Let us begin, then, as a point of departure, with Lucía Pulido and the extreme avant-experimentations with traditionally male Colombian cowboy songs that she uses as a global springboard, leaping from a highly gendered and personal cosmopolitanism into an intercultural musical hybridity that New York City’s cultural heterogeneity enables, endorses, and consumes.
CHAPTER TWO

Lucía Pulido’s Cantos de Vaquería: Colombian Cowboy Folksongs and the Poetics of Performance

In the mid-1990s, emerging almost as a rumor, Lucía Pulido’s name began to circulate in New York City among young, cosmopolitan Colombians in search of alternatives to their parents’ musical preferences for “authentic” Colombian and/or mainstream US and Latin popular music. As news of Pulido’s performances at small, informal venues and bars in Manhattan slowly began to spread, commentary from cultural insiders about the recently arrived Colombian singer, though unaccustomed to the degree of hybridity in the music she performed, was generally favorable. For young Colombians however, Pulido’s music and artistic identity seemed to represent a novel option away from the musical tastes of older generations, for whom the prevalence and availability of local costeño musics and musician remained a stable element of the city’s pan-Latin cultural fabric—a separate but firmly ensconced musical world existing within the communities’ enclaves. Coalesced primarily around first-generation Baranquilleros and other costeños from northern Atlantic coastal cities and towns, Colombians in the diaspora consumed music from allá (i.e., homeland) via either imported recordings or locally established artists such as Lisandro Meza, Los Macondos, and Foncho Castellar, listening to

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51 During this period, I was conducting fieldwork for an urban ethnography of Colombian costeño musicians in the New York metropolitan region (see Arévalo 1998). To my knowledge, Lucía Pulido was the first and only Colombian woman artist presenting an entirely new and different Colombian musical proposal at the time.
vallenato, cumbia and música tropical/salsa (see Arévalo 1998). With Lucía Pulido’s arrival in 1994, a different sort of Colombian artist emerged. Singing and performing a varied repertory of Colombian folk and international Latin popular musics, Pulido expanded the range of musical worlds available to both consumers and fans of Colombian and Latin music.

Among the first wave of a new generation of musicians migrating from Colombia’s interior cities during the early 1990s—primarily from Santa Fé de Bogotá, Cali and Medellin—Pulido’s personal and aesthetic musical vision was evident from the outset. Filtered through a cosmopolitan, urban sensibility intent on intercultural collaboration and exploration, her core repertory of Colombian folksongs is comprised of Atlantic and Pacific coastal song traditions as well as international or pan-Latin canciones (e.g., popular songs from Mexico and Argentina, such as boleros and canciones de despecho/heartbreak). In addition to her eclectic musical tastes, Pulido has also brought to New York and Colombian audiences her love for rural Colombian folksong styles, including cantos de vaquería (cattle herding songs), cantos de zafra (harvest songs), and velorios and alabaos (funereal songs).

Costeño refers to the inhabitants of the Atlantic/Caribbean northeast coastal regions of Colombia; see Arévalo 1998.

Lawrence J. App writes: “These songs have a specialized function in that the social interaction is completely dependent on successful musical performance; conversely, the songs cannot be performed out of their context.” The Garland Encyclopedia of World Music, Volume 2: South America, Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean (New York: Garland Publishing, 1998), 403–404, author’s emphasis. However, as Pulidos’ case demonstrates, when performed in the an urban, global context, the social and cultural significance of the songs does not remain the same.
engendering interest in a corpus of generally unfamiliar folksong traditions, genres and styles.

In this chapter, I focus specifically on the cantos de vaquería that Pulido sings, a particular folksong substyle indigenous to the region known as los llanos, the expansive savannahs which roll eastward from the Colombian Andean mountains, extending across and deep into Venezuela. While ranching songs are heard throughout Colombia, in los llanos, vaquerías specifically refer to a type of sung poetry that reflects vaquero/cowboy rural, working class culture, distinctly marked by the region’s ethnic mestizaje, strong spirit of independence, and pastoral soundscape. *Música llanera*, the term most used to describe the music from this region, is associated with folk song genres such as joropo, pajarillo, seis, corrido and the cantos de vaquería (see Portaccio Fontalvo 2003). Born and raised in the small llanera village of Yopal, Pulido identifies with the music culture of the region as shown by her modern performance of vaquerías. Pulido’s vocal explorations and adventurous arrangements, in fact, not only form a significant component of her signature cosmopolitan brand and musical identity, they comprise a repertoire.

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54 *Música llanera* has only rarely been performed in NYC, save for an occasional joropo, a traditional dance form of the region, typically inserted into performances by local folkloric dance schools or performance troupes; such cultural presentations of Colombian “folklore” have for the most part been limited to either costeño or paisa music and dance forms: i.e., cumbias, garabatos and passillos, or bambucos, guabinas and torbellinos, respectively. In recent years, *música llanera* has gained significant international exposure through live performances and recordings by Grupo Cimarron and jazz harpist Edmar Castaneda, for example. Grupo Cimarron plays pajarillos, joropos, etc., in a traditional ensemble format (see Sí, Soy Llanero (Smithsonian Folkways, 2008), performing at the 2009 and 2011 Smithsonian Institution’s Folklife Festival. Castaneda is a virtuoso player of música de arpa (harp
suggestive of an embodied Colombian collective memory. Performance scholar Diana Taylor (2003) writes that “embodied practice[s], along with and bound up with other cultural practices, offers a way of knowing”(3). Taylor suggests that performance functions as epistemology, since it operates on a methodological level that enables scholars to analyze events as performances. Drawing examples from pre- and post-Conquest Latin America (communal, ceremonial and ritual song/dance, e.g., areito), Taylor also notes that “writing and embodied performance have often worked together to layer the historical memories that constitute community”(35). So what knowledge or epistemes does Pulido’s performances of vaquerías in fact contain, and how do they serve the Colombian diasporic community? Cultivated with varying degrees of authenticity, experimentation and hybridity, I argue that Pulido’s vaquerías informs and represents a cultural politics of revival, restoration and reinvention articulated through embodied-vocal expression. Following Taylor’s emphasis on “repertoire” versus the “archive” (that is, performance versus objects of documentation, e.g., the written text, images, sounds), and Victor Turner’s (1986) idea that performance reveals culture’s deepest, truest, and most individual character (Taylor, 4), we find in Pulido’s cantos de vaquería cultural utterances and gestures

Music from llanos orientales has also been used in Colombian political theater during the last decades of the Twentieth Century. For example, in Santiago García’s “Guadalupe años sin cuenta” (1991), a folkloric ensemble acts as a kind of Greek Chorus to tell the story of Guadalupe Salcedo’s murder, one of the first guerrilleros of the Liberal party, by the Colombian military. See Teatro de la Candelaria, http://hidvl.nyu.edu/video/000512389.html (accessed 3/27, 2011).
that reflect and illuminate both a historical and individual social past as much as a cosmopolitan present and a transcultural-global future. Her choice to sing cattle-herding songs also points to what Keith Negus (1999) identifies as an important consideration that underscores how musicians work through constructions of musical genres to create a framework for evaluating “creativity” and, therefore, works as a pivoting strategy for balancing the familiar with what is new and unique to an artist.56 Pulido’s careful selection of material/repertoire from genres in the midst of profound disturbance and/or transformation (Schechner and Appel 1990) thus provide her with a point of musical departure, from which reiteration, experimentation and re-elaboration of particularized musical praxis enable her to expand her vocal palette. Moreover, Pulido’s choice of repertoire also serves segments of her Colombian audiences as an agent and catalyst for Colombian remembrances, cultural (re)affirmation, and survival. It nurtures and advances the development of individual and communal, intercultural and cross-cultural musical integration. Pulido’s vocality, whether performed “live” or recorded, works to express emotions, communicate ideas and embody desires, even as it offers new sounds and images of Colombia—real and/or imagined.57

57 Unlike Turner, I am more interested in documenting processes of social performatives of intercultural phenomena rather than teasing out “universals” of performance from specific cultural formations. However, I agree with Turner’s insistence to locate texts in context of performance, rather than construe them [solely]…into abstract, dominantly cognitive systems (Turner 1990, p16). For a review of Turner’s model of social drama/ritual performance (i.e., Breach, Crisis, Redressive, Reintegration), see Schechner and Appel 1990, pp. 8-18.
Pulido’s performances of música llanera in New York City, particularly her cantos de vaquería/cowboy songs, serve as the central theme of this chapter. Drawing from recontextualized local, rural, and traditional musical sources, I argue that Pulido’s cowboy songs represent a current modality of urban, cosmopolitan Colombian musical expression found among members of the growing community of Colombian musicians. Pulido’s vaquerías retain and maintain a living connection with rural Colombia through strategies of cultural (inter)play and ongoing artistic exploration nourished by an acute musical and aesthetic curiosity (cf. Danielson 1997:160). Whilst her goal is to define, refine and honestly represent her voice, her highly stylized performances also serve as a template for several of her fellow émigré musicians, many of whom have followed a similar artistic/career trajectory through New York City—the city that serves as a cultural gateway into the globalscape, or in Pulido’s words, as a “trampoline” (interview, February 14, 2004).

Encountering social stigmas and recurring stereotypes surrounding notions of Colombian social identity, as well as the limitless creative intercultural resources the city offers (in human and cultural capital), the potential of artists such as Pulido to redefine homeland and diasporic Colombian identity through cultural expression in broadly transnational, transcultural and cosmopolitan terms is at the center of my analysis. As the first case study of the dissertation, the main theme of this chapter is to examine Pulido’s voice and repertoire as an embodied, post-national and post-diasporic Colombian subjectivity. Pulido’s vocality signifies a shifting of musical, aesthetic, and political values, always in motion and moving across and between
subjectivities of her listeners as well as her own. Investigating the “grain” of Pulido’s voice (Barthes 1985; Danielson 1997; Grey 2007), I discuss how Pulido’s “voicing” serves particular musical and larger aesthetic and artistic goals. I further maintain that Pulidos’ work proffers a kind of model of affirmation and transference of cultural values that transcend normative genre traditions or innovative stylistic hybrids. Pulido achieves both a level of individual and collective artistry through affective performative and collaborative relationship with cohort members of the Colombian (and non-Colombian) community of musicians (of which she is an important part) for audiences in the transnational and diasporic spaces they occupy. As a white, educated, middle class woman, Pulido’s subject position and repertoire choices also lead me to focus upon her performances of cantos de vaquería (performed live and on recordings) as a way to consider phenomenological and cognitive modes of engagement with musical neo-traditionalism, intercultural-postmodernism and gender. Perhaps her most reliable form of multivalent musical-aesthetic expression, Pulido’s interpretations of vaquerías serve as mediators for the attainment of artistic, aesthetic and cultural-political goals, as significant for their “structures of feeling” (Williams) and memory performatives (Taylor) as for their linkage to Colombian folk and popular musics (i.e., música llanera, cumbia). Drawing upon theoretical frameworks from anthropological and sociological studies of intercultural dynamics (Rappaport 2005, Patterson 2000), performance and memory studies (Schachner and Appel 1990, Turner 1986, 1990, Taylor 2003), and cognitive psychology and neuroscience studies (Dowling and Harwood 1986, Kramnick 2011, Kurtz 2012,
Turner and Fauconnier 2002, Zbikowski 2002), I inquire why cantos de vaquería—as vehicles of artistic and communal identity—are meaningful to Pulido and significant for the community whether derived from a sense of “nostalgia” or the drive for individual expression, or both, and how they acquire representational meaning for and among members of the Colombian diaspora in New York City.

Finally, through a discussion of traditional Colombian gender roles and their transformation or transcendence, I offer an interpretive analysis about the conceptual and semiotic value of vaquerías when performed or interpreted by a Colombian woman singing in a postnational, intercultural global space. Paying particular attention to issues of gender and place, I also consider the ramifications of when a predominantly masculine folk tradition—usually sung by mestizo men in a rural context—is performed by a white woman in an urban/global environment, and what it may suggest for the revitalization and/or (re)construction of diasporic Colombian identity for both singer-artist and the Colombian community at large. The aim of this case study, then, is to shed light on larger representational and/or subtextual values that Pulido’s voice engenders for an evolving sense of Colombian communitas in present-day cosmopolitan New York.

“I will always be in a place in which I am allowed to sing”58

In present day New York City a growing number of cosmopolitan women singers, musicians, and dancers participate in the city’s dynamic social and musical

life, performing gendered representations of diverse Latin and Caribbean cultures. Irka Mateo, Kaila Paulino (Dominican Republic), Raquel Z. Rivera (Puerto Rico), Sofia Rei Koutsovitis and Sofia Tosello (Argentina), Eva Ayllón (Peru), among others, appear in mainstream Manhattan nightclubs, such as Joe’s Pub and Sounds of Brazil, and in small outer-borough nightspots such as La Terraza in Queens, Barbès in Brooklyn, and throughout the city. Moreover, non-Latinas artists, who share either aesthetic and/or cultural affinities for Latin music and song styles, such as Marta Topferova for example, further contribute to the diverse panoply of women’s voices.

Significant among local Colombian women artists in New York, there is Marta Gomez, Johanna Castañeda, Andrea Tierra, Vanessa Ascanio and Lucía Pulido. Though Colombian male musicians such as pianists Edy Martinez and Hector Martignon, singer-songwriter Iván Benavides, and bassist-composer Jairo Moreno have long been part of the city’s international tapestry of popular and Latin jazz music scenes since the late 1970s and early 1980s, it was not until Lucía Pulido’s arrival in 1994 that a Colombian woman’s voice could be heard with any degree of regularity in the New York region. And while world music artists Mercedes Sosa (Argentina), Totó la Momposina, Ana Veydo (Colombia), Susana Baca (Peru), Chavela Vargas (Mexico) and Lila Downs (Mexico/US) make regular appearances at major New York cultural institutions—Town Hall, Symphony Space, and Lincoln Center Out of Doors, to name a few—under the auspices of presenters such as the World Music Institute (WMI), the Center for Traditional Music and Dance (CTMD), or major institutions Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center—Pulido is among the first of
a new generation of Colombian women artists to arrive and perform Colombian musical traditions for New York audiences. The singularity of Pulido’s voice and repertoire has slowly yet gradually helped her to achieve considerable public recognition within the city’s heterogeneous Colombian communities. Her interpretations of Colombian folk music traditions not only demonstrate the desire to use her voice as an effective medium, or portal into her essential self—“If I feel the song, I am already putting who I am inside of it” (interview, author’s translation)—Pulido’s musicking (Small 1998) is a highly subjective and emotive form of cultural politics and expression; that is, I suggest that Pulido’s voice works to expand a concept of Colombian identity that is gendered, transnational, cosmopolitan and modern, explored through intercultural and musical means. In this sense, she may be regarded as a public intellectual, engaging in social action through performance, and keenly aware that self-representation is crucial (Wong 2004:302).\(^{59}\)

\(^{59}\) For more on musicians as public intellectuals, see Wong 2004, especially pages 306-316.
Figure 2.1. Lucía Pulido performing at Jazz al Parque, Bogota, Colombia, 2011.

Born in Bogotá in 1962, Lucía Pulido Reyes was raised in Yopal, a town that developed into a small urban center in the Department of Casanare, an area that was once part of the Boyacá region of the Colombian llanos. From a working class family of public employees, Pulido became familiar with música llanera not because it defined her own social context, but rather because she loved to sing and the music was part of the soundscape—she grew up listening to música llanera, folk songs, and cantos de trabajo/work songs, including vaquerías. Sent to Bogotá to attend Catholic private school, Pulido often returned to her hometown, where llanero music, song and dance have continued to the present day. Completing High School in the capital city, she subsequently enrolled at the University Pedagógica to pursue her studies in music pedagogy. It was during this period, in the early 1980s, that she met Iván Benavides, forming the duo Iván and Lucía, a pairing of Benavides’ cantautor
(singer-songwriter) talents with Pulido’s voice. As a duo, they performed a kind of
_nueva canción_ and _trova_ (new song and troubador) approach to Benavides’ romantic,
poetic and quasi-political folksongs. As Ochoa (1996) points out however,
“Colombia never had a New Song movement” (13), explaining that, in Colombia,
where La Violencia, [the] violent conflict which tore the nation apart [since 1948],
“political processes that characterized the countries of the southern cone…which
were crucial in the rise of New Song [as it did in Chile and Argentina]—never took
place” (1996:14) \(^{60}\) Nonetheless, by the 1980s, _canción de protesta_ (protest song) had
emerged among left-wing university students, particularly in cities such as Bogotá, in
response to ongoing violence and socio-political turmoil caused by Colombia’s
perennial civil war. Differences between nueva canción and canción de protesta are
primarily historical and contextual in nature, having to more to do with the degree of
public contestation and engagement with the political causes and conditions of
conflict and the forms dissenting expression took. Moreover, nueva canción/trova
was typically based on the adaptation of regional folk musics from within national
settings; on the other hand, canción de protesta, in the Colombian context, also tended
to incorporate national and international (read US) folk music structures as well (e.g.,
Bob Dylan, Joan Baez, The Beatles). In this highly charged atmosphere, young
bohemians such as Iván and Lucía experimented with song forms and music

\(^{60}\) In the 1970s however, as Ochoa argues, there was a precedent in the Colombian
_música de protesta_ duo Ana y Jaimé; see also Olivia Peláez and Luis Felipe Jaramillo
O., _Colombia Musical, Una Historia...Una Empresa_ (Bogotá, Colombia: Discos
Fuentes, 1996), p269. Interestingly, Ana y Jaimé recorded songs, such as “Alba,” a
poetic text by national poet Darío Jaramillo Agudelo, set to music by a young
Benavides.
traditions. Eschewing Andean (bambucos and pasillos), costeño (cumbias and vallenato), or internationally recognized música tropical and salsa genres then in vogue—genres which were thought to represent Colombian national musics—Iván and Lucía instead leaned musically and conceptually toward nueva canción and Cuban nueva trova song genres, albeit with a uniquely Colombian aesthetic. It is therefore evident that by the 1980s an active nueva canción/protest music scene was active in Colombia, mostly in urban cities, especially Bogotá. Though Iván y Lucia represent a distinctly Colombian approach to these once vital socio-political song forms, by the 1980s, the work of nueva canción and trova artists such as Pablo Milanés, Chico Buarque and Silvio Rodriguez had become less relevant for Colombian urban youth.

From the early 1980s until 1993, Iván and Lucía traveled often throughout Colombia, Ecuador and Argentina, wherever regular bookings could be obtained, leading a Bohemian and peripatetic artistic lifestyle typical of cosmopolitan and transnational mobility. During this period they recorded three CDs (Iván y Lucía (1986), Entre el Sueño y la Realidad (1989) and Arcanos (1991)), establishing considerable name recognition and professional profile. Though self-consciously “apolitical” artists, however, the duo’s politics appear to have posed something of an obstacle to furthering their music careers. Not unlike the younger generation of

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[Cuban] nueva trova artists of the 1980s, Benavides and Pulido took hold of nueva trova’s poetic tools and musical style and rather than use them to express internationalist goals [i.e., global Socialism], instead began to explore and (re)construct local identities, thus challenging and demonstrating possibilities for expressing disaffection with the status quo (Thomas 2011: 217). For Iván and Lucía, their identity took on an increasingly transnational, cosmopolitan and experimental cast. Touring and performing in Europe (Spain, England, and Austria), Pulido and Benavides were generally well received, although most likely perceived as “political” artist by default—the result of simple identifications facilitated by Colombia’s reputation as a “war-torn” and “Third World” South American nation state. Nonetheless, appropriate to nueva trova/canción praxis, their performance strategies emphasized poetic renderings of Benavides’ and other poets and writers song lyrics, from the sentimental to the romantic or discretely political. Due to then current conditions in Colombia however—relative to the intensification of the civil/drug war—the duo reached a point by the early 1990s where performance options became increasingly limited. As Pulido tells it: “We couldn’t go any further at the time, it being Colombia, the way it was and the way it could be, and the way it is” (interview, 14 February 2004). As a result, Pulido resolved to try something different, and to do other things with her voice—this path led to New York City. The realities of Colombia’s social and political circumstances along with a need to explore new artistic vistas merged for Pulido, who decided to migrate. Although neither a
songwriter nor composer, Pulido chose to leave Colombia to place all her creative energies into her voice, and what she hoped to achieve with it.

Shortly after having emigrated, in 1995 Pulido had an opportunity to work on a solo recording in New York City for Colombia’s Sonolux label (distributed in the US by SONY Music). Released under the title Lucía (1997), the recording features several songs penned by Benavides, who had become a highly respected songwriter in part because of his association with Colombian vallenato pop star Carlos Vives. Since then, Benavides’ career has been on a somewhat mainstream trajectory with projects such as Bloque (on David Byrne’s Luaka Bop) and British club/electronica artist Richard Blair’s Sidestepper (for Peter Gabriel’s Real World Sound Factory).

Lucía features arrangements by Colombian pianist Hector Martignon, a mainstay of New York’s Latin jazz scene and, it is fair to say, that Pulido gravitates toward a broad spectrum of jazz music and musicians, demonstrating a proclivity toward what performance scholar Diana Taylor describes as an “avant-garde that values originality, the transgressive, and the authentic” (2003: 9)—which is not to say that other forms of music (art, folk, popular) do not, but rather that much depends on the different publics and performance contexts. Nonetheless, earlier in Bogotá, she met and worked with Satoshi Takeishi for example, a young Japanese jazz drummer active in the capital city’s then burgeoning Latin jazz scene (see PM chapter). Sharing common interests in traditional Colombian rhythms and song genres, albeit from diametrically opposed global and cultural polarities, together they released a collaborative work: Cantos Religiosos y Paganos de Colombia/Religious and Pagan
Songs from Colombia (2000), which was aptly subtitled “Nueva Propuesta Musical/A New Musical Proposal.” Cantos’ liner notes prominently credit Afro-Colombian folklorist Manuel Zapata Olivella for his inspiration and direction while further establishing Pulido’s artistic orientation both in sound and concept, an aural iconicity (Feld 1988) that has remained foundational to her work. This direction has been a constant in her work, wherein she has not only maintained direct linkages with traditional and popular Colombian folk musics (e.g., cantos de vaquería) but also expanded upon them through constant experimentation with modern jazz, “art” song and vocal innovation. Describing Pulido and the New Colombia music colony’s aims, Ana María Ochoa considers their “leaving nostalgia for their country aside” as a path toward a space where they are “creating musical worlds that enrich the New York scene” (2008, my translation). In other words, Pulido is among the young cosmopolitan, transnational movement of artists, whose artistic/creative goals emphasize aesthetic and innovative intent over either local, regional or national identity.62 Her impact on the New York’s Colombian musicians community is especially evident by the influence she has had on them and her listeners; Pulido’s audiences are in fact heterogeneous in terms of race, class, gender and ethnicity, reflective of New York City’s polycultural diversity. Musical director and guitarist

62 Colombian ethnomusicologists Ana María Ochoa Gautier (Columbia University) and Michael Birenbaum Quintero (Bowdoin) have, in fact, become strong advocates of Pulido’s work (e.g., Ochoa 2008); Ochoa even appears in a YouTube promo video (see www.youtube.com/watch?v=TaDBkaNs8k). Pulido’s work also appeals to members of New York City’s Latin@ Studies intelligentsia, evidenced by the attendance of scholars such as sociologist George Yudicé, poet Francisco Pancho Navarro, and performance scholar Diana Taylor at performance events.
Sebastian Cruz offers the following perspective: “[T]o be able to work with her on different [projects] is great, and I learn a lot from her in many ways…its not like she’s assumed like a teaching role or anything, but she has a lot more experience and has developed something very special that I appreciate” (Sebastian Cruz interview, February 14, 2004). Pulido, while highly regarded among her peers, is also considered as something of a leader within the musicians community—a community for whom her work illustrates both the challenges as well as the rewards of playing and singing traditional or contemporary Colombian music in spite of evidently minimal or negligible commercial potential. As Ochoa correctly indicates, Pulido is less interested in searching out the roots of traditional music (“búsqueda de las raíces”) than “la escucha hacia el futuro” (“listening for the future”)—a forward-looking strategy aimed at exploring new musical extrapolations, which, nonetheless, stand upon Colombian musical foundations. Why, then, does Pulido choose to sing vaquerías, or zafras or velorios, highly particularized rural musical substyles so far removed from New York’s urban environment? And what do they convey or intend to communicate in the moment of performance? And why does this repertoire—especially the vaquerías on which I focus below—seem to serve personal, artistic, political and communal goals so well? Before delving into these questions, first, a

63 Clearly each member of the musicians community is working toward a level of public accessibility that could lead to financial and artistic success. The choice to work in New York City is likely a conscious effort to gain access to global networks via local and glocal media outlets and/or producers within the city’s professional circuits.
look at vaquerías as performative gestures and formations of expressive Colombian culture and some of the discursive fields surrounding them.

_**Cantos de Vaquería**_

Cantos de vaquerías, or cowboy herding songs, are work songs that are generally acknowledged as contributing to the development of local Colombian popular music and culture. As a substyle of traditional melodies from the cattle herding plains of Colombian and Venezuela\(^\text{64}\), often performed using _coplería_, the Spanish derived poetic form that has attained importance as vernacular prose, they are mentioned only briefly in a few general music and folkloric publications about Colombian music genres (Abadia Morales 1971[1995r], 1973, Araujo de Molina 1973, Gutiérrez Hinojosa 1992, Ocampo Lopez 1990). As rural work songs about _ganadería_ (cattle herding), cantos de vaquería have been historically overlooked, relegated to a nominally social status, and yet acknowledged for their tangential links with antecedent Spanish, primarily Andalusian, culture (see Figure 3.2).

\(^{64}\) Cattle herding songs are similarly called _tonadas_ in Venezuela as well, which shares the cowboy culture of _los llanos_. In fact, the term _música llanera_ is often described as a Colombo-Venezolano musical genre; e.g., see Bedoya Sánchez (1987) and Monroy Camargo (2010).
Although vaquerías are still presently sung during herding season, they are becoming increasingly rare due to commercial changes in the nation’s beef-production industry. Perhaps or because of their utilitarian function and agrarian (working) class association, vaquerías have received markedly less scholarly attention or interest than other Colombian worksong substyles related to indigenous, folkloric and popular music forms (e.g., zafras, or harvest songs). Nevertheless, throughout Colombia’s cattle-raising regions, this type of cowboy song was typically sung by two or more male singers singing in a call and response manner, in which a single voice provides a declamatory canto, or shout at the cattle, to which one or more
vaqueros respond in kind. Víctor “Gallo Jiro” Espinel, a regional participant in the 2011 Smithsonian Folklife Festival, in which the music of Colombia was recently featured, explains: “It’s a way to calm the herd. In the middle of the second stanza, I sing a verse and echo that of the lead herder,” adding that, “when the lead herder did not sing to the cattle, he would be ridiculed in verse by his companions.”

Ethnomusicologist’s George Lists’ research of Colombian costeño musical culture in the mid-Twentieth century, Music and Poetry in a Colombian Village: a Tri-cultural Heritage (List 1983, 1994r), remains one of few scholarly works to include fieldwork data about this particular element of Colombian folklore. Despite that his pioneering work presents analyses for only two vaquerías, which only minimally adheres to his rigorous melodic classification system and descriptive of “free rhythm” as music without an underlying pulse (180), the examples nevertheless provide parameters of performance conventions then in practice among costeños in the village of Evitar and its surrounding region during the early 1960s. These are useful not solely for their descriptions of how vaquerías were once sung they also

66 Though List’s research is somewhat dated, cantos de vaquería are still found among both costeños and llaneros, and indeed, throughout Colombia’s cattle raising regions. As previously noted, costeño refers to the inhabitants of the Atlantic/Caribbean northeast coastal regions of Colombia; llanero refers to inhabitants of the eastern plains or savannahs, both of whom use similar cattle-herding song practices.
offer a comparative metric from which we may start to analyze Pulido’s
contemporary approach (listen to Recordings: music example 1).  

As for the cantos themselves, particularly the characteristically accompanying
gritos (or shouts), List pays scant attention to the textual content of the coplas—that
is, he primarily notes the presence of poetic utterances which form the sung
structures, including “meaningless syllables” and “meaningful exclamations” (327),
which hold special significance when contrasted with Pulido’s approach.

In the “Traditional music” part of the “Atlantic coastal” section of the NGD
(2001) entry however, List provides the following general description of work songs,
including vaquerías:

Two types of work songs are sung by men as solos or group songs in the rural
areas: the zafra, used in agricultural labor, and the vaquería, sung while
herding cattle. The texts consist of coplas or self contained quatrains on
philosophical or humorous topics, or verses from such coplas. Sometimes
workers sing in turn, encouraged by cries from others. The vaquería texts are
sometimes about cattle, and the men leading the herd sing alternately with
those in the rear. The music of both genres consists of improvised
combinations of melodic patterns and does not have a definite tonality. The
singing is in a very high tessitura (Ibid.139, author’s emphasis).

While this single reference to Colombian cattle-herding songs is noteworthy, since it
highlights musical elements presently under consideration—tonality and vocal

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67 Pedro Cueto Pimientel. “Vaquería,” George List field recording, accession number
69-145-F, OT 12255, 1968. Used with permission, Archives of Traditional Music,
Indiana University.

68 For example, ethnomusicologist Gerard Béhague’s et al. chapter on Colombia in
Music in Latin America (1979), as well as his “Colombia” entry in the New Groves
Dictionary of Music and Musicians (2001), focuses strictly on “Art” music; that is,
European-trained Colombian composers of the 19th-century, whose Nationalist
“modern” works (after post-1819 independence) exhibit increasing incorporation of
non-European, indigenous, and African musical sources and elements.
quality, it also raises questions and a possibility that vaquerías are not, in fact, always about cattle, either literally or as metaphor. I suggest that Pulido’s vaquerías serve a different artistic and cultural purpose: that is, more than mnemonic devices or mimetic gestures, they work to register emotional states of remembrance as well as conceptual reconnections between between translocal soundscapes of the Colombian llanos and urban New York City. I further submit that Pulido’s performances are “an act of creativity and criticism combined”\(^69\), in which the poetry of the cantos and their song’s melodic shapes and gestures communicate more than solely the text.

Also relevant to this discussion is Béhague’s introduction to the musical characteristics of traditional Brazilian music, particularly, where he notes: “irregular rhythmic structures and amensural or free-rhythm melodies occur in certain song types…such as the typical aboios (cattle herding songs) of the north-eastern states.”\(^70\) Is it reasonable, then, to suggest that such features might be similarly shared with Colombian vaquerías, along with the aforementioned lack of tonality and strained, tense vocal quality? And could it be possible that vocal-utterances and/or musical features of cattle-herding “songs” may in fact extend cross-culturally or even transnationally, trans-communally and interculturally? Through the human voice, cowboys communicate and control the cattle, calming/herding/moving them. Can similarities in vocal “calls” across-cultures (e.g., aboios of Brazil, tonadas of


Venezuela, cifras of Argentina, kulning/kauking of Sweden and Norway) be attributed to “universal” processes of mimesis, mnemonics, nomadism, memory? These questions impel and are related to my examination of this folk expression and its transformation and relationship to the construction of musical meaning across national or post-national boundaries, especially when interpreted by an artist such as Lucía Pulido. As I discuss further below, interculturalism plays a major part in Pulido’s artistic strategy, since she values her collaboration with diverse and experimental musicians such as Satoshi and Stomu Takeishi, Fernando Tarrés, Adam Kolker, and Shixp Shirey, to name a few.

Ethnomusicologist Lise Waxer’s encyclopedia entries about Colombian popular music (Béhague and List’s New Grove co-author) also omit rural cowboy songs of the Atlantic coastal and Eastern plains regions, even though they are generally thought to have influenced the development of vallenato (Araujonoguera, sources). While Waxer notes generic links between vallenato and cumbia, for example, neither of their stylistic antecedents nor cultural precursors are mentioned with respect to cantos de vaquería. On the other hand, Lawrence App’s entry for Afro-Colombian traditions in the Garland Encyclopedia of World Music (1998) provides the following descriptive: “Vaquerías are songs used by cattle herders to quiet the animals and communicate among themselves” (1998:408). App further adds that use of free rhythm and melodic overlap shows some African influence, although he adds: “continued use and dispersion of…vaquerías is unlikely (1998:409). And yet, vaquerias have also been described by Italian ethnomusicologist Leonardo
D’Amico as “particularly diffuse in the Cesar, the principal region of the beef industry” though generally headed toward obsolescence. Notwithstanding apparent inconsistencies or contradictions, George List’s *Music and Poetry in a Colombian Village* (1983 [1994r]) remains nevertheless the sole North American scholarly source wherein vaquerias are discussed alongside analysis of the copla poetic form.

Colombian scholarly literature about folk music however is rather more extensive yet oriented toward general descriptions of folkloric music traditions, typically catalogued by region, race and/or ethnicity. For example, paraphrasing folklorist Quiroz Otero (1983), anthropologist Nina S. Friedemann, writes:

> Vallenato is a song that arose from the black presence, rooted in the work songs and rural environments of what was happening throughout the colony. Vaqueria songs are probably as old as the work of cattle-herding, which, since the arrival of the Spanish, had to be done by slaves who had to raise and take care of them.

> *El vallenato que es una canción con ascendiente y presencia negra tiene sus raíces en los cantos de trabajo en ámbitos de la hacienda y también de la boga en la colonia. Los cantos de vaquería probablemente son tan viejos como la misma ganadería y el trabajo de los esclavos que desde el comienzo de la llegada de los españoles tuvieron que arrearlos y cuidarlos.*

Friedemann further notes Quiroz Otero’s recovery of “old nostalgic vaquerías” such as the following example:

> **Cuando yo tenía ganao**
>
> **cantaba mi vaquería**
>
> When I had cattle
>
> I sang my vaquería

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71 “Il canto di vaqueria e particolarmente diffuso nel Cesar, regione che principalmente dell’allevamento del bestiame” (D’Amico 2002:67, author’s translation).

72 See also Juan Moreno Blanco, *La cepa de las palabras, Ensayo sobre la relación del universo imaginario wayúu y la obra literaria de Gabriel García Márquez* (Kassel, Germany: Edition Reichenberger, 2002), especially pp.17-18.

ahora que no lo tengo

canto la vida mia.

now that I do not have any
I sing about my life. (ibid.)

This single strophic excerpt, with the coplas octosyllabic rhyme scheme, reveals a highly philosophical perspective embedded within a lament of (economic) loss. Friedemann adds: “their narratives continued traveling from town to town and were a registry of legend, myths and histories from the ample regions populated by cattle dealers and descendants of black runaway slaves, free blacks, and ever since from the rest of the peoples whom gathered there.”74 With the suggestion of a strongly raced and communal sensibility, vaquerías have thus informed local popular culture and music with narrational features that will prove significant and relevant for Pulido’s case study. In addition, Gutierrez Hinojosa’s (1992) study of origins, theories and evidence around which vallenato developed, emphasizes the economic and social importance of vaquerías—here again, referring to the cattle-raising industry. In highly evocative language, he describes the “ritual force,” the “magic and majesty,” with which the “ebony vaqueros of African ancestry” controlled the slow marches of hundreds of cattle through savannahs, jungle, rivers, to the seaports, singing known and improvised songs along the way.75 Clearly, the use of sound to control cattle is singularly important to the genre.

74 Sus narrativas siguen viajando de pueblo en pueblo y son un registro de leyendas, mitos e historias en amplias regiones que son ganaderas y están pobladas por descendientes de cimarrones negros, de negros libres y desde luego del resto de gentes que allí confluyeron (Ibid.).

75 See Gutierrez Hinojosa 1992, especially pages 431 through 435, where he discusses vaquería as a dynamic of vallenato song.
Colombian folklorist Abadia Morales’ *La musica Folklorica Colombiana* (1973), a work that is perhaps the single most reprinted volume on the topic, while highlighting indigenous, *mestizo* and *criollo* folkloric forms, however, makes no mention of vaquerías whatsoever. And yet, in popular (and public relations) literature, often produced by local and regional government administrations and businesses or professional associations, one finds pamphlets, songbooks, periodicals and monographs written by local historians or music *aficioanados*. Castro and Caballeros’ *Música de acordeón* (1990), published by Asociación Carbocol Intercor (a coal producing corporation operating in northern Colombia), for example, contains illustrated chapters depicting a history of ganadería and vaquería that places special cultural significance for their influence on vallenato.76

From this rather colorful and varied literature we can ascertain at least a few of the main features of cantos de vaquería, as they are still practiced in rural areas: (1) they are informal and utilitarian in function; (2) they often express local and regional folklore77; (3) they are largely in “free-rhythm” and (4) minimally “Tonal” (in a Western harmonic sense). They use well-known *coplas* and/or improvised lyrics set

76 Fernando Dangond Castro and Juan Manuel Lopez Caballero, *Música de acordeón* (1990), Asociación Carbocol Intercor; see “La Ganadería en el caribe Colombiano” (pp.33-40) and “Y cantó la vaquería” (pp.41-52).
77 As Abadía Morales affirms, the use of coplas remain pervasive significant markers of Colombian literary and folk culture: “…es claro que para el pueblo la copla ha de ser la expression más elocuente de su sentimiento, más aún cuando aparece ayudada por la música en la forma cantada o canción o “canta”…pero en cuanto se canta, este canto pertenece—como es obvio—al folklor musical.” “…it is clear that for the people, the *copla* has been the most eloquent expression of their feelings, even more so when they appear with music in sung form or as song or ‘singing’…but inasmuch as they are sung, those songs belong—as is obvious—to musical folklore.” (Abadía Morales 1995r: pages 9-10, author’s translation.)
to traditional folk and popular melodies, and are therefore encoded racially and ethnically. Significantly, the interjection of exclamatory vocal utterances in vaquerías—such as “ai”, “ao,” or “aū”—observable within patterned copla structures is a particularly unique expressive characteristic. Thus, a working definition for cantos de vaquería is the nexus of sung poetics, melodic cells, gestures and improvised declamatory statements performed in an unmetered (free) rhythmic, natural environment (e.g., los llanos/the plains) for communicating with cattle.

The quaver, yelp and near sob

For Pulido, cantos de vaquería are a familiar and local form of cultural expression, for which she exhibits close affinity and a strong connection. Claiming that “I grew up listening to this music and, as such, learning them didn’t require any kind of effort”\(^79\), she identifies with llanero culture to the extent that she is confident in adapting and incorporating them into her performances. However, as Pulido also acknowledges, she listened to cantos de trabajo, including vaquerías, on recordings: “I sing the melodies much as they are on the recordings” (interview).\(^80\)

\(^78\) I borrow Jon Pareles’ phrase describing the vocal quality of Colombian pop star Fonseca here for two reasons: first, it encapsulates the popular performer’s adherence to the vallenato singing style and, second, the descriptive also applies to Pulido’s interpretations of vaquerías, which, as noted above, are historically, traditionally and culturally linked to vallenato.

\(^79\) “Yo crecí escuchando esta música de manera que aprenderlos no implicó ningún tipo de esfuerzo.” (Lucía Pulido, email correspondence, April 27, 2007, author’s translation).

\(^80\) Two of the coplas/calls Pulido records in her Cantos Religiosos y Paganos (2000) CD can be traced to an earlier reissued recording, entitled Raíces de la Música Llanera en Casanare (2000), on which noted llamaderos/callers Tirso Delgado,
Hence, her musical entrainment of vaquerías is neither simply natural nor manufactured. While it appears that Pulido does claim some degree of ownership, by virtue of learning vaquerías while growing up in Yopal, her knowledge of them is especially significant for the identification she manifests toward llanero culture and the community values it holds. With respect to her entrainment, it is less that Pulido performs them correctly or authentically according to the principles of a tradition than what they seem to represent for her of llanero culture, the aesthetic value she places on them, and how she chooses to perform them. Committing many of them to memory, Pulido continues to draw upon their texts and melodies in her present work. Their intrinsic musico-poetic elements are not only links to her early emplacement memories of los llanos, they also present her with the challenge of how to affectively and effectively communicate them in entirely modern, cosmopolitan social and cultural contexts. Let us now take a closer look at the musico-poetics (among other factors) intrinsic to traditional cantos de vaquería in order to determine if what Pulido sings is, in fact, in free rhythm—unmeasured and recitative-like—or strict rhythm measured and “song-like,” organized into recurring groups describable with respect to meter but not carrying a normative accentual pattern (Agawu 1995: 28). By comparatively examining Pulido’s vaquerías in relation to a small sample of extant

Alfonso Niño, Dumar Aljure, Orlando Vega Villamil Torres and Don Orlando ‘El Cholo’ Valderrama appear. The recording is housed and available at the Biblioteca Nacional de Colombia, Centro de Documentación Musical, Bogotá Colombia: catalog nos. CD-0540, 0178, 0179. Pulido credits Cantan los Alcaravanes, a recording of cantos by Samuel Bedoya and Carlos Rojas, with singer Raul Gonzalez, as her source of inspiration, where she first memorized the vaquería coplas and melodies.
vaqueria field recordings collected by George List in the mid-1960s through 1970\textsuperscript{81}, I ask, do they correspond or correlate in any way? What musical or performative features or characteristics have endured through time and space? What stylistic markers can be ascertained based on earlier data? My goal here is less to provide either a strictly musicological or historical link between List’s and Pulido’s vaquerías. Rather, I examine conceptual analogies and/or differentials to formulate a theoretical Reading and understanding of Pulido’s vaquerías as a unique musical phenomenon; a phenomenon that registers and indexes the progression and transformation of vaquerías from a folk to modern music idiom.

Furthermore, I also inquire whether Pulido sings the melodies correctly, as she recalls them, or if she deviates from traditional melodic cells? I ask if and how they are they representative of traditional cantos de vaquería and, more specifically, how does she alter them? In doing so, my aim is to illuminate what meanings are decipherable, as intended by the performer or received by the listener. While answers to such questions are apparently contingent on different social, cultural and historical contexts, the ways in which vaquerías are performed by Pulido suggests that their meanings are reinscribed narratives of lived experiences of nature and mobility (i.e., movement), with retentions inherent in their original form. Though comparisons

\textsuperscript{81} See music example 1, from George List, \textit{Music and Poetry in a Colombian Village, A Tri-Cultural Heritage} (Bloomington: Indiana University Press (1983,[1994r])), especially transcriptions on pp.321-322 (and pages 319-342). List emphasizes how even during the time he conducted this fieldwork, vaquerías were rarely heard in the village of Evitar (Bolivar) and the surrounding region, which leads me to surmise that in Yopal (Casanares), Pulido’s place of birth, cattle-herding and vaqueria singing have endured for a longer period.
between List’s transcriptions of Evitar vaquerías and Pulido’s performances of modern vaquerías clearly have analytical limitations, they nonetheless reveal a number of shared musical features and characteristics that highlight what Pulido does as a singer that is unique and underscores her musicality and interpretative choices.

*The high pitched and piercing notes express feelings about life and death.*

—Manuel Zapata Olivella

**Intercultural experimentation and hybridity: Takeishi’s vaquería arrangement**

Collaborating with Japanese producer, percussionist, and arranger Satoshi Takeishi, in 1998 Lucía Pulido recorded *Cantos Religiosos y Paganos de Colombia* (2000) in Brooklyn, New York. The work demonstrates her profound admiration for and knowledge of traditional as well as regional Colombian musical forms. As producer Brian Ales writes: “These are songs out of the past, pagan songs from a beautiful and troubled country…It’s ironic that these fundamentally human and…non-cosmopolitan songs could really only have been given a bit of new life in a place as cosmopolitan as New York City: arranged by a Japanese, sung by a

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82 A reference to vaquería’s vocal range, quality and affect, Zapata Olivella’s quotation appears in the CD liner notes for *Cantos Religiosos y Paganos de Colombia—Nueva Propuesta Musical* (2000).

83 Satoshi Takeishi is a NYC-based drummer, percussionist, and arranger. A native of Mito Japan, Takeishi studied music at Berklee College of Music in Boston, Massachusetts. While at Berklee he developed an interest in the music of South America and went to live in Colombia, where he met Pulido. He continues to explore intercultural electronic and improvisational music with local musicians and composers in New York. [http://home.earthlink.net/~takeishi/id1.html](http://home.earthlink.net/~takeishi/id1.html), accessed April 17, 2007.
Combining Colombian melodies, instrumentation, and texts from its folk repertoire with popular, urban, modern and post modern sensibilities, Cantos established a template and modus operandi for Pulido’s musical eclecticism: “I don’t feel married to any particular region or camp…I can see it from outside…but nonetheless traditions need to be maintained. What I am doing is like a circle of virtual nourishment, I learn…and what I reinvest produces something…different. It’s part of the development of popular and traditional music. I am not rescuing the tradition. I am part of the process of elaboration, of transformation” (interview). Pulido’s commentary gives a clear indication of her approach toward processes of musical expansion; the challenge however lies in locating traditional Colombian folk music praxis within a transcultural, transnational and intercultural setting in order to comprehend how change and innovation—notwithstanding Zapata Olivella’s epigrammatic quote (above)—is negotiated or reconciled within entirely different social spaces.

Musical Structure and Analysis

Takeishi’s arrangement of cantos de vaquería consists of two distinct but interconnected sections, structured as follows: essentially, the first section of the recording is comprised of four coplas/stanzas followed by a pasillo section. After

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84 Ibid., Cantos. Intuition is a record company based in Mainz, Germany, a division of Schott Music and Media.
85 According to Ocampo López, pasillo is one of several dances, song styles, and rhythms from the Tolimense Andean region. While it may seem an unusual choice for inclusion here, these genres are widespread and exist alongside llanera musical
an extended instrumental interlude, introduced by Luis Bonilla’s solo trombone over the galloping pasillo section, Pulido returns with a final verse and a closing chorus section. Musical example 2 begins with a struck cajón followed by a two-bar introductory melodic statement played in unison by an ensemble of cello, trombone, clarinet and bass. After a fermata on the third bar holds an E-flat major chord, which functions as a dominant harmony, a cello enters at a moderate tempo (\( \dot{\lambda} = 63 \)), joined by clarinet and the trombone playing variations of an ostinato patterns in 6/8 meter in the key of A-flat minor (the initial tonic chord). Pulido’s voice enters over a harmonic rhythmic pattern that continues cycling through a sequence or series of chords: \( i – iv – I – V7 – i \), thereby, creating a flowing, undulating harmonic foundation upon which Pulido is free to articulate each vaquería stanza as she wishes. Adding to the free-moving textural quality of the arrangement, the acoustic bass part is scored in a manner that elicits a discretely indeterminate random feel. Takeishi explains: “the [bass] notes were placed uneven within 3/4 [sic] time to give a sense of shifting time. I could have given a certain numbers of notes per melody/key and let the bass player decide where to put them following Lucía's singing, but I wrote [the notes] down anyway to get the similar effect of randomness (Satoshi Takeishi, email correspondence, April 14, 2007). While an underlying metric pulse is maintained—though rather flexible—the arrangement was written to be expanded, or condensed, as

traditions such as joropo, galeron, corrido and seis; see Ocampo López 1990, especially pages 89, 119-124.

\(^{86}\) Cajón refers to the Peruvian box drum that is usually associated with joropo, which is also a musical style from los Llanos.
needed, in order to follow Pulido’s free-floating melodic lines. Takeishi: “One very important thing for me was not to change the way she sang/phrased those melodies…never go against the nature of those melodies” (Satoshi Takeishi, email correspondence, April 14, 2007). Thus, the fundamental importance of the melodies, acknowledged by Takeishi, enabled him to apply his own understanding of what a vaquería is, or is not. Though I recognize that the subject positions from which Pulido and Takeishi conceptualize and realize vaquerías are culturally and aesthetically different—an example of cross-cultural domain mapping (Zbikowski 2002) as I will discuss below—Pulido’s musical entrainment is completely different: she does not read notated music, relying more on musical intuition, sensitivity, and sensibility. Learning songs through orally transmitted folk traditions rather than from formal conservatory training, Pulido approaches the material at hand in a very personal and unconventional manner. Takeishi, on the other hand, spent four years in Colombia formally studying traditional musics—a practice which he continues by incorporating Colombian elements into original compositions and ongoing musical collaborations.

Nonetheless, each of the vaquería stanzas follows an overall structural design wherein descending harmonic shifts occur across phrase lengths of varying duration (i.e., one stanza may occupy 14 measures, another 12, or 11, etc.), depending on how Pulido phrases a particular copla. As previously mentioned, the first key or harmonic area begins on A-flat minor, descends to G-minor, is followed by G-flat minor and finally ends on F-minor, as it follows the copla stanzas. This copla-specific harmonic
movement—which is tonally and rhythmically supported—serves to draw the listener into the song and, following Zbikowski, retains associations with image schema or conceptual domains emblematic of llanera vaquerías. Accordingly, the melodic shifting of corresponding pitch sets, which I analyze here, further perpetuate the back and forth motion of each *copla*. Each of the key sections (harmonic region) therefore correlates with a particular *copla/stanza* or vaquería, even as the harmonic change serves to cue Pulido when to enter with a new vaquería *copla*. In addition, the form of Pulido’s vaquerías—unlike the internal poetic structure of the List vaquerías (i.e., A - B - A - B) —is A⁴ - A² - A³ - A⁴ , where each line ends with the same rhymed vowel. Thus, the fact that Pulido sings each *copla* in a different key area and with varying phrase lengths, and that stanzas two, three and four all differ in vowel agreement patterns are significant details of harmonic and tonal elaborations Pulido uses to differentiate her interpretation. As a result, we begin to get a sense of her processes of adherence and re-adaptation of traditional elements and their subsequent reformulation and transformation relative to Pulido’s vocality (see Meizel 2011).

Arranged as a single work, “Canto de Vaquería” appears as a series of four distinct *coplas*. Each *copla/stanza* adheres to the principles and structures of the Spanish poetic form—a form that remains culturally significant for Colombians (Abadía Morales 1995r). And since each stanza represents a distinct poetic cell or

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87 The general structure of *coplas* are comprised of two, two-line verses that form a quatrain; *copla* forms however appear in a variety of formulas with flexible rhyme schemes (e.g., AABA; ABAC; ABBA); and, while vaquerías use these forms, as List further notes, the *copla* may be embellished with meaningless syllables and
idea—making references and associations to daily vaquero/cowboy life—the fact that they are brought together in Takeishi’s arrangement is, in itself, somewhat novel. Moreover, since Pulido performs vaquerías in a variety of live musical settings for different audiences, their presentation demands considerable flexibility on the part of her musicians. Describing how they initially performed vaquerías (while still in Bogotá), Takeishi explains: “When we were performing live, she would sing any one of those cantos de vaquería and then go into a simple pasillo melody with me playing percussion; just melody and rhythm, very open and free…and that simple combination worked well to express the sense of llanos, the plains of Colombia” (Satoshi Takei, email correspondence, April 14, 2007). Takeishi suggests that the association of vaquerías and pasillos with Colombian’s llanos orientales (Southeastern plains) and the tonadas in Venezuela, musically and textually invoke affective imagery of the region’s vast open territories, where vaquerías were once the province of mestizo cowboy culture. From the beginning of their musical collaboration, this approach has well-served their musical interaction, which has continued to evolve to the present day, whenever they perform together. Always sensitive to Pulido’s creative elaborations, Takeishi closely traces the melodic arcs meaningful exclamations (1983: 323). That is, vaquería coplas often include interjections of declamatory/exclamatory calls or shouts, usually in response to a caller, or ganadero (cowboy), who either leads the herd, or follows behind. For no reason other than it is a different musical style, albeit one with connections to vaquero/cowboy culture, I will not discuss pasillo here any further. I believe, however, that the presence of a pasillo in a “song” with the title “Cantos de Vaquería” is an effort to bind different but related musical styles to convey a broader concept of Colombianidad (Colombianess), one that extends conceptually and stylistically beyond national borders.
and textual articulations of each copla, whether in live performance or in recordings. As a result, Takeishi’s arrangement of vaquerias expands upon traditional models of *música llanera* (music of the plains) that support and reveal the underlying impulse and inspiration of Pulido’s songs.

*Cantos de vaquería: Text*

Continuing with musical example two, while each of the vaquería copla stanzas communicates specific ideas and affects, together they conjure a singular poetic vision of the vaquero’s natural world. In the first stanza, for example, Pulido sings of the relationship between “bull” and “rider”: beast and man—the gently swaying and regular harmonic movement of the arrangement seems to represent their conjoined physical motion; and yet, it communicates that work needs to be done. Pulido’s ululated exclamation, heard at the end of the phrase, is an emblematic vaquería gesture; urgent in tone, the long held grito/call (“aü…”) is an utterance intended to further incite the beast to “Move It!” This is followed by the first of a series of semi-tone harmonic descending shifts in each subsequent copla, which works mimetically to draw the listener deeper into its sound ecology, as if descending down into the verdant lushness of *los llanos* themselves:

- *Ajila, ajila novillo*  
  *Por la huella ‘el cabrestero*  
  *Póngale amor al camino*  
  *y olvide su comedero, aü…*  
  Move it! Move it! Young bull through the traces of the rider put some loving on the road and forget your eating goal, *aü…*

The second copla (“*Mañana, mañanita*”), with its graceful, delicate language and extended relaxed pitch values and phrasings, then presents a decidedly more poetic image of the vaquero’s early morning surroundings:
Mañanita, mañanita
Que canta junto a la aurora
Con tu brisa pura y fresca (repeat)
Maciendo a palma y mapora
Mañanita, mañanita

Little morning, little morning
singing by the day’s dawning
with a breeze so pure and fresh
rocking the palm and mapora.
Little morning, little morning

Similar in its relaxed tone, the third copla introduces three new ideas: a “pigeon,”
“four words,” and “heart”; each meaningful, enigmatic, yet laden with potential
metaphors:

Palomita, palomita
Párate con atención
Recibe cuatro palabras
De éste pobre corazón
Palomita, nube de agua

Little pigeon, little pigeon
stand by and pay attention
and take in these four words
of this poor heart
Little pigeon, water cloud.

As Pulido personalizes these words so that each listener might privately (or
“heartfully”) share with the (real or imagined) “pigeon”, again, the chromatic lowered
harmonic region and cycling rhythms together serve to draw the listener in to the
mystery of the text. Interestingly, Pulido’s repetition of stanzas 2 and 3’s opening
lines at the end of their respective stanzas (Mañanita, mañanita and Palomita, nube
de agua) seems to be an attempt to connect the listener to the vaquero’s desire to hold
on to that specific moment (or memory). In addition, the latter stanza’s word change
to nube de agua (“water cloud”) is striking for two reasons. First, syntactically, the
pairing of two images, “Little pigeon” and “water cloud,” is particularly lyrical and
poetic, and, second, the way Pulido repeats the darkly low tonic pitch (Gb) on “nube
de agua” (water cloud) invites multiple metaphors invoked through both musical and
extramusical literary means.

89 Mapora is tall, thin palm tree. (Cantos CD notes, Pulido 2000).
In the fourth and final stanza of the cantos, the inextricable relationship between the cosmos (the moon) and earth (here, the river) is poetically invoked; tides are affected, as the stars anticipate and plea for the rivers’ affirmation, articulated by Pulido’s extended melodic phrase on the final pitch of “te quiero,” which leaps up to a high C in the final cadence.

According to Takeishi, Pulido’s vaquería melodies are completely and intuitively improvised (personal communication); a statement which we can presume to mean that although texts, melodic shapes, and rhythms are retained, Pulido freely alters stresses, accents, and durations of particular pitches and words in a spontaneous manner—in short, her improvisation derives from a facility with both textual and musical resources. Furthermore, as Takeishi notes, because Pulido is so familiar with vaquerías, she is able to sing consistently or alter each melody with similar timings and phrasings, attenuating durations as necessary: “Sometimes Lucía will sing slightly faster or slower, or the ensemble will play faster or slower, and that will change the mood of the song slightly” (email correspondence, April 14, 2007). One of the challenges of transcribing Pulido’s vaquerías, then, come from the fact that she does not either sing strictly to the time signature or pulse beat of the arrangement, or

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90 Traditional lyrics provided by Pulido; translation by Daniel Mosquera, from Cantos Religiosos y Paganos de Colombia, Nueva Propuesta Musical (2000) CD notes. An a capella version of the fourth copla, “La luna le dijo al río...” also appears on Pulido’s Luna Menguante (2008) recording, performed a half-step higher in the key register of G♭(music example 3); see Discography.
exactly the same way twice. Explaining how he resolved timing issues associated with Pulido’s phrasing, Takeishi states: “I just calculated how long it will take each melodies [sic] to last and [I] adjusted the bar length…of course we played around together to get the timings right, the tempo of the music, and how long she will wait for her to start the melody, etc.” (Ibid.). In the recording her voice is prominent, underlaid with a rhythmic-harmonic ostinato in 6/8 meter. In terms of transcription, it may be more accurate to notate Pulido’s melodic lines without either a time signature or use of bar lines (see Musical Transcription 2.1). I have opted to use broken-bar lines to emphasize not only the copla’s phrase structure and intervalllic relationships, but its free articulation:

Transcription 2.1. Pulido’s first copla stanza - “Canto de vaquería”; Recordings: music example 2.

An examination of Pulido’s melodic phrasing in the first copla (“Ajila, ajila novillo”) reveals that she tends to declaim her text on repeated pitches within a tonal context (with timbral and rhythmic alterations of course). And while pitch sets remain rather
constant from copla to copla (or stanza to stanza), each one shares similarities as well as differences. For example, in stanzas 1 and 4 she begins the copla from the 5th below (E♭), moves up and lingers in an upper register, moving mainly between scale degree 1° and a b 3rd before briefly leaping up to the 5th for the call/grito at the end (mm.10-11). By contrast, in stanzas 2 and 3—recall that the copla quatrain is divided into two line units—the melodic line descends more dramatically, ending on a tonic pitch one octave lower; and, significantly, there is neither a call nor grito. The second phrase repeats a similar melodic motion as first phrase, but in m.8, the third note leaps up to a 3rd (c♭) before immediately moving down a 3rd, up a 2nd, then down a half-step (i.e., a♭ - b - b♭ - b - a♭ ), returning to the tonic just prior to taking a final leap up a 5th, to a high register E♭. That is, Pulido instead ends the second stanza on b 3 in the lower octave, rising to the tonic pitch only at the end of the third stanza.

The descending melodies in the second and third stanzas link up with the analogous textual structure and rhyme: “Mañanita”-“Palomita.” Moreover, in the third stanza, the melodic descent arrives in the lower range more rapidly, as though Pulido has become comfortable in the lower—more interiorized—region of her voice.

91 I indicate scale degrees numerically: e.g., (2nd, 3rd, 4th, etc.). In cases where I wish to indicate scale degree with an accidental—that is, a sharp (“#”) or flat (“♭”)—I use both, hence, “♭ 3” refers to a flatted-third or minor 3rd scale degree.
range and can now move directly into it; that is, Pulido plays with low tonal areas for expressive, affective purposes.92

Still another noteworthy musical occurrence takes place after the harmony begins its chromatic descent, shifting down a half-step to g-minor for the second copla/stanza: Pulido begins the melody on the tonic pitch (g), reiterating the note before going up a minor 3rd (to b♭). In the subsequent 2nd and 4th coplas; she then returns to, repeats, and generally stays with this motivic idea (root ↑ 3rd). Thus, for coplas 1 and 3 (in the key areas of A♭-minor and G♭-minor) there is one convention of the melodic outline, and for coplas 2 and 4 (in the keys G-minor and F-minor), there is another.

Upon arriving at the final, lowest tonal region (F minor), in the fourth copla, Pulido’s melodic line has attained an affective, lonesome and plaintive quality: night has arrived, emotions and romantic love—only hinted at textually in the third stanza (i.e., “heart”)—are now clearly present, as the moon, river, and stars conspire to resound with unfulfilled longing. Again, like the first stanza, repeated pitches are sung, however, now more slowly and with greater emphasis on articulation of the text and its affective power. Taken together, the melodic motion illustrates Pulido’s variation and attenuation of the melodic line, oscillating internal notes and bending

92 In List’s earlier transcriptions, the lack of tonality is noteworthy since, instead, harmonic-melodic shifts occurring in each of Pulido’s stanzas use closely-related tonal “pitch sets” (i.e., A♭-minor: a♭ - b♭ - c - e♭) that perpetuate a back-and-forth motion within each copla. List, however, was more interested in linguistic relationships, recording patterns of speech rhythms, and gritos/shouts, etc.—the much narrower and chromatic pitch sets (i.e., hemitonic pentatonic) he recorded certainly occur within a free rhythmic environment.
pitches for emphasis, rather than sticking to the original conception of what appears to be a normative tradition (vis a vis List). Evidently, while Pulido’s performance maintains the integrity of the copla verses—although, in live presentations Pulido has, on occasion, repeated opening verse lines or freely repeats either interior or last lines—her animated use of gritos and melodic elaboration based on diatonic yet varying pitch sets is more frequent and extensive than those typically heard in traditional costeño practice. Improvisation, as a creative resource, is therefore key to Pulido’s vaquerías. And, although spoken word utterances are less apparent than speech-rhythm statements (which have a tendency to adhere to a rhythmic meter), wide melodic pitch leaps, and attenuated use of timbral shadings and colorings in the voice, even without any discussion of timbre, tonal quality, or use of dynamic elements, the varied and nuanced expression of Pulido’s interlaced melodies, lyrics, and rhythm point toward a blending of conservative (as in the retention of traditional melodic structures) with improvisational aesthetic procedures. These are particularly exemplified by her use of pitch and phrase modifications, which she deploys for rendering affective emotion. Moreover, free-rhythm remains a centrally constant element in Pulido’s vaquerías, not unlike their related costeño variants.

Thus, Pulido’s conception of carefully selected coplas works together with Takeishi’s arrangement to further aestheticize and recontextualize this “distinctive song tradition for calling cattle” 93 into a fully realized artistic and semiotic statement. While the unit of analysis remains the set of vaquerías arranged for Pulido, her

93 2011 Smithsonian Folklife Festival program book, p18.
approach to melodic material reveals a performance strategy that takes into account varied musical, conceptual, and aesthetic blending. Furthermore, Pulido’s singing belies the search for meaning and creative strategies that use a style of musical production undergoing radical and empirical change at a variety of performative and perceptual levels. Her modern interpretative and improvisational approach—particularly through the use of free rhythm and improvised poetic and vocal utterances and gestures—go well beyond either preservationist efforts or the archive of rural models. That Pulido’s vaquerías musically and conceptually differ from and yet can be compared with traditional vaquerías highlights the stylistic choices, aesthetic values and a cultural subtext that serve as sources of artistic inspiration and as points of departure for her vocal exploration. For comparative purposes, in Table 2.1 below, I provide a comparative summary of parameters—continuities and transformations—between vaquerías collected by List and those sung by Pulido:
Table 2.1. Comparative summary of the List and Pulido vaquerías

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>copla</th>
<th>List’s vaquería</th>
<th>Pulido’s vaquería</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>line repetition</td>
<td>yes repeat first line</td>
<td>yes repeat interior line repeat last line</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| “gritos” (shouts)     | yes                                 | yes                                   |
| elaboration           | yes                                 | yes                                   |

| improvisation         |                                  |                                       |
| vocal                 | yes                                 | yes                                   |
| spoken word           | yes                                 | no                                    |
| instrumental          | n/a                                 | yes                                   |

| tonal/key-centered:   | no                                  | yes/ modulation                       |
| scale/pitch sets      | hemitonic, pentatonic               | diatonic, varied                      |
| “free–rhythm”/        | yes                                 | yes                                   |
| speech rhythm:        |                                     |                                       |

And yet, Pulido adds: “I sing the melodies much as they are on the recordings…these are songs that men sing not the women; from there, already there is a first reinterpretation.” Pulido’s response thus raises important questions about recorded media’s role and gender association—that is, the mediated and gendered agency of a musical practice traditionally performed by men. However, insofar as Pulido makes no claims to “authenticity,” her performance of the melodies “as they are on the recordings” is open to interpretive strategies. For her, this is clearly a subjective point.

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94 “Yo canto las melodias tal cual como están en las grabaciones. Estos son cantos que cantan los hombres no las mujeres. Desde ahí ya hay una primera reinterpretación” (Lucía Pulido, email correspondence, April 28, 2007, my translation).
of difference and a divergence from the “tradition that was not initially evident” (interview). Therefore, it is not so much that Pulido learned vaquerías in the Colombian llanos as a child, or that she sings them correctly or authentically, according to the sources and principles of the tradition. For Pulido it seems to have more to do with what they represent for her and her society’s culture, the aesthetic value she places on them, and how she chooses to perform them. That she does so in a modern, urban context reveals not only, as Blacking might say, that “(her) cognitive organization will be a function of (her) personality (108), but that “music is not a language that describes the way society seems to be, but a metaphorical expression of feelings associated with the way a society really is” (104).95

Not unlike Korsyn (2003), we too ask, what are the values of the aesthetics? Does Lucia’s performance, then, in its thoroughly decontextualized, cosmopolitan setting present a different set of values than those of the vaquero? How is the Colombian vaquero, or, in this case, vaquera, like Bakhtin’s Russian peasant? How does music reflect subjectivities of a musician’s implicit and/or explicit knowledge? Is there an ideological antagonism at play in a multicultural world when languages become, as Bakhtin put it, “impossibly co-present”? (1981). Or is Pulido displaying vaquerías simply as “local” culture to reach a world music market via established networks? And what about the singing itself as a manifestation of gender issues? Is Pulido’s vocality an act of empowerment with political or ideological ramifications,

as one recent communication suggests?

The Pulido case study clearly shows that, for even the most foundational or basic of rural Colombian music folk forms, multiple conceptual domains and affiliations operate simultaneously at different levels (Slobin). Introspection and analysis point towards a music theory for the musico-poetic practice of cantos de vaqueria and my effort to present a formal analysis, notwithstanding the fact that not everything has to be neatly systematized, shows that music theory brings pertinent analytical and discursive value to the ethnomusicological project. Consequently, music theory too is enriched by the integration of the practitioner(s) voice themselves, suggesting that in the project to “theorize music” there is no final and complete analysis, explanation, nor even a “best description.” There can be, however, in dialogue with and within this discourse, theoretical tools that draw out “truths,” if only for a particular musical work, and at a particular moment in time.

Cognition

To further consider how Pulido achieves synthesis and integration between past and present performances of vaquerias, I draw from Zbikowski’s (2002) theory of cross-domain mapping and musical cognition. According to Zbikowski’s work in cognitive linguistics and psychology, he argues that conceptual mappings points “are actually key to understanding music as a rich cultural product that both constructs and is constructed by cultural experience” (72). “The brain is what we do with it” (Malabon), and its “plasticity” (the capacity to respond to environmental modifications) and cognitive functions are related to life experiences at the neural
level (Slaby); that is, it is generally accepted that (electro-dynamic) neuron activity points to physical processes (e.g., movement) that result in embodied “consciousness” (Kramnick). Based on work by theoretician Gilles Fauconnier and linguist Mark Turner’s idea of conceptual domains, aesthetic and cultural artifacts combine to form, what they term, a conceptual integration network, or CIN. Essentially, CINs result from conceptual linkages between abstract cognitive resources, which are shared from a foundational generic space, thereby forming a “blended space” where concrete structures (e.g., perceived images, sounds, memories, etc.) recombine and operate in new and culturally meaningful ways. As Fauconnier and Turner clarify, although conceptual blending is a pervasive and often transparent cognitive process (82), relationships between shared conceptual features, or “input spaces,” whether musical or textual, are contingent on close homologies between concrete conceptual “input” features, if there is to be any possibility for meaning construction derived from such topographical networks. Although Fauconnier and Turner’s CIN model presents a seemingly flat mapping of conceptual regions or domains—that is, a cognitive

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96 Where music is concerned, recent research exploring cognitive science and neuroscience as interpretative and quantitative tools (including fMRI and PET technologies) remains at the incipient stage. This was strikingly evident in discussions by neuroscientist Matthew Kurtz (Wesleyan), neuro-aestheticist Jan Slaby (Free University, Berlin), and Jonathan Kramnick (Rutgers), wherein, while a consensus emerged that music holds rich possibilities for further research, current “nonempirical” technologies only point to regions of brain activity when triggered by primarily visual stimuli. (Your) Brain and Culture workshop, Wesleyan University (Friday, September 23, 2011).

structure limited to one *generic*, two *input*, and (a resultant) *blended space*—it nevertheless provides a template for observing how multiplicities of conceptual, aesthetic and artistic features can produce meaning from a variety of images, memories and sounds, and how these, in turn, are cognitively and consciously stored and synthesized (at least theoretically). Vaquerías, therefore, can be seen to work not only as a mnemonic musical style, a source input that helps Pulido to invoke and recall experiences of her individual as well as collective past, they inform, reinscribe and reconstitute subjective musical interpretations and representations of past, present, and future. Let us look at Diagram 2.1 (page 130) for an example of a vaquería CIN formulation based on the generic folk form and its musico-poetic features, to illustrate how Fauconnier and Turner’s model works:
Diagram 2.1 illustrates one possible set of relationships proper to the idea of vaquerías as a conceptual domain when performed by Pulido. The generic space
relates to a mental space where vaqueria/cowboy songs occupy a base-line
topography or mapping, here defined as vaquerías, a particular Colombian expressive
folk form. From this base-line “generic space” we link conceptual domains but they
must be recursive; that is, through recursion, the structuring principles that give rise
to a conceptual model are subsequently applied to the elements of a conceptual
domain originally created by the same, or another, conceptual model (Zbikowsky
113), and they must be coordinated in a theoretically reasonable manner. In our CIN,
these are illustrated by “Music” and “Poetic” input spaces. We, then, pair off
coordinates; for example, musical folklore vis a vis literary folklore (which,
significantly, shares an oral transmission tradition); sung recitatives with spoken
word copla/galerons; improvisation spaces: melodic and harmonic freedom, free
rhythm, and pitch sets in the “musical input space” in relation to gritos/shouts, free
stresses, accentuation, and rhyming liberties within the poetic input space; and, lastly,
a pairing of collective collaboration with individuation. Note, too, that connections
between the generic space and the input spaces, resulting in a blended space are
dynamic (hence, the broken arrow lines), whereas, input spaces are, by necessity,
directly and categorically relational (connected by a thick solid line).

The point of the model is simply to demonstrate how mental spaces may
manifest cognitive and affective synthesis. The resulting blended space therefore
exhibits an integrated network, where, in Pulido’s case, the musico-poetics of
profoundly ingrained cultural objects (vaquerias) are revived and recontextualized as
a modern form of expression, and yet retain elemental transparencies from the folk
tradition from which it draws resources. As a result, “meaning” is reimagined via the sonic language of a transformed folk song that reflects the individual artists’ consciousness (through cognitive processes) along with modernity’s multiplicity of conceptual domains.\(^98\) Zbikowsky further states that: “the conceptual models around which we organize our categories of music are also the means by which we negotiate or resist cultural change, guide performance, and engage in complex patterns of musical discourse” (242). In this case, with respect to Pulido’s repertoire (a blend of both contemporary and historical elements), CIN theory liberates analysis from strictures of either purely musical or textual components, registering, elucidating and yielding an individual’s artistry as a member of a culture relative to larger cultural movements and social environments. If, as Naomi Quinn and Dorothy Holland suggest, “culture is not a people’s custom’s and artifacts and oral traditions, but what they must know in order to act as they do, make the things that they do, and interpret their experience in the distinctive way they do” (i.e., perform), then we may begin to infer how “a new conceptual model is born” (110).

Pulido’s conceptualization of vaquerías also raises questions however: are her memories of them intact? Are the melodies she sings accurately reproduced, from either the vaquerías she heard while growing up or from available commercial recordings? Is the llamado (call) correctly articulated? Does the lack of a caller

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\(^98\) Despite a plethora of discourses regarding “modernity” as social, technological, economic or political conditions, I lean toward poet John Ashberry’s existential definition, wherein, absolute modernity is an acknowledgement of “the simultaneity of all life, [and] the condition that nourishes poetry at every second.” From Ashberry’s preface to Rimbaud’s *Illuminations* (New York: W.W.Norton & Company, 2011).
response in any way diminish its performance? And to what extent are these parameters culturally significant? Moreover, what importance do the copla texts hold, if any? Are Pulido’s performances simply an artistic/aesthetic repertoire of gestures, or a mimesis of an embodied episteme? I suggest that Pulido draws from both vaquerías’s artistic/aesthetic repertoire and the archive of embodied memory (the epistemic source, according to Taylor) in order to recreate virtual soundscapes for listeners in the moment of performance. While Pulido has a wide variety of material to select from, by virtue of her musical entrainment and cosmopolitan aesthetics, the performance setting and extent of intercultural collaboration, too, plays a vital role in the conscious-unconscious decision-making process.99

The challenge of finding a suitable theoretical framework for analyzing vaquerías, illuminated by Pulido’s intercultural and collaborative performances, lead to an earlier study of poetic meter in this rural musical variant, where I first considered its transformation into an expressive avant-garde formation. In what I maintain is a salient approach to comprehending the transfiguration of a once-prevalent folk cultural expression into a modern, world music, I further posit that Pulido’s voice exemplifies an interstitial liminality between speech and song attained through the incorporation of musico-poetic elements of vaquerías and mitigated by experimental art song and jazz aesthetics, thereby developing a form of identifiably Colombian referential and representational musical expressions. My goal here—

99 As discussed in the Introduction chapter (pp.64-70), I describe intercultural collaborations as mutually transformative relationships that occur between local, traditional folk and cosmopolitan, world musicians and musics, often resulting in hybrid musical forms that may circulate across transnational and cultural borders.
mindful of the questions raised above—is to foster better understanding of the ways in which the maintenance of musical-aesthetic connections with a nearly-forgotten rural past remain culturally significant and meaningful in an ever-changing, postmodern present, especially where a dialectic of individual and community overlap is operative.

Conclusion

The act of singing by women is a broad field of inquiry open to wide discursive practices, from the evolutionary to the historical, the performative to the mimetic, the cognitive to the cultural. Gendered traditions of vocality abound and the power of women’s voices to challenge (and confound) scholars’ efforts to critique, describe, and contextualize the voice as musical phenomena and social production persists. Ethnomusicologist Virginia Danielson’s classic study of Egypt’s iconic woman singer, Umm Kulthum, for example, asks, “How is a voice of the people constructed?” “[I]t is created collectively and socially, and not individually, over time” (1997:162). For Danielson, Umm Kulthum became the voice of Egypt through a highly mediated musical praxis that used established historical and socio-musical practices, norms and patterns to perform highly localized sound; Kulthum’s powerful individualism was somewhat negated in the process however. On the other hand, for musicologist Jane A. Berstein (2004), the agency of individual women is central, as she contrasts the performance styles of North and South American women protest

100 Since, according to Stephen Blum, “we have good reason to be suspicious of those who claim that a culture ‘speaks’ through a single voice.” Stephen Blum, “In Defense of Close Reading and Close Listening,” Current Musicology 53 (1993), p.47.
singers, Mercedes Sosa and Joan Baez, whom she correctly notes: “have used their musical gifts as powerful weapons for their beliefs, and as such, have become the social consciences of their countries” (182). On the other hand, global pop stars such as Bjork also provide commentary on their creative and expressive strategies and purposes: “You can use the tools of Western civilization and be impulsive and intuitive and emotional—and that, for me, creates a lot of hope.”

Gendered emotionalism is further explored by Veronica Doubleday, whose research on *chaharbeiti* laments teases out the significance of contrasting perspectives among Afghani men and women, as well as their strong ties to popular mystical roots in Islamic idealism and Sufism (26). Lila Ellen Gray (2007) also builds on themes of *saudade*, the sensate aesthetics of emotion expressed by Lisbon’s *fadistas*, to form what she calls a “landscape of feeling” (125), where past and present coexist in a dichotomy of mystery and soulfulness. More recently, ethnomusicologist Katherine Lynn Meizel proposes a holistic approach to vocality: “The voice informs how we hear both song and singer. It helps to shape and to articulate identity. And though we may never see all of its intricate secret workings inside our bodies, what we *can* learn about its structures and sounds and meanings affords us valuable knowledge about

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human experiences and relationships, and the negotiation of power.”

In this chapter I have approached Lucía Pulido’s vaquería singing and sung poetics though analysis and discussion of the complexities of modernity, transnational movement, the agency of the creative gendered individual, and the constant weight of history and memory on the Colombian artist and society. As a performer, Pulido does not compose music—instead, she selects songs and songwriters that appeal to her artistic, aesthetic, and musical interests. Her vocal performances are neither typical of Colombia’s regionally-based traditional singers nor of the New Colombian music revival specialists, or the growing number of Colombian popular artists appearing on the supercultural global stage (Slobin 1993). Her appropriation of vaquerías—predominantly a male, rural practice—from the very outset signifies an inversion of traditional gendering; performed in foreign urban contexts, they lie even further outside of normative patterns. Her vaquería calls however are not radical departures from their rural antecedents, nor do they deviate melodically or rhythmically to an extent that would render them totally unfamiliar to a llanero cowboy, although the modern performance context might prove somewhat disconcerting.

Pulidos’s biography indicates a formation of sensibilities informed by the cultural history of los llanos, the social-political history of Colombia, and the experiences of transnational migration. Truly cosmopolitan in her receptivity to women’s voices, she is as much a product of nueva canción singers Violeta Parra and

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Mercedes Sosa, Afro-Colombian cantaoras Etelvina Maldonado, Ines Granja and Totó la Momposina as experimentalists such as Meredith Monk, Laurie Anderson or Diamanda Galas, to name a few. However, set within innovative musical arrangements which juxtapose and incorporate urban jazz and experimental musics and musicians, the agrarian copla’s rich prose and imagery are elevated and transformed by Pulido’s vocality. Drawing from Colombian cantos and other local, indigenous folk music forms, her strategy, in fact, demands not only deep knowledge of Colombian source materials and the ability to engage musicians from diverse cultures, it speaks to interculturalism, mimesis and the power of representation (Ochoa 2003, Levin 2006, Merlin 2001, 1991). Pulido sings vaquerías because she values their importance as creative vehicles which both challenge and push her to sing them in a culturally accurate yet personal and aesthetically meaningful manner; that they express emotions or evoke narrative soundscapes for her audiences is significant nonetheless. It is “undeniable that intercultural circulation of local musics is playing a crucial role in the redefinition of the socialization of bodies and feelings” (Ochoa 2003).104 Singing traditional folk songs in her native language, Pulido weaves mimetic narratives that evoke Colombian spaces and soundscapes. Rendered as a nexus of traditional and modern resources, Pulido’s vocality works to invoke the natural-sonic space of los llanos, recalling Steven Feld’s concept of acoustemology,

104 “Pero es innegable que la circulación intercultural de músicas locales está jugando un papel crucial en la redefinición de la socialidad de los cuerpos y de los afectos.” Ochoa, Músicas locales en tiempos de globalización, 2003: 27, author’s translation.
Theodore Levin’s related notions of “sonic chiarascuro” and “sound portraits,” and R. Murray Schaefer’s enduring “soundscapes”.  

The characteristic elements of Pulido’s voice (e.g., timbre, melodic elaboration, rhythmic—free rhythmic—articulation, improvisation), in combination with a highly selective repertoire, in particular cantos de vaquería (as well as cantos de trabajo, zafras and música llanera), effectively expresses sentiments and memories that some listeners tacitly recognize or identify as somehow linked to the homeland. Of course, listeners with differing interests, motivations, lived experiences and cultural backgrounds will experience Pulido’s performances in entirely differently ways; for example, in urban settings, her performances are viewed as ranging from folklore to jazz to world music, soliciting a range of affective responses and associative perceptions. Nonetheless, with a wide dynamic and emotional range capable of incorporating a variety of aural effects, including whispering cries, ironic laughter, heartbreaking moans, sonic utterances and gestures—each of which reveal narratives of personal memory and political thought—the quality or grain of Pulido’s

105 See Steven Feld, “Waterfalls of Song: An Acoustemology of Place Resounding in Bosavi, Papua New Guinea” in Sense of Place, ed. Steven Feld and Keith H. Basso (Santa Fe, N.M.: School of American Research, 1996), 91-136; also, Sound and Sentiment: Birds, Weeping, Poetics, and Song in Kaluli Expression (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982); R. Murray Schafer, The Tuning of the World. New York: Knopf, 1977. See also the section, “Sound Mimesis and Spiritual Landscape”, in Levin 2006, especially pp.88-99. Following the work of Alain Desjacques (“La Dimension orphique de la musique mongole,” Cahiers de musique traditionelles 3:90 [1990]: 105), Levin similarly proposes a metatheory of sound mimesis; writing about Tuvan throat-singers: “…landscapes or soundscapes that have been experienced in the past may be recalled and mimetically evoked with great precision. Even landscapes that have never been experienced may be mimetically represented” (77-78).
voice is uniquely her own. While not prototypically llanero in style, Pulido nonetheless performs vaquería arrangements that invite, juxtapose, and incorporate different musical cultures. As such, it represents the advent of a cosmopolitan, heterogeneous Colombian musical culture liberated from the strictures of either cultural essentialism or relativism. Through her core modern cosmopolitanism and transnational nomadism, Pulido’s vaquerías self-consciously preserves llanero sound imagery and symbolism in a modern yet contemporary form (cf., Levin 2006: 147) that underscores the changeable nature of aural-, rural- and urbanscapes—transformations that both reflect Pulido’s personal journey and embodies the phenomenology of Colombian experiences in New York City.

I have provided data about Pulido’s singing in this case study to discuss musical, performative and cognitive processes related to her use of Colombian cowboy songs. Every Lucía Pulido performance, of course, is different in effect if not by design—each a demonstration of her individual artistry, aesthetic collective rapport with Colombian and international audiences, and commitment to the art of singing. Typically starting recorded or live musical sets with a canto de vaquería, or zafra de entierro, or other cantos de trabajo (work songs)106, Pulido’s performances

106 While the number of “live” recordings are much too plentiful to list, the following examples of recorded cantos de vaquería appear on Pulido’s Cantos Religiosos y Paganos (2000), Luna Menguante (2008), Por esos caminos (2012; 2 tracks), and Live at Joe’s Pub (unreleased, n.d.). In addition, zafra de entierro and cantos de velorio are on Luna Menguante (2008), Cantos Religiosos y Paganos (2000), and Songbook II (2006); and a canto de trabajo is the opening track on Por esos caminos (ibid.).
emanate from interior regions of her (re)imagination, expressing memories, emotions, and life experiences through the sung poetics of modernized cantos. Her search for and the meanings she attaches to her voice is impelled by a profound desire to comprehend music as a way of life, personally and communally. Both formal and free of characteristic forms, Pulido (re)presents herself as much an experimentalist as a traditionalist; one whose artistry is paradoxically both contingent upon and independent of linkages to Colombian musical culture and its often gendered and racialized norms. Evidenced by her peripatetic presence on world music stages, “[i]t is as if she had assigned herself the task of being her country, singing her people and her land everywhere she goes.” In other words, when and where Pulido sings, Colombia is also present. And while embodying a nation or its culture is not a facile intellectual, aesthetic, or musical enterprise, as recent studies of musical nationalism, postnationalism and cosmopolitanism have shown, music travels in multiple directions, with multivalent modalities and manifestations. As ethnomusicologist Matt Sakeeny notes: “a dynamic model of circulation can accommodate all forms of transmission—origins, retentions, appropriations, diffusions—as entangled processes, without having to assign them a fixed place in a

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107 Brazilian pianist Benjamin Taubkin is quoted from his notes to Pulido’s recording “Por esos caminos” (Por Esos Caminos/Journeying, Ojo-Música, 2012, track 2); Pulido collaborates with Taubkin on a forthcoming recording project (see Taubkin 2012). At the VIIIth Encuentro de músicos Colombianos de Nueva York (October 23, 2011; see the Mayor chapter), Pulido started her set with a zafra de entierro (burial song) of the Pacific coast followed by an agrarian copla; Por esos caminos (2012) begins with “A Pilar Arroz,” a rice husking worksong.  
linear and hierarchical trajectory.”

Benavides’ lyrics to “Por esos caminos” illuminate Pulido’s personal and her musical community’s nomadic ethos:

verse:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mi gente se fue del pueblo</td>
<td>My people left the town</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sin saber a dónde va</td>
<td>Not knowing where to go</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A veces se van huyendo</td>
<td>Sometimes they leave to flee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y llegan a la ciudad</td>
<td>Arriving to the city</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

chorus:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ayayay me fui</td>
<td>Ay ay ay! I left</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ay, pa’ dónde vas</td>
<td>Oh, where are you going?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ay, me voy huyendo</td>
<td>Oh, I'm fleeing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Para la ciudad</td>
<td>To the city</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ay, déjame quieta</td>
<td>Oh, leave me alone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yo me voy pa’ llá</td>
<td>I'm going there, too</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ay, yo me voy lejos</td>
<td>sadly, I'm going far</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Para progresar</td>
<td>To find progress</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thus, Pulido’s performances of vaquerías represent both a radical break from and adherence to Colombian musical norms, emerging from intercultural musical interaction and dialogic collaboration between her self-representation and the carefully selected musicians she works with in New York City, Europe, or Latin America. As Beverly Diamond eloquently states: “By exploring how differences are ‘narrated’ in relation to diverse and even divergent worlds of music, we begin to understand more about the role that music can play in contemporary intercultural contexts while nevertheless insisting that this story is specific and unique” (2000:132). Through her singing of cowboy vaquerías, Pulido’s voice thus obtains a representational identity and a communal identification with her audience that, while fundamentally Colombian, is not fixed either in terms of strict historical musical norms.

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110 Lyrics by Iván Benavides, from “Por esos caminos” (literally, “down those roads”), Lucía Pulido, Por Esos Caminos/Journeying (2012), music example 10.
praxis, cultural essentialisms, or the geopolitics of locality and place. Pulido’s vocality speaks for the interiority of artistic expression and the resonances of emotional and aesthetic feelings that are invoked when concurrently pursued. We turn now to a different case study, wherein the work by a Colombian composer, arranger and bandleader on the New York scene mediates tradition and modernity through jazz and popular music of a very different variety.

Among the conclusions reached in one South African intercultural study: “folk songs are an important starting point for investigating a culture; folk songs are an important educational resource”; and, “arrangements and new compositions based on folk songs can contribute to making people aware of the music of other cultures.” Hetta Potgieter and Jeanne Colling, “The Use of Tanzanian Folk Songs and Storytelling in a Teaching Environment” in Intercultural Music, Volume 6, Centre for Intercultural Music Arts (London: MRI Press, 2007), pp.89-104. See also Beverly Diamond’s “The Interpretation of Gender in Musical Life Stories of Prince Edward Islanders” in Music and Gender, Pirko Moisala and Beverly Diamond, eds. (Urbana, Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000), pp. 99-139.
CHAPTER THREE

Pablo Mayor and Folklore Urbano’s New Colombian Jazz: Intercultural Advocacy, Entrepreneurship, and Aesthetics

By the late 1990s the number of young Colombian musicians arriving in New York City continued to increase, bringing with them novel sets of musical proposals and experiences. This latest influx of transmigrant, cosmopolitan musicians, to a city still regarded the cultural capital of the world by many, was certainly not the first time Colombians entered its heterogeneous Latin music scene. Though comparatively small in number, Colombian musicians in the early twentieth century, playing then popular styles from the interior regions (bambucos, pasillos, torbellinos and guabines), were among an international mix of Latin artists and musics that were being commodified by, first, US recording companies such as RCA, Victor, Columbia, and Decca, and, subsequently, by national and international radio broadcasting organizations. By the 1950s and 60s, música tropical—an all

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112 Puerto Rican percussionist Bobby Sanabria states as much in the film From Mambo to Hip Hop: A Bronx Tale (2008). Colombian musicologist Jairo Moreno writes: “[B]y the early 1920s New York…was an obligatory destination of sorts for musical pilgrims and also for those interested in incorporating themselves into a rapidly emerging international market centered in and around United States mass culture” (2010: 179).

113 See Ann Orlov and Reed Ueda’s “Colombian Immigrants: A Case Study in New York City” for an overview of social and cultural forces behind Colombian migration patterns, up to the 1970s. Especially noteworthy is the data regarding La Violencia, which, as the authors write, “many Colombians believe…triggered the large scale immigration: from 1945 to 1955.” “Central and South Americans” in Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups, Stephan Thernstrom, Editor (Cambridge, Massachusetts; London, England: Harvard University Press), 1980, pp.212-217.
encompassing term—became the favored style for exportation by these recording companies, with renowned Colombian artists such as Los Corraleros de Majagual, the big bands of Lucho Bermúdez and Pacho Galán, and by the late 1960s through the 70s and early 80s, Enrique Urbano Tenorio (Peregoyo), Julio Ernesto Estrada (Fruko), and Joe Arroyo traveling regularly to New York City to record and perform. The musical products of these artists were marketed to audiences both at home and in the emerging diaspora. In the wake of Cuban and Puerto Rican popular music’s success among New York Latinos throughout much of its documented history, Colombian musicians or bands de afuera (foreign, from outside) generally met with a limited degree of public recognition or commercial success; for the most part contained to the city’s small but growing working class Colombian communities located in the outer borough neighborhoods of Jackson Heights, Corona, and Astoria, Queens. In fact, the presence of and participation by

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114 During this time, música tropical was inclusive of música costeña and música de la costa Pacífico (i.e., music from the Atlantic and Pacific coasts of Colombia).
115 For a historical overview of the Colombian popular music industry’s development, internationally and domestically, See Wade 2000; especially pp.47-52; see also Pacini Hernandez 2010, especially chapter six, pp.106-141.
116 In effect, New York has long served as the center of the Latin music industry’s system of mass media production, marketing and distribution.
117 The overwhelming success of the cha-cha-chá and mambo “craze” of the 1950s, followed by the salsa explosion of the 1970s—the sine qua non of New York Latin musical expression, to the present day popularity of merengue, bachata and reggaeton, has forced Colombians and other Latin ethnic groups, artists, and audiences to confront the reality that mainstream Latin popular genres exert inordinate control over NYC’s Latin music fans, evidenced by long-standing ethnic music, journalistic, and media industry barriers. See Austerlitz 2005; Pacini Hernández 1995; Washburne 2008; Rivera, Marshall, and Pacini Hernández 2010.
Colombian musicians within the “Big Apple’s” Latin music scene and historiography remains largely overlooked and unexamined to the present day.

In part as a corrective to this historical-cultural lacuna, this chapter examines the case of Pablo Mayor and Folklore Urbano (henceforth, FU). A case study of Nueva Música Colombiana (NMC), or New Colombian Music, I will show a manifestation of Colombian expressive culture and its emergence within New York’s urban soundscape, as it exists primarily among middle and upper class transmigrant musicians working in the diasporic setting (see Appadurai 1996; Fernández-L’Hoeste and Vila 2013; Schafer 1977; Feld 1988; Santamaria Delgado 2008). 118 From the outset, it is important to note that this community of musicians differs in significant ways from already established networks of working class musicians (see Arévalo 1998). With respect to social class, this new generation of musicians are (for the most part) highly educated, well trained and more interested in displaying musical virtuosity and eclecticism than playing folk or popular Colombian music genres as either strict traditionalists or preservationists. These musicians are well endowed with social, cultural and economic capital (relative to their working class counterparts), trying to find a presence, a voice and a sound in the context of New York and its complex of Latin music scenes. Not unlike ethnomusicologist Frederick Moehn’s (2012) work on middle class popular musicians in Brazil, who also have

118 *Nueva Música Colombiana* is a somewhat vague and often contested term that refers to the musical movement by a new generation of Colombian musicians and artists working both in and outside of Colombia with traditional, folk and popular musical sources, creating and defining new modes of cultural expression for Colombian music that includes musical hybrids and mixtures disseminated via new and traditional networks and forms of media.
embraced an ideology of *antropofagia* to describe the (presumably) essential characteristic of Brazilians to consume and digest as many styles as they like and to make them Brazilian, the Colombian solution, as evidenced in the Mayor case study, is to blend jazz with pan-Latin (read Cuban and Caribbean) and traditional Colombian popular genres. “New Colombian music” (or NMC), therefore, may be viewed precisely as a strategy that enables the new Colombian musicians in New York to distinguish themselves from other jazz, Latino/o, and even older Colombian musicians—but at the same time, not being too different, so that they can keep their cultural image while retaining status as trained professionals.

Jazz and its historical importance in New York is central to this process for what it connotes in terms of social, racial and class associations as well as current intercultural relationships. Given New York City’s history of jazz, these musicians aim for artistic expression and acceptance within its increasingly diverse and international communities. Jazz as a socio-cultural practice not only provides opportunities for them to gain status as “professional” musicians, it allows the Colombian musicians to enter, re-create and re-define jazz in the image of their own national identity, without having to adhere strictly to Colombian musical referents. In other words, within the multicultural and multiethnic city—a transnational city with a long history of “Latin music” production—this case study highlights how a significant segment of a Latin American nation’s educated middle and professional class resolve questions of representation, and through this process, establishing their presence while upholding a modern, cosmopolitan Colombian identity in diaspora.
Also significant to the processes are the musical tastes of these artists and how they differ from those of previous generations of Colombian musicians, whom perform traditional or popular genres—different enough that they are sufficiently compelled and willing to alter homeland styles to achieve a degree of “popular” local success in New York City. Audiences for NMC music and musicians also differ from the second- and third-generation working class Colombians that constitute the majority of the New York’s Colombian population in the metropolitan area, and to which NMC musicians seek to appeal. Instead, audiences are made up of sophisticated, cosmopolitan, middle class and up-scale Colombian intellectuals interested in consuming novel hybrid musics of both international and Colombian derivation. Jazz, then, functions as a catalyst musically and aesthetically, making connections between national ethnic (“Latin”) musics and global, transnational genres and styles (e.g., Colombian salsa and Latin jazz).

In this chapter I argue that Mayor’s project demonstrates how the musical activities of a significant actor on the NMC music scene, working within New York City’s centrality as a Latin music, world music and global jazz capital, reveals a localized effort at entrepreneurship and advocacy that marks an emerging praxis of cultural nationalism for the Colombian communities of New York City. That is, the valorization and reaffirmation of Colombian musical and cultural identity via intercultural networks of musical production and performance exemplified by Mayor’s Folklore Urbano illustrate how music cuts across national and transcultural differences of race, class and nation-region. Drawing from theoretical underpinnings
of interculturalism, recontextualization, and jazz consciousness, I discuss Mayor’s Colombian Latin Jazz and big band dance music through biographical and ethnographic fieldwork (interviews, performance documentation), community advocacy (festival and recording production), and music and performance analysis (analyses of representative recorded works and live performances). I will show how Mayor’s contemporary and neo-traditional Colombian brand of Latin jazz exemplifies and enables us to comprehend an emerging musical style among the heteroglossia of the intercultural dialectic (Washburne 2008:11), and the marketing strategies that inform and constitute a nueva (or “new”) Colombian identity within and across musical cultures. The intercultural and intracultural strategies Mayor uses to negotiate a space for his Colombian musical-cultural projects highlight a local, multilayered and deeply cosmopolitan Colombian identity that is simultaneously transnational, transcultural and, ultimately, post-diasporic. 119 Within the historical and cultural setting of “Latin NY” we can begin to consider the positionality that

119 Following Ang (1991), I use the term post-diasporic to refer to groups of displaced people exercising the right to establish communities as full citizens within a host nation (not the “homeland”) based on specific organizing principals (e.g., national, ethnic, race, or religious identity), yet marked with distinctly cosmopolitan features (i.e., ease of access to travel, media, cultural capital, etc). Markers of a post-diasporic identity may include its members’ spatial and cultural mobility, eclecticism and mutability in the ongoing negotiation of identity and difference. See also Salman Rushdie, Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticisms (London and New York: Granta Books), 1991.
Pablo Mayor and his New York-based band Folklore Urbano occupy at the present stage of transnational, global musical movements.¹²⁰

As a central actor in New York’s NMC scene—the movement of transmigrant Colombian artists and musicians establishing cultural frontiers for Colombian music—Mayor gathers multiple strands from Colombian, pan-Latin and, significantly, North American jazz sources to innovate and produce a particularized musical and aesthetic vision that encompasses a broad array of political, economic and cultural priorities. This vision discretely addresses and attempts to alter long-held stigmas and/or media perpetuated stereotypes of violence associated with Colombian society.¹²¹ In other words, though Colombia’s perceived legacy of violence often precedes or accompanies the myriad musical manifestations and cultural contributions that its musicians make—and audiences perceive—they must also contend with negative, stereotyped or inaccurate images, responding in ways where subject and group positions are articulated through phenomenological (embodied musical), performative, and (more rarely) programmatic means. This means that Colombian musicians express themselves covertly, through musical processes that give voice to an operative subtext, or what Christopher Washburne calls the unspeakable: “Musicians may be silenced verbally, but the nature of musical expression provides a distanced and ambiguous space for cathartic release, a place for

¹²⁰ For a historically informed and pedagogical account of the fusion that brought Jazz and Latin dance music together to form Latin Jazz in NYC in the 1960s, see DeVeaux and Giddens (2009), especially pages 458–467.
¹²¹ One need only consider a few Hollywood film productions about the Colombian drug situation, with titles such as Clear and Present Danger (1994), Blow (2001), or Collateral Damage (2002), to get a sense of American cinematic perspectives.
the unspeakable, a sonification of the silence” (Washburne 2008: 118). As such, these musicians contend with an imagined, decontextualized strain of violence as subtext that is very much evident in public and media discourses about the “nature” of Colombian society, or what folklorist Manuel Zapata Olivella refers to as the Colombian “reality.”¹²²

As an example, in his study of salsa in New York City, Washburne notes “how violence manifests itself in aesthetics, how tropes of violence are adopted by musicians…and how violence has served as an integral and shaping force…throughout the music’s history” (2008: 111). Acknowledging the difficulty of addressing or fully comprehending issues of violence and music, I nonetheless argue that attaching recent trends in Colombian transnational cultural movements to Latin music histories and their global trajectories underlines continuities, disruptions, and negotiations that such cultural production demands; even while, as this case study illustrates, actors contend with and negotiate “modernity,” in the process of recreating a post-diasporic, post-national cultural identity. The crisis of modernity, as Ravindran posits, has its roots in what it displaces and separates and how the displacement and separation of time and space from place gets reflected in the crisis of identity (2006: 252). As Canclini aptly points out, “it is a situation of unending transit in which the uncertainty of what it means to be modern is never eliminated” (1995:268). This is evidenced by these musicians and their self-conscious embracing

of modernity and its complexities, while neither rejecting the history of an objectified past nor the national heritage of “tradition.” Clarifying the strategy, Canclini explains: “it is what happens to mass-media producers who, in expanding their programs to new countries, where other tastes and cognitive systems reign, must reconvert their codes in order to communicate with different audiences.” (Ibid.) Canclini’s theorization of alternative modalities of expansion and renovation (e.g., hybrid cultures), which he suggests are unique to Latino cultures, therefore encompass (and exemplify the) contradictory, transient, and complex processes of “re-presentation” (Ibid; see pp.147-152). Thus situated, at the local/global (glocal) nexus of the cultural power matrix that is New York City, Mayor’s Folklore Urbano provides a vivid example of a different set of interstitial cultural objects (folklore, tradition, modernity, postmodernity) reconfigured as a post-diasporic representation of a new Colombian identity. As a result, Mayor’s project—a cultural composite of musical styles—raises key issues about Colombian identity, difference and representation, as they revolve around questions of a subtextual presence, erasure and/or transcendence of violence.

In this chapter I examine Mayor’s music, paying particular attention to the musicking process (Small 1998) through the incorporation of emblematic elements of Colombian folk, traditional, or popular musics. I investigate how Mayor’s personal background and professional experience with salsa, North American and Latin jazz, and pedagogy inform his work (e.g., compositional and arranging style and technique, performance practices, etc.). I inquire what differentiates FU from other New
York/Colombian projects, what aesthetics are operative in his musical production, and how aesthetic elements in Mayor’s music are combined to bear upon the notion of a modern, cosmopolitan Colombian identity that aims or appears to be free of association or identification with the stigma of violence. What follows, then, are a set of inquiries into what I describe as sites of production; i.e., sociomusical sites of performance, recording, and innovation and musical analysis that extend well beyond Nora’s notion of lieux de mémoire/sites of memory, understood here as nostalgic remembrances of musical cultural expressions past, reflecting real historical, generational, and structural change.⁹²³ In order to place Mayor and Folklore Urbano within the past and present cultural milieu and historiographical setting of Latin music and musicians in New York City, to discuss innovations and transformations that his brand of Colombian jazz represents for Colombians (and non-Colombians alike), I begin with a historical overview of “Latin music” in New York City in order to underscore similarities as well as the constructed nature, cultural relevance, and musico-aesthetic continuities that Mayor’s Folklore Urbano brings to the cultural-historical narrative.

**Latin Music in New York City**

Latin music has generated an extraordinary degree of study and scholarship, receiving substantial attention from a variety of disciplinary and interdisciplinary

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perspectives and discursive orientations (e.g., Boggs 1992; Cepeda 2010; DeVeaux and Giddens 2009; Flores 2000, 2009; García 2006; Glasser 1995; Pacini Hernández 2010; Lapidus 2008; Loza 1999; Manuel 1988; Roberts 1979; Salazar 2002; Singer 1982, 1983; Sublette 2004; Washburne 2008; and, Waxter 1994). Ever since New Orleans pianist and composer Louis Moreau Gottschalk (1829-1869) demonstrated his affinity for Antillean (Caribbean) and South American music, and black American composer and bandleader James Reese Europe (1880-1919) recruited musically literate Puerto Rican musicians into his “all-Black” 369th US Infantry Regiment military band during WWI, and while creole innovator Jelly Roll Morton (1890-1941) acknowledged a “Latin tinge” (i.e., Hispanic music from the Caribbean) as a critical component to the early development of New Orleans jazz, Latin and Caribbean social and musical migrations and interactions have revealed and been marked by ongoing intercultural exchanges and transnational flows (see Aparacio et al. 2003). The migration of Latin and Caribbean people to large urban centers, such as New York City, Chicago, Philadelphia, and Boston, and the activities of the musicians, dancers, and bandleaders that emerged during the Twentieth Century together chronicle concurrent social, political, economic, and cultural processes which continue to the present moment.

Early migration patterns from Latin and Caribbean source nations to the New York City region in the first decades of the Twentieth Century, and the musical

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124 To these we can add articles, monographs, theses and dissertations that focus on Caribbean and Afro-Caribbean music in New York City, e.g., Berrian 2000; Calle 2012; Pierre Louis 2006; Rivera et al. 2009; and Velez 1996.
cultures that were brought with them, provide evidence of the development and
growth of distinct ethnic communities often delineated along national, racial, or class
(i.e., economic) lines, found in the barrios of East (Spanish) Harlem, the South
Bronx, and Brooklyn neighborhoods such as Crown-Heights, Brownsville and
Bedford-Stuyvesant. Although the demographic profile of NYC’s ethnic communities has continually shifted, expanding, contracting, and overlapping
neighborhood and community boundaries, the socioeconomic, political, and cultural
makeup of each community has sustained individual local, national and group
identities despite an apparent heterogeneity that is often reduced to the notion of the urban “melting pot.” Close interaction between mainland US and Caribbean island nations and territories (e.g., Cuba, Puerto Rico, Haiti) ensured that musical
developments occurred along and across these lines, a result of both transnational and intraregional relationships. The music history of Latin and Caribbean musical influences in NYC thus reflects, and is a result of, the constant social and cultural
exchange of musical worldviews and cultural values between the host receiving
nation and arriving migrant populations; that is, between the US, the Spanish
Caribbean, and Central and South America.

By the 1930s Puerto Ricans were the largest Spanish-speaking minority group
in New York City, having established a major diasporic presence.\textsuperscript{125} Cuban

\textsuperscript{125} In reality, the case of Puerto Rico is unique because of its long and complex relationship with the United States: since 1898, when it became a colony; 1917, when its citizens gained US citizenship; and, in 1952, when the island was legally granted commonwealth status and incorporated within the industrialization project “Operation Bootstrap.” That is, the social, economic and cultural interactions occurring between
musicians such as Vicente Sigler, Alberto Socarrás, Don Azpiazu, and Mario Bauzá were also actively recasting Afro-Cuban music to reflect the popular big band sound of North American bandleaders such as the Dorsey Brothers (Jimmy and Tommy), Benny Goodman, and Glenn Miller. The trenchant establishment of Afro-Cuban musics as foundational and essential to the notion of “Latin music” in NYC, even though clearly catering to domestic tastes, have therefore been decisive and enduring. Although this historical point has been commented upon elsewhere (e.g. Roberts 1979, Salazar 2002, Washburne 1997), in the following section I outline a brief genealogy of musical and cultural contributions made by notable Latin artists and bandleaders to the popularization and dissemination of Latin and Caribbean music throughout the northeastern corridor of the United States. By doing so, I wish to emphasize a few of the seminal, intercultural musical trends which have gained currency as cultural capital among Latin and Caribbean diasporas in the US, while also noting the long term impact they have had on contemporary Colombian musicians working within New York’s transnational center. Although some structural and aesthetic principles have held throughout different historical periods—from the brassy 1930s big bands to 1970s salseros, such as Willie Colon and Eddie Palmieri, for example—differences between Colombian musicians and musical production and the hegemonic Cuban/Puerto Rican musical nexus have emerged and

the mainland and the island were inextricably bound in a post-Colonial relationship that is symbiotic and dependent on US government collusion with the island’s administration.
are, as I argue, significant for the intercultural interactions they underscore and the intracultural relationships they highlight.

By the early 1940s, Cuban and Puerto Rican musicians, composers, and arrangers had gained considerable public adulation if not mainstream media attention for the “Latin” sounds they were producing.\footnote{Bandleader Xavier Cugat (1900-1990) must be mentioned here, if only for the international commercial success he attained as “King of the Rhumba” [sic], the title bestowed upon him as the most popular exponent of “Latin” (i.e., inauthentic) dance band music during the 1930s and 40s (see Salazar 2002: 42-45). The Spanish-born Cugat and his orchestra nevertheless provided several Cuban musicians such as Tito Rodriguez, Desi Arnaz, and Mario Bauzá a model or template of the professional, primarily white, highly successful working Latin big band—a model that would be emulated by Puerto Ricans bandleaders such as Canario, César Concepcion, Cortijo, and Tito Puente.} Dancing to “live” Latin dance bands in New York City was the rage both uptown and downtown, with different audiences—Latinos/as, Blacks, Whites, Jews—consuming the music of Frank “Machito” Grillo, Miguelito Valdés and the Casino de la Playa Orchestra, the Tito Rodriguez Orchestra, and the young Puerto Rican acolyte of Cuban music, Tito Puente.\footnote{Wade notes that in 1939 Valdés’ Orquesta Casino de la Playa had traveled to Barranquilla, Colombia (\textit{la costa}), where “they were mobbed by fervent crowds” (77). According to an eyewitness account, “[t]hey played the Club Barranquilla, The Country Club, and various teatros” (ibid.).} Appealing to both Latinos/as and urban sophisticates, documentarian Max Salazar identifies three moments of utmost importance with respect to Cuban dance music and its New York success: first, in 1938, when Orestes “Macho” López and his brother Isarel “Cachao” López created the \textit{danzon-mambo} while still members of Antonio Arcaño’s charanga orchestra; second, in June 1942, when Machito’s orchestra went into a New York City studio for a Miguelito Valdés recording session,
sparking the *rumba* and subsequent *mambo* era (at the time, these were neologisms, or marketing terms that refer to Cuban *son*); and, third, in 1943, when Mario Bauzá’s composition “Tanga” kicked off the Afro-Cuban jazz era (Salazar 2002). Undoubtedly, there were many other important moments, but these were indeed seminal events highlighting the fluidity and adaptability of Cuban bandleaders to attenuate Afro-Cuban and Caribbean genres, shaping them to meet public demand, especially in the arena of crossover popular dance music.

Havana-born Mario Bauzá (1911-1993) was one of the “first classically trained Cuban musicians to look outward to other parts of the African diaspora” for inspiration writes Austerlitz (2005: 47), setting a trend that would be followed by countless musicians that have migrated to New York City during the first decades of the twentieth century. Ethnomusicologists have called attention to Bauzá’s decision to settle in New York in 1930, emphasizing its importance as a reflection of a preference for the racial clarity that North American race relations typified in contradistinction to the Cuban ideology of a raceless society (Austerlitz: 48-52; see also Moore 1997: 78-79, 94-96). Bauzá, however, it appears was more interested in immersing himself in American jazz. As an Afro-Cuban musician, he discovered greater opportunities to record and perform in the US and to develop the technical, aesthetic and cultural understanding or consciousness jazz requires.  

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128 “…[T]he consciousness of the jazz community has articulated an aesthetic of inclusivity and an ethos of ecumenicity. By melding many different influences…jazz creates an expansive space. […] a holism that reconfigures the mind set” (Austerlitz 2005: xiv). Cf. Washburne’s discussion of “difference and exclusion” associated with tactics of identity formation among salseros and salseras (see 2008: 72-73).
director, multi-instrumentalist (alto saxophone, clarinet, trumpet) and, later, bandleader, Bauzá learned to navigate the big band jazz scene from musical contemporaries such as Chick Webb, Fletcher Henderson, Alberto Socarrás, and Cab Calloway, for whom he had worked. Austerlitz further notes that Bauzá “identified more closely with the black jazz scene than with the Latin music scene” (2005:57) due, in part, to the discrimination on the part of light-skinned Latin bandleaders who often did not hire capable Latin black musicians. This suggests that Bauzá’s experiences with notable black jazz musicians such as Webb and especially his close friendship with Dizzy Gillespie prompted him to develop the idea of wedding Latin music with jazz. Writing arrangements and forming a band that could play idiomatically correct Afro-Cuban rhythms while still “swinging”—a musical concept that would later flourish as a major innovation in American music (Ibid.)—Bauzá’s fusion of jazz and Cuban music highlights what Austerlitz describes as “an interactivity that is central to Afro-diasporic arts” (2005: 96). The tying together of racial and ethnic strands through musical means would have, as Austerlitz notes, “a lasting effect” (2005: 94; emphasis is mine) on the ways musicians would continue to borrow, collaborate and experiment in New York City.

During the mid-1950s, when Frank “Machito” Grillo and his Afro-Cubans, Tito Rodriguez, Tito Puente, and Miguelito Valdés held sway over New York Latin dance fans, performing Cuban-based big band and jazz inflected arrangements by the top arrangers of the era (e.g., Bauzá, René Hernández, Chico O’Farrill) in New
York’s major dancehalls and nightspots (e.g., Palladium, Blen, Park Palace/Park Plaza Ballroom), other Cuban and Puerto Rican Latin artist were introducing other equally strong Afro-Caribbean forms. Arsenio Rodriguez (1911-1971, né Ignacio Loyola), the Afro-Cuban composer and tresero (player of a tres, the small Cuban six-stringed guitar with three courses of two strings) moved to New York in 1951. With innovative concepts for an expanded conjunto (ensemble), extensive improvised soloing, and cultural recuperation of the son-montuno, or changüí style, Rodríguez’s musical proposal provided a radically different alternative to the aforementioned popular dance bands. His powerful identification with African rhythms and use of African-derived linguistic idioms informed the development of a brand of Afro-Cuban and Caribbean music that would have an immense impact on later developments in salsa and Latin jazz (see García 2006; Lapides 2008). García, for example, particularly recognizes Rodríguez’s important contribution as a Latin music innovator squarely situated within discourses of tradition and modernity; that is, as a musical contemporary of artists such as Tito Rodriguez, Machito, and Miguelito Valdéz, Arsenio Rodriguez performed a distinctly “raw” and rough-and-tumble style of Black Cuban music that “reveal[s] a much more varied and contested history as to the relationship between son montuno, mambo, pachanga, boogaloo, salsa and the local music cultures of Cubans, Puerto Ricans, and others in the Caribbean and United States” (García 2006:7). Not only did Rodriguez reclaim the Afro-Cuban musical elements of son montuno, through his emphasis on the centrality of its racial component he was able to maintain close connections to proletarian,
migrant and working class urban Latinos; hence, Rodriguez’s music would figure large, when, later, in the 1970s, *salsa* emerged to attain an international level of popular success among pan-Latin audiences.

Ethnomusicologist Paul Austerlitz attributes tensions between racial, ethnic and national identities to competing ideologies of “nation” versus the “state,” with competing interests in marked categories made by different groups. The category “Black Cuban” music, as noted above in Rodriguez’ example, is thus a socially constructed cultural formation and a “product,” with musical genres (such as *son montuno*) claimed by both interethnic and raced subjectivities. Hence, Rodriguez’s approach to performing Afro-diasporic musics in the urban context may be seen as simultaneously representing a unique self-awareness of identity politics, a questioning of “authenticity,” and a deep sense of nostalgia that would become influential to generations of Latin musicians (and audiences) that followed—these values are especially evident in the *charangas* of Johnnie Pacheco, the *pachangas* of Alfredito Valdés Jr., the Latin jazz explorations of brothers Charlie and Eddie Palmieri and, of course, the *salsa dura* of Willie Colon—all professed Rodriguez disciples whom advanced modern and novel stylistic approaches while using well established Cuban musical idioms. As I argue below, marked categories of Colombian regional musics (*música costeña, música llanera, música Andina, música del Pacifico*, and so on) also have interethnic and raced associations, but in the diaporic urban context these come to represent a different set of musical and cultural values which have as much to do
with the social history of violence in Colombia as with either Latin or pan-Latin intercultural dynamics or national and state ideologies.

Regarded as Arsenio Rodriguez’ Puerto Rican counterpart and contemporary, Rafael Cortijo (1928-1982) was a master percussionist, composer and bandleader “for whom NYC was also a point of reference” (Loza 2001:799). Cortijo’s innovative re-appropriation of African-based aesthetics—in the form of Afro-Puerto Rican folkloric musical and cultural elements—deeply informed the development of salsa while also establishing a “Nuyorican” Boricua identity as a marker of Latin music in New York City.\(^{129}\) Similar to Rodriguez, Cortijo’s response to the commercial big band sounds being played at the large hotels and nightclubs of Havana, San Juan, and New York prompted him to form a smaller yet more rhythmically based *conjunto* to play modernized versions of classic bombas and plenas along with still popular Cuban mambos.

By the late 1950 and early 1960s however, the Puerto Rican population in NYC had grown proportionally larger than either Cuban or any other Latin ethnic group.\(^{130}\) With the immensely popular Puerto Rican *sonero* Ismael “Maleo” Rivera, fronting Cortijo y su Combo, Nuyorican dance fans enthusiastically embraced the


\(^{130}\) The Cuban Revolution (1959) led by Fidel Castro rapidly contributed to the disruption of and fracture of social communications and cultural exchange between the US and Cuba; by 1962, the political, economic and cultural embargo was firmly in place.
gritty, kinetic energy of the conjunto’s arrangements as never before, making Cortijo an international success both in New York and throughout Latin and Caribbean markets. \(^{131}\) The importance of Cortijo cannot be limited to his commercial success however, or even to the legacy of El Gran Combo, the orchestra that continued his folk/popular musical hybridization, although in a larger big band format. Cortijo’s innovations were a result of his acute valorization of Afro-Boricua, proletarian \((jíbaro)\) and populist cultural values applied to Puerto Rican folk music, then performing them as modern expressions of an emerging, cross-cultural New York Latinidad/Latinness. As a result, both island and New York audiences participated in Cortijo’s dance-oriented representation of Boricua cultural identity, evidence of a historical process sociologist Ruth Glasser has described as one of “infinite crossovers and variations on a theme,” where “Puerto Ricans have defied scholars’ longstanding categories by popularizing folk music and folklorizing popular music” (Glasser 1995: 12). \(^{132}\) In other words, Cortijo achieved a commercial fusion of traditional and modern elements with respect to Puerto Rican music (Casares Rodicio et al. 1999-2002: 105). \(^{133}\) Lipsitz offers pertinent commentary, referring to “Puerto Rican and trans-Caribbean collaborations and creativity” (2007: 224) in order to note how in New York these reflect “complex transnational relationships that structure

\(^{131}\) Further evidence of the bandleaders’ pan-Caribbean and transnational importance is music critic Ed Morales’ notation that Cortijo also had a major influence on the developments in merengue in the Dominican Republic during the emergence of that country from the reign of dictator Rafael Trujillo in the early 1960s (2003: 79).

\(^{132}\) See also Glasser 1995, especially pp.69-190.

\(^{133}\) A similar process can be heard in the recordings Cortijo made of songs written by Rafael Hernández, generally regarded as Puerto Rico’s greatest songwriter and bandleader.
Puerto Rican music [and] can confound commentators and critics attempting to craft linear chronological narratives about the music’s history” (ibid.). In a similar vein, the New York-based Puerto Rican bandleader and singer Manuel ‘Canario’ Jimenez (1895-1975) had in the 1930s previously blazed a modernizing trail when he, too, popularized plena beyond its status as a local folk genre, thus transforming the music of lower class mulatto Boricuas into yet another urban “popular” idiom that achieved international success.

Throughout the 1960s, Latin music in New York City underwent significant transformations, impacted by the sociological, political, and cultural movements and events of the times. One result was that Latin music was recast as urban popular music for its primary constituents: la gente del barrio (the people from El Barrio, or neighborhood). The popularization of Caribbean-based folk genres into urban dance musics appealed to local Latino audiences, whose growing population could sufficiently sustain a viable market. However, the US recording industry also experimented with artists that performed a variety of crossover genres (e.g., mambo, cha-cha-cha, bugalu, watusi) in efforts to capitalize on cosmopolitan and growing international interest. The mambo and pachanga bands of Tito Rodriguez, Tito Puente and early Johnny Pacheco, for example, were followed by a new contingent of modern Latin musicians, such as Joe Bataan, Joe Cuba, Jimmy Sabater, and Mongo Santamaria; these artists successfully bridged Latin and non-Latin musics and
audiences with hybrid repertoires of intercultural musical mixtures. Following the paradigmatic narrative of salsa discourse, increasing social and racial awareness—impelled by the Black American Civil Rights movement of the 1960s and prevalent inequities within poverty-stricken urban communities—led US Latinos/as—culturally and politically speaking—to search for their own representative voice, resulting in the rise of the *salsa* phenomenon. Following US implementation of the Cuban embargo, the advent of *salsa* signaled a period when Latino identity politics took center stage. The “new” Latin music (salsa) was embraced as the unparalleled cultural expression by and for urban Latinos—primarily Nuyoricans, expatriate Cubans, and Dominicans who had long been socially and politically disenfranchised and marginalized.

Thus, the social history of Latin music and people in New York City directly contributed to salsa’s formation: Cuban *son-montuno*, with its attendant bipartite structure; incorporating instrumental techniques such as *mambos* and *moñas* (“hot” ensemble interlude sections), vocal *soneros* (improvisations) and *coros* (responsorial choruses); Latin music genres—e.g., *guarachas*, *boleros*, *habaneras*, and *rumbas* blended with Puerto Rican *danzas*, *plenas*, and *bombas*—passed down through generations; and, the melodic and harmonic elements of *seis* and *aguinaldos* combined with Afro-Caribbean diasporic elements (e.g., polyrhythm, call and

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134 New York-born Joe Bataan (b.1942) is often credited for coining the term “Salsoul,” a style term for the hybrid party dance music he helped develop. The half Filipino, half African-American musician was clearly influenced by both Latin rhythms and Black Rhythm and Blues (“Soul” music). See Flores 2000, especially pp.107-110.

135 For an overview of the Puerto Rican communities engagement with US popular music, see Pacini Hernandez 2010, especially pp.43-50.
response, syncopation, etc.) and African-American sources and musical styles (soul, jazz, rhythm and blues), all contributed culturally laden musical sounds and related dance movements to salsa’s crystallization and sonic ecology.

Although salsa’s major exponents have for the most part been Nuyorican, the Latin community’s intention was less to create a national (Puerto Rican) music than to establish a form of cultural expression and identity that recognized both the uniqueness of local Boricua culture while acknowledging broader pan-Latino/a experiences emanating from within NYC’s rather harsh, urban, and racially charged environment. Ethnomusicologist Christopher Washburne, following Santos-Febres (1997), applies the concept of *pueble* to emphasize the translocal nature of salsa over distinct constitutive national identities (2008: see 39-44). Embedded as both participant and observer (musical insider and ethnic outsider), Washburne’s study of salsa in New York City emphasizes how salsa is a music deeply connected to violence, often marked by illicit forces and activities such as the drug trade and drug culture (cocaine, drug trafficking organizations (or DTOs), musician’s consumption), masculinist misogyny (i.e., competition for work, machismo, marginalization of women), and a brutal street ethos which affects musical production from performance practice to economies of the music’s marketing and distribution. Describing the NYC salsa scene, Washburne names well-known salseros such as Tito Puente, Johnny Pacheco, and Willie Colón, among others, along with impresarios Jerry Masucci and Ralph Mercado. Evidently, as he suggests, top bandleaders, musicians and producers/promoters had to deal with the realities of illegal activity and criminal
elements that had long underwritten and driven much of the salsa scene’s development. The initial sociopolitical thrust undergirding salsa dura was thus compromised by the subsequent commercial success salsa achieved. Although its international success—particularly via the Fania All-Stars—offered a platform for Latinos everywhere to celebrate pan-Latin cultural solidarity writ large, the aesthetics of “barrio” violence were transplanted and perpetuated well beyond New York City limits, taking root among lower class segments in many South American nations. In Waxer’s monograph on salsa (or música antillana) in Cali, Colombia, she notes for example, that during the 1980s and 90s black, lower class salsoteras coexisted along with white, upper-class nightclubs. After the fall of Pablo Escobar’s cartel in 1995, she further points out, viejoteras resumed playing salsa dura, illustrating the recuperation of an established “local” popular culture along with its working class values. This “edgier” urban aspect of salsa has endured to the present day, and notwithstanding salsa romantica’s emphasis on love themes, pop vocals, and “smooth” arrangements, it remains closely associated with Latin ethno-racial identity and working class values, evident in the persistent revitalization of salsa dura among consumers of “classic” salsa.\textsuperscript{136}

As salsa evolved from the salsa dura days of the rough-and-tumble NYC barrios of the 1960s and 70s, to the softer, radio-friendly pop of salsa romantica in

\textsuperscript{136} For an analysis of contemporary “smooth” salsa performance practice in NYC, see Washburne 2008, Chapter 6, pp.165-206; see also Washburne’s chapter five about the career of Linda Bell Caballero (aka “La India”), pp.151-164. For more on women salseras, see Aparicio’s (1998) concluding thoughts on women practitioners of salsa romantica, especially pp.242-43.
the 1980s and 90s, it is important to also be aware then, as Washburne notes, that
“How salsa is played, heard, danced, made, and talked about is informed by its long relationship with cocaine and the drug’s associated industry” (2008: 150). From an “inside-out” musician’s perspective (6), he writes: “The circle extends way past the actual white powdery substance informing the aesthetic, structuring performance practice, and affecting the daily lives of those who make the music” (Ibid.). Colombians, in fact, are present on both sides of Washburne’s analysis, both as salseros and actors in the international DTOs and networks of money-laundering businesses (read performance venues) that have helped to sustain salsa.\footnote{137} In contrast, Waxer’s ethnographic studies of salsa in urban environments, while providing a broad overview of the social processes by which salsa (as a transnational popular music) was adopted by Colombians, Venezuelans, and Canadians as signifier of cosmopolitan sophistication (1998, 2002a, 2002b)\footnote{138}, does not foray into the underworld elements of drugs and violence that Washburne highlights.

Pacini Hernandez, on the other hand, addresses the issue, clarifying that for Colombian (and Peruvian) immigrants, the international drug business “generated much…of the violence that stimulated their diasporas” (2010: 138). Though Colombians have been clearly involved in salsa’s (and cumbia’s) transnational circuits—and its attendant subcultures—their presence has been indexed and

\footnote{137} See Washburne (2008), especially Chapter Four, “New York Salsa and Drugs”, pp. 130-150. 
\footnote{138} Extending the discourse to the London salsa scene, see also Patria Roman-Velázquez’s “The Embodiment of Salsa: Musicians, Instruments, and the Performance and Latin Style and Identity. Popular Music (18) 1: 115-131.
stigmatized more by an illicit drug culture (i.e., cartels, DTOs, random violence, etc.) than by either their musical participation or cultural contribution—at least in a considerably less prominent or visible manner.\(^{139}\) When asked about the presence of Colombian musicians in New York’s salsa scene, for example, Washburne indicated that during the 1990s Colombian musicians and groups were indeed very active, but that after many of the Queens clubs closed, presumably under law enforcement pressure, “only the better players were able to continue professional careers” (personal communication, March 6, 2009). Undoubtedly, the rapid rise of Dominican merengue (and to a lesser extent bachata) as well as English and Spanish language rap’s continuing popularity were contributing factors to salsa’s decline among young Latinos/as. Washburne’s comment nevertheless suggests that without the networks of Queens (drug money-laundering) performance venues, providing musicians a means to earn a living, the majority of Colombian salseros were simply eviscerated from the scene. And yet, despite the paucity of documentation about Colombian salseros in New York City, there remains strong anecdotal evidence of their presence. From earlier migrations of musical protagonists such as Aníbal Ángel Anán, who traveled to New York in the mid-1950s to study orchestration, harmony, and counterpoint, to Los Corraleros de Majagual (the “star” ensemble organized by Discos Fuentes), and from Fruko and Joe Arroyo and the Colombian salsa groups of the 1990s (e.g., Grupo

\(^{139}\) Ties between music, drugs and violence are not limited to *salsa* however. Pacini Hernandez explicitly notes, for example, how *vallenato*, the rural costeño country music that gained an international reputation for its links to marijuana production and trafficking during the 1980s, was promoted by the Colombian drug trade (2010: see pp.118-119).
Niche, Guayacan, Grupo Caneo) that toured regularly to perform in NYC, albeit primarily at local Colombian community venues, Colombian musicians have demonstrated a strong commitment to playing, performing and recording salsa. Nonetheless, as Washburne further attests, it would be difficult to identify Colombian musicians that worked (in NYC) during the earlier Cuban mambo-Cubop era, in the 1940s and early 50s (Ibid.).

Although locating Colombian salseros or “Cuboppers” may in fact prove difficult, *música tropical*, a broad term encompassing a variety of pre-salsa Latin popular musics, has long circulated with Colombian touring and recording musicians successfully bringing Colombian genres and styles—cumbias, porros, fandangos, gaitas—to international audiences. Under this marketing rubric, musics from the Caribbean Basin (Puerto Rico, Cuba, and the Dominican Republic) and South America (Colombia, Venezuela, Panama) were clustered into a homogeneous stylistic mass: e.g., pachangas, charangas, guarachas, guaguancos, merengues, merencumbes, etc.—not unlike salsa itself. However, with the emergence of the *música tropical* bands that emerged in Cartagena and Barranquilla during the 1930s”, as Waxer notes, “[t]he process of adapting traditional rhythms and melodies to more cosmopolitan ensembles” in Colombia was certainly well underway. She writes that during the

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140 During the 1970s, documented performances by the touring Fania All-Stars, especially Richie Ray and Bobby Cruz, were highly influential to local musicians in Colombian cities such as Cali, Ibagué, Barranquilla and Bogotá, sparking the growth of salsa in Colombia. See Waxer 2002a, 2002b.
1940s and 50s “pioneers Lucho Bermúdez and Pacho Galán composed and arranged big-band adaptations of cumbias, porros and gaitas, popularizing the sound which became consolidated as the new national music of Colombia” (Ibid.) Among other scholars, Pacini Hernandez (2010) has also noted that by the 1940s the Colombian recording industry had begun to market and distribute música tropical (a euphemism for Afro-Colombian Atlantic costal popular music: cumbia, porro, gaita, fandango, etc.) throughout the Caribbean region, and to cities in the United States with sizable Latino populations. Colombian recording companies (or casas fonográficas) such as Discos Tropical and Discos Fuentes, vigorously marketed Colombian artists Los Corralero de Majagual, Fruko y sus Tesos, Sonora Dinamita, Peregoyo and, later, Joe Arroyo, among others—performers who often blended both Atlantic and Pacific coastal stylistic elements and genres with salsa and other Caribbean musical sources.

Among the first documented Colombian salseros in New York of the 1970s and 80s, one finds pianists Joe Madrid, Edy Martínez, Hector Martignon and bassist Jairo Moreno, all of whom would later turn more forcefully to Latin Jazz idioms. More recent arrivals, such as percussionist Samuel Torres, harpist Edmar Castaneda and pianists Ricardo Gallo and Fidel Cuellar, have benefitted from the intercultural

142 Both Martignon and Moreno are veterans of Ray Barreto’s later period Latin jazz ensembles. As a music scholar and academic, Moreno (2010) has written about the bifurcation of racial identities that Mario Bauzá and Dizzy Gillespie advanced through their respective approaches to the development of Latin Jazz. Gillespie, working with Chano Pozo, presented it as an innovative cultural blending of African (by way of Cuba) and North American African elements, with the Latin@ side somewhat marginalized; while Bauzá snuck in through the back door of American Jazz by using a clear and conceptual marriage of Caribbean and North American jazz music best exemplified in the work of Machito and his Afro Cubans—Bauzás experience of race was clearly different than that of Gillespie’s.
incursions made by these musicians, whom may be viewed as forerunners to the new generation of eclectic, cosmopolitan musicians that perform jazz- and Latin jazz-influenced music. Indeed, the decision to come to New York during this period to play music professionally offered few choices to Colombian musicians: (1) play “traditional” roots music, generally limited to the local Colombian audiences (e.g., Lisandro Meza and Foncho Castellar, playing vallenatos and cumbias; or, (2) play salsa (e.g., Edy Martínez); or, (3) play Latin jazz, which was (and still is) generally understood to be the offshoot of Afro-Cuban rhythms blended with North American jazz (as first developed by Dizzy Gillespie along with Cubans Chano Pozo, Maura Bauza, and Arturo O’Farrill). Hector Martignon, who relocated to New York in the 1980s, serves as a case in point. Despite his formal classical and jazz entrainment, Martignon’s interest in Latin jazz has followed the precedent set primarily by the Cuban (Bebo Valdez, Paquito D’Rivera, Arturo Sandoval, etc) and Brazilian models. Not until more recently has Martignon’s work begun to exhibit greater inclusion of Colombian musical references—a result of the present new Colombian musical movement’s development.143

My point here is that the historical development of popular Latin music for the US and international markets—sometimes with the discreet, often concealed, and rarely overt participation of Colombian artists—has long been linked to both the

143 In 2008, Hector Martignon received a Grammy nomination in the “Best Latin Jazz Recording” category “Refugees” (ZOHO, 2008). More recently, he has received a nomination for “Second Chance” (ZOHO, 2010), on which there is greater collaboration with the young, New York-based Colombian jazz-harpist Edmar Castaneda and percussionist Samuel Torres; see Discography.
national and international recording industries, social and political and cultural movements specific to relationships between the US (and indeed NYC) and Latin nations, and to globalizing forces such as transnational migration and cyclical movements of people, capital and cultural products across national borders. Thus, the present stage of pan- and global-Latino/a cultural consciousness, exemplified here by young, Colombian *cosmopolatino* musicians working together as a strategically created community at the forefront of the global or World music scene, is part and parcel of larger socio-historical processes in which these musicians seek to reposition themselves in relation to a multiplicity of cultures.\(^{144}\) In one sense, such processes adhere to the idea that microcultures are often subsumed by or incorporated into dominant macrocultures, as groups of people are increasingly forced to share resources and space—a theoretical framework put forward most effectively by Slobin (1993). Alternatively, and from an economic theoretical perspective, the idea that “what determines the inventiveness and rate of cultural change for a population is [commensurate with] the amount of interaction between individuals” results in the

\(^{144}\) Pacini Hernandez borrows the term “cosmopolatino” from music journalist Gervase De Wilde, and other Web sources, to denote an identity-based, cultural construction of “young, urban, and bilingual [individuals who] are fusing aspects of Latin America with other global trends to create a unique cultural space in New York and other cities” (2010, pp.106-107). The central features of the term signify a pan-Latin global musical culture that travels and manifests itself in multiple and variegated styles; see Slobin 1993 for a discussion of intergroup contact, with respect to the “length of contact time” (i.e., *durée*, 113) between groups, and its impact on our understanding or ability to make definitive, categorical statements about music and culture.
evolution of a collective intelligence. In other words, facilitated by migration, whether by voluntary or forced displacement, culture evolves as a result of exchange through trade and urbanism, thereby enabling collective invention and innovation. The adaptation and incorporation of modern, traditional and popular musical elements, while utilizing technological and industry structures (even illicit ones), moreover, highlight what Austerlitz describes as the social consciousness that is evident in the “New York-bred brand of inclusiveness [that] pulled disparate constituencies together in a pan-American [and Caribbean]…family affair” (2005: 97, author’s brackets). However, limited space on the “cultural stage” prevented all actors to emerge on either the Latin music or world stage sites—not everyone could participate in Austerlitz’ somewhat idealized notion of a pan-American and pan-Caribbean cultural coalition. Here, I refer specifically to Central and South Americans as well as Caribbean people. Whether attributable to relatively small migration numbers entering the “gateway city” (see Kasinitz et al. 2004: 2), or to their subsequent ghettoization into ethnic communities and enclaves within the New York region, well into the 1960s, South and Central Americans as well as Caribbean and West Indians were not highly visible players on the New York Latin music scene, and limited to performing within the confines of local enclaves, often remaining on the sidelines while the still powerful Cuban, Puerto Rican, and rapidly emerging

145 See Matt Ridley. “Humans: Why They Triumphed.” Wall Street Journal (Saturday/Sunday, May 22-23, 2010), W1-W2. For a socio-political and cultural overview of transformational forces on popular music, with particular focus on urbanization, see Manuel 1988, especially pp.6-18; Manuel posits the marginalization of ethnic groups as one of the forces that drives popular music’s development.
Dominican base continued to dominate Latin music markets.\textsuperscript{146} Of course this too has changed, as Caribbean island migrations soared throughout the end of the Twentieth Century.

More recent scholarship points to significant changes in the transnational, cultural landscape, a result of an increased influx of Colombian transmigrants to global centers in the US (and, indeed, globally): e.g., Miami, Los Angeles, Chicago, Boston, Pittsburgh and New York City (see Pacini Hernandez 2010 and Cepeda 2010). While this trend certainly alters social demographics and the nature of intercultural relationships within these US cities, New York, in particular, has been the site of the longest *durée* (duration, or time period) between Colombians and other Latino groups. Still an important center of musical production—as much for its jazz, experimental, and *avant garde* music scenes as for its Latin music—New York remains a magnet for large numbers of young Colombian, *cosmopolitano* musicians,

\textsuperscript{146} Recent population figures cited in Kasinitz et al. 2008 indicate that there are 168,000 Colombians living in households throughout New York City’s five boroughs (Manhattan, Brooklyn, Bronx, Queens, Staten Island) and the metropolitan area, including the counties of Hudson, Essex, Union in New Jersey, and Nassau county on Long Island (28). Sociologists Kasinitz, Mollenkopf, Waters, and Holdaway (2004, 2008) present their findings about New York City and transmigration with what they term as a “synthetic South American category” that groups Colombians, Ecuadoreans and Peruvians as one subset of a larger set of immigrant groups. As they explain, their rationale was twofold: first, “because no other single Hispanic national group [outside of Dominicans and Puerto Ricans] was large enough to be sampled on its own…[and second, because these groups] generally have more in common with each other than with Dominicans and Puerto Ricans” (2008: 14), e.g., education, income, ancestry, class associations. In addition, a further complicating factor is the undercounted populations of Afro-Latin descendents, many of whom are, in fact, both “Hispanic” and “African”.

For an examination of the Latin music industry as it pertains to Colombian popular music and transnationalism, see Cepeda 2010, especially Chapter Two, about the Miami-based scene; see also pp.13-17 of the publication’s introduction.
whom, since the 1990s, have engaged musicians beyond local Colombian musical networks. As a result, this new generation is attaining at least a modicum of greater social, economic, and political visibility and cultural representation for both the established and emerging Colombian communities.

Among this latest wave of Colombians is Pablo Mayor, the pianist, composer-arranger, bandleader and producer, who, with his project, *Folklore Urbano* (trans. urban folklore), presents a novel case study of the folklorization of Colombian popular music and its converse: the urban modernization of “traditional” Colombian folk music. Working with a core group of NYC-based Colombian musicians, Mayor draws together multiple strands of Colombian music—informed by historical developments in Latin and American big band jazz—to render an invented hybrid of Colombian Jazz and Latin popular dance-band forms. In doing so, Mayor seeks to affirm the contribution of Colombian musical resources while staking a claim to a place in Latin music’s historical continuum in NYC. Restoring a renovated sense of Colombian cultural identity through musical means—one that has long been stigmatized as much by stereotypes of violence as by real violence—*Folklore Urbano* forges an outlet for cultural self-expression that gives voice to the young cosmopolitan musical community while also aiming to garner support from the larger Colombian constituency. Before further discussing the indigenous naturalism evident in Mayor’s intercultural urban engagement, or the strategies applied to negotiating space for his brand of expressive musical culture, the following biographical profile is
intended to underscore both Mayor’s personal and professional goals as well as the broader cultural aim that led him to create Folklore Urbano.

**Colombian salseros and jazzeros in NYC: Pablo Mayor…es mas rumbero**

Since relocating from Bogotá in 1999, Pablo Mayor has become one of the most significant figures in the growth and development of the Colombian musicians community in NYC. Mayor’s musical, entrepreneurial and educational activities place him at the center of the so-called NMC movement in diaspora. And while his work could be considered “new” in the context of contemporary Colombian big bands working within the New York Latin music scene, the following biographical sketch highlights not only his personal connection to Colombian expressive culture, but his socio-musical entrainment—one that enabled him to form a band that plays both traditional and modern music while drawing from Colombian and US sources. Through the band’s re-modeling of Colombian identity, the transformation and transcendence of Colombian and non-Colombian audience perceptions about Colombian music and dance, specifically its representational symbolic value, are actualized and Mayor’s status within the local Colombian community, and his

147 Comment by Ricardo Gallo, a young Colombian jazz pianist and contemporary of Mayor, also based in New York (http://www.ricardogallo.com, accessed 5/31/09). The term *rumbero* has often been used reductively to circumscribe a Colombian person, or group of people of a particular, often racialized, lower class segment of the population, as a party person (e.g., “party people”); the term *parrandero* is more or less synonymous (see Birenbaum Quintero 2006). In quoting Gallo here, for an introductory section to Mayor, I seek to indicate how a benign, even offhand comment suggests regional marginalization; that is, *rumberos* and *jazzeros* are as much linked with race, class, and elitist connotations in the diaspora as back in the homeland—the keyword is *mas, or more* rumbero.
relationship to the international Latin music market, are thus exposed, revealing musical undercurrents of the traditional Colombian music, international salsa, and North American jazz that inform his music and enables the building of community both locally and across transnational boundaries. While evidently a different sort of “Latin” music, Mayor’s is nonetheless part and parcel of Latin music’s ongoing evolution in NYC, holding meaning for Latinos and the macroculture of the global city. \(^{148}\)

**Pablo Mayor’s Biografía/Biography**

Pablo Mayor was born on November 28, 1964, during year-end holidays at his mother’s family home in Palmira, a small rural town in the southwestern *departamento* (or state) of Valle, not far from Calí. For the first twelve years of his life however, Pablo grew up in the capital city of Santa Fé de Bogotá, where his father, educated as a lawyer, worked as an economist at the *Banco de la Republica* (the National Bank of Colombia), achieving for his family a privileged, upper class lifestyle. In Bogotá, the city’s modern, cosmopolitan environment offered a wide variety of local, regional, and international musics, from *bambucos* to *pasillos*, from North American rock to Mexican *boleros*. Pablo absorbed a great deal of music as he listened to the *cajon* (the large family radio), and his interest in music quickly developed. Observing his young, music-making friends, some who played musics from different regions of

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\(^{148}\) Pablo Mayor, in fact, is among many of the Colombian musicians that have embraced and elaborated upon American jazz traditions since the 1920s; see Muñoz Velez 2007, for a historical perspective of Jazz in Colombia.
Colombia, Pablo soon began playing drums before switching to guitar, learning to play *música llanera* and *vallenatos*. Recalling how in Bogotá his curiosity was piqued by a one of his friend’s Yamaha keyboard, Pablo discovered that he could easily play the popular music he heard on the radio, learning it strictly by ear.

Sharing this revelation with his parents, he was given his first Yamaha BK2 organ (an electronic keyboard with a built-in “drum” sequencer) at the age of twelve and soon began to take piano lessons, albeit briefly, from a local teacher (named Blanca) who taught Pablo how to read musical notation.

At the age of twelve, Pablo’s parents separated, and together with his mother and younger brother, they relocated to Cali. Already being proclaimed by Caleños as the “world capitol of salsa” (Waxer 2002b: 235), Pablo soon entered another short-lived period of musical instruction, with a piano teacher that encouraged him to rely on his natural aural talents and growing musical ability. During this period, he focused on developing his piano technique, use of pedals for timbral effect, and the importance of musical dynamics. Musically proficient by fifteen, he was hired to demonstrate Yamaha organs at the local Sears Roebuck & Co. department store, a job he found life-changing. According to Mayor, music profoundly helped him: “My life was reorganized…my school grades got better, everything…”; even his friends took note, as Pablo was gradually drawn more and more deeply into music (interview, May 12, 2005).

By eighteen, Mayor was in demand locally, hired to regularly play at weddings, First Communions, and other social events, especially at *pachangas* (house
dance parties). With a top-of-the line Yamaha keyboard (on loan from his employer), Pablo provided festive soundtracks to all-night parties, where he was hired to play the popular Colombian repertoire of the day (albeit limited to the keys of C-Major and a-minor). Although his specialty had been organ interpretations played in the old *chucu-chucu or raspa* style[^149], as well as international styles such as salsa, Cuban rumbas, Dominican merengues, and Brazilian sambas, among others[^150], Pablo soon realized his musical limitations. Acknowledging the need to continue his musical studies, and with his father’s blessings and support, he enrolled at the Universidad del Valle (in Calí). Leaving after three semesters, he continued to study privately with Cicero Marmoleja Correa, a musician who had studied via correspondence at the Berklee College of Music (Boston). With a stronger foundation in both classical and jazz harmony, Mayor felt better prepared than ever to pursue a career in music.

He began to work as a second organist in a local salsa group, La Quinta Compañía (The Fifth Company), but soon switched to piano, joining Cuarta Generación (Fourth Generation) for a brief period. Subsequently, he was invited to join Manricuras, a move that marks Mayor’s entry into a more professional class of musicians (i.e., they could all read music notation). By this point, he had joined the growing pool of aspiring salsa musicians in Cali, whom benefitted from its popular

[^149]: According to Waxer, *raspa* is a simplified style of *música tropical* associated with *paisa* (Antioquian) audiences and musicians of Colombia’s interior…. *Raspa* bands of the 1960s were characterized by their use of electric bass, drum kit, and gimmicky Wurlitzer organ sounds (2002: 294), all sounds that Mayor’s Yamaha could easily replicate.

[^150]: Mayor also cites Sonora Matancera, Daniel Santos, Richie Ray and Oscar de Leon as international artists and groups whose music he regularly “covered” during this time (personal communication, April 28, 2010).
acceptance and [the] rise of educational institutions and opportunities during the
1980s and 90s (Waxer 2002b: 236). Between 1980 and 1990, the number of local
salsa bands mushroomed, from only ten to almost seventy (Ibid. 236; see also Waxer
1998) and Pablo was soon working regularly at local clubs, bars and tabernas
taverns), including with Grupo de Manricuras, the house band at the eponymously
named jazz joint. The venue, as Mayor describes it, “was a jazz place [where] you
could hear [Japanese percussionist] Satoshi Takeishi playing there with Juan Vicente
Sandran [and] Kike Santander; that generation [of jazz musicians] which preceded
me” (interview, May 12, 2005; see also Lucía Pulido, chapter two). Interestingly,
although Mayor identifies with the then burgeoning local jazz scene, he adds: “a little
later, the people wouldn’t go for jazz and [we] started to play dance [music]; it
became salsero” (Ibid.). Mayor’s recollection is significant both for his biographical
narrative and for the previously undocumented tension it registers between local jazz
and salsa musicians and the competing interests of Cali fans at the time; it also
explains Mayor’s dual interest in jazz and dance music. “The level of playing by
Juan Vicente, Manrique (the founder of the venue), Kike and Satoshi could not be
matched,” but as Mayor further explains, “after their departure—especially
Manrique’s departure for Bogotá—the place started to play [only] dance music”
(personal communication). Undoubtedly, while salsa was the local “rage,” Mayor’s
musical entrainment and proficiency in both musical camps was already proving
useful to his chosen musical path.
As jazz waned and Calí’s salsa scene continued to intensify during the early 1980s, Mayor’s work schedule followed suit. At one point he worked six nights a week for four months before joining Los Bunkers\textsuperscript{151}, one of Calí’s top salsa bands, performing in elite nightclubs such as the Club San Fernando, Club Campestre, Club Colombia, Club La Rivera, Club los Farallones, the Hotel Intercontinental and at the annual Calí Feria (on several occasions between 1982 and 1987). While the social environment of these upper class venues vastly differs from the working class *salsotecas, tabernas* and *viejotecas* that Waxer documents in her studies of Caleño popular music (Waxer 2002a, especially pp. 25-136; and 1997), performance and musical aesthetics were likely also dissimilar.

After five years on the Calí salsa scene, the then twenty-four-year old Mayor decided to once again resume his musical education, leaving Colombia for the United States in 1988. Registering for English language studies at the Wesli English Institute in Madison, Wisconsin, Mayor was accepted four months later at the University of North Texas (UNT, Denton), long considered a premier jazz education institution, even described as the “international Mecca for jazz training,”\textsuperscript{152} where he spent the next nine years completing his Bachelor and Master of Music degrees in Jazz Studies with a specialization in jazz arranging. Although regarded primarily as a jazz

\textsuperscript{151} Although locally popular for playing salsa, under the direction of Jairo Calderón, Los Bunkers also performed transcribed arrangements of porros, cumbias, merengues, and pasodobles (personal communication). For a listing of salsa bands performing in Cali during this period, including Los Bunkers, see Waxer 1998, pp. 268-69; see also Waxer 2002a.

musician and *salsero* by his peers, Mayor had to focus his academic energies toward classical music and its piano repertoire, which had not been part of his earlier musical training. Under the mentorship of Berthe Odnoposoff, a classical cellist and pianist, with a reputation as a strict educator, Mayor persevered and successfully completed the classical piano program required of Jazz majors. This was soon followed by the formation of a Latin jazz trio that performed in the Dallas area; the trio included Chris Michael, a young American percussionist. Discovering Brazilian music while studying at UNT, Michael’s exposure to Colombian music came through Pablo Mayor, inculcating an abiding interest that would lead him to later rejoin Mayor in New York City in the early formation of Folklore Urbano in 1999.

Continuing to play with several UNT orchestras and bands, Mayor increasingly turned to arranging, discovering yet another creative outlet for his musical ideas. While still in Texas, Mayor’s empirical approach led him to

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153 Mayor performed with several groups during his time in Denton. The first group included Efrén Guzman on drums and Dan Andrews on bass; Jorge Ginorio played percussion later in this group. Later, he formed a band called Chekere, a ten-piece band playing salsa and Latin jazz; after that he put together a fifteen-piece band called La Tribu, which counted fifteen members, including five jazz singers and Brazilian drummer Renato Pereira. When Renato left Denton and moved to New York, his new drummer was Jose Aponte, who is presently faculty at North Texas. In addition, Mayor was part of Carlos Guedes’s trio (a popular Venezuelan harpist in the Dallas area). With Renato Pereira, they played Venezuelan, Afro-Cuban and Brazilian rhythms, mostly original music by Guedes. A lover of Keith Jarrett’s music, with Mike Davis on bass and Chris Michael on drum kit (who is a classical percussionist, but also a fine jazz drummer), Mayor’s trio played jazz standards and Brazilian music in that style. Finally, Mayor also played in a band called Shati, an all-star salsa band based in Killeen Texas, which accompanied touring singers and bandleaders from New York City and Puerto Rico, such as Pete “El Conde” Rodriguez, Adalberto Santiago, Tito Allen, Melcocita, Bobby Valentin and Luicito Carrion, among others (personal communication, August 24, 2010).
experiment applying jazz idioms to classical music themes (interview, 5/12/05), which was well received by local audiences. After nearly ten years of pursuing intensive academic, classical, and jazz musical training in the United States, Mayor decided to return to Bogotá because, as he stated, “I felt I had been away from Colombia for too long,” and adding that “something I did not expect happened immediately after my return…I felt an overwhelming connection with the music of my country that I had never felt before” (Romero 2009: 22).

Upon returning to the capital city, Mayor contacted the music department at Universidad La Javeriana, and with his newly acquired academic credentials secured a part-time teaching position—Mayor, in fact, has maintained a strong commitment to teaching piano and Latin music pedagogy throughout his career. Despite increasing teaching responsibilities at La Javeriana that demanded more and more of Mayor’s time, his interest and desire to reconnect with Colombian musical culture led him to deeper involvement with traditional musics such as *bambuco* and *currulao* (from Antioquia and the Pacific Coast, respectively) and participation at regional and local festivals and competitions (e.g. Festival Petronio Álvarez, Festival del Pacifico). Mayor, however, related that he often felt treated as an “outsider” at several of these events; especially, when confronted with Colombia’s entrenched cultural regionalism and class consciousness. Moreover, due to the exceptionally diverse and large

154 While at UNT, Mayor explained that in addition to his Teaching Assistant in jazz arranging responsibilities (part of his scholarship), an abiding interest in Afro-Cuban music led to his teaching young American musicians “on the side” (Ibid.). In New York City, Pablo Mayor is on the faculty of Boys Harbor Latin Music School in East Harlem.
number of autochthonous Colombian musical genres and styles, which poses a challenge for any musician wishing to master either one or more of them, his desire to more closely identify with his own cultural roots was repeatedly frustrated. Mayor, feeling tolerated rather than accepted by local or regional music specialists, explains that “out of the frustration was born the concept of Folklore Urbano” (Romero 2009: 26).

Even as Mayor’s career as a teacher, pianist, and arranger was clearly gaining momentum in Colombia, winning awards for arrangements of traditional styles and significant commissions to work with Totó la Momposina and Marco Vinicio Oyaga (tambolero, or tambor mayor drummer for the most visible Colombian cantaora on the World Music scene), he hoped to realize a personal goal of one day living and working in New York City. When asked, ‘Why New York?’ he replied: “perhaps [because] at the University [of North Texas] they inculcate [the idea]. They make New York as the place where you have to prove yourself, to see where you are, to measure yourself [against], and see the best.” Adding, “I always listened to the music from here (NYC). So many people have passed through here. I was always interested, [but] always [with] the fear that the city will eat you alive” (interview, May 12, 2005). By the late 90s, Mayor felt that he was ready to take up the challenges New York City presents to any artist with ambitions and the hope of realizing them.

During his final semester at UNT, Mayor met Anna Povich, a classical flutist, who subsequently went to the State University of New York at Stonybrook to
complete Master’s and doctoral studies in performance. Their relationship blossomed, with Mayor moving to New York City in 1999, marrying Povich and settling in the Astoria section of Queens, where he began to write for his new project: Folklore Urbano. Their relationship is a supportive partnership that has expanded into a professional, mutually shared musical enterprise.

The concept of Folklore Urbano is structured around a musician’s collective made up of both Colombian and non-Colombian musicians that play Mayor’s arrangements of Colombian-based genres (or *ritmos*), in arrangements that blend jazz inflected idioms and pan-Latino dance music (i.e., salsa). Initially, finding the “right” musicians for the project proved difficult; at one point, Mayor even auditioned as many as six bassists for the band. Accustomed to a high level of musicianship at UNT, Mayor’s project demanded disciplined, imaginative and collaborative musicians willing to work through Mayor’s challenging original compositions, as well as musicians willing to learn a repertoire of Colombian popular classics (i.e., cultural references). Meeting Bogotáanos Martín Vejarano, Sebastián Cruz, and Ihán Betancourt, who had already established La Cumbiamba eNeYé (LCE; see chapter 4) as a Colombian folkloric ensemble in New York City, was thus both timely and fortuitous. Although Mayor had originally intended to work, first, with costeño musicians (whom he had difficulty locating), among these young *Bogotanos* he found a group of highly dedicated students of traditional costeño music that shared his interest in developing new musical ideas from and within a Colombian communal
In its earliest incarnation, Folklore Urbano included not only members of La Cumbiamba eNeYé but also carefully selected New York musicians and his former UNT trio drummer, Chris Michael. When asked how the name Folklore Urbano was arrived at, Mayor explained:

When I was in Colombia, being in Colombia, something happened. You’re ten years outside [and], you’re trying to fit in… Because I started to search and Colombia had something new, for me. It had Cubans. And I was in Cali and [then] I was in Bogotá with Cuban musicians. So, you could see something that I didn’t see when I was in Colombia [previously]—serious virtuoso musicians (interview, May 12, 2005).

Mayor’s experiences during time spent in the US instilled in him a sense of renewed interest in Colombian music and culture. Upon returning to Colombia however, he reacted strongly to the presence of virtuosic Cuban musicians, who were then teaching in several of Bogotá’s university music departments. Inspired by their advanced musicianship and aesthetic sensibilities, a product of a deeply entrenched history of music education and pedagogy supported by the Cuban government, Mayor realized that Colombian music too could be written, arranged, and performed with a similarly high level of artistry and national pride. Further, he recognized the possibility of promoting Colombian musical culture both from within and outside one’s homeland. Recalling his exposure to a variety of Latin musics and musicians while in Texas, Mayor comments:

I had survived in Texas as a pianist who could play salsa; the Puerto

See Arévalo 1998, especially pages 46-47, where I discuss costeño “authenticity” in the context of New York’s vallenato musicians. To reiterate, where one comes from, even within a particular region, impacts how they are viewed as practitioners of a musical genre, or subgenre. It follows that class is related, since it underscores how accurately the music conveys the cultural history and values of its practitioners (47).
Ricans were okay with me; I would play with some Cubans, even some Brazilians being in Texas...[but when] I’m back in Colombia and I have the Cubans telling me ‘you’re not Cuban man, you can play these montunos but, you know, this comes from my land.’ I go to the Marcos Vinicios, you know, the cumbia guys, and [they say] ‘you don’t know anything about the names of all the rhythms,’ but I grew up listening to this music, and I grew up listening to Lucho Bermúdez, but he’s telling me ‘you’re not costeño. You don’t know all the differences between the porro from this area to this area, the cumbia,’ bla,bla,bla...; [then] I go to the bambuqueros, I got to meet really good [musicians]...and the feeling was the same. The same when I went to [the] Petronio Alvarez [Festival], you can play, but that’s it...’you’re not from Choco,’ but I am from el Valle, but I’m not black...I didn’t grow up with this... (Ibid.)

Despite edifying experiences as a “Latin” music student in Texas, accepted for his ability to play salsa as well as Brazilian and other “foreign” (i.e., Colombian) Latin music styles, upon his return to Colombia Mayor found himself being somewhat marginalized by both the Cuban and Colombian musicians he admired, whom questioned less his musical abilities than his capacity to perform local, regional, or national styles authentically. In Colombia, one finds a greater sense of musical proprietorship (ownership), of what is properly (or essentially) “yours” or “mine.”

Neither of these localisms or regionalisms are limited to place but also involve racialized hierarchies which recognize, associate, and privilege different layers of Colombian mestizaje based on (among other factors, such as class) where one is from and what comprises one’s racial makeup (appearances). Mayor, whose appearance is evidently white, and from an upwardly mobile middle-upper class family, is bound to confront some of these tensions if not outright resistance to his participation with musics that are not his own. In short, race and class are prevailing factors that often determine what is, or is not culturally acceptable from outsiders. Undeterred
however, Mayor’s curiosity and appreciation of traditional Colombian music led to the realization that while his interests lay in Colombian music’s folkloric roots, they would be better served elsewhere:

Being a folklorist, I want to play Colombian music. I want to play bambucos because, I guess, my dad used to play these on the radio… So, being in New York and looking for the [project’s] name, the question came [up], ‘what is it that I’m doing? What is it that I like? I like folklore, but I’m a guy from the city.’ That’s why the folklore urbano concept came in…it was, like, the only place where I fit in was the city. (Ibid.)

Motivated to self-identify as a Colombian, with specific musical and cultural goals, Mayor describes himself thus:

I identify with what el campo produces: the countryside. I identify with what el campo del norte produces, what Monteria produces, what Pasto produces, what Cauca produces, I identify like this…[soy] un producto del campo pero en la ciudad / I am product of the countryside but in the city (interview, August 26, 2009).

Literally from the countryside (Palmira) but raised in the city (Bogotá, Cali), Mayor’s biographical trajectory closely mirrors his cultural interests and subject position.

Though aware that he may be regarded as rather “cosmopolitan” in substance, he chooses not to view himself as such, preferring instead a close identification with the campesino/peasant class elements of his background. From the perspective of someone from the south (Bogotá, for example) his commentary, also betrays a selective lower class consciousness rather than either the racial, regional, or class privileges afforded by an upper class (international) education.

Since its inception, Folklore Urbano has performed widely in and around the New York metropolitan region; they have recorded three critically well-received CDs on the Chonta Records label—the local independent record company founded by the
Mayors and Robert Ayala Kelley; and, they have been central to the establishment of the annual music festival that showcases the talents of New York’s growing Colombian musical community: El Encuentro de Musicos Colombianos en Nueva York/The Encounter of Colombian Musicians in New York.

While Folklore Urbano has continued to evolve, its musicians have changed over the years, with both Colombian and non-Colombian musicians from New York’s Latin and jazz scenes arriving and circulating in and out of the orchestra. Certain constants have remained however: the orchestra’s instrumentation is centered around a prototypical Afro-Colombian percussion section of the Atlantic coastal region (including tambor alegre, tambor mayor and tambora); along with this dance oriented rhythmic foundation, brass (euphonium, saxophones, trumpet), woodwinds (flute, clarinet) and a modern rhythm section comprised of piano, electric bass and drum kit are orchestrated in dynamic arrangements of original compositions penned by Mayor or of cover versions deriving from a variety of Colombian and international folk, popular, and jazz sources; and, a pair of vocalists (male and female) alternate lead vocals, often harmonizing with each other while occasionally providing additional percussion (large gourd maracas) and/or indigenous gaita (duct flute). Moreover, instrumentalists often add their voices to coro (sung chorus) sections and are often called upon to play improvised solos within the arrangements.

156 The precedent of using both male and female double front-line vocals in música tropical was established by Lucho Bermúdez, whose popular dance orchestra included singers Bobby Ruiz and Matilde Díaz. Latin Jazz critic Gabe Romero finds Mayor’s connection to the Bermúdez model irrefutable; see Romero 2009, pp.20-46.
Sites of Production

Like most musical projects seeking to develop an audience, Mayor and FU engage in a variety of musical and marketing strategies. While FU’s audience has primarily been young, cosmopolitan Colombians interested in maintaining some connection (cultural or symbolic) with their homeland, they have also garnered attention from a wide sociocultural and generational spectrum, including fans of Latin music, Latin jazz, Pop and World Music. Not unlike Frank “Machito” Grillo or Tito Puente before him, Mayor has pursued several pathways in efforts to develop a cross-cultural audience, making strategic choices not limited solely to Colombians yet driven by a determination to simultaneously develop that particular segment of the public. Through festival production, live performance and recorded media, FU performs often and records regularly. Until its eventual demise, FU released a new recording every two years on their own record label, Chonta (see Discography). Mayor runs educational workshops throughout the NYC region and they are the core performing ensemble in the Encuentro de Musicos Colombianos en Nueva York, the annual music festival the Mayors first presented in 2003.

The Festival of New Colombian Music: El Encuentro

Since its start the Encuentro (or “Encounter,” the translation most often used during the event) has become the Colombian musician community’s regular gathering forum, a site where Mayor’s goals as producer, bandleader and community advocate are most evident. It is in the latter role that Mayor’s talents as pianist, composer,
arranger and bandleader coalesce around his vision of cultural solidarity, bringing local musicians together to advance a collective sense of identity and mutual support—a form of community advocacy actualized through local festival production. In the following section, I will present a brief outline of the Encuentro as it has evolved for nearly a decade, then provide field reports from the VIth and VIIth Encuentros (2009 and 2010, respectively) in order to give an ethnographic sense of the festival’s musicians, the overarching programming architecture, the range and multiplicity of musical styles it (re)presents, and a comparative of the cultural continuity it offers the community and its participants.

**Community Advocacy through Festival Organization and Performance**

Between Pablo Mayor’s arrival in 1999 and the first Encuentro (held in 2003), Folklore Urbano was only one of a handful of Colombian bands trying to establish a place for themselves on the NYC music scene. Working with local, young Colombian musicians—some well-trained, others less so—FU’s early formative period relied heavily on the collaborative efforts of recently arrived or visiting artists. Loosely organized, yet bound together by their shared goal of creating a presence for their music, FU’s trajectory is traceable from band rehearsals to playing small community centers, from unpaid gigs to performing at larger NYC venues and clubs, mirroring the efforts of other then emerging musicians during the late 90s and early 00s.\(^{157}\) In 2003, a visit by Los Gaiteros de San Jacinto proved to be a pivotal moment.

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\(^{157}\) Since the late 1990s, I have recorded numerous hours of video and photography, documenting changes in FU’s artistic, stylistic and thematic direction, as well as the
During the late 1990s and early 2000s, a small group of artists including cosmopolitan Colombians Lucía Pulido, Iván Benavides, Ihán Betancourt, Martín Vejarano, Sebastián Cruz and Pablo Mayor relocated to New York City, settling into its culturally polyglot environment, where musicians of diverse national origins perform “ethnic” music for appreciative audiences—many looking for the next big “new” Latin or World music. Trying to draw attention to and exposure for new Colombian music—beyond the local salsa and vallenato bands that play regularly within the Queens immigrant community, for example—this group of cosmopolitan musicians pursue a different track from their predecessors, whose musical preferences adhered to *música tropical* and *costeño* popular musics of previous generations of Colombian immigrants (see Arévalo 1998). Benefitting from the surging international popularity of Colombian artists, such as traditional *cantadora* Totó la Momposina, rockers Andrea Echeverri and Hector Buitago of Aterciopelados, and perhaps the biggest of them all, Carlos Vives, the popular telenovela artists whose recasting of vallenato helped trigger its widespread crossover success, this latest group of migrating Colombians were different from either their popular or local public’s reception and increasing interest in and appreciation for Colombian music—a central aim of the dissertation is to record both Mayor’s project and the musician community’s evolution and growth. As of this writing, the most recent Encuentro (IXth) took place at Le Poisson Rouge in NYC, on November 10, 2012.

During this visit, Los Gaiteros de San Jacinto also gave a series of workshops. Organized by Martín Vejarano and Alexandra Posada, two days of classes and workshops with Los Gateros were given at the Clemente Soto Velez Cultural Center in the lower east side section of Manhattan.

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predecessors in several respects. Although still intent on playing traditional Colombian music properly, they experimented with myriad musical mixtures, creating hybrids of ethnic, Latin, Jazz or World Music styles that draw from the vast pool of resources available to them in New York City; they were willing to create music in ways that moved beyond strictly grassroots/traditional or mainstream boundaries of genre, style or categorization. That is, in terms of adherence to authentic musical techniques and practices, these musicians strive for proficiency even as accepted norms for playing Colombian popular musics (e.g., música tropical, música costeña and salsa), what I refer to as mainstream praxis, are no longer delimited or defined by the practices of earlier generations. Significantly, these young musicians were also ambitious and organized in ways that were novel to the Latin music scene, as they sought to appeal to a wider (pluricultural) audience and the growing Colombian populace of the metropolitan region. The first wave of these musicians, including La Cumbiamba eNeYé, Lucía Pulido and Pablo Mayor’s Folklore Urbano, all of whom had worked their way through local music networks, performing whenever and wherever they could, reached instead toward whatever sounds, aesthetics, or cultural references and inspirational musicians appealed to their cosmopolitan sensibilities.

Ana María Ochoa Gautier finds that for some of the Colombian musicians in New York the use of their musical heritage was driven “less [by] an urgency to
celebrate roots and more [by] a desire to creatively use its stylistic heritage.”

While this is an important point (for some), I suggest that at the heart of this movement there is a self-conscious tension between the identity politics that these musicians struggle with and the expressive cultural potentialities that they explore through music. Thus, the burgeoning musical movement entered the Twenty-first century with an entirely new set of aesthetic impulses, detached, as Ochoa puts it, from “a place of origin that was neither lost nor a place whose social wounds must be sutured through music.”

Notwithstanding Ochoa Gautier’s sociological, postmodern reading, the need to create a rallying point around which these musicians could work together, learn from each other, and support each other, if they were to achieve individual and collective goals soon surfaced. Mayor, recognizing the importance of organizing the movement did so, perhaps unwittingly. A Folklore Urbano concert scheduled for late September 2003 at the Taller Latinoamericano, a cultural center located in Manhattan’s upper west side was billed as the “First Encuentro.” This event provided an opportunity for Mayor to emphasize that Los Gaiteros de San Jacinto, who were in NYC recording at the time (see chapter four), were going to make an appearance as FU’s special “guests of honor.” The entire community was invited to participate, and the well-attended event brought together for the first time in one venue many of the community’s disparate group of musicians,

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160 “…un lugar de origen que se perdió ni un lugar cuyas heridas sociales hay que suturar a través de música” (Ibid.).
fans and friends. Up to that point, these musicians had primarily performed throughout the city and region in a series of individual performances at a variety of small clubs and venues. Converging on Manhattan that evening, they gathered to play music and demonstrate their high esteem for Los Gaiteros, turning the concert into a festive, collective celebration of Colombian music and musicians.

Over the next several years, this same group of artists has continued to participate in what has become the first festival of new Colombian music and musicians in the New York City diaspora. With each successive year, as new artists and musical projects join in, the festival producers have tried to accommodate as many newcomers and newly established artists as possible. The number of loyal fans and followers regularly attending the Encuentro has also risen, growing from a small group of a few dozen to approximately a hundred people in 2003, to several hundred at the most recent 2010 festival. In its earliest days, audiences were comprised of primarily recent arrivals of young professionals and students, friends of the musicians, or musicians themselves. While the audience seemed rather homogeneous at first, as the Encuentro grew, more and more Colombians from different socio-economic groups began to attend, many returning year after year. Between 2005 and 2008, the event has had to relocate several times, moving from venue to venue, as the festival outgrew smaller performance spaces. The Mayors have had to look elsewhere for appropriate venues capable of accommodating both expanded programming and audience attendance. Demanding larger space (with a dance floor) and larger blocks of time, the Encuentro has required increased production planning,
logistics and funding. Despite its relatively small production budget, the festival has needed outside sources of financial support as well as in-kind services (advertising media, etc.). By the time the short-lived, midtown club Satalla (an Israeli owned venue that conspicuously advertised itself as “The Temple of World Music”) hosted the event, in 2005 and 2006, the Encuentro had grown into a marathon length showcase that ran over six hours, with more than fifty participating musicians, and an over-the-legal-limit audience capacity of two-hundred and fifty. And, since most of the performers receive little or no remuneration for their participation, the festival primarily relies on the contributions musicians themselves make, along with ticket sales.

Proceeding from relatively modest origins, more recently, producers Pablo and Anna Mayor have tried to secure larger sponsorships for the festival, appealing to the Colombian Consulate’s New York office, Avianca (the Colombian national airline) and other corporate and private organizations. While such efforts have not been entirely successful, the Encuentro has nevertheless been able to consistently present larger and more diverse programming. In what was initially a grassroots amateur movement, professional name artists have appeared alongside aspiring semi-professionals and others in recent years, representing a multiplicity of Colombian regional genres and styles to varying degrees of authenticity or hybridity—another undoubtedly relevant vector has to do with socioeconomic differences among performers and audiences. Nonetheless, open to experimentation, admixtures of traditional and non-Colombian elements are well in evidence throughout the event;
that is, one possible explanation for the wide stylistic range of the Encuentro is its participants’ socioeconomic heterogeneity and the multiplicity of Colombian musical tastes in the diaporic context. Musical tastes vary among all groups and within them. Of course socioeconomic factors such as race and class are significant but what is particularly striking among this community is the apparent effort and desire to transcend such factors in the name of cultural expression vis a vis art and identity.

Nonetheless, despite the logistic and financial challenges the event poses, under Pablo Mayor’s direction the Encuentro has continued to evolve into a highly professional production that has gained substantial critical attention and media exposure while regularly drawing ever larger audiences. Let us now turn to the most recent Encuentros (2009 and 2010), for a closer look into the festival itself and the cultural work it does within the global city.¹⁶¹

VIth Encuentro de Musicos Colombianos en Nueva York (2009)

The VIth Encuentro de Musicos Colombianos en Nueva York coincidentally fell on the same day as the annual Puerto Rican Day Parade (June 14th), underscoring the constantly changing demographics and cultural politics of New York City and its Latin populace. Held on a beautiful, sunny Sunday (following several days of rain and unusually cool weather), The Highline Ballroom on West 16th Street served as the venue for the marathon music event. With more than twenty acts scheduled to

¹⁶¹ The following “reports” on Encuentros 2009 and 2010 were prepared soon after each event, written usually within a twenty-four hour period of its conclusion. Based on field notes and observations, I present two sections here intact; that is, with virtually no editorial alteration. The purpose is to present, as accurately as possible, my perceptions and reactions to events as they occurred “in the field, as it were.”
perform—more than one-hundred musicians participated—co-founders Pablo and Anna Mayor produced the largest festival of Colombian musicians, outside of Colombia, drawn together in celebration of Colombian music and culture. Billed as “an all-day-and-night festival of Colombian music,” the Encuentro engages New York-based Colombian musicians in a communal expression of cultural pride and solidarity; it is a site where the new community of artists has an opportunity to present themselves before both Colombian audiences and the general public. What follows here, then, is a descriptive synopsis of the ten-hour event (running from 2 PM to 12 midnight), an overview of the diverse and dynamic quality of Colombian expressive culture as it manifests in NYC, in the present moment, followed by commentary on the event’s significance as a site of cultural production for its founder and the audience it represents.

Upon arriving at 2:30 pm (events rarely begin at the appointed scheduled time indicated), nearly twenty people were already standing on line, waiting to get in. The doorman announced that the doors would soon open, and when they did, I quickly ensconced myself in a strategic spot in the dimly lit room, at a table seating area near and slightly to the right of the stage, where I could observe the performers and staging activity around the entrance to the artists “green room.” Directly ahead, one table

162 For the first time, since its inception, the VIth Encuentro received outside funding from organizations such as Juan Valdez, W Radio International, The Colombian General Consulate (New York office), CitriCo Inc. and Chonta Records, enabling the producers to stage the event with new media elements and features. For example, throughout the day/night, artist video clips were shown on a large rear screen between sets; the 2009 event’s documentation included a four-camera shoot.
away, was the sound engineer, whose monitor was aimed directly at me, ensuring that
I would hear the onstage mix clearly.

After making a few welcoming remarks, Pablo Mayor introduced the hosts
and announcers for the night: Ricardo Leon Peña-Villa, a Colombian journalist and
poet (el poeta/the poet), and Anna Povich de Mayor, his wife, flutist in Folklore
Urbano, and co-producer of the Encuentro. Essentially, the hosts introduced each
performer or group, providing biographical background and commenting on their
musical influences or sources. Reading from a prepared and scripted text, Peña-Villa
reiterated in Spanish what Anna Mayor said in English, allowing the multilingual
audience to better understand the proceedings. For the most part, the audience was
made up of Colombians, but a large number of non-Colombians were present as well.
The cross-generational audience ranged in age, with families, including a few infants
and adolescents. The majority of adults seemed to be in their mid-twenties to forties,
but many were older, in their fifties, sixties, and seventies.

After el poeta commented on the importance of the event and its music as one
that “salutes us,” he added that the Encuentro would be “una fiesta inolvidable/an
unforgettable fiesta.” Nilko Andreas Guarin, the classical guitarist and regular singer
with La Cumbiamba Eneyé was to open the first segment of the program, which
appeared to focus on Colombia’s Andean folkloric and art music. However, since

163 Andean music generally refers to the music of indigenous and mestizo (Spanish
and Amerindian) people that populate the Andean mountain highlands, extending
from Colombia’s three cordilleras south through Ecuador, Peru, Argentina and Chile.
For an overview of Colombia’s Andean musical traditions, see “II. Traditional Music,
he was in Paris to perform, he was unable to attend but instead sent a video (wherein he sat with guitar, in a tropical setting) in which he expressed his desire to be at the Encuentro, and wishing everyone in attendance a good time. Instead, the Gallo-Flórez Duo, with pianist Ricardo Gallo and guitarist Alejandro Flórez, opened with a two-song set intended to evoke the “string music” of the Colombian Andes. The delicate duets of piano and 12-string guitar reminded one of the typical Andean estudiantinas, or ensembles of tiple, bandola and requinto, heard from Medellin to Popayan, where Spanish and indigenous influences merge and are evident within the music’s harmonic and melodic sonorities. Each musicians’ classical and jazz training was apparent, as sections within each of the pieces demonstrated highly arranged, contrapuntal composition that alternated with open improvisations marked by tremolos, trills, drones, pedal-points, unison lines, and harmonic dissonance. In a second, more uptempo piece, a type of bambuco with its traditional harmonic and rhythmic (sesquialtera) structure featured free improvised sections marked by pointillistic flourishes and variations in dynamics that served to create an impressionistic aesthetic. Both Gallo and Flórez would figure in several of the later group performances as well, indicating their rising position within the community of musicians and their contribution to it through their immersion in and understanding of Colombian Andean music genres (e.g. torbellino, passillo, gavota, guambina, bambuco).

In spite of technical difficulties throughout the early part of the program, the second artist, Johanna Castañeda, was soon introduced. Along with her brother, harpist Edmar Castañeda, the young vocalist specializes in música llanera from the eastern provinces of Colombia that run along and into Venezuela, and south to the edges of the Amazon forest. Accompanying herself on cuatro (the small, four-stringed instrument indigenous to the region), she was joined by a multi-percussionist, featured on cajon, along with bass, piano, and trumpet; a rather unconventional instrumentation, more typical of Cuban sextetos or septetos.

Performing three original songs, “La pena tan amarga,” “Lucía” and “La Orilla,” there was a distinctly Cuban flavor to Castañeda’s performance, displaying a personal interest in and recognition of the work of Cuban musicians in New York (especially Arsenio Rodriguez) and the profligate use of Caribbean drums such as the cajon. Although the last song added Afro-Colombian drummers Ronald Polo and Morris Cañate playing tambora and alegre respectively, the ensemble’s hybridity results from the mixture of Castañeda’s llanera vocal style and rhythmic cuatro strumming with Cuban-stylized drumming accompaniment and solo trumpet/flugelhorn ornamentations provided by her musicians.

Following Johanna Castañeda’s performance, while a video of Johanna Castañeda was shown on a large screen behind the stage, Anna Mayor gave the audience a brief overview of Colombia’s topography and geography, to help explain the nation’ musical multiplicity and regional diversity. The videos were intended to provide a brief introduction to each artist, wherein they introduce themselves, give a
brief personal statement of their musical influences, and express why the Encuentro is important to them and their fellow Colombian musicians. Unfortunately, it was often difficult to hear the audio portion of the clips, but one could make out, for example, that among Johanna Castañeda’s influences, in addition to música llanera, Cuban music and flamenco were formative.

Next on the program was Hector Martignon, the veteran Latin jazz musician who has played with Ray Barretto among many of the genre’s luminaries, appearing with his trio of non-Colombian professional Latin musicians, Alex Hernandez on bass and Mauricio Herrera on drums. His set opened with a Cuban guajira styled (four-chord) Latin jazz vamp and conga drumming. The second tune however, “Abre los ojos mi hermano”/“Open your eyes my brother” was introduced by Martignon as a cumbia. Evidently, what made the song a cumbia despite its wide stylistic references was an underlying repeated two-chord harmonic pattern cycling over common time meter with a strong duple feel. Moreover, the pianist’s melodic lines in thirds maintained cumbia’s relatively straightforward harmonic phrasing and rhythmic figurations. Closing with another original composition entitled “Andrea,” in a ritmo Andino (Andean rhythm), Martignon’s trio played in a prototypical 6/8 meter while accentuating the songs jazz-waltz texture.

Guitarist Daniel Reyes then followed with his Parias Ensemble to close the first portion of the days program. Reyes’ project is a contemporary music chamber ensemble comprised of two classical guitars, accordion, electric cello, drums and hand percussion, and clarinet. The ensemble sets up with the drummer in the center,
flanked by the accordionist and electric cellist, with the guitarists seated at opposite ends, which serves to anchor Reyes’ compositions; the clarinetist stands behind the semicircle of musicians. The first song of their three-song set opened with overlain melodic and rhythmic patterns in 6/8 meter, played over an open two-chord harmonic pattern. Guitar ostinatos fluctuated in and between cello and accordion sections, in a style that evoked Andean music with a minimalist aesthetic. The second tune was somewhat reminiscent of an Argentinian tango blended with bambuco, while the final piece was clearly a cumbia, featuring clarinet and repeating percussion breaks played by Daniel Correa.

The second part of the program shifted to Afro-Colombian musics from the coastal Caribbean and Pacific regions, highlighting marked regional contrasts between highland and plains (llanos) folk and urban music hybrids and Afro-Colombian and –Pacific costeño music and dance genres. While folk dancing is certainly an important element of traditional Colombian “roots” music genres, dancing is inextricably linked to costeño music and its raced and culturally significant African antecedents (Simon 1994, Wade 1993). Up to this point, the audience had listened attentively and politely to the performers while remaining in their seats. However, the next set by Diego Obregón y Grupo Chonta, a large group consisting of marimba de chonta, bombos (arrullador and golpeador), cununo, piano, guitar, coro (a chorus made up of three women singers playing guasas, a small shaker of African origin), and a horn section with saxophones, trumpet and clarinet, almost immediately, as if on cue, two older Afro-Colombian women approached the foot of
stage and began to dance. Obregón’s group played two original currulaos and a juga, two of the Pacific coastal region’s most prevalent genres in which the marimbero and coro closely interact. Obregón, along with Ronald Polo and Morris Cañate (both members of Chonta and several other groups), are central to the musicians’ community since they are Afro-Colombians with direct linkages to the heritage of these musical traditions. Having started their own projects, including Rebolú, they were joined by Sergio Borrero playing arrullador, an amateur musician who has also been closely involved with Pablo Mayor’s Folklore Urbano since its formation and a key participant to the scene’s unfolding.

Continuing the coastal region’s festive performance aspects was Rebolú, also a joint project of Polo and Cañate which seeks to fuse popular and traditional Afro-Caribbean musics such as bullerengues and champeta. Rebolú is a multicultural ensemble featuring Polo and Cañate on costeño percussion (tambora and alegre), soprano saxophonist Sam Sadigursky, Argentinian vocalist Sofia Tosello, guitarist Alejandro Flórez, and drummer Chris Michaels, playing popular dance music that quickly filled up the dance floor. In the final song of their three-song set, a fast tempo tambora (“Mañana me voy de aquí”/“Tomorrow I leave here”), Polo began to play a gaita hembra (the costeño female flute), spurring the band to play faster, as the

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164 Both Polo and Cañate are from the Caribbean port city of Baranquilla, where they have been friends since childhood. Cañate is reportedly a descendant of Batata, the highly influential Afro-Colombian drummer and bandleader from Palenque, the African community founded by descendants of runaway slaves, designated a UNESCO heritage site in 2010. Polo arrived in New York in 1999, and was later joined by Cañate in 2001.
audience responded along with the chorus, singing “Ay Hombre” excitedly, as they tried to keep dancing to a rapidly accelerating tempo. By 6 PM, less than four hours into the Encuentro, a festive quality had already overtaken the ballroom.

Following Rebolú, was Tibaguí, a group organized by the Bogotá-born guitarist Alejandro Flórez which again shifted the program back toward jazz and modern experimental hybrids. Also active on the Colombian jazz scene, the University of Texas trained musician relocated to New York City in 2005, where his focus on Andean rhythms was evident in ensemble pieces composed for guitar, tenor sax/clarinet, acoustic bass and drums. Tibaguí refers to an imaginary Colombian pueblo (village) and it specializes in impressionistic, modern jazz musical sketches that seem to emphasize technical and intellectual precision. Among the group of well-trained musicians, tenor saxophonist Sam Sadigursky is often given the soloist spotlight. In the intro section of the first piece, “Algo mas melo,” long unison melodic lines by the ensemble alternate with solo guitar sections, followed by a statement of a slow jazz melody, while odd and even meters fluctuate throughout. The second song, “El Gran Guayajo de los Hogares,” is set as a bolero, a slow romantic work that opens with a solo clarinet melody before the group enters with an uncharacteristic 3/4 meter. Contrasting bridge sections, however, are faster and decidedly more jazz oriented in tone; divergent sections and odd-metered melodies within a composition are distinguishing features of Tibaguí’s performance style, as are Flórez’s percussive guitar solos. By this point, the dancers gradually drifted off the dance floor, returning to their seats—a clear cut dichotomy of costeño and non-

Next was Fidel Cuellar, a young pianist, teacher, and recent arrival to New York’s Colombian musicians scene (2007). A recent graduate of City College of New York (2009), he was accompanied by Carlos del Pino on bass and drummer Luis Ebert. Cuellar’s Latin jazz trio performed three original compositions, opening with “Soundtrack for a Rainy Day,” a jazz tone poem. The group played a melancholic opening theme, as the piece slowly and gracefully unfolded; each of the musicians took solos while the ensemble built towards a crescendo moment, before returning to softer textures similar to the introductory section. Followed by “Tribu,” (tribe) Cuellar’s trio demonstrated a fairly standard jazz approach to the 7/4 odd meter, with pentatonic melodic lines and pensive soloing. Cuellar’s piano, for some reason, called to my mind the technique and genteel approach of pianists Ahmad Jamal, Randy Weston, and Bill Evans. The set closed with a composition entitled “Alabao,” based on a melody attributed to the Choco region, which Cuellar credited to fellow musician Camilo Rodriguez (from LCE) for bringing it to his attention. Cuellar chose to begin the piece with a recording of a traditional alabao\(^{165}\), with the piano gradually entering, while the rhythm section built as the recording faded away. Cuellar tends to arrange his music in ways that optimize the use of musical dynamics for affect and subtlety. His familiarity with folkloric music is evident, as in his reinterpretation of currulao marimba phrasings, which, nevertheless, are less subtle.

\(^{165}\) Alabaos, or alabados, refer to Catholic praise hymns, which were indigenized then syncretized by the people of the Choco.
As the evening’s host Peña-Villa noted, Cuellar’s music was full of *sentimiento* (feeling), further demonstrating how traditional music can inspire new generations of musicians.

Among the handful of Colombian women singers on the New York scene, Marta Gómez has established a high-profile World Music career. Introduced by a short video highlighting recent accomplishments (receiving a platinum album for record sales in Israel, for example), she appeared with her guitar and ensemble of guitar, bass, and drums. Performing four songs, Gómez’s simple yet beautiful voice exudes a warmth that gives her personal stories and poetic imagery a deeply affective and alliterative quality. With songs such as “Un Rio,” with lyrics that speak of “when the river sings”, “Almita Mia,” “La Melancholia,” where she profoundly identifies with a willow tree, and her signature song “Confesion,” she seems to have a powerful effect on the audience, silencing them into rapt listening. Concluding her set, Gómez, in all sincerity, pronounced the following: “*Esto es lo que hacemos por la paz. Al menos no hace mucho, pero es lo que tenemos*” /“This is what we do for peace. Maybe it does not do much, but it’s what we have,” for which she received a standing ovation.

Having reached the midpoint of the Encuentro, Pablo Mayor came onstage to make a brief presentation. In his comments, Mayor stated that among his goals for the event he simply wants to present a new generation of Colombian artists and musicians to interested listeners, exposing them to new audiences and each other. Indicating that the event has created a nurturing space for the community of
musicians, to be listened to by fans, he expressed gratitude for the encouragement and support he has received from everyone involved in the effort to “spread Colombian music to the world.” While Folklore Urbano was setting up, Mayor also thanked the event sponsors and audience for attending then joined his band members at the piano.

Mayor’s twelve-piece Folklore Urbano began their set of Colombian big band jazz with a new composition entitled “Tierra” (“Earth”), especially written for the Encuentro, featuring an arrangement based on currulao. As the dancers immediately rushed to the floor, responding favorably to the band’s mixture of Afro-Colombian rhythms, punctuating brass lines, and salsa-influenced montuno patterns, Folklore Urbano’s capacity to pace their audience was evident. In a puya (a rapid tempo costeño rhythm) that followed, Nestor “Nestico” Gómez Jr. played its opening theme on a flauta de millo, a small indigenous cane flute that blended perfectly with the orchestra’s tight brass and woodwind sections, while the percussion section of Ronald Polo, Morris Cañate, Nestico and Franco Pinna provided Folklore Urbano’s propelling rhythmic force. What distinguishes Mayor’s arrangements, again, is that they are structured upon a foundation of Colombian rhythms and percussion instrumentation (alegre, tambora, maracas, caja vallenata, guacharaca, guiro), which benefits from the virtuosic technique and dynamic power of his costeño drummers: Ronald Polo, Moris Cañate and Nestico Gomez. Closing their set with “Fandango,” another up-tempo dance piece, with lyrics written by event host Peña-Villa, and sung by Argentinian Sofia Rei Koutsovitis and Ronald Polo, dancers quickly thronged onto the dance floor and when the band concluded its set they let
out a collective groan. Pablo Mayor quickly reassured them that the dancing would continue with the following act: La Cumbiamba Eneyé.

Opening with a traditional *gaita*, “El Armadillo mohan,” *gaiteros* Martín Vejerano and Juan “Juancho” Ospina played the distinctive *macho* (male) and *hembra* (female) cactus flutes accompanied by large gourd maraca. With their breathy sonority and regular duple meter pulse, the contrapuntal variations and melodic hocketing of the *gaitas* soon captivated the audience, as they stood near the front of the stage. La Cumbiamba Eneyé presents indigenous musical genres with utmost attention to authentic (“roots”) performance practice, which they complement by screening an animated film produced especially for the Encuentro (see Figure 3.1).

![Figure 3.1](image.png)

**Figure 3.1.** Photo still from LCE animated video. Used with permission.

Switching to drumset, Vejarano and ensemble promptly jumped into an original *cumbia* penned by guitarist Sebastián Cruz entitled “Mundo grande, mundo
raro” (“Large world, strange world”), which was immediately followed by
Vejarano’s original *fandango*, “La Melcocha.” The large ensemble closed their set
with “Carambantua,” based on a traditional Afro-Colombian *canto* (field chant)
arranged as a *champeta*; the title itself is a clever conflation of *caramba* (wow!) and
*bantua*, a reference to the Congolese Bantu region of Central Africa. The song
betrays a pan-Caribbean profile informed by soca, calypso and soukous (the
Congolese popular genre), that is typically heard as dance music in Cartagena,
Barranquilla, and throughout the entire Atlantic coastal region.

Experimental vocalist and interpreter of Colombian popular song and
traditional folk music, Lucía Pulido appeared with her long time music director and
guitarist Sebastián Cruz and Japanese electric bassist Stomu Takeishi, a long time
collaborator (and brother of drummer Satoshi Takeishi, both of whom have been
deeply immersed in the study of Colombian musical culture). A veteran of the
Colombian musician scene in New York, Pulido has performed at every Encuentro
since its inception and is a favorite among audiences.

Starting with a duet between Pulido and Takeishi, based on a theme from the
Afro-Pacific coast, the spare arrangement incorporated a simple rhythmic pattern
played with brushes on her thighs while singing over bass and improvised electronic
effects. For the second song, Pulido drew from the *cantaoras de bullerengue*
(bullerengue singers) Afro-Caribbean tradition of the Atlantic coast of Colombia,
performing the classic “Porque me pegas?” (“Why do you hit me?”), a song which
illustrates the close vocal and guitar interplay that occurs between herself and Cruz.
Typically accompanied by an ensemble of traditional tamboleros (drummers), Pulido’s bullerengue was instead performed rhythmically “free,” with an underlying, unmetered pulse which served her vocal exploration of the song’s traditional melody. The next piece was then introduced as a currulao, which was a challenge to identify as such, except perhaps for a loosely floating 6/8 meter, around which Cruz and Takeishi circled in and around Pulido’s expressive vocals. The final song of her set was “Maria que iba en el mar” (“Maria who went in the Sea”), which, with its simple yet haunting melody, Pulido performed with her signature heightened emotion and luminous voice, leaving the audience stunned in silence before erupting appreciatively with applause.

Remaining onstage, Cruz and Takeishi were joined by drummer Richie Vardett to perform with Cruz’ latest project: The Cheap Landscape Trio. Forming a sort of “power rock” trio without vocals (guitar, bass, drums), Cruz takes on a somewhat irreverent, tongue-in-cheek approach to writing for this band—in contrast with his previous project (i.e., Coba), for which he composed rather earnest and poetic texts set to somber postmodernist “art” songs. Alternatively, The Cheap Landscape Trio seems to take themselves much less serious than Coba, as Cruz attempts to write short, punkish songs inspired by the city’s urban detritus. Introducing the first song as an “homage to the short attention span” (Cruz, onstage comments), the piece was a clever, playful montage, a mashup of musical ideas with no apparent through-composed rationale or clear compositional design. Instead, 

166 See Ochoa Gautier 2008, for a concise discussion of The Cheap Landscape Trio as example of música reciclada/recycled music.
juxtaposed with background visuals (slides of New York City images; e.g. graffiti, architectural sites, etc.), the music was pithy, quirky and humorous, going in different stylistic and genre-hopping directions from moment to moment, section to section (i.e. from Metal to Jazz and back). For the second song, the trio performed another Cruz original, “Paradis Quarter,” introduced as a champeta (the highly popular pop/dance genre associated with the city of Cartagena), which, according to Cruz, is otherwise reggaeton in Colombia (Ibid.).

Peña-Villa then introduced the next artist, tiplero Andrés García, announcing that the first-time participant at the Encuentro is a virtuoso of the tiple, as well as guitar and bass. Winner of several important Colombian Andean music festival competitions for his masterful technique and musicality, García’s trio (bass, piano, drums) featured his amplified effects driven tiple (a small 12-stringed guitar), whose thin, high ringing timbre (a result of the instrument’s four-coursed set of three strings) is typically played with a highly percussive and syncopated chordal technique. García instead plays in a uniquely soloistic fashion, with single note runs and alternate harmonic voicings, thus expanding the instrument’s role from its traditional Andean rhythmic-chordal accompaniment function. However, owing to technical difficulties with his amplifier, García’s tiple was inaudible for most of the set,

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167 Cruz’s comment suggests that champeta, the popular Afro-Colombian, lower-class dance/party music, is synonymous with reggaeton, the Afro-Panamanian/Puerto Rican genre that gained international notoriety in the 1990s (cf. Rivera et al. 2009). While perhaps not an accurate cultural or stylistic equivalent, the comment can be understood as a byproduct of Cruz’ subject position as a middle-class Bogotáno and his parallel identification of Afro-Caribbean-based popular musics.
rendering his considerable musical skills and performance less than what the audience was led to expect from a fusion of Colombia’s national instrument and Latin jazz.

Since Daniel Correa arrived on New York City’s Colombian musicians scene, he has performed with numerous projects at Encuentros since 2004. A drummer with the jazz fusion band Samurindo, led by saxophonist Juan Pablo Uribe, Correa is a familiar and reliable percussionist and member of the community. As leader of The Crazy Rhythm Orchestra/Los Locos del Ritmo, Correa’s ensemble included cuatro, accordion, clarinets, acoustic bass, and guitar. The band plays original songs as well as cover versions of North American folk and rock classics (e.g. the Doors’ “Light my Fire”). The quintet’s concept involves an internationalist “gypsy” identity, a mixture of subcultural musical and lyrical styles from Bogotá’s bohemian circles, Cajun zydeco, boozy Americana (e.g. Dylan and Waits), blues, tango, fado, etc. During the second song of their set, a goodtime vals (waltz), I was reminded of Michael Doucet’s Beausoleil or Jim Kweskin’s Jug Band, but with a Spanglish and/or broken English lyric style.

While the next performers began to set up, Peña-Villa called attention to the presence of Edy Martinez, the Colombian Latin jazz pianist and long-time New York resident, who has worked with major artists such as Tito Puente, Ray Barretto, Mongo Santamaría, as well as his own Orquesta Privilegio. Martinez’ presence at the Encuentro is significant not only for is it his first appearance, in a sense it qualifies the growing importance of the annual event. Martinez walked to the front of the stage area and, taking a bow before the audience, seemed genuinely pleased to be there.
The largest orchestra on the program that evening was the Gregorio Uribe Big Band (Fig. 3.2). Founded in Boston, the sixteen-piece group featured Uribe on *vallenato* accordion, along with a horn section comprised of three trombones, three trumpets, four saxophones/woodwinds, three percussionists (including *tambora*, *alegre*, and a female kit drummer), electric bass and guitar.

![Gregorio Uribe playing vallenato accordion at the VIth Encuentro (2009). Photo used with permission, courtesy of Pablo Mayor.](image)

**Figure 3.2.** Gregorio Uribe playing *vallenato* accordion at the VIth Encuentro (2009). Photo used with permission, courtesy of Pablo Mayor.

Opening with a cumbia, the group’s sound was reminiscent of the Lucho Bermúdez Orchestra, whose popularization of *porro* and *gaita* in the mid-1950s is proving very influential to new generations of young Colombian bandleaders, composers, and arrangers. Although Uribe’s big band repertoire is essentially Colombian in its use of musical sources, its musicians are a multinational collective playing arrangements that include global funk, pop, and jazz stylistic elements. In the second song, a piece entitled “El Amarrao,” the rhythm section plays an Afro-Caribbean and *soukous* influenced guitar chord progression, while the horns stab at
Uribe’s vocals, and solos are taken, then shared among trumpeters. A dance party big band that draws as much from pan-Caribbean as from Pop Tropical trends, under Uribe’s direction, arrangements recall James Brown’s JBs (with Maceo Parker’s sax and Fred Wesley’s trombone soloing) set to neo-traditional Afro-Colombian rhythms. In their final song, Uribe’s orchestra closed with a slow tempo piece, which he dedicated to Colombia.168

Next came a surprise performance, when Edy Martinez, the “godfather” of Colombian Latin jazz, was invited to join the young percussionist Samuel Torres and his trio onstage for an intergenerational jam session. The evening’s final sets that followed featured Torres, a professional congro and percussionist with renowned world music artist Lila Downs, and Andrea Tierra, the Medellin-born jazz vocalist and poet, who earlier had performed with Edmar Castañeda. Castañeda is a successful young jazz harpist that expands the música llanera tradition of joropo (the courtship dance music of the eastern plains of Colombia, that shares borders with Venezuela), exhibiting dynamic interpretive skills, virtuosic soloing, and intense technical flair on an instrument not usually associated either with jazz or Latin jazz.

There is something that unifies us on a personal level, and the experience we share together. –Yousef Hbeisch, Palestinian musician with the Oriental Music Ensemble169

168 Among the most popular, big bands such as Gregorio Uribe’s exemplify how costeño styles are being perpetuated from within local scenes, then transnationally. Specializing in playing porros and cumbias with modern orchestrated arrangements, numerous bands have emerged, such as Roberto López’ Big Band in Montreal, Gregorio Uribe’s in Boston, and Pablo Mayor’s in New York City; in 2008, Uribe relocated to NYC, joining the Colombian NMC scene.

Motivated by the Encuentro’s unifying goals—despite differences of class, race, gender and immigrant status—through the focused efforts of founder Pablo Mayor, the annual event has grown from a small gathering of young musicians playing for a small audience on the upper West side of Manhattan’s Taller Latinoamericano to a ten-hour marathon event, with an growing fan base, a large venue setting, and even corporate and media support. The event’s success, however, neither clouds nor diminishes the reality of what drives these musicians to play music together: commonly shared personal experiences as a certain sector of Colombians seeking to be heard and understood as both a collective of individuals and as a community. Not unlike the Oriental Music Ensemble, whom meets for the purpose of demonstrating a political solidarity and musical presence through performance, the community of cosmopolitan musicians share an undeniable social background that, nonetheless, identifies with and adheres to Colombian musical regionalisms and the fervent allegiances they demand. Significantly, there are differences that lay within individual artistic commitments that are based less on local or regional pride than on personal aesthetics and cultural resonance; another on the mutual respect and acceptance of each other’s musical choices; and, yet another, the musical entrainment and sharing, thereof, that each musician brings to the communal, collective goal.

In examining the regional genres and affiliations, as well as the stylistic affinities, of each of the Encuentro’s participants, it is noteworthy that several of the musicians effortlessly traverse their own distinct musical preferences, demonstrating ample cosmopolitan eclecticism. Daniel Correa, for example, a percussionists with
the Parias Ensemble is also the drummer for the fusion jazz group Samurindo and leader of Los Locos del Ritmo/The Crazy Rhythm Orchestra, an ensemble within which he plays the Andean cuatros in an idiosyncratic “gypsy” band. Sebastián Cruz is not only active as Lucía Pulido’s musical director, creating arrangements which bear out her experimental, genre- and gender-bending and stretching vocals, he also plays on gaita and tambora as well as guitar with La Cumbiamba Eneyé, Samurindo, and his own Cheap Landscape Trio. On the other hand, Diego Obregón, the marimba de chonta specialist can be heard playing with his own Grupo Chonta and as a guest artist on recordings and performances with Folklore Urbano. Lucía Pulido, a specialist in a more experimental vein will often sing at La Cumbiamba Eneyé performances, whether in the more traditional setting or “downtown,” avant-garde scene in which both are immersed (e.g., guitarist Marc Ribot, Dan Zanes, etc.). In addition, the community largely embraces pan-Latin, Caribbean, and global sources and diverse musical collaborators, as evinced by the participation of Argentinian vocalists Sofia Tosello and Sofia Rei Koutsovitis, Israeli euphonium player Rafi Malkiel and Japanese bassists Stomu Takeishi, among others. Table # below gives an overview of some of the musical styles associated with each of the VIth Encuentro participants, indicating each project’s mixture of musical genres—“fusions”—and their regional references and/or aesthetic orientations. Here, I use quotations around the term “fusion” to designate individual projects that generally do not strive to achieve either “folkloric” or “authentic” performance verisimilitude. Instead, “fusion,” in the context of urban Colombian musical expression, refers to the
intentional application of experimental, avant-garde, or postmodern musical and conceptual practices along with subcultural, neotraditional, and so-called “roots” musical resources. My use of parentheses below also delineates “fusion” as a process and byproduct of musical hybridity, experimentation, and innovation (Table 3.1):

Gallo-Flórez Duo: Andean music, Art music, Jazz (“fusion”)
Johanna Castañeda: *música llanera*, Folk music, Afro-Cuban
Hector Martignon: Latin jazz, Afro-Cuban music, *música costeña*
Daniel Reyes and the Parias Ensemble: Art music (chamber music, modern minimalism), Andean and South American folk music
Diego Obregón y Grupo Chonta: *música costeña*, Atlantic and Pacific coastal folk and popular musics, *música bailable*
Rebolú: *música costeña*, pan-Afro-Caribbean popular and dance music, *música bailable*
Tibaguí: Andean music, Art music (modernist), Jazz (“fusion”)
Fidel Cuellar: Latin jazz, Jazz, Folk music
Marta Gomez: folk/pop singer-songwriter
Pablo Mayor and Folklore Urbano: big band Latin jazz, Atlantic and Pacific coastal folk and popular musics, *música bailable*
La Cumbiamba Eneyé: Atlantic and Pacific coastal folk, traditional, and popular music, pan-Afro-Caribbean music, *música bailable*
Lucía Pulido: traditional and popular folk music, Experimental (“fusion”)
Sebastián Cruz and The Cheap Landscape Trio: Jazz, Rock, Experimental, traditional and popular music (“fusion”)
Andrés García: Andean music, Latin jazz (“fusion”)
Daniel Correa and The Crazy Rhythm Orchestra: North and South American popular and folk musics (fusion)
Gregorio Uribe Big Band: big band *música costeña*, *música bailable*, North and South American popular and folk musics (“fusion”)
Samuel Torres: Latin jazz
Andrea Tierra: Folk, Jazz, and Popular music
Edmar Castañeda: *música llanera*, Latin jazz

**Table 3.1.** Colombian musicians and musical genres represented at the VIth Encuentro.

Although regional designations (or musical preferences) such as Andean music (*música Andina*), *música costeña* (Atlantic and Pacific) and *música llanera* are evident for most of the Encuentro participants, the strongest stylistic musical

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tendencies are clearly toward the performance of “fusion” or “Latin jazz” hybrids. Colombian popular music genres and styles, including música bailable (music for dancing), are also generally present but with less emphasis on either traditional or folk (i.e. “roots”) musics. Not surprisingly, most of the musicians eschew “pop” styles per se, unless used either experimentally or as postmodern cultural references. In light of the highly mobile, global consciousness of these musicians however, tensions between wanting to be rooted in any particular location or place (e.g., regional, urban, rural, etc.) and the desire to remain cosmopolitan—free to adapt and incorporate anything at will—are best represented by the prevalence of musical “fusions” and what I refer to as Colombian jazz; a distinctly Colombian subset of Latin jazz (more typically associated with Cuban or Brazilian substyles) with Colombian musical elements.

VIIth Encuentro de Musicos Colombianos en Nueva York (2010)

The VIIth Encuentro marked the first time the festival was spread out over two days, a decision apparently based upon the producers’ realization that despite even short sets (of usually three or four songs), showcasing twenty or more acts in one ten-hour period could be rather overwhelming for audiences. Newly relocated to El Museo del Barrio in East Harlem, the Encuentro has continued to grow nonetheless, developing in a variety of ways that require improved programming and production planning, scheduling, stage management and funding. The renovated El Museo facility has a refurbished auditorium, café and museum shop (where CDs by many of the event’s artists are available for purchase). As a result, there seemed to be
a more institutional tone to the proceedings, somewhat more restrictive than the
nightclubs or performance spaces where the event had been held prior. Despite its
steady growth, festival sponsorship remains minimal (this year receiving modest
support and in-kind services from the Harbor Conservatory for the Performing Arts,
the Colombian Consulate, Mama’s Empanadas (a restaurant), Studioworks (a NYC-
based recording studio) and Terraza.com (who provided promotional material; see
festival programs: Figures 3.3 and 3.4 below).

As the event producer, Pablo Mayor’s decision to present at El Museo was
thus pragmatically based not only on his affiliation with Boys Harbor, the Latin music
school where he is on the piano faculty, but on the prohibitively expensive costs of
renting a viable Manhattan venue for successive two nights. Nonetheless, the
festival programs give a sense of the Encuentro’s many participants who have
performed in previous years as well as new artists appearing for the first time. Aside
from their colorful design and use of logos, the programs also convey a level of the
professionalism and fairness Mayor advocates for, allotting each performer twenty-
eight minutes in the VIth Encuentro, then raising it to thirty-minute sets for the VIIth
Encuentro.

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170 Since 1999, the Encuentro has operated strictly on ticket sales; it has not yet
turned a profit. Although the musicians receive minimal fees, they continue to
collectively participate in the festival year after year. Mayor remains optimistic and
hopeful however that, as the festival continues to grow, sponsorships will be
forthcoming.
Figure 3.3. VIth Encuentro (2009) program. Used with permission.
An annual Colombian music festival uniting the best of Colombian traditional and modern music in NYC, this year honoring legendary singer Totó la Momposina from Colombia, as well as Plectro Trio, and nearly 20 bands playing cumbia, curruelao, joropo, vallenato, bambuco and a myriad of rhythms and styles from COLOMBIA.

Figure 3.4. VIIth Encuentro (2010) programs. Used with permission.
The VIIth Encuentro was scheduled for Friday and Saturday June 18th and 19th, 2010, from 6 pm to midnight. MC duties were again fulfilled by Anna Povich de Mayor, who was occasionally joined by Pablo Mayor to introduce the musicians. While difficult to ascertain a clear programmatic orientation, it appears that each night sought to showcase a balanced blend of regional and stylistic musical variety. Multimedia technology for this year’s event also saw improvements, with short, well-produced artists video clips shown prior to each performance. In each clip the musician states why they are pleased to participate in the Encuentro; they briefly describe their musical project; and, they express why they consider the annual event musically and culturally important to the Colombian community. The inclusion of video technology enables the musicians to introduce themselves, albeit in a highly mediated fashion, establishing a somewhat tenuous connection with the audience. As the stage crew strikes the sets in preparation for the following performers, the video clips facilitate smooth transitions between acts while emphasizing the communal and solidarity aspects of the event.

In 2010, however, a few artists, including mainstays such as Lucía Pulido (who was performing in Caracas, Venezuela), vocalist Andrea Tierra, pianist Fidel Cuellar, Ibanero harpist Edmar Castaneda and Daniel Correa’s Crazy Rhythm Orchestra could not attend due to scheduling conflicts. Without Lucía Pulido, the

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171 Visual media, as evidenced by the presence of film crews recording at recent Encuentros, is increasingly a component of live performance and its documentation. Folklore Urbano intends to release a film documentary, to which I will contribute footage.
main “draw” for the VIIth Encuentro was its “guest of honor,” Totó la Momposina, the renowned world cantadora, who arrived with her son and music director, Marcos Vinicio Oyaga, along with her llamador player, Elvis Marrugo. Scheduled to perform on both nights, instead of bringing her own professional touring group she was accompanied by an ensemble of local Colombian musicians.

During introductory remarks made to the audience prior to her Saturday night performance, Mayor noted how the Encuentro has grown over the years. He pointed out that in the seven years since the festival’s inception, which started as a small gathering of “one hundred people,” with only a handful of local musicians performing for the then visiting Gaiteros de San Jacinto, whom he regards as their musical and cultural “fathers,” he felt both a sense of fulfillment and renewed purpose. Expressing feeling honored that Totó had agreed to perform at the VIIth Encuentro, Mayor suggested that the Colombian musicians community—at long last—now too has been blessed by the presence of their musical “mother.” The implicit message contained in Mayor’s comments is significant since it both qualifies and provides justification of the community’s role in the project to perpetuate and expand global exposure to Colombian musics, even while placing themselves as favored “sons and daughters,” with social and cultural responsibilities to properly represent Colombian culture. Together with Los Gaiteros de San Jacinto, Totó la Momposina thus represents a symbolic, music-cultural “parent” for the NYC Colombian musicians (and audiences alike), further attesting to the powerful connection these musicians have with traditional Colombian music and their goal of global promulgation. While
there is little evidence that Mayor, or the Encuentro’s participants regard themselves as international ambassadors of Colombian music traditions *per se*, there is a sense that, in representing a movement of new Colombian music, they are as reliant on the acknowledgement and recognition of so-called tradition bearers as on their own ability to perform and/or expand upon traditional practices with an appropriate level of musical skill.\(^{172}\)

Unable to attend the first day of the festival, we arrived at El Museo just before 6 pm; performances shortly commenced thereafter. The audience initially numbered around fifty people, but by 8 pm it grew to around 250—no doubt for Totó’s performance (several left afterwards). The audience seemed to be primarily made up of Colombians, cutting across different race, class and generational lines. Inquiring, I was told the previous days audience numbered similarly around two hundred.

As has become the norm at the Encuentros, several musicians, especially members of LCE and FU, are ubiquitous, often performing with several projects throughout the program, including their own. Nevertheless, the Parias Ensemble opened their set with their somewhat “cinematic” compositions scored for two guitars, clarinet, accordion, cello, acoustic bass and drum kit. The two co-leaders of Paria are Colombian Daniel Reyes-Linas and Argentinian Luis Carlos Lanes; both

\(^{172}\) From a recent online announcement: “Mr. Mayor has become a representative for Colombian music and culture in the USA; in 2008, Mr. Mayor was invited to speak on Colombian music at the Colombian Embassy on Capitol Hill, during the 2008 celebration featuring Petrona Martinez” (http://www/hudsonsquarebid.org/play/events/Pablo-mayor-folklore-urbano, accessed January 7, 2011).
compose, play guitar, and direct the ensemble. There is a decidedly “art music” and chamber-like quality to Parias’ instrumental works, fusing elements of tango, bambuco, and jazz, at times reminiscent of Pat Metheny’s more ethnic incursions into the realm of world music. “Luna Vieja,” for example, began with a 3-2 clave rhythm, to which angular arpeggios, long-held pitch tones, and pianistic guitar flourishes create a mildly delicate and minimalist timbre. Paria’s performance thus crystallize one of the Encuentro’s goals: the artists’ development and growth is evidenced by virtue of the artist’s vastly improved compositional ideas and performance.

Harold Gutierrez, a young pianist, composer and music director of the Folkloric Mestizo Dance Company, a local organization based in Queens, who has recently completed his masters degree in composition (at Queens College, CUNY) further exemplifies individual artistic and professional growth. Gutierrez’ set was divided into two parts; the first featuring highly formal and technique driven art pieces scored for violin and piano—short works influenced by classic Andean bambucos and pasillos. In the second part of his presentation, Gutierrez’ large neo-traditional/modern band changed direction, prominently featuring musicians from LCE’s excellent percussion section and the soprano saxophonist (name), whose playing captured both the reedy flavor of the costeño cana de millo and the modernist timbre of Ornette Coleman.

Followed by Sebastián Cruz’ Cheap Landscape Trio, the “highly portable project,” as he claims in his opening video clip, seeks to optimize the compositional tools available to the guitar power trio. Cruz’ project, however, seemed to lack a
clear connection to Colombian musical sources save for perhaps vague thematic links. Introducing one song as a “vallenato,” for example, Cruz’ trio performed a short, cartoonish piece that stretched stylistic definitions and boundaries of the genre. In the process, Cruz (who is also Lucía Pulidos’ musical director) achieves precisely what he is aiming for: a post-modern, “cosmopolitan” reworking of rock, punk and jazz styles that subverts stylistic expectations, which he first deconstructs then reconstructs into power pop. (As an aside, many performances generally suffered from poor audio mixing throughout the evening.) Nevertheless, in Cruz’ project there is always something interesting and refreshing to be explored, such as his use of projected imagery (graffiti, street art, found objects, etc.), which compliments the music in its juxtaposition of urban images of New York with rural images of Colombia. Backed by the excellent drummer John Sailor and pianist Jason Lindner, Cruz and his trio display an ever-searching quest for self-expression, always with an ear for hybrid fusions and experimental creativity.

The Plectro Trio then followed, playing trios of classic bambucos and pasillos in the tradition of Andean string ensembles such as Trio Morales Pino. Recent winners at the Festival de Mono Nuñez competition, the annual event of Andean music held in Ginebra (Valle del Cauca), Mayor introduced the trio as a model of

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173 Since 1974, the Festival de Música Andina de Colombia, popularly known as the Festival de Mono Nuñez occurs annually during the first week of June. Named in honor of Binino “Mono” Núñez Moya, the legendary composer, bandolista and guitarist who received official (Presidential) recognition as a Cultural Heritage of the Nation in 2003, the festival commemorates Núñez and celebrates Colombia’s Andean music traditions. The central component of the festival is the “Mono Nuñez Competition,” a prestige event that serves as vehicles for launching performing
bandola, tiple and guitar musical interaction. Acknowledging the colonial period from which the string trio format emerged, guitarist Daniel García also thanked his musical collaborators, whom had traveled from Bogotá to appear at the Encuentro. (This was not the first time that the New York-Bogotá connection was mentioned.)

In addition to playing “Espíritu Colombiano,” one of only two pasillos composed by Lucho Bermúdez, Plectro played “La Hora Nuestra,” followed by a tango and a marcha that mimicked military musical effects of a bugle and drum corps.174

After a dance break, held in the venue’ café (one of the 2010 festival’s new features), Pablo Mayor and Folklore Urbano opened their set, playing four new songs that the leader explained he had composed especially for this year’s Encuentro. Excitedly, he introduced Julianna Barrios, an Afro-Colombian costeña vocalist who hails from Miami (again, transnational links were emphasized), who has since become FU’s female lead singer. Although FU’s set seemed brief, it was powerful as always. FU has become a top quality Latin dance band, with strong performances and reliable showmanship—in particular, dancers in the audience respond favorably to the orchestra (much to the consternation of the Museo’s ushers and security staff).

careers in instrumental and vocal música Andina (e.g., bambucos, passillos, torbellinos, etc.).

174 The other instrumental pasillo by Bermúdez is “Huracán,” which can be heard in excerpt form at http://www.banrepcultural.org/blaavirtual/musica/blaaaudio2/compo/ibermu/indice.htm. Plecto Trio’s choice of repertoire suggests an identification or affinity for specific intraregional, international and local musical sources; that is, the inclusion of a Bermúdez’ pasillo, an Argentinian tango, and military music—a marcha derived from a Colonial past—implies a desire to elevate música Andina’s global profile, on par with música costeña or international popular Latin musics. That these are linked culturally to European colonial legacies further positions Andean music and its musicians in terms of social emplacement and related cultural status.
As Mayor himself has often commented, his tenure with salsa survivors Orchestra Broadway has clearly taught him a great deal about what it takes to direct a Latin music big band in NYC.

As the leading interpreter and most recognized exponent of Afro-Colombian music on the world music stage, Totó la Momposina was the next to perform. Before opening with a *gaita*, she remarked (in Spanish) about her surprise at the commitment and level of respect that the New York musicians have shown for the musical traditions of their homeland. She also was quick to point out the *cachaconess* of the New York gaiteros (LCE members Martín and Camelo).¹⁷⁵ Her energetic set included standard genres in the *cantadora* tradition, such as a cumbia and bullerengue. Her stylistic specialty is Atlantic coastal songs about rivers, the land and ocean, which she delivers with joyful exuberance and profound feeling.

¹⁷⁵ Though difficult to precisely define, the term *cachaco* has long been used by costeños to pejoratively refer to white, urban elites from the capitol city of Bogotá; the term can be considered synonymous with “pasty, uptight, city slickers.” Totó’s comment, then, is suggestive of both her surprise and doubt that these young *rolos* (see fn5 p2) are capable of playing costeño music, a joke that elicited knowing laughter among the audience.
After yet another pause in the program, multi-percussionist Samuel Torres took the stage and performed a unique set with Jason Lindner on piano and drummer Ludwig Alfonso. Later joined by his wife, the Spanish vocalist Lara Bello, Torres’ stylistic, technical and musical prowess is remarkable, demonstrating why he is an in-demand, “first-call” percussionist for many professional artists (e.g., Lila Downs, etc.). For his own projects, he performs Latin and African percussion based compositions in myriad hybrid forms, displaying mastery of kalimba (finger piano), cajon and, of course, congas.

Towards the end of the program, the final two projects switched slots, with Martín Vejarano’s La Cumbiama eNeYé playing the penultimate set, which included songs from their La Palma (2010) recording. This was followed by Grupo Chonta, the group under whose direction marimbero Diego “Yiyo” Obregón specializes in Pacific coastal currulaos, alabaos and jotas.
The Encuentro: Interpretation

The social and performance dynamics of the Encuentro underscore Pablo Mayor and the Colombian musicians community’s efforts to both assert and define themselves as such, even while undergoing and effecting individual and collective transformations. The festival offers a place where local musicians appeal to primarily Colombian audiences for validation and recognition of their musicianship and the artistry and value of the work they are doing in New York. It also affords the musicians the opportunity to be observed by a general public curious about Latin musics other than styles heard on mainstream Latin radio and other media. In a significant development, the presence and participation of the legendary Totó la Momposina (in 2010) appears to provide tacit acknowledgement of this movement of young, urban Colombians, as they strive to preserve musical traditions while advancing their own ideas about Colombian cultural and social identity. As a result, the “nation” (and nationalism) is reified in the diaspora through both symbolic and cultural expression of Colombianness—sometimes with overstated regional affiliations, while at others, with understated nationalist identifications.

Nonetheless, Totó’s evident exuberance during her performance—expressing pleasure with the quality of musicianship by the New York Colombians—serves to further quantify the Encuentro for the community, giving the festival both heightened cultural capital and greater social significance. Moreover, there appears to be a concerted effort to elevate the event to a higher strata of musical professionalism. Many of the performers have clearly evolved, transitioning and developing from local
amateurs to semi-professionals and professionals. Over the Encuentro’s past seven years, as projects have come and gone, several participants have demonstrated marked individual and collective growth as artists and performers. The maturation of the heterogeneous Colombian music scene, and the artistic evolution of a Colombian-based urban soundscape, are two products of Mayor’s mission through the Encuentro. Nevertheless, despite and perhaps because of individual goals and motivations, the artistic and communal growth of the community remains both Mayor’s greatest obstacle and goal. Speaking of the Encuentro, Mayor says: “It brings everyone together, but it’s not on everyone’s mind…we need more musicians.” (personal communication, November 2, 2010). Aware of the challenges involved in growing and fostering community, he adds: “The consciousness of the artist is still not operating as a collective” (ibid.). Despite the realities confronting Mayor, he continues determined and undeterred.

Yet another significant aspect of the Encuentro, as shown in Table #(?), is its emphasis on the diversity of Colombian styles performed during the event, from the internationally popular cumbia to champetas, vallenatos, bambucos, pasillos, gaitas, mapales, bullerengues, música llanera and the many other musical forms which comprise Colombian traditional and popular music genres. US, pan-Latin and global popular musics (e.g., jazz, Cuban, Brazilian) also play significant roles for the Colombians, as musicians shift between genres and subgenres, varying styles and substyles, alternating and synthesizing between traditional, modern and avant garde
techniques and methods, applying multiple musical layers and/or aesthetic sensibilities.

Finding an appropriate space for the Encuentro has also proved a challenge. Although the venue for the VIIth Encuentro provided a professional quality performance space, the lack of a dance floor made for a particular sort of musical incongruity. Colombian music festivals are often noted for the highly spirited enthusiasm of its audiences and their dancing; and clearly, many wanted to dance in the aisles at the Museo del Barrio (which was not permitted due to local fire safety codes). And yet, as the festival program unfolded, extreme stylistic transitions were apparent, as performers went from style to substyle, genre to subgenre (region to region, etc.). As a result, for all its diversity, this transitioning requires audience members to regularly and sometimes abruptly shift attentive (or aesthetic) focus between the varied “artistic” proposals being presented and a natural tendency or desire to parrandear (party). In the broadest sense, then, the Encuentro provides a space for audiences with either specific or eclectic musical tastes to participate in a variety of ways, while satisfying the desires of both listeners and dancers. While fans of Colombian music demonstrate appreciation for the variety of offerings the Encuentro provides, for many, this multiplicity reflects their own cosmopolitan tastes and tendencies, even as music for dancing remains the height of the festival experience for others. Mayor complies by providing both, continuing to refine and improve upon the festival, bringing new and “newer” Colombian musicians onto the
scene, all while hitching Colombia’s musical base to New York’s pan-Latin and
global cultural engine.

Moreover, given the rise in Colombian transnational migration, with cultural
events being held in many cities throughout the diaspora, Colombian Independence
Day (July 20th) celebrations are not uncommon, for example. The Encuentro’s
success has helped to spark greater interest in Colombian music, with music and
cultural festivals large and small initiated in cities from Toronto to Newark, Miami to
London, Montreal, Boston, Berlin, Barcelona, wherever local Colombian
communities and musicians gather. These differ, of course, both in tenor and
substance from official national holiday celebrations however. Reflecting local
interests, new “Encuentros,” such as the First Colombian Music Festival In Chicago,
a month long series of concerts and events that were held for the first time in 2010,
are emerging and thriving, giving further testimony to Mayor’s efforts in New York
City to gain wider attention for Colombian musical culture.

Sites of Production: Recordings

While the annual Encuentros have helped to establish Mayor as an important
player on the NYC music scene, Folklore Urbano has also worked to develop its
presence via recordings. Aviso, their first recording, released independently, in 2003,
represented an initial step toward the larger goal of creating visibility for new
Colombian music from New York City. As its title suggests, it was intended as a
statement of arrival, an announcement calling attention to a new brand of Colombian
music. Significantly, although liner notes were minimal, Mayor made it a point to
dedicate *Aviso* to “my country, Colombia, and to peace” (CD cover). The only other direct reference to Colombia appears on the CD package’s otherwise neutral art design, in a separate foldout section illustrated by Eliana Perez, in which each song title is accompanied by a drawing (see Figure 3.6 below). The graphic for the instrumental track entitled “*Algun Día*” (or “Someday”) depicts a slender, perhaps feminine right hand piecing together the shards of a broken, highly fractured shape that appears to be a map of Colombia. Likened to a shattered mirror, glass, or puzzle, the figure’s index finger glides one small section of the fragmented cartography into place, thereby beginning to repair or put the nation back together. Thus, Mayor and Folklore Urbano’s position, with respect to Colombian socio-politics, is succinctly stated in an understated yet subtle and hopeful message; although obscure within Folklore Urbano’s musical content, as a graphic subtext incorporated into *Aviso*’s very design, the message of Colombia’s healing (“someday”) is clearly evident.

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176 Significantly, Mayor began to compose and arrange several of the songs that appear on *Aviso* while still living in Bogotá, starting with an arrangement of Thelonius Monk’s “Well You Needn’t” (Mayor interview, August 26, 2009).

177 I do not analyze “Algun Día” for musical features here, which may, or may not, support my reading of Perez’s illustration.
During the production of *Aviso*, Folklore Urbano was already an aggregation of evenly divided Colombian and non-Colombian musicians. Sharing musicians from La Cumbiamba eNeYé (Ihán Betancourt, Sebastián Cruz), along with *guachero* Wolfgang Barrios and percussionist Sergio Borrero—and driven by regional music genres that serve as its core stylistic sources—the project remained essentially Colombian. Nonetheless, by featuring celebrated Puerto Rican Latin jazz bassist Andy Gonzalez, along with several young, New York session players from diverse backgrounds (Chris Karlic, Rafi Malkiel, Chris Michael), the intercultural elements that have increasingly defined Folklore Urbano were already present.\(^{178}\)

\(^{178}\) With the exception of Thelonious Monk’s classic “Well You Needn’t” (discussed below) and Jorge Villamil’s bolero, “Espumas,” all the material on *Aviso* was
In 2002, Mayor entered into a business relationship with Robert Kelley Ayala, a local, Colombian-born entrepreneur, to start a recording company that would produce recordings by many of the NYC-based musicians that participate in the Encuentro festival. After a series of discussions and negotiations between the artists, the Mayors and Kelley Ayala, an agreement was reached: the Mayors would serve as executive producers and principals for the label; Kelley Ayala’s role was to manage business and financial matters; and, the musicians themselves would submit content in the form of new Colombian music. In effect, Chonta Records was established by and for the community of musicians in order to provide a means to for them to record and disseminate locally produced music.

Folklore Urbano’s second recording *Baile* was released in 2005 on the Chonta Records imprint, shortly followed by the compilation *Nueva Colombia, A New Generation of Colombian Music*. While *Baile* represented Folklore Urbano’s marked shift toward the big dance band format, with an emphasis on *música bailable* (or dance music), *Nueva Colombia* emphasized the transnational aspects of the musical community. The compilation’s thirteen tracks include both NYC and Colombian-based projects: four tracks from Bogotá artists (Alé Kumá, Mojarra Electrica, Asdrubal and Curupira), one track each from El Chocó, Bucaramanga and Medellin composed and arranged by Mayor; moreover, the arrangement of “Well You Needn’t” was written in Bogotá (Mayor interview, August 26, 2009). Coincidentally, *Aviso* also includes a track titled “Anna,” composed by Mayor composed for his wife, Anna Povich de Mayor; “Anna” was also the title that costeño bandleader Pacho Galan recorded in the 1950s, written by Giordano Vatro, for Luis Emilio Fortou Pereira’s Baranquilla-based Discos Tropical label.
(ChoQuibTown, Cabuya, Puerto Candelaria, respectively), and six from New York City (Folklore Urbano, Coba, La Cumbiamba eNeYé, Marta Gómez, Samurindo and Ricardo Gallo). The domestic tracks were licensed from independent Colombian record companies or publishers and distributors such as MTM and Distritofónica, the remaining from Chonta artists. Stylistically varied, ranging from bambuco to hip-hop, fandango to bullerengue, *Nueva Colombia* showcases musical projects emanating from both the homeland and the NYC diaspora in nearly equal measure, further underscoring the convergence of North and South American transnational flows of Colombian musical culture. Again, overtly social and political statements were minimized, save for a poem by Ricardo Leon Peña-Villa that appears on the back cover of the liner notes:

\[
\begin{align*}
Se abre el corazón en su punto más brillante & \text{The heart is opened at its most brilliant point} \\
Se brinda la ilusión para curar la tristeza & \text{It toasts illusion to cure the sadness} \\
Con el verso de insinuada oración & \text{With the verse of insinuating speech} \\
Se pone mano con mano & \text{Hands are joined together} \\
Para aliviar el dolor para sembrar alegría & \text{To alleviate pain to sow happiness} \\
Y darle a la vida color & \text{And give to life color} \\
De nueva generación. & \text{Of a new generation.}^{179}
\end{align*}
\]

Peña-Villa’s poem is thus a statement of optimism. Cognizant of Colombian sorrows, he acknowledges that a new generation of Colombian artists are now joining together to “sing what we have in our minds and what we feel in our hearts” (Ibid.).

On both *Baile* and *Nueva Colombia* (as in *Aviso*), music serves as a symbolic medium through which expressions of the revalorization of Colombian folk culture,

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179 Poetry excerpt from *Tarea de Amor*, by Ricardo León Peña-Villa, used by permission. Translation is the authors.
and the promise of a hopeful (and modern) future, are mediated and thus imagined and perhaps realized. *Baile*, however, is a substantive departure from *Aviso* in several respects. While the latter recording documented FU’s “arrival” per se, highlighting Afro-Colombian rhythms and traditional folk melodies, it contains strictly instrumental ensemble orchestrations and Latin jazz arrangements, replete with solos, improvisation, scored sectional playing, all anchored by Andy Gonzalez’s foundational salsa-Latin jazz bass. *Baile*, instead, marks a closer collaboration between Mayor and his musicians, and significantly shifts the band’s musical aesthetic towards *popular* dance, an emphasis of the band’s live performances. Working with lyricists, poets and songwriters such as Ricardo Peña, Antonio María Peñaloza Cervantes, Ronald Polo, Rafael Mejía Romani, and Mauricio Castillo, Mayor’s arrangements are written to support the song texts. In a concerted effort aimed at getting people to dance however, *Baile* appears to be somewhat more distanced from Colombian socio-political realities than *Aviso*, which contains at least a few instances of referential musical artifacts, such as harmonic dissonances and atonal colorations or shadings within the band’s brass arrangements (see musical analyses below). On the other hand, *Baile*, seems to be produced primarily for dancing and entertainment purposes. Although Mayor, again, dedicates *Baile/Dance* to “Colombia, and to Peace,” Kelley Ayala’s introductory notes provide socio-cultural context. Alluding to “the conflicts that have ravaged the country, driving people from their homes and sometimes from their own country,” he explains that

180 Cf. McLary 2000, especially Chapter Five, pp.139-170.
“the ensuing pain is unfathomable” (Baile CD liner notes). Still, he adds, optimistically: “Colombian culture has thrived nonetheless” (Ibid.). Echoing Kelley Ayala’s hopefulness, Ronald Polo’s lyrics to “Tiempo Buenos”/”Good Times”:

\begin{itemize}
\item \textit{Levántate pueblo canta.} Get up people
\item \textit{Gritemos “llegó la paz”} Sing and shout “Peace has arrived”
\item \textit{Se termino la desgracia.} Misfortune has ended
\item \textit{Vamos de Nuevo a empezar} We are starting anew
\item \textit{Y al compass de cumbia y gaita...} And to the beat of cumbia and gaita
\end{itemize}

By 2007, however, a breakdown in communications with Kelley Ayala forced the Mayors to continue without the support of their one-time business partner and “true believer.” Unable to gain access to, or retrieve their master recordings and back-stock of CDs (which had been warehoused), Chonta Records scaled back operations to local distribution and online sales of Folklore Urbano and the label’s affiliated artists. Without further capital investment, or financial and sales records, Chonta Records has remained active under the management of the Mayors but limited to marketing Folklore Urbano and the remainder of Chonta’s back-catalogue.\footnote{In addition to FU’s three releases (Aviso (2003), Baile (2005), Corazón (2009)) and the Nueva Colombia (2005) compilation, Chonta Records released four CDs: La Cumbiamba eNeYé’s Marioneta (2006), Ricardo Gallo’s Los Cerros Testigos (2005), Coba’s Canción Mandala (2006), and Samurindó’s Cuando Ovejas (2006), for a total of eight CD releases (tracks from all artists were included in the Nueva Colombia compilation). Chonta artists, including Folklore Urbano, are distributed in Colombia by MTM, thereby maintaining a presence in Colombia, at least in Bogotá.}

Despite the setbacks, in 2007, Folklore Urbano entered Mohawk Studios in New Jersey to record their third CD. Self-financed, Corazón (Chonta, 2009) was released two years later, a product of the Mayor’s perseverance and renewed commitment to the Colombian musician’s community. No longer dedicating the
recording to “Colombia” or “peace,” Mayor instead gives “Thanks to the community of musicians in New York, a constant source of inspiration to me” (Corazón CD notes). Also thanking the “non-Colombian musicians who are part of this movement,” Mayor makes the point that “This production was conceived with much love” (Ibid.).

As illustrated by the artistic direction undertaken in Corazón, the release exhibits a renewed emphasis on song lyrics concerning themes of love and romance. Moreover, the production demonstrates a strong orientation toward Latin language radio programming, audibly leaning toward the *salsa romantica* side of Colombian popular dance music despite FU’s atypically non-salsero percussion section. In addition, Corazón further reflects Folklore Urbano’s development as dynamic “live” performers, highly aware of their audiences desire to dance, and highlights Mayor’s desire to draw a larger sector of the growing Colombian population in the
metropolitan region. Cognizant of the band’s entertainment value to non-Colombian audiences, Mayor notes: “I think, as a band, we have learned how to appeal to Colombians too. The band is working toward a show that somehow is attracting more Colombians…” (Mayor interview, August 26, 2009). While audibly FU’s most commercial release (to date), Corazón discreetly circumvents making deliberate social or political statements (either textual or extramusical), which might detract from the parranda (“party”) atmosphere it seeks to inculcate—perhaps even more so than on previous CDs. That is, Mayor’s arrangements remain closely linked to the recording’s rather accessible themes, while the dance band orchestrations are intentionally designed, as Mayor says, “to get people dancing” (Ibid.). Nonetheless, Corazón’s final track, “Pañuelito Blanco”/“White Handkerchief” contains the following lyric, repeatedly sung with accented rhythmic emphasis during the song’s chorus: “Saca el pañuelito blanco”/“Take out your white handkerchief” (listen to music example 6). The song, a currulao, which features Diego Obregon’s marimba, as Mayor explains, was “[i]nspired by the image I have of crowds of people in my country waiving [sic] white handkerchiefs for peace” (Corazón CD notes). Thus, even FU’s most accessible, commercial and marketable recording suggests tacit

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182 Mayor’s comment refers to Colombia’s Peace Movement (CPM), which has been a growing social movement since the 1990s. Initially impelled by rural indigenous, mestizo and Afro-Colombian leaders and activists, advocating for peace through policies of self-autonomy and respect for civil and local land rights, CPM also established networks throughout urban areas, where Colombian youth as well as large segments of the general population joined in with efforts to urge the Colombian state to provide improved national security and social infrastructure through negotiation and dialogue. Colombian popular music stars, such as Juanes and Shakira, have often been affiliated with CPM, performing at several public protest rallies and events. See
solidarity with the Colombian Peace Movement (CPM). For all the discrete avoidance of, or association with Colombian socio-political issues, Mayor and Folklore Urbano’s recorded trajectory demonstrates a cautious yet clear stance with respect to public perceptions about the state of the nation. Through conventional modes of cultural expression (i.e., popular music, recorded media) however, an underlying social, cultural, and political consciousness is not far removed from the products of Folklore Urbano’s labor. Mayor’s efforts to establish Chonta Records, as a New York-based Colombian music record label, despite the many challenges that such a venture presents, remains notable nonetheless since it represents an initiative taken to recast NYC not only as a place where Colombian music is performed but also independently recorded and produced.

**Sites of Production: Composition and Arranging**

Yet another aspect of Mayor and Folklore Urbano’s cultural work occurs in the areas of musical composition and arranging. In the following section I present musical analysis of characteristic techniques and methods that Mayor applies to his musical writings. Tracing Folklore Urbano’s musical evolution through an investigation of musical styles as they appeared chronologically (examples are drawn

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from each of FU’s extant releases), I am primarily interested in the degree to which innovation, transformation and convergences of traditional-modern music modalities appear and are channeled through the project’s recordings. Markers of musical innovation are manifold and not limited to the following list of features, among which ethnomusicology counts as examples: the use of new admixtures of instrumentation and instruments (e.g., with expanded pitch range); non-traditional combination of ensembles and instruments; addition of new sections to existing compositions; willingness to blur cultural distinctions (hybridity); borrowing and transferring across boundaries of categories (e.g., genres, styles); and, new approaches to improvisational methods and techniques. Nonetheless, like the popular Latin music performers that Singer (1983) documented in the late 1970s early 80s, for whom, “innovation and exploration of new ideas are also part of the definitional process,” Folkore Urbano is similarly “committed to defining new directions for contemporary Latin popular music in New York City”(187).183

Innovation, then, as Katz (2010) suggests, can be viewed as a circumscribing principle around which “the perceived integrity… of compositional form” is “not violated, unless for special effect.”184 Offering an example of this aesthetic, he notes how in Indian musical praxis, according to Śāṅgadeva: “a new song composition…employs a new (i.e. different) rāga, tāla and verbal text” and, therefore

a rāga may be “‘newly’ executed with new [combinations of] sthāya, the verbal text,” resulting in an innovation by virtue of its varied subject-matter and affective power (ibid). Brinner’s (1995) study of innovation instead points to social and historical factors, which either evolve or, as Geertz alternatively proposed, involute around a cultural matrix model. “[I]nnovation is likely to be contingent upon an array of social and political forces as well as individual artistic motivations” (445). Brinner’s example nonetheless demonstrates a different kind of innovation among new forms of wayang padhat (an abridged form of Javanese shadow play) that results from the exploitation of “regional stylistic distinctions for specific dramatic and emotional effect” rather than “relying exclusively on the repertoire and practice of one regional style” (445, Brinner 1992). Therefore, I suggest that Singer, Katz and Brinner each illustrate approaches to innovations that are pertinent to Mayor and FU’s cross- and intercultural case. My analysis of musical examples of three Mayor scores—one each from Aviso (2003), Baile (2005) and Corazón (2009)—provide a view into Mayor’s musical development, giving a sense of a delicate balance between innovation and adherence to musico-historical precedents aimed for, and the affective and cultural expression the music transmits. While it is likely impossible to completely assess any composer (or arranger’s) aesthetic intent, the traditionalism and transformation, fusion and hybridity in FUs music sufficiently impacts audiences and the community of musicians alike, thus necessitating a closer examination of the creative, compositional work at hand.
“Well You Needn’t”: Analysis of a Colombian Jazz Cover

While still a student at UNT, Pablo Mayor was exposed to the music of Thelonius Sphere Monk (1917-1982). Regarded one of the great American jazz pianists and composers of the Twentieth-Century, Monk is often noted for his expressive originality and distinctively individualistic and innovative work. As previously mentioned, his composition “Well You Needn’t” (1944) is a jazz classic, a standard of the repertoire, and a work that has served as a staple of jazz education programs in the US and internationally. It is a type of jazz composition that broke free of constraints from the then current and dominant jazz orthodoxy: Bebop. Challenging notions of a linear jazz tradition, Monk successfully established an expanded modern jazz vernacular—and in so doing, provided an invaluable lesson to students of jazz about individual vis a vis collective creativity. Infused with musical elements such as melodic and harmonic chromaticism, structural malleability, thematic and tonal elasticity, radical use of articulation (attack), emphatic dissonance and angular, elliptical rhythms, Monk’s works, although historically grouped within the Parker-Gillespie-Powell School of Jazz innovators, place him in a different strata due to his unconventional and often described as “eccentric” musical idiosyncrasies.

That Pablo Mayor would be drawn to the music of Thelonius Monk and “Well You Needn’t” is not surprising then, given his jazz entrainment at UNT and long-standing interest in jazz pedagogy (listen to music example 4). “Well You Needn’t” in fact encapsulates many stylistic elements once regarded as radical in Monk’s compositions. And while Mayor’s arrangement preserves much of the work’s melodic and harmonic material, even retaining its original key signature, Folklore Urbano’s version of “Well You Needn’t” (Aviso, 2003), as a *cumbia-Latin jazz* hybrid, resounds with specifically popular Colombian and Latin jazz qualities (music example 4). Though clearly not *salsa* (as generally understood), FU’s version nevertheless invokes the Afro-Cuban concept of *mambo*, more as a matter of formal convention, to generate an entirely different sonic effect than the implicitly accepted use of that term. While certainly “danceable,” Mayor’s arrangement instead highlights the centrality of the ensemble’s Afro-Colombian drumming and costeño rhythms, which provide rhythmic foundation and accompaniment to its jazz soloists. Still, why cumbia-jazz (or jazz-cumbia) and not salsa? For one, this is instrumental music, showcasing Mayor’s compositional and arranging skills as well as the improvisational talents of FU’s musicians. Mayor: “It is a cumbia, it has a strong influence of the ‘orquesta de baile colombiana,’ with the format of a jazz standard (intro, head and solos with[in] the form), plus the typical sections of a dance band (mambo, moña, etc.)” (personal communication, October 30, 2010). Moreover, throughout Aviso, Atlantic coastal genres such as *cumbias, porros* and *mapales*

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186 Mayor’s scores generally do not include percussion or drum parts, as I discuss below.
function as a rhythmic core around which the arrangements hinge, not salsa’s Afro-Cuban-Puerto Rican clave based rhythms, or its standardized format: Intro-tune-coro/chorus-mambo section-second coro/chorus-montuno.

While one need only recall Charles Mingus’ jazz fusion experiment with cumbia (to note another prominent jazz leader’s interest in the genre), what is noteworthy about Mayor’s effort here is his ability to remain stylistically and culturally positioned evenly between the música tropical of Lucho Bermúdez and Pacho Galan and UNT’s school of big band arranging, perpetuated by its longtime director of jazz studies, Leon Breeden (following the tradition of the Stan Kenton Orchestra).187

Nevertheless, Mayor’s arrangement also indicates the importance that compositional structure or form, along with robust sectional writing and rhythmic phrasing, holds for his arranging process. In speaking of inspirational Colombian bandleaders, specifically Galan and Bermúdez, Mayor says

to me the way they express [themselves] and the way their forms [are used] in their songs, that is also very attractive to me. Like how they organize their music and how that is what is Colombian...the form, that is always the question.” (PM interview 8/26/09, author’s emphasis)

Mayor’s careful consideration of formal structures and connections to Afro-Cuban and Colombian musical values are highly evident. Attentive to a section of the work where “mambo” is invoked (see Score 3.1), Mayor’s recognition of salsa’s normative

and functional structures is especially apparent in the use of a mambo section as a pivotal point in the arrangement, indicating the moment where the harmonic form shifts to the full band’s “mambo” or dance section. By retaining this formal element of salsa performance within the arrangement, not only does the band transition into a lively mambo, an intercultural exchange is further borne out:

I grew up being a musician, a Colombian, and I was [always] told ‘Afro-Cuban, Afro-Cuban…you have to sound Puerto Rican,’ and [so] we started to establish those forms of where we say ‘mambo’—I don’t know if Lucho Bermúdez ever called his section a ‘mambo’…when the horns and the orchestra plays tutti, or full band, but that term mambo comes from the tradition of salsa, and it was adopted. (Interview, August 26, 2009)

Although salsa, música tropical and jazz can appear rather incongruous genre resources, Mayor finesses the arrangement throughout by bridging Monk’s melodic-harmonic concept with interspersed música tropicalisms; i.e., stock melodic musical phrases (often in syncopated or tied triplets), which function as a connective tissue or overlay. For example, following a set of double chorus solos by soprano sax and trombone, Mayor transitions from Monk’s jazz harmonic cycle (at m.101) into a two-chord Dominant-Subdominant (I [C7] – iv [F-min]) vamp (marked “Mambo”), in which a transparent, duple-meter, overtly cumbia-like harmonized phrase is played together by woodwinds, saxes and brass (mm.101-108-109):
Score 3.1. “Well You Needn’t” (mm. 97-113), used with permission.

Following this “mambo” section, after a one-measure restatement of the quarter-note triplet melodic theme (at m.110), Mayor allows the key center to linger momentarily around an F-minor tonality in preparation for the percussion solo that
follows; later reverting (at m.119) to Monk’s ascending and descending half-step harmonic cycle \([F, G^\flat, G, A^\flat, A, B^\flat, B, B^\flat, A, A^\flat, \text{etc.}]\), marks a return to the original harmonic scheme of the work.

From this brief example, we can see that for Mayor there is form and, again, there is form—succinctly demonstrating one central aspect of his creative process: layers of musical structure may oscillate between and be juxtaposed with each other. But form as it relates to Monk’s jazz and Colombian musical aesthetics, even when presented with salsero terminology, is dialogic, intercultural and intertextual. Mayor’s arrangement of “Well You Needn’t” is consequently less a fusion of musical styles, or a postmodern hybrid (pastiche or collage) of traceable genres (i.e., “mashup”), than a transformation of distinct musical texts and aesthetics combined and used to negotiate and dialogue with and among dynamic intercultural relationships.

“La Pringamosa”: Analysis of an Atlantic-Pacific Musical Melding\(^{188}\)

Among the several pachangas, or parranda dance (party) songs that make up the greater part of Folklore Urbano’s second release *Baile* (Chonta, 2005), “La Pringamosa” stands in contrast as an example of Colombian ensemble jazz—what I consider to be Mayor’s major contribution to Colombian musical praxis.

Undoubtedly a juxtaposition of traditional costeño gaita rhythms (*gaita corrido* and *gaita de amor*)...

\(^{188}\) “Pringamosa” refers to a plant that stings when touched; a title conferred to Mayor’s arrangement by costeño percussionists Ronald Polo and Morris Cañate (Sergio Borrero, personal communication, 25 October 2010). Borrero’s song is not to be confused with Cipriano Guerreros’ tumbequé, “La Pringamosa,” recorded by Pacho Galan y sus Sabaneros on *Caracoleando* (Tropical LD-1415, 1959).
puya) with marimba de chonta (the emblematic, mallet struck idiophone from the Pacific coastal region), the work, composed by percussionist Sergio Borrero, underscores Mayor’s interest in and approach to arranging instrumental music based on regional coastal traditions (listen to music example 5). In addition to the presence of a gaita playing the melody (see Score 3.2), “La Pringamosa” also incorporates marimba de chonta within an arrangement divided into two sections by tempi: medium and fast. Significantly however, there is no actual marimba on the track: the “marimba de chonta” is performed on an electronic keyboard by Mayor. That is, marimba notes were digitally sampled and tuned to A=440, then uploaded and performed as the piano part of the score. Borrero provides details:

I have a marimba de chonta in F. Pablo wanted a chromatic instrument and my marimba is diatonic, so I sampled it. Each bar was recorded at various intensities to create an instrument with velocity switching (to switch between samples based on the speed with which a key was depressed). I created two identical instruments. One went into a hardware synth (Roland Fantom XR) and the other to a software synth. The hardware synth was used so that Pablo could hear the marimba sound as he played (hardware synth has a very low latency) and the MIDI data was recorded into Sonar (my digital audio workstation). The MIDI data was then used to trigger the software synth during playback and for bouncing. Pablo used a Kurzweil [keyboard] controller that had weighted keys (similar to the keys of a piano) to record the MIDI data. The samples on the marimba [then] had to be pitch corrected because they were slightly out of tune (personal communication, November 4, 2010).

189 While Mayor describes the dance band section as a “mambo,” Borrero identifies the second section as a chalupa, a genre similar to puya de gaita (personal communication, 25 October 2010).
190 Mayor was “not happy with the texture of the acoustic piano sound against the gaita and [so] decided to try different things,” adding that “the marimba was treated as the piano” (personal communication, 30 October 2010).
Polo’s gaita, too, was digitally “retuned,” and, as a result, the “marimba” and gaita are harmonically consonant (i.e., “in tune”).

![Score 3.2](image)

**Score 3.2.** “La Pringamosa” - *Gaita hembra* melodic motif (mm.1-4). Used with composer’s permission.

Throughout the duration of the (3’48” sec.) work, this melodic motif (see Score 3.2 above) is stated, repeated and reiterated, often with slight modifications, alterations, and occasionally played in unison with other instruments in the ensemble. The derivation of the melodic material is based on the Dorian mode, which as Borrero explains, “is common in gaita compositions” (personal communication, 25 October 2010). Based on the pitch series [a-b-c-d-e-(f#)-g], the gaita interjects short, improvised motivic phrases, while the flute, brass and woodwinds respond in kind. Western instruments, here, appear to fulfill a dialogic, responsorial function to the call of the improvising gaita, which could be read as both a retention of African-derived musical features persisting particularly among Afro-Colombian gaiteros and as a standard feature of big band jazz orchestral interaction: that is, an improvising soloist (or soli) playing over an arrangement while the orchestra responds closely in a kind of individual *vis a vis* collective conversation (e.g., Count Basie, Duke Ellington, Stan Kenton, etc.). After a final restatement of the melody (marked “Out” in the score, see Score 3.3), and a two-beat rest, a distinctly jazz-inflected, chromatic linear

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191 For more on the idiosyncratic and melodic-harmonic aspects of gaita scales and motivic practices, see Leonor Convers and Juan Sebastian Ochoa (2007), Part 1, pp.54-60.
phrase is played in unison by the ensemble’s flute, brass and saxes (at mm.149-end, see Score 3.4):

Score 3.3. Final melodic statement in unison. Used with permission.
Score 3.4. Closing statement (or tag) in a “bebop” style (mm.149-155). Used with permission.

Played by the full band, this closing “bebop” riff serves more as a final response and re-defining declarative statement than a coda (or tag). Mayor’s arrangement thus brings together canonic acoustic and symbolic regional elements, thereby reformulating and altering both sonic markers and emblematic values within the work—wherein lies its representational innovation. The combination of Mayor’s “jazzy” brass orchestrations, powerful costeño drumming and “marimba” accompaniment thus achieves inter-regional cultural parity between Atlantic and Pacific coastal genres and instruments, yet expressed within a modern jazz band context.

The presence of (sampled) marimba however, an unusual insertion, especially within a gaita-based work, functions here as more than an intermingling musical-
cultural object. As evidenced from the work’s outset, the marimba’s sonorous texture is subtly present yet audible. Midway through the work however (at m.83, 152 sec.), the marimba prominently re-enters to overtly establish the new tempo change (accelerando) into the faster puya (or chalupa rhythm). By doing so, Mayor demonstrates a shifting of regional associations, altering the musical-cultural balance between the primary Atlantic and Pacific instrumentation and their relationship to the band.

Score 3.5: Marimba entrance and ostinato; puya/chalupa ensues (mm.83-87). Used with permission.

Having firmly established puya’s characteristic simple duple, uptempo meter, the marimba’s melodic ostinato—signaling and signifying currulao—is forcefully played over a two measure harmonic rhythm (A-Major [ii] to G-Major [I], each for one measure), and harmonized as four descending M6ths, a P4th and a P5th (see Fig #Z). Accentuated by irregular, syncopated rhythmic phrasing, suggestive of currulao’s compound duple meter (i.e., 6/8), puya’s standard underlying meter remains ever-present in the background, further maintaining its costeño base.

A gaita solo soon re-enters and immediately begins to alternate eight-bar melodic phrases with the ensemble, trading-off with horns, woodwinds and, especially, the euphonium (or bombardino), an instrument also closely associated
with Atlantic coastal *porro* bands and chirimías from the Choco region—here, three musical-regional representations (Atlantic, Pacific and American jazz) combine and are portrayed within “La Pringamosa’s” musical profile.\(^\text{192}\) When asked if bringing these regional polarities together was intentional, Mayor replied: “I thought it was such a great thing to have two symbols of two different regions together” (personal communication, October 30, 2010). Regional, stylistic and instrumental elements are thus orchestrated in a convergence of cultural symbols and aural signifiers that are neither simply cross cultural nor hybrid fusions.

What’s more, as in “Well You Needn’t” (discussed above), Mayor again deploys a “mambo” section in “La Pringamosa” but for an entirely different purpose. Harkening back to Latin big bands from Machito to Tito Puente (into the present day, e.g., Orchestra Broadway), mambo sections are typically used to heighten the affective energy of the band for audiences of listeners and dancers (*música bailable*).\(^\text{193}\) Notwithstanding Mayor’s musical shorthand to signal the full band’s entrance, mambo usually refers to contrasting sectional playing, usually between brass and woodwinds, based on a set of alternating repeated musical phrases (or “riffs”).\(^\text{193}\) Immediately following the gaita solo, the band jumps into a lively mambo section. The four-measure motivic phrase however (repeated twice) is a set-up; for what follows for the remainder of “La Pringamosa” are a series of increasingly dynamic

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and contrasting episodes of tonal (diatonic) and atonal (chromatic) variations on the fundamental melodic and harmonic changes. Played over an intensifying puya rhythm, tensions between folklore and jazz are exploited. Culminating with the “bebop” statement (see Score 3.4 above), that slows down only during the final two measures, “La Pringamosa” leaves listeners with a particular jazz after-effect. Sans either gaita or “marimba,” the closing musical statement suggests modern jazz’s conclusive triumph or ascendancy over the folkloric—albeit electronically generated—elements previously emphasized. Mayor’s arrangement thus reinscribes aspects of gaita and marimba de chonta within a personal style of Colombian jazz that simultaneously recasts, reorders and exalts modern/urban and traditional/folklore aesthetics while upending their respective cultural polarities.

“Pañuelitos Blancos”: La Costa Pacifica and Pacific Coastal Pacifism through Popular Currulao-Jazz

In his work on cultural policy, race, music and violence, Birenbaum Quintero (2006) comments on processes of marginalization, erasure, and distancing that occurs in discursive practices that do not truly define or describe the value of musical or social worth of the Afro-Colombians of the Pacific region. Following Ochoa (2001), Waxer (2001, 2002), and Wade (1993, 2000), Quintero argues that recent state policies with respect to Pacific coastal segments of Afro-Colombian populations, often in the name of pacifist goals, are in part a neo-liberal abrogation of

the state’s responsibility to provide security for all its citizens. The argument further suggests that the state’s cultural policies, such as the folklorization of regional Afro-Colombian musics (e.g., currulao, chirimía, and numerous substyles and crosscultural hybrids), have only served to exploit Afro-Colombian resources while continuing to marginalize its practitioners.

In recent years, as growing numbers of Afro-Colombian musicians have migrated to NYC, with some joining the new Colombian music scene, New York audiences have been exposed to this “folklorization” process in a transnational urban setting. Diego Obregón, a marimbero and multi-instrumentalist from Guapi (in the state of Cauca) relocated to New Jersey in 2003, driven by a desire to establish a music career (personal communication, October 30, 2010). He views his cultural contribution to the New York music scene primarily as one of “sharing knowledge of the Pacific coast rhythms that run through my veins.”

Certainly neither the first nor last Pacific coastal Afro-Colombian to embark to New York City, an earlier precedent had been set by Enrique Urbano Tenorio (1917-2007), or Peregoyo, whom during the 1960s gained widespread attention for Afro-Colombian Pacific coast regional styles. With songs such as “Mi peregoyo”, “La palma de chontadura” and especially Petronio Álvarez’s anthemic “Mi Buenaventura” (1961), Peregoyo gained

195 “La contribucion es dar a conocer los ritmos de la region pacifica colombiana los cuales corren por mis venas” (personal communication, 30 October 2010).
196 In response to the increased popularity of both Atlantic coastal popular música tropical and salsa’s spreading global diffusion, Peregoyo and his musicians——first, with Grupo Bahía and later Peregoyo y su Combo Vacaná——reformulated currulao and its local variants (i.e., abozao chocoano, aguabajo, porro, arrullo) into a regional brand of popular Afro-Colombian music.
national and international recognition for the port city of his birth, its people, and the musical culture of the region, representing a musical affirmation of Pacific coastal Afro-Colombian styles.\(^{197}\)

Mayor’s song “Pañuelitos Blancos” (*Corazón*, 2009) can be viewed in light of this recent revalorization of the Pacific region’s folklore—and its utility to promote a pacifist “pro-peace” agenda—and the re-emerging interest in Pacific coast pop currulao. Based on this model, the final song on *Corazon* (2009), “Pañuelitos

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\(^{197}\) Since the 1960s, the eponymous, annual Festival Petronio Álvarez has become an important cultural event with musicians traveling to Cali from all parts of Colombia. The mission, as stated via the Secretary of Tourism and Culture website is as follows: “El Festival de Música del Pacífico Petronio Álvarez, tiene como misión la conservación y divulgación de la música tradicional del pacífico colombiano como eje cohesionador del tejido social regional, la reivindicación de los valores y aportes de la etnia afrocolombiana y su inclusión social. Visionándolo como el proceso cultural más importante de la etnia afrocolombiana y de América Latina. Tiene como sus objetivos principales la preservación, el fortalecimiento y promoción de las tradiciones culturales de la región pacífica, en sus diferentes expresiones autóctonas. Además de socializar a Santiago de Cali como una ciudad multietnica y pluricultural, generando espacios de inclusión social, a través de la articulación de procesos y actividades artísticas, gastronómicas y de industria cultural”([http://.cali.gov.co/publicaciones.php?id=2502](http://.cali.gov.co/publicaciones.php?id=2502)), accessed 3 November 2010.

In recent years the festival has also included artists from disaporic communities, performing currulao and chirimia as well as other cross-cultural museo-cultural derivations. Local music projects originating from the Pacific coast have emerged to much popular acclaim, such as Choc Quib Town—a reference to the department of Choco and town of Quibdo—with global pop hits such as “Somos Pacificos,” further valorizing Pacific Afro-Colombian identity through fusions of pop currulao, funk and rap, while playing with the double-meaning of “Pacífico” and infusing localisms into their music and rap lyrics. In New York City, AfroColombia NY, an Afro-Colombian cultural advocacy group has emerged in academia, under the direction of sociologist Guesnerth Josué Perea, a colleague at BMCC (CUNY). For a biographical sketch of Enrique Urbano Tenorio, see [http://dintev.univalle.edu.co/Cvisaacs/index2.php?option=com_content&do_pdf+1&i d=327](http://dintev.univalle.edu.co/Cvisaacs/index2.php?option=com_content&do_pdf+1&id=327), accessed November 3, 2010.
Blancos” features Diego “Yiyo” Obregón playing *marimba de chonta* and *guasa* and percussionists John Jairo Bonilla on *bombo del Pacífico* instead of costeño regulars Ronald Polo and Morris Canâte. Explaining why he programmed the song last, Mayor comments: “I thought [this] is not a dance piece, the subject is serious, [and] it is the most jazzy…” (personal communication, October 30, 2010). A vocal work, Mayor had started to arrange the song in several different ways (e.g., as a *bambuco*, *pasillo*, and *rajaleña*) but it was not until after trying several Pacific coast rhythms that he settled upon currulao for the arrangement. Obregón and Bonilla were invited because, as specialists of Pacific coast music, Mayor did not want to miss the opportunity to work with them, explaining: “I just like to mix elements from different sources” (ibid.).

Mayor, whose compositional and arranging approach often revolves around the costeño percussionists in the band, further notes: “The [working] method was the same as it has been with Ronald (Polo) and Morris (Cañate). I show them the tune with the suggestion of the groove that I hear, and they might or might not change it, or sometimes they would change the groove in some sections” (personal correspondence, email, July 11, 2010). However, as Mayor also comments, Polo and Cañate tend to privilege Atlantic coastal rhythms consistent with their musical training and background. Given Mayor’s propensity for collaboration then, Bonilla and Obregón’s participation in “Pañuelitos Blancos” is especially significant since he switches out costeño drums (and drummers) for a Pacific-based percussion section, with its related techniques and *ritmos*. Set in 6/8, the standard meter for currulao—
which binds the work throughout—Mayor’s arrangement provides contrast between verses, bridge, and chorus sections primarily through subtle manipulation of key relationships and tonal areas, which he juxtaposes in a manner that creates overlapping sonic resonances and textures. Each section of the arrangement is carefully designed to draw upon aural signifiers from different musical fields (currulao, Latin jazz and popular dance music) that, when woven together, serve to communicate a textual socio-political statement.

In order to achieve this, processes of recontextualization occur utilizing a variety of the arrangements’ musical factors. Diego “Yiyo” Obregón’s marimba tunings, for example, not only coincide with standard Western tunings of the ensemble’s winds, brass, and strings, its very presence foreground the regional inclusiveness that Mayor and Folklore Urbano foster. Obregón’s marimbas, which he builds and describes as having afinación mas definado (“a more defined tuning”), allows them to provide melodic-harmonic counterpoint that is consonant within the arrangement (personal communication, November 5, 2010). In other words, capable of playing traditional scales and/or pitch sets, Obregón’s marimbas are constructed to correspond with well-tempered Western tuning systems, enabling them to fit into a variety of non-traditional and/or contemporary musical (and social) settings.

The harmonic procedures in “Panuelitos Blancos” are also most evident in its structural key relationships, especially during interlude, bridge and chorus sections, which are all closely related. That is, the introduction\textsuperscript{198}, interludes\textsuperscript{199}, and

\textsuperscript{198} Introduction: [iv – i/v] or C-minor to G-minor/D-minor.
choruses\(^{200}\) (using currulao and Afro-Caribbean and Afro-Pacific coastal traditional and popular forms) are generally in G-minor. During song verses, however, Mayor works with extended harmonies written in B-flat-Major and its relative minor tonal areas (G-minor), using chords with voicings somewhat reminiscent of Brazilian and Latin jazz. And, for the all-important mambo (dance) section—especially evident in the later montunos and moñas (ostinati) of the arrangement—he resolves to F Major, at which point the marimba solos to the end. Together, marimba and the brass section provide melodic counterpoint, ornamentation, and accented phrasings. Except for the closing tag (discussed below), the overarching harmonic architecture is: vi - I - V in B-flat Major (but with sections clearly in G-minor), a somewhat conventional harmonic scheme.

As mentioned above, the verse sections deploy a rather modern, jazz chord progression with expanded harmonies, including sharp-11\(^{th}\), flat-13\(^{th}\) and half-diminished chords as well as its characteristic descending chromatic, harmonic motion. Alternatively, The bridge and choruses use somewhat more traditional material in terms of melodic and harmonic (and rhythmic) content (i.e., triadic voicings, four-part harmony, harmonic rhythm, etc.). For example, in the relative minor key, the [iv–i–V7–i] chord cycle (c-minor, g-minor, D7th, and g-minor) in the choruses is a progression commonly found throughout much of the Spanish Caribbean and Latin America (e.g., Puerto Rican seis and aguinaldos); Mayor’s

\(^{199}\) Interludes harmonic cycle (mm.68-88): [iv – i – v - i] or C-minor, G-minor, D-minor, G-minor, played over a G in the bass (pedal tone).

\(^{200}\) Chorus progression (e.g., mm.76-83): C-minor7, g-minor7, D7 b 9 , g-minor.
juxtaposition thus creates rich contrasts between them.

Notably, at m.147 (or 3’19), the arrangement shifts to a sharply contrasting mambo section, modulating to the key of F-Major; here functioning as a sort of Dominant (V) harmony in relation to the original key (B-flat Major). Introduced by the marimba and piano, giving impetus to the melodic phrase (see Score 3.6), a new harmonic pattern (V7 – I, or C7 – F) is established while the bass initially undergirds the transition with a bordón figure, that, later, and for the remainder of the mambo’s montuno section, resembles bajo anticipado (anticipated bass) of salsa and Cuban popular dance styles and Colombian bambucos’ Pacific coastal swing:

![Score 3.6](image)

Score 3.6. “Pañuelitos Blancos” - Intro to mambo section (mm.147-150). Used with permission.
Adapting the bass pattern to currulao’s meter—a sesquialtera or superimposition of 3/4 and 6/8 meters, the extended instrumental ‘mambo’ section combines the rhythmic pulse of currulao with a montuno pattern. Taken up by the winds, as they play classic moñas (or short brass interjections and responses), Obregón’s marimba solos while the montuno increasingly build until suddenly the “tag” section appears, returning momentarily to the languorous Latin jazz harmony of the verse. Only the first line of the text is sung—“Ella se levanta antes que l’sol”—as the song softly concludes, ending with an open-ended, somewhat ambiguous G-minor 13th chord.

Set to the rhythm of currulao, “Pañuelitos Blancos” strives for a textual and musical balance that merges Latin jazz with Latin dance music to underscore the notion of “peace” (or calma) presented in the lyrics. Mayor’s creative choice to set “Pañuelitos Blancos” to the ritmo par excellence of the Afro-Colombian Pacific region is significant, although the referential incorporation of Latin jazz and Cuban montuno also work to make wider African-Caribbean and pan-Latin intercultural connections. Argentinian vocalist Sofía Rei Koutsovitis sings about the protagonist’s (“Juana”) life struggles, acknowledging the social, often violent, political disenfranchisement that affect her home and nation. The softly sung verses, articulated over smoothly unfolding Latin jazz changes, seem to undulate with currulao’s underlying pulse, invoking the constant, temporal movement of Pacific shores. Expressing hope and desire for a more secure, less impoverished existence,

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201 Mayor explained that “Juana,” the song’s protagonist, was later changed to the more generic “Ella,” to avoid any association with marijuana (personal communication, January 16, 2011).
sung from a third person’s viewpoint, the text never mentions violence directly. Yet the chorus refrain, “Saca’el pañuelito blanco,” a nationally recognized gesture that symbolically signals a collective call for peace, serves to remind listeners of colonial legacies of poverty, domestic social and political instability, and the nation’s failure to provide for all its citizens. Sung over the familiar Latin-Caribbean chord progression, the text “su amor es su verdad” (“her love is her truth”) expresses an Afro-Colombian ethos of individual and collective empowerment and the determination to create peace through unity.

Conclusions

Pablo Mayor’s presence and participation in the Latin music scene has helped to galvanize many of the cosmopolitan Colombian musicians living and working in NYC, shaping what has evolved into a cohesive musical community and mutually supportive network of diverse regional and stylistic constituencies. Through the efforts of the Mayors, the growing musical collective has developed beyond Folklore Urbano itself to encompass an annual music festival (*El Encuentro de Musicos Colombianos en Nueva York*), recording production and distribution (via Chonta Records) and an expanding community of musicians, artists, venues and resources. While Folklore Urbano continues to stake a place for its brand of Colombian jazz and big band dance music, the larger musicians community represents an unprecedented effort at transcending social stigmas typically associated with Colombian social identities and regionalisms, including violence. A case study of a young community’s agency for transformation, Mayor et al. nurture intra- and intercultural
dialogue through socially conscious (read pacifist) musical expression of *Colombianidad* that encourages non-Colombians to participate as well. Intercultural strategies involved are such that Colombian musicians engage in adapting to eclectic musical genres and styles (multiplicities) in partnerships with local musicians while retaining, preserving and advancing Colombian traditional and modern musics. Following Rappaport’s concept of interculturalism (in studies among indigenous (Nasa) Colombian intellectuals), I too find that the New York musicians’ intercultural pursuits do not derive from realist anthropology but rather from a political [or cultural] imaginary in which culture is a vehicle for negotiating diversity” (6).

Rapapport maintains that the goal of interculturalism is pluralism in practice:

> Interculturalism does not…consist exclusively of the process of appropriation of external ideas within indigenous movement[s], but is an essential component of everyday social interaction…a kind of political microcosm in which pluralist practice can be imagined (7).

Slobin views interculturalism more as a network or series of pathways, where diasporas operate within a supercultural or mainstream system of linkages across and between societies and its members. “[W]ithin subcultures, local/interculture intersections can be very important for diasporic groups” (1993: 79). Noting how “[t]he nice thing about music is that it combines the local and the national, the immediate and the intercultural” (10), he adds that “[i]nteraction among intercultures goes on among all possible players” (79) as “diasporic interculture[s]…emerge from the linkages that subcultures set up across national boundaries” (64). Drawing from both Slobin and Rappaport, I further suggest that intercultural processes in diaspora
can and do occur across musical matrices and cultural boundaries, as musical priorities, affinities and preferences (of styles, genres, or hybrids thereof), whether strictly adhered to or experimented with, reflect a pluralist praxis evidenced by the multiplicities which Mayor et al. represent (also see Hamm 1983).

For example, although regarded a *rumbero* (salsa musician) and *jazzer* (jazz musician) by his musical peers, Mayor’s primary association as a *salsero* is understandable, given that as a Caleño musician he worked in that city for several years during a period of that genre’s heightened activity in the 1980s and 90s. As Waxer has shown, salsa was adopted as a representative style of the new urban and cosmopolitan context of the city (2002b: 223), much as it had been for New York City Latinos in the late 1960s and 70s. And yet, it is also Mayor’s intercultural involvement and performance tenure with New York salsa mainstays Orchestra Broadway that provide him with experience and substantial cultural capital to advocate for Colombian music in a salsa town—that is, active interculturalism in practice. Moreover, despite Mayor’s earliest interest in Colombian music (*música llanera, vallenato, bambuco, pasillo, etc.*), his musical-cultural values are also informed by the presence of Cuban musicians and teachers in Bogotá, from whom he acquired a strong respect for and understanding of Cuban music.\(^{202}\) To Mayor, Cuban

\(^{202}\) Mayor in fact credits several Cuban music faculty members at Universidad de los Andes for his own formation and for awakening a musical consciousness among other young Colombian music students who were then just starting to delve into their own traditional music during this period. Moreover, Cuban and Colombian musical exchange has long been evidenced through artists collaboration and countless recordings of *música bailable* (or *tropical*) in the 1950s, especially on Medellín labels such as Codisco, Tropical, and Discos Fuentes.
musicians represent a resourceful, transnational model to be emulated; one demonstrating a deeply embodied approach to music, indicative of a deep cultural appreciation and valuation of one’s own musical culture. Differentiated by what he had personally witnessed, Mayor explains: “at the Universidad de los Andes, there was [a] faculty of Cuban musicians and they were great instrumentalists.” On the other hand: “Colombian instrumentalists...[were] always muy así (i.e., mediocre)...there were good groups...but that consciencia (consciousness or awareness of music’s cultural value) did not exist” (interview, May 12, 2005). As a result, Cuban music has served Mayor’s edification and conceptualization of Colombian music’s potential global and transnational worth.

Mayor has also experienced intracultural tensions within his own musical practice. Perceived primarily as either a rumbero (salsa musician) or Latin jazz musician, he was not always easily or readily accepted among practitioners of traditional musics in his own country. While region, race, and class continue to play a role in maintaining boundaries of authenticity, limiting Mayor’s acceptance among traditional musicians, his commitment and immersion to music overrides resistance to what can be viewed as either elitist, top down cosmopolitanism or the re-inscription of hegemonic norms. For instance, well aware that salsa is not an “indigenous” Colombian musical tradition, Cali’s top salsa bands in the 1980s (i.e., Grupo Niche, Guayacan) were nonetheless highly influential to Mayor precisely because of their ability to play a “distinct Colombian salsa that used elements from Pacific Coast Afro-Colombian music with international styles” (Waxer 2002b, 236). While there is
no argument or doubt that Colombian salsa exists as its own national version of the pan-Latin genre, in New York City, salsa and jazz still provide a dominant, dynamic cross-cultural model, a space wherein Mayor can present his musical vision of Colombianidad (Colombianness). In New York, as Mayor claims, “everyone…is in the same place,” adding that “everyone is a stranger here, but everyone is representative of their culture…in New York the people at least listen” (interview, May 12, 2005).

The reception by New York audiences to Folklore Urbano’s musical proposal thus contrasts sharply with essentialist localisms or regionalisms that Mayor experienced while in Colombia. For many of the so-called Nueva Colombia musicians, ever mindful of the audience’s agency, this has spurred further creative experimentation—or fusion, the popular term often used to describe the avant-cosmopolitan scene in Bogotá. As a result, Mayor’s recontextualization of Colombian-based musical forms, implemented while embracing Cuban, Puerto Rican, and Dominican musics from the wide spectrum of pan-Latin and Caribbean, African, indigenous and global popular music genres and styles, render a clear example of center/periphery interaction, intercultural engagement and cosmopolitan aesthetics at work. As Berrian (2000) argues, a recontextualized space is helpful for understanding how memories are circularly reinscribed in the process of cultural regeneration(175). The connection between Berrian’s study of Caribbean popular songs and the work of Mayor et al., then, is the extent to which recontextualized Caribbean music and culture are manifested within liminal, urban spaces; spaces from
which diasporic and cosmopolitan people, particularly artists, create and recreate their
lives.\footnote{The idea of recontextualization is itself reminiscent of Nelson George’s neologism \textit{retro-nouveau}, the notion of an embrace of the past to create “passionate, fresh
expressions and institutions…”\cite{George1989}, qtd in Berrian, 2000:175; as well as Pierre Nora’s \textit{lieux de memoire}, or sites of memory: the linkage between memory and history to the imagination and its “capacity for metamorphosis and an endless
recycling”\cite{175}. For a functional definition of \textit{cosmopolitanism}, see Turino 2000.}

In the context of New York City’s Latin music scene, Mayor’s Folklore
Urbano and the musician community can be regarded part of a continuing chapter in
Colombian and Latin and Caribbean music history.\footnote{In a sense, Mayor is following in the footsteps of earlier Latin big band leaders such Frank “Machito” Grillo and Rafael Cortijo, each of whom popularized Afro-Cuban and Afro-Puerto Rican folk musics (respectively), transforming them through
modern arrangements, incorporation of jazz elements and instrumentation, live
performance and the then emerging Latin music recording industry.} Until recent years, the
Colombian population in the metropolitan region was neither sufficiently large
enough to sustain a strictly Colombian audience for Mayor (or the community) nor
principally engaged in identity politics \textit{vis a vis} Latinidad in the city. Folklore
Urbano’s proposal therefore highlights the growing New York Colombian
community and Mayor’s commitment to \textit{Colombianidad}/Colombianness—an identity
registered here through various sites of production (discussed above), where efforts at
negotiating space for Colombian musics and musicians are concentrated within an
urban, multiethnic and global environment. While Mayor’s initial strategy sought to
appeal to a wider general audience of Latin and world music fans, in recent years the
focus has shifted, in part due to increasing demographics of first, second and third
generation Colombians as well as more recent arrivals. Cognizant of the Colombian niche market that has become his primary audience, Mayor self-consciously draws upon the richness of Colombian and pan-Latin dance musical resources (i.e., salsa, Cuban son, mambo) to appeal to this growing segment of the population—an ongoing process informed by his experience as pianist for New York salsa mainstays Orchestra Broadway.

For Mayor however, Colombian Latin jazz serves as the core, connective tissue, the interface and point of interaction between and among his Colombian collaborators and the New York City musicians (from different national and ethnic groups) he performs with. As a genre that privileges wide stylistic, individual and collective improvisatory musical skills and techniques, Latin jazz enables a heightened level of intercultural musical dialogue to occur without losing either the constitutive or collective consciousness of individual identities, whether defined locally, regionally, nationally, or as a cosmopolitan feature. Ihán Betancourt, a Bogotá based musician (and grandson of folklorist Delia Zapata Olivella), who

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205 While my dissertation highlights the efflorescence of new Colombian music in NYC’s global context, a similar process is presently occurring among communities of South American musicians from Peru, Ecuador, Venezuela, Argentina, Chile and Uruguay, requiring further study. E.g., Argentinian vocalist Sofia Tosello, guitarist Eric Kurimski and Afro-Peruvian percussionist Juan “Cotito” Medrano, to name only a few artists.

performed and recorded with Mayor in the earlier years of Folklore Urbano offers the following assessment:

Pablo Mayor [is] more jazz, more intellectual, reading music…all these are translated into different stylisms, ornamentation, nuances, etc. Pablo [has] played traditional porros—he didn’t sound like a band here [in Colombia]; his vocabulary included broader jazz harmonies, more chromatic, more nuances. A Bogotá musician would not use the jazz harmonies that Pablo Mayor uses” (Ihán Betancourt interview, August 25, 2008).

The combination of Colombian musical styles and aesthetics, imbued with jazz nuances and consciousness (Austerlitz), as Betancourt’s commentary suggests, signal a significant change and new direction for New York’s Latin musical culture. Not only has Mayor’s experiences and education in Cali, Bogotá, and Denton (Texas) inculcated a uniquely cosmopolitan musical perspective, his cultural advocacy and entrepreneurship has enabled him to bring to New York Colombian music and musicians to an important global center of Latin music. Mayor, along with his contingent of polyglot collaborators, therefore make claims for a Colombian-jazz idiom that appeals to diverse audiences even as they establish intercultural dialogue through music. As Panamanian pianist Danilo Perez expresses it, “…you don’t need a conga [for it to be] what they call Latin jazz.”

Mostly evident in his compositions and arrangements, recordings, and the Encuentro festival production, the cultural strategies and musical procedures deployed by Mayor support both the textual and subtextual elements present in Folklore Urbano’s music: the Encuentro thus serves to

mediate texts/subtexts of the larger community through live performance, and, in those efforts transmit their meanings beyond localized boundaries—Folklore Urbano’s recordings document and mediate the exchange. Christopher Small’s dictum could hardly be more apropos:

We shall, of course, not be starting from scratch but will be drawing on our memories of what has sounded right to us in the past as well as on our imagination of what is going to sound right to us in this place, at this moment, and with these fellow musickers (1998: 218).

In the first decade of the new millennium, New York City remains a global capital, an urban, transnational host space that serves as a strategic local base of operation for Pablo Mayor and his musicians. Working to insert themselves into the larger, local Latin scene and global music markets, New York City is a musical laboratory, an incubator where musicians constantly experiment with glocal musics of indigenous and exogamous origins. Musical interactions taking place in New York simultaneously and mutually transform the city’s cultural, sonic landscape and that of its participants. The transnational city affects musicians in a number of ways—artistically, socially, economically, and politically—while itself undergoes its own incessant urban cycles, modifications, and transformations. This hyperlocal and dynamically reciprocal relationship I suggest index the mutual agencies of New York City and the Colombian diaspora musicians, illustrating how they each reinscribe, respond to, or resist the creation or recreation of musical variants according to local factors and intercultural processes.

That Mayor strives to create a space for the new Colombian musicians while
establishing a market niche for his own project within NYC’s highly competitive and polycultural environment is not limited to either his own enterprise or professional benefit. Expanding the role of bandleader to include a mission of cultural advocacy, pedagogical goals and entrepreneurship, Mayor’s musical activism is inseparable from his artistry. Aware of the necessity to create opportunities where Colombians in New York (or elsewhere) can create and perform their “new” music, and thereby assert a cultural politics that affirms a revitalized social identity, or *Nueva Colombianidad* (New Colombianess), for Mayor, this process encompasses more than a singular, simplistic definition of ethnic, national, or cultural identity, or an essentialized composite or hybridized simplification of authentic musical elements. Instead, the incorporation and blending of Colombian and intercultural musical artifacts results from their *coexistence* within a contemporary, post-diasporic urban complex. Highly mobile, global in consciousness, not rooted in any particular location, Mayor and Folklore Urbano embody new Colombian identities as well as tensions that result from a desire to be grounded in one’s homeland culture while remaining free to willfully adapt to any local and global musical sources.
CHAPTER FOUR

*Pa dónde vas Marioneta?/Where is Marioneta going?: La Cumbiamba eNeYé: Gaita Praxis, Transnationalism, and Transformation*

In the final case study I shift the plane of analysis to examine transnational movements of musicians between the NYC diaspora and Colombia. The case study investigates musicians and musical performance not only as expressions of Colombian cultural identity, or reflections of social behavior, but to inquire what it means to play traditional music—*gaita*—in a modern, urban diaspora, *then* to return and participate at local, rural performance competitions in the region of Colombia from which the music is from. In expanding the field, as it were, I engage discourses of modernity, globalization, and cultural politics to examine not only contextual but transformative processes occurring among the musicians and their host and homeland audiences. Although drawn from the same community of cohort musicians in the NYC Colombian music scene, multidimensional aspects differ radically from prior cases. Here, we observe NYC Colombian musicians *and* traditional musicians from Colombia crossing transnational paths, sharing performance spaces and audiences, interacting musically in ways that highlight musical and cultural change. As such, interculturalism and performance work to emphasize a cyclical transnationalism that enables intracultural and cross generational dialogue and shifts in cultural proprietorship to take place, even as it locally and globally empower the actors involved.
Prior to leaving for San Jacinto to compete in the *XVIIth Festival Nacional Autóctono de Gaitas*, Martín Vejarano and La Cumbiamba eNeYé (LCE) were scheduled to perform at a small hipster club located in the Bohemian artists enclave cf. Flores 2009b of Williamsburg, Brooklyn. Based in New York City, Martín and LCE specialize in *música de gaita*, a genre that forms a substantial part of its core repertoire. As an ensemble of mostly young, white and urban Bogotá-born musicians, LCE claims to “perform in a variety of styles from Afro-Colombian music traditions—from both the Atlantic and Pacific coasts of Colombia—while retaining the styles’ original formats.”

This is strikingly apparent on their first US release *Marioneta* (2006), which contains traditional as well as original music in diverse genres and hybrid substyles, including *chirimía*, *currulao*, *puya-merenge*, *garabato-chande*, *bullerengue*, *champeta*, *porro*, *cumbia* and *gaita* (see Figure 4.1 below).

Promoting the August 1st, 2008, event via email as a rare opportunity to hear La Cumbiamba eNeYé in the “last show in NYC before our trip to Colombia,” Vejarano emphatically urged everyone: “so don’t miss it!” In recent years, The Rose has provided a performance space for both local and recently arrived young, cosmopolitan Colombian musicians to regularly showcase their projects. As part of New York City’s emerging *Nueva Colombia* music scene, trendy urban outposts such as The Rose have contributed to the cultural efflorescence of the movement, with

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208 Quoted from CD notes to LCE’s *Marioneta* (2006); see Discography.
209 Email correspondence, sent July 28, 2008. Then current members of LCE included Nilko Guarin, voice; Silvia Sierra, voice; Juan Ospina, voice; Juan P. Uribe, soprano sax (not there); Pacho Davila, alto sax (not there); Sebastian Cruz, percussion; Daniel Correa, percussion; Camilo Rodriguez, gaita macho, percussion; and Martín, gaita hembra, percussion.
audiences of young, non-Colombians exposed to a wide variety of Colombian musics as never before.\textsuperscript{210} What also marked this event as particularly special however was the expected presence and participation of Los Gaiteros de San Jacinto, the most recognized and highly influential \textit{conjunto de gaita} from Colombia.

![Image of La Cumbiamba eNeYé](https://example.com/lacumbiamba.png)

\textbf{Figure 4.1.} \textit{Marioneta}, La Cumbiamba eNeYé’s first recording was released in 2006 on Chonta Records.

As acknowledged bearers of the costeño \textit{gaita} tradition—a music genre inextricably linked to \textit{cumbia}—Los Gaiteros have for more than five generations been its foremost practitioners, traveling internationally and bringing traditional folk musics of

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{marioneta.png}
\caption{La Cumbiamba eNeYé’s first recording was released in 2006 on Chonta Records.}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{210} As noted in the Introduction chapter above, the \textit{Nueva Colombia} movement occurs both in Colombia and its diasporas, with music serving as a central locus of the transformative processes underway; scholars such as Ochoa (2003) and Santamaria (2008) are leading ethnomusicological study and analysis in this area of the discipline. Often spoken of as “scenes,” the Nueva Colombia movement in New York—due to its essential global modernity and importance as an international cultural center and economic power—has been at the forefront of “avant garde” and “fusion” processes. For a study of the Bogotá, Medellin and New York City fusion “scenes,” see Simon Calle’s 2012 dissertation.
Colombia’s Atlantic coast, such as gaita, porro, puya and cumbia—the *ritmos* (or styles) that constitute the gaita tradition—to audiences worldwide.211 The performance of LCE together with Los Gaiteros in a NYC venue thus exemplifies a striking case study of intracultural exchange and the transformation of musical values that involve several factors: relevance of “place”, transnational flows of cultural material, cosmopolitanism, and a classic encounter between tradition and modernity, conservation and innovation, all within the context of the NYC Colombian diaspora. In this chapter I explore processes and tensions that arise when local and regional folklore meet and encounter global or world music ambitions, as issues of authenticity, innovation, and preservation are raised for both the indigenous *gaita* practitioners and the *new gaiteros* from *afuera* or *del exterior* (outside of Colombia; i.e., the diaspora).

The focus of my study is *música de gaita* as performed by Martín Vejarano and LCE—or rather, as Marioneta, the name they use when performing in Colombia. As an *ad hoc* ensemble, Marioneta refers to the conjunto de gaita organized by Vejarano made up of both New York City and Bogotá-based musicians, including members of La Cumbiamba eNeYé together with young musicians from the capital city who study *música costeña* (costeño music). The fieldwork and data presented in

211 Scheduled to perform at Queens Theater in the Park in Flushing-Meadows the following day, five members from Los Gaiteros were present at The Rose that evening: Juan Fernández “Chuchita” Polo, Manuel Antonio “Toño” García, Gabriel Torregrosa, Dionysio Yepes, and Freddys Arrieta. Juan Nicolás Hernández, the senior leader of the renowned conjunto de gaita did not travel to NYC this time, due to recent health issues. In fact, he rarely performs with Los Gaiteros these days except for special occasions.
this chapter take into account audience reception to Marioneta/LCE’s performance and participation in the local context of San Jacinto’s annual Festival Nacional Autóctona de Gaita, in which they take part as self-conscious representatives from Bogotá. Part ethnographic report, part reception study, the narrative is driven by the intersubjectivities of Vejarano, local festival organizers, and the audience’s response.

Hence, I am concerned with the movement of people and expressive culture through geographical borders and social spaces (i.e., home countries and host nations). The search for new spaces, networks and creative outlets for artistic and aesthetic cultural expression (Zheng 2010:31) by Colombian musicians that perform Atlantic coast genres of the gaita complex (cumbia, gaita or gaita corrida, porro, puya) signals transnational flows which move in a circular pathway between homeland and hostland. With questions of authentic “tradition” and definitions of “folklore” serving as a subtext in the narrative, particularly in settings where gaita is performed by musicians from both within and outside the official festival cultural context, the introduction of new forms of innovation, however discreetly, is a central theme or unit of analysis. As Ana María Ochoa points out, “Innovation or musical creativity transforms not only the instrument and the genre but challenges the ideologies through which both elements have been constituted historically” (Ochoa 1996: 40). With respect to socio-political and cultural economies occurring during the festival event (that is, “on the ground”), these questions are raised in order to underscore significant musical innovations and shifts in meaning(s) for local audiences and cosmopolitan Colombian musicians alike, even as the thornier issue of
Colombian identity is raised. Thus, through an ethnomusicology of gaita performance and its cultural meaning, my aim here is to illustrate how one of Colombia’s most popular and traditional music cultural resources (gaita) and its contemporary praxis, elucidates processes of transnational and global cultural transformation along the cumbia axis, while serving local and transnational desires (cf. Flores 2009b).

To trace this process, my fieldwork plan was to shadow and his musicians’ path from New York City to Bogotá, then to San Jacinto for the festival, where I would document Marioneta’s rehearsals and performances before and during the competition. The combined ensemble brought together three émigré musicians from the New York’s LCE with three Bogotá-based musicians, demonstrating the joining together of two contemporary urban youth musical movements; one from the US diaspora, the other from Colombia’s central Andean capital city. Along with (on gaita hembra), the New York-based Colombian musicians are Camilo Rodriguez (gaita macho and maraca) and Juan Ospina (cantador); the Bogotá musicians included Edwin Castellano (llamador), Freddy Urrea (tambor alegre), and Pedro Garzon (tambora). Significantly, Marioneta’s musicians reflect the capital city’s heterogeneous urban diversity of race and class and was thus formed solely for the purpose of establishing a transnational gaita conjunto capable of realizing ’s goals for the competition.

In addition, I also planned to interview and record audience members during the festival, paying particular attention to their reactions to Marionetas’ performances.
The goal was to gauge audience reception to los de afuera de la region (that is, those from outside the region), and by doing so, addressing emic/etic concerns. Post-festival activities remained open-ended, but included the possibility of further travel and immersion into the Serranía region to meet, play music with, and further observe Martín’s interactions with local gaiteros. For the moment, however, we return to the Brooklyn context, and the event from which the case study began.

The Rose itself is a rather unremarkable venue located on Williamsburg’s eastern border, adjacent to the Bushwick section of Brooklyn. In a small, dimly lit neighborhood bar, with a tiny stage and dance floor, and a bar that runs along the length of one wall, seating is limited, capable of holding no more than seventy-five people at one time. Patronized by local artists, working class residents, and young urban professionals, The Rose regularly programs ethnic music with a strong propensity for pan-Latin-based dance music with a traditional and/or experimental orientation. Depending on the particular artist or group scheduled to perform on a given night, audiences are often comprised of a wide variety of Latin Americans: Brazilians, or Peruvians, or Colombians, as well as curious aficionados of world music and dance. The setting is truly cosmopolitan, appealing to broad and sophisticated musical tastes and sensibilities, with a festive party atmosphere that provokes audience enthusiasm.

Vererano’s willingness and desire to participate in this fieldwork, allowing full access to both him and his musicians, would not have been possible without first having developed a personal and professional relationship over several years.
That night, Colombian musician Martín announced that it was going to be a special night because *los maestros* (the masters)—their musical mentors, from whom they learned everything—were present, opened LCE’s set with a *gaita corrida*—an instrumental piece whose rhythmic base is closely aligned with cumbia. While *música de gaita* has long held historical significance as authentic Colombian traditional folklore, and as a progenitor of cumbia, many of the sounds associated with costeño *gaita* are increasingly evident in Colombian popular music: e.g., as heard in Carlos Vives “Zoila” (*La Tierra del Olvido*, 1995), Hector Buitrago’s “Música Somos” (*Conector*, 2008), Benavides’ own Sidestepper project (e.g., “In Beats we Trust” from *3 AM: In Beats We Trust*, 2003), and in the efflorescence of the contemporary fusion music movements in Bogotá, Colombia, and its diaspora over the past decade. In the notes accompanying the 2007 Latin Grammy award winning recording, *Un Fuego de Sangre Pura* (“a fire of pure blood”) by Los Gaiteros de San Jacinto, Ana María Ochoa writes: “Through their own new compositions and through teaching young musicians, they are a crucial link between traditional *gaita* music and its contemporary renewal.”  

*Un Fuego de Sangre Pura* is decidedly in the traditional gaita style of San Jacinto, hence, its nomination and subsequent win in the Grammy’s “folkloric” category. Los Gaiteros de San Jacinto recorded the full-length compact disc in NYC during a 2004 visit. Co-produced by the ubiquitous Colombian producer Ivan Benavides, *Un Fuego de Sangre Pura* was released on the Smithsonian Folkways

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213 Ana María Ochoa, CD notes to *Un Fuego de Sangre Pura* (Smithsonian Folkways Recordings (SFW CD 40531), 2006, p.8.
record label in 2006, winning the 2007 Latin Grammy for “Best Folkloric Album,” thereby garnering wider international recognition and interest in música de gaita.

In honor of their special guests, LCE played their own version of the opening song from the Los Gaiteros CD: “Fuego de Cumbia” (“Cumbia Fire”). Followed by several songs from their own repertoire, for example guitarists Sebastian Cruz’ composition “Marioneta”—the title track and name of LCE’s first release, invited members of Los Gaiteros to join and perform with them. Prototypically, “Chuchita,” the cantador (voice, or lead vocalist) began by reciting a décima, as members of Los Gaiteros gradually replaced LCE musicians on gaita macho and hembra (male and female flutes) and tambor alegre (lead drum), while core members remained on tambora (or bombo, bass drum), llamador (timeline drum), and coro (vocal chorus). Together, playing mostly slower tempo Afro-Colombian bullerengues as well as cumbias and gaitas, the paired gaitas were heard perceptibly more clearly and the distinctively close musical interplay between the tambor alegre and gaita hembra was markedly evident on classic gaitas, cumbias, and porros, such as the ubiquitous “Campo Alegre.” Indeed, the performance demonstrated a rare example of master musicians and students performing traditional Colombian music together, sharing a stage in front of a mixed audience of Colombians, other Latinos, and New Yorkers of all kinds.

\[214\] Winning the Latin Grammy however would prove to have cultural and polemical repercussions for Los Gaiteros, the San Jacinto community, and música de gaita itself.
After several songs from the combined ensemble—but by which point dancers had overtaken the floor—LCE regulars returned to close out the set. Evidently, the presence of Los Gaiteros de San Jacinto had clearly inspired LCE, motivating them to continue the performance with a renewed dynamic vigor. Whereas previously they had played confidently and efficiently, after playing with the “masters” they exhibited noticeably increased intensity that figuratively borrowed from the Smithsonian Folkways title *un fuego de sangre pura*: a fire of pure blood.

Significantly, in the urban setting, LCE’s material tends toward faster gaita corrida and puya uptempo songs, undoubtedly to appeal to young urbanites wanting to dance. Demonstrating careful selection of audience-appropriate music and its interpretation, LCE’s repertoire clearly leans toward the more traditional or authentic side of contemporary gaita/cumbia praxis, or its close approximation. Whether this was done solely due to the presence of the masters, or to present gaita “authenticity” in practice, the audience responded appreciatively nonetheless, dancing, clapping, and singing choruses throughout the set. Not unlike their San Jacinto musical mentors, LCE demonstrates what Gil Olivera regards as central qualities of Sanjacintero musicians; that is, they exhibit “natural musicians[hip] dispatched with a tremendous force,” while “making themselves heard throughout the world,” as they “carry a gaita in the deepest folds of their soul” (2002:40, author’s translation). Thus, in the performance context of The Rose, there is striking evidence of processes of intracultural interaction, exchange and transformation underway, impacting both local
cosmopolitan musicians in the diaspora and “authentic” traditionalists on the world music circuit in a variety of ways.

Since arriving in 2000, Vejarano has worked diligently with Colombian and non-Colombian musicians, singers and dancers alike, assembling one of the more visible and successful musical projects of the so-called *Nueva Música Colombiana*/New Colombian Music (or NMC) music community in the US. Insofar as LCE’s Atlantic coast repertoire is concerned, cumbia and gaita are not only genres or ritmos closely associated with San Jacinto’s folkloric musical traditions, they are musical sisters in that their geo-cultural place of origin is traceable to the Sinú valley, specifically the Montes de María la Alta region, or Serranía de San Jacinto in the northern coastal regions of Colombia. It is in this rural environment that the production of social life and racial *mestizaje* of costeño peoples work together to create an abundantly rich and enduring musical culture.

The region’s mountainous areas, lowland savannahs (*sabanas*), and marshes (*ciénagas*), located in the Department of Bolívar, lie southeast of the port city of Cartagena de Indias, only fifty kilometers from the Caribbean coast, to the west. Within this area, the people known as *costeños*, populating such storied musical centers as El Carmen de Bolívar, San Basilio de Palenque, Sincelejo, San Pelao, Ovejas, and San Jacinto, have contributed much to costeño culture and the many discourses and debates surrounding costeño music and dance, their history and significance, and the role they perform for local communities. The literature about the importance of *festivales patronales* (patron saint festivals), for example, where
expressive cultures are dynamically maintained, is particularly abundant, rife with local and regional claims to cultural authenticity, proprietorship, and patronage (see de Friedemann et al. 1995). And yet, most researchers agree that the distinctiveness of highly localized, microcultural expressions, evident in contemporary performance practices, reflect socio-cultural change as they reference and highlight tensions emanating from processes of cultural innovation vis a vis preservation. Given these contemporary tensions, I am interested in querying how the musical field of the cumbia/gaita complex extends and is impacted upon by lo de afuera (from the outside)—that is, by the Colombian diaspora.215

To illustrate this point, on LCE’s first release Marioneta (2006; see Figure 4.1), the New York City-based ensemble included a fifteen-second spoken word recording in which Nicolás Hernández, the elder and still active leader of Los Gaiteros de San Jacinto is heard briefly stating: Eso no lo pueden cambiar nunca por la gaita, la que suena suena desde que usted la empieza hacer. Hay un cardon (cactus) muy bueno, un cardon que... (recording trails off; see music example 11).216

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215 As Fernández L’Hoeste notes, “…in Bogotá[…]costeños are traditionally viewed as outsiders (p.342). This “outsider” status, whether referring to the diasporic exterior of the nation, or marginalized regions within national borders, is relevant to the discussion because and LCE are exemplars of precisely those “scions of the Colombian urbanized middle class” whom eagerly awaited for a pivotal figure like Carlos Vives to emerge and use popular genres such as cumbia and, especially, vallenato to “combine tradition and modernity.” (Ibid.; see also Vives’ La Tierra del Olvido (1995) in the discography). Vives thus established a musical model that would become highly emulated by Colombians of all stripes and from all sectors of society.

216 “That’s something that can never be changed in the gaita, that sound sounds from when you first start making it. There is a really good cactus [the material used to create a gaita], a long cactus that…” Nicolás Hernández. author’s translation; see
Programmed between original compositions by founding members Sebastián Cruz and Martin Vejarano (“Marioneta,” a puya, and “Pachanga,” a cumbia, respectively), Hernández’s comments are included as a tribute to música de gaita and the centrality of its indigenous flutes—the authority with which Hernández speaks is unquestionable. By incorporating Hernández’s voice on the recording, Vejarano et al. demonstrate the profound respect that they, as modern, urban cosmopolitan proponents of gaita, confer upon the acknowledged masters and carriers of the tradition. Vejarano however takes the honorifics a step further. He is interested in maintaining direct links with practitioners of traditional Colombian musics and the places from which they derive—thus, cultural preservation results from active participation and imitation, a necessary strategy deployed to gain entry into an “authentic” musical space. For Vejarano and his musicians, returning regularly to participate and compete in local traditional music festivals—e.g., San Jacinto—is not only empowering but enabling, allowing them to insert themselves into processes of cultural preservation while simultaneously emulating and advancing musical innovations that are intended to help galvanize and perhaps reinvent traditional costeño musics (i.e., cumbia and gaita). It is a bold act, and Vejarano’s experimentation—as a Bogotá musician connected to global networks via the NYC diaspora—with the very construction of the gaita, attenuating and altering the

Discography. The essence of Hernández’s comment, according to Vejarano’s understanding of the tradition, is that the sound of gaita cannot be modified or changed, if the gaita is well made and constructed from cactus, that is, from local materials (personal communication).
instrument’s tunings\textsuperscript{217}, using different materials (e.g., PVC tubing), and even applying new performance and arrangement techniques, suggests that participating, placing, or winning at the San Jacinto festival represents for Marioneta (and others) at least a modicum of acceptance by the tradition’s authenticators—the authorities, as it were. Before we travel to San Jacinto however, a discussion of \textit{Gaita} as a costeño genre and central form of cultural expression is in order.

\textbf{Gaita}

Gaita is a music genre that primarily developed in and around a number of small costeño towns such as Carmen de Bolívar, Ovejas and, in particular, San Jacinto, its popularly acknowledged birthplace. Diffused throughout the coastal departments of Bolívar, Sucre, and Córdoba, there have been vastly differing accounts and oral histories concerning its origins, with few music historians venturing to either date or determine its source. Scholars, such as List (1983), Miñana-Blasco (2000), and Zapata Olivella (1962) have focused instead on gaita’s tri-ethnic racial and cultural makeup to explain its derivation and evolution. More recently, gaita has received increased musicological and pedagogical attention for its indigenous antecedents and contemporary revival (see Convers and Ochoa 2007; Fortich Diaz 1994; Revista Cultural 2008). While gaita’s relationship to cumbia (particularly its rhythmic structural similarities) has been well commented upon, greater emphasis has been

\textsuperscript{217} While paired \textit{gaita macho} and \textit{hembra} flutes are tuned according to a traditional series of pitches (or scales), the system of tuning allows for a range of pitches within the scale. Moreover, the tuning system does not strictly correspond to Western scales or European equal-tempered tuning—major and minor intervals, for example, are neither uniform nor standardized; see Convers and Ochoa (2007) for a description of a traditional gaita “tunings” and “scales”(First part: p.55-56; Second part: pp.27-31).
placed by ethnomusicologists on, for example, the organology of flutes and natural materials native to the region, that is, caña and cardón, from which flutes are constructed (List 1983). Each gaita (an abbreviated term for conjunto de gaita) is thus comprised of an ensemble of membranophones and idiophones including paired gaitas, a large gourd maraca and tambores (drums): a llamador, a tambor macho or alegre, and a tambora or bombo. It has also been well noted that throughout la costa a variety of flutes are used, including the gaita corta (the short cane flute of San Pelayo) and the paired gaita hembra and gaita macho duct flutes (of San Jacinto, and elsewhere in the Serranía), with five and single fingerholes, respectively, both of Zenú provenance (see Figures 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5 below). While, here, we are concerned with the gaita hembra and gaita macho, gaita generally refers to the native flutes of the Kogi and Ika tribes that are found and continue to be played on the southwestern slopes of the Sierra Nevada, and the short and long paired sets of flutes played by both mestizo people of the lowland costal regions and the Afro-Colombian gaiteros on the littoral coast. In a more general use of the term, gaita also refers to the traditional music ensembles of San Jacinto that perform closely related musical genres (i.e., porro, cumbia, gaita and puya).
Figure 4.2. *Gaita macho* (left) and *maraca*, (right) *Gaita hembra.* Photo used with permission. Courtesy of Juan Pablo Assmus.

Figure 4.3. *Llamador*
Figure 4.4. Juan Carlos “El Chongo” Puello playing *tambor alegre*.

Figure 4.5. Ulianoth Daza Perez playing *tambora*.
Further complicating the term, gaita also can be said to represent the racialized, cultural dichotomy evident in local and regional music practices: one mestizo, yet primarily indigenous, and one predominantly African—that is, *gaita negra* (or Black gaita)—the latter traceable to Cartagena and its environs, where it remains prominently associated with a distinct drumming tradition found throughout Afro-Colombian costeño towns and villages such as Soplaviento and Palenque de San Basilio. Social anthropologists Peter Wade has written extensively on the cultural complexities of racial divisions associated with *musica costeña*, noting, for example, why “blackness was not simply eradicated from Costeño music” (2000, p.104). Notwithstanding the commercial “whitening” of costeño music that he correctly elucidates, blackness, in fact, could not be excised from costeño identity due to the closely intertwined relationship between Afro-Colombian and mestizo costeños, the retention of African musical values and aesthetics, and the enduring cultural capital it holds for them and (as it turns out) for the nation. Although discursive debates surrounding the topic endure, distinctions between black and mestizo forms of gaita exist and continue to be maintained; these can be viewed as a manifestation of conjoined yet independent racial and ethnic streams of identity. One need only to consider Catalino Parra, an elderly black gaitero from Soplaviento, and his grandson, Ulianoth Daza Perez, who also competes at the annual Gaita Festival of San Jacinto, or Carlos “El Chongo” Puello, from the San Fernando barrio of Cartagena, all of whom exemplify ongoing efforts by black gaiteros, young and old, to maintain the Black gaita tradition. In fact, Encarnación “El Diablo” Tovar remains perhaps the
most revered black gaitero, a cultural actor and legend among all costeño tamboleros (drummers).

Moreover, music and dance ethnographer Delia Zapata Olivella noted that while the organology and names [of Afro-Colombian instruments and styles] have changed from region to region, the choreography was conserved (Convers and Ochoa 2007: 32). This suggests that as variegated as gaita-related genres such as porros and puyas, or even fandangos may appear, gaita and cumbia are regarded as linked musical genres which evolved in tandem, over time and place, and as a result of inter-cultural, racial, and ethnic interactions over a historical continuum that has endured from the colonial era to the post-colonial present.

In San Jacinto, gaita is decidedly mestizo in form, function, and content, retaining indigenous melodic elements and instrumentation, while incorporating African-derived drums and drumming patterns, and perpetuating European choreographic styles, poetics, and social hierarchies. In the mid 1950s, for example, when Toño Fernández of San Jacinto began to set lyrics to traditional gaita melodies, this innovation was eventually adopted as common practice and cancioneros (singers) have since performed poetic texts (i.e., often in the form of work songs), incorporating them with the once instrumental conjunto de gaita—an ensemble that typically would play at informal social and community events such as fiestas and parrandas (celebrations). For today’s gaiteros then, as in the past, the ability to improvise prose is one of the required performance skills; a skill that is acquired from
learning and reciting décimas, a decidedly Spanish-derived poetic form that continues to be significantly valorized throughout the region.

Figure 4.6. (Left to right) Camilo Rodriguez, Martín Vejarano, and Juan Ospina of Marioneta. Photo used with permission, courtesy of Juan Pablo Assmus.

Although gaita is a musical tradition that developed within costeño family and community structures, with the establishment and proliferation of festivals celebrating local “folklore”—that is, traditional music, dance, and artisanship—its social context was altered, impacting performance dynamics for local artists and audiences. For example, one of the intrinsic aspects of local performance by San Jacinto’s conjuntos de gaita were the intense, raw competitions which took place between gaiteros engaged in heated décimas and piquerías, and other forms of endurance contests held during informal gatherings and festivals. As the Gaita Festival in San Jacinto gradually developed however, the passion of local and regional rivalries was contained while the artistry of musicianship was elevated to specialized levels of professionalism. As a result, when principal gaiteros like Toño Fernández, or the
Lara brothers, among others, migrated to urban centers of the interior to educate people about gaita, the communal function was diminished somewhat, causing concern among some of San Jacinto’s gaita elders. Thus, the weight of maintaining and carrying the gaita tradition fell squarely upon and largely emerged because of professional *conjuntos de gaita*, in particular Los Gaiteros de San Jacinto.\footnote{218}

**The San Jacinto Gaita Festival: Development and Displacement**

Colombia is a nation with a penchant for celebration, recognized for its many regional and folkloric festivals as well as its carnivals and beauty contests. Of these, the *Festival Nacional Autóctona de Gaita* in San Jacinto is unique, not for its size or level of media coverage—in fact, it is one of the smaller festivals of the Atlantic coastal region, with only about five-thousand people attending annually from primarily nearby towns in the departments of Bolívar, Sucre, and Córdoba. Although receiving minimal print or broadcast media reportage, the festival nevertheless commands an exceptional degree of regional, national and international attention.

\footnote{218 For a recent method book, including audio and video examples of gaita performance techniques and musical analysis, see Convers and Ochoa (2007). These authors also correctly point out that when gaita moved from the traditional rural areas to the urban cities, it lost much of its ritual (read communal) character; thus, to play folkloric music today is indeed a “profession,” even though, the music as part of daily life, endures (2007: 37, author’s translation, my use of quotation marks for “profession” are for emphasis). Also see Gil Olivera (2002), who recognizes that “la gaita es la misma cumbia/the gaita is the same cumbia,” yet primarily differentiates cumbia from gaita based on its black influence, which he describes as more *alegre* (joyful), in major keys; while the gaita of San Jacinto is in a minor key (p.106), more indigenous and mestizo.}
Located nearly thirty miles southeast of Cartagena, midway between Carmen de Bolivar to the south and San Juan Nepomuceno to the north, off route 25, the main arterial road lying twenty-five miles east of the coast, San Jacinto is a small rural town with an agrarian history of cattle raising and local farming. Nestled in a valley within Los Montes de María, most of the surrounding terrain is generally more hilly than mountainous but with some lowland savannahs and brush that are conducive to both the cultivation of local foods and animal grazing. Although the Plaza, where the town center is located, is typical of much colonial period municipal planning, most of the village’s small concrete block houses, many with corrugated tin roofs and makeshift patios, are located on steep, unpaved roads that disperse in various directions from the town center. The Plaza, which serves as the gathering place for San Jacinto’s populace of over twenty-thousand inhabitants, is where local merchants and artisans conduct business in open air markets while local stores (including cell phone and computer repair shops), restaurants and bars attend to the residents. Although San Jacinto appears rather rustic, long famous for the production of hamacas (hammocks) and vueltiaos (the distinctive hats worn by many costeños), local items of folk culture that have taken on symbolic meaning while promoting local cultural tourism and industry, street merchants fiercely compete for sales as they boisterously negotiate to beat their competitor’s prices. Although my stay in the town coordinated with the festivities of the gaita festival, I imagine that the sonic and social environment of blaring ghetto blasters, revving motorcycle engines, and walking or galloping horse-hooves were all fairly standard ambient occurrences. As people
milled about, or played chess in the Plaza, or hung around the “watering holes” (restaurants and bars), daily life in San Jacinto nevertheless betrayed a certain sentido (feeling) or sense of danger.

The region has long had a history of being in the middle of the ongoing conflict between Right wing paramilitary groups (AUC), revolutionary fighters (from FARC), and the ever-pervasive military presence of the Colombian national military. Even as small patrols of fully armed soldiers walked the streets, I could not help wondering if the groups of men casually riding on horseback were not members of organized landowning, paramilitaries instead of local young men in search of entertainment and social activity. Juan Pablo Assmus, my Colombian research assistant, counseled me to keep a low profile and not talk or engage with locals for fear that they might recognize me more as a gringo than as a Colombian (carrying a US passport or dollars, for example, is considered an invitation to kidnapping, theft, or worse). Needless to say, I followed these instructions.

The first San Jacinto Música de Gaita festival took place on December 2, 1988, dedicated by local town leaders as a tribute to Toño Fernández and the brothers Juan and Jose Lara, then leaders of Los Gaiteros de San Jacinto. Fernández, who had expressed his concern, believing that the gaita tradition was threatened and going to disappear (Convers and Ochoa, 2007: 34, author’s translation), together with other hombres de color de tierra (“men the color of earth”; Ibid.), including notable gaiteros such as Mañe Mendoza, Nolasco Mejia, Eliécer Meléndez, Nicolás
Hernández, and Toño Garcia, had been integral to the growing interest in música de gaita in urban areas (Revista Cultural, 2008). While touring with Los Gaiteros both nationally and internationally, and teaching and performing in Bogotá since the 1950s, countless people were introduced to costeño expressive culture through gaita. Although Fernández passed away the very same evening of the first festival’s inception, Toño, as he is fondly remembered, continues to be a cultural icon for the people of San Jacinto. Yet it was more than local recognition of Fernández or his colleagues’ musical contributions that impelled the community to establish the San Jacinto Gaita Festival as a cultural project of CORFOARTE, the local NGO. Town leaders recognized the importance of creating and developing a locally based organization that would promote San Jacinto and the Montes de María region as a vital site for the cultural maintenance and conservation of música de gaita, which they presented as significant not only for the town, or the Serranía, but for the nation itself.

Located in a region where since the mid-Twentieth century intense armed struggle, civil war, and violence has perpetually victimized large segments of the costeño population, San Jacinto has sought to appeal to the regional and central government

219 During this period, the brother and sister team of Manuel and Delia Zappata Olivella advocated for Afro-Colombian folkoric traditions of music and dance, primarily from the costeño regions. Specifically concerned about the cultural loss of gaita Sanjacintera, Fernández similarly instigated the revival of the traditional style of gaita performance, which was being threatened by commercial popularization of “gaita” as performed by costeño bandleaders such as Lucho Bermúdez and Pacho Galan. Prompted by Colombia’s recording industry, based in Medellín and Bogotá, to record and perform cumbias and gaitas bailables (danceable) with big band instrumentation, modern arrangements, and contemporary lyrics, the synthesis of orchestrated cumbias and gaitas gained wide popular acceptance among urban ruling elites (cf. Wade 2000).
(in Bogotá) for recognition and acknowledgement of its vulnerability, soliciting protection through and for its *culturas patronales* (local cultures):

Presently, from within the deepest fibers of our being, the folkloric and artisan corporation of San Jacinto, struggles for the rescue and conservation of gaita music, which has for San Jacinto been its identity before Colombia and the world of a land that keeps alive the deepest folkloric traditions, and that with our work we place a grain of sand in order to convert the Montes de María into symbols of peace and progress for the country.  

Through cultural policy and advocacy, festival organizers have continued to make a case for supporting local folklore as a way to encourage cultural survival and economic stimulus through the valorization and conservation of its arts and artisanship. In the festival’s annual event publication, *Revista Cultural* (2008), a historical review is provided that includes the following statement: “During this journey’s trajectory, the last eleven festivals were organized, which made possible a peacefully shared space for our town and the region.” In the context of the costeño region’s history of socio-political struggle, the gaita festival thus functions to

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220 “Hoy día, la corporación folklórica y artesanal de san jacinto, en lo mas intimo de nuestras fibras sensitivas, luchamos por el rescate y la conservación de la música de gaita, que ha sido para san jacinto la identidad ante Colombia y el mundo de una tierra que aun conserva vivas las mas profundas tradiciones folclóricas de la region y que con nuestro trabajo ponemos un grano de arena para convertir a los montes de María en símbolos de paz y progreso para el país.” (Revista Cultural, 2008, n.p., author’s translation).

Present organizers of the *Festival Nacional Autóctona de Gaita* include CORFOARTE, Fundación SER, and Mutual SER, receiving help from Colombia’s Ministerio de Cultura (federal), Gobernación de Bolívar (state), the Alcaldía Municipal (mayor), and the Fondo Mixto de Cultura, a coalition of national, regional, local and NGO sponsors. Budget cost estimates for the Festival are unclear, but Colombian beer producer *Cerveza Aguila* is clearly the event’s main sponsor.

221 *Durante este trayecto recorrido, se han organizado los once últimos Festivales, que han posibilitado e espacio de convivencia pacifica para nuestro Municipio y la Region.* (Revista Cultural 2008: n.p., author’s translation).
maintain local performance standards of traditional music even as outside participation in the preservation of its culture is encouraged and welcomed. Moreover, in the face of and beyond the daily realities of the ongoing civil war, música de gaita is promoted as a symbol of peace and national importance, representing efforts of local costeño leaders to celebrate identity—that is, convert the image of the region—while fostering inclusion within the nation’s definition of the national project. Although only rarely mentioned in Colombian music scholarship (if at all), the socio-political conditions that led to extensive social displacement drove some gaita musicians to migrate from rural to urban centers in the 70s and 80s, and particularly to the capital city of Bogotá.

Nevertheless, through participation in the annual festival, gaiteros (and tamboleros, as well as dancers and poets) who travel to compete and partake of San Jacinto’s social and cultural environment, together with festival organizers and sponsors, continue to uphold gaita musical culture as an authoconous folklore of the national culture—significant for a nation claiming to be formally receptive to its essential meztizaje. Gaita can therefore be viewed as a folkloric tradition and a conciliatory socio-cultural strategy, but not strictly in an essentialized manner, as with the mainstreaming and whitening of cumbia and música tropical.222 The San Jacinto Festival instead purports to embrace the present national mandate for constitutional multiculturalism (set by the 1991 constitution) in accordance with and adherence to notions of authenticity by virtue of its indigenous and mestizo folkloric qualities.

222 For example, see Fernández L’Hoeste 2007, Wade 2000, and Waxer 2002.
By doing so, the very transformation of that folklore is encouraged, as new actors—e.g., people from the diaspora—are invited to participate. Thus, the conservation of local culture, and the security and safety of San Jacinto and the Serranía region, that festival organizers strive for (and hope to achieve) through the social and cultural associations and connections that are made, are insured. Gaita’s renewal and popularization thus signals a strategic cultural move toward opening inroads for the attainment of economic, social, and political support—hence, political and cultural survival.

In Colombia, however, folklore as an institutional and national commodity is concerned with purity of tradition, rescue from cultural loss, and the desire and “preference for accumulating and carefully cataloging information, [rather than] attempting to interpret” (Miñana Blasco 2000: 2-3) cultural expressions that fit well with a defined national imaginary. Moreover, it is neither about “fakelore” (i.e., invented traditions or cultural spectacle) nor solely placing music in the role of either redeemer or savior, as Ana María Ochoa has suggested from one theoretical vista. Rather, the festival works to position gaita within an appropriate national niche, where it—and its people and culture—will somehow be protected from socio-political and cultural violence. If by some miracle the violence were to subside, perhaps aspects of cultural survival and retention would be foregrounded, and the festival’s meaning and agenda would be altered symbolically and even programmatically (cf. Cambria 2012). However, the region’s deeply embedded history of violence renders that possibility unlikely despite the nation’s recent, well-publicized advances in
regional and national security. I now turn to the festival and our case study of Marioneta to more closely explore a prototypical current in this new direction.

*Regresando a Colombia: The Festival, Cultural Patrimony, and Competition*

*Agua Chica, August 14th, 2008 (6:17 AM)*

At sunrise, after traveling nearly eleven hours on an overly-air-conditioned bus from Bogotá, we pull into the Agua Chica station stop. Mules and stray dogs mill about as people wait around to make bus connections to unknown destinations. Throughout the first leg of the journey, for more than five hours of winding wet roads heading north to *la costa*, Martín Vejarano continued to instruct his musicians, talking through musical arrangements, reviewing *cortes* (musical breaks) in the songs they would perform, and playing rehearsal audio and video clips. With Carmen de Bolívar still more than five hours away, and one of the musicians feeling ill, anticipation was building.

By early afternoon, in a light rain accompanied by high heat and humidity, we finally arrive in Carmen de Bolívar, where we hire two cars to take us the last few miles to San Jacinto. Upon arriving we proceed directly to the *Museo Etnoarqueológico Montes de María*, a small one-story concrete block structure with offices and an exhibition area. There, we meet the festival coordinator Jorge Arrieta Caro. After greetings, Arrieta Caro registers Marioneta for the next day’s aficionado level gaita competition.

For Vejarano, the 2008 trip marked the third time in as many years that, together with LCE musicians, they traveled to take part in the San Jacinto festival.
Aside from the desire to compete (and hopefully win) at the San Jacinto festival, returning to Colombia fulfills an important cultural and pedagogical function for Vejarano. The competition not only enables him to test and measure his own musical development as a gaita musician against local gaiteros, it allows replenishment of cultural and educational resources that he relies upon for continuing to experiment with and expand upon his understanding of the so-called boundaries of the gaita tradition. Moreover, returning to San Jacinto validates Vejarano’s innovations and contributions to a resurging gaita movement as well as the cultural representation he brings to the festival as an “outsider” to costeño culture. Further, it qualifies his participation in that it enables Vejarano to make certain claims for working within tradition while remaining sufficiently flexible to perform gaita in ways that are different, modern, and cosmopolitan, pushing the traditional boundaries of the genre. In other words, it provides Vejarano license to bring his own creative vision of gaita to the forefront of local and world music audiences.

Held annually in mid-August, gaiteros, dancers, and poets from all over Colombia gather in San Jacinto to compete for awards and cash prizes in several different performance categories. In the conjunto de gaita competition, for example, there are three levels: children, aficionado, and professional, each of which must meet specific criteria for eligibility.223

223 There are also separate competitions for composers and lyricists in the cancion inedita (unpublished song) contest, as well as for décimeros (décima poets) and bailadores (dancers) in décima, concurso de parejas bailadoras (paired dancers) and grupo bailadores (group dance) competitions. The general rules for the Festival are published in its annual program, Revista Cultural, which include twenty articles.
Expectations for the 2008 festival ran high, and Vejarano hoped it would culminate with a win by his coterie of young Bogotá and New York City musicians. In 2006, the first time Marioneta took part in the festival, the conjunto reached the finals of the aficionado (or serious hobbyist) competition, impressing the judges with their close adherence to traditional gaita praxis. At that time, many members of the public, including several judges, believed Marioneta merited a first place win. However, the ensemble missed the opportunity to perform in the finals, due, first, to a postponement in the schedule, then a miscommunication, arriving late to their stage call and thereby annulling their standing. In 2007, Vejarano, along with two of his NYC students and colleagues, returned and garnered a second place win; although according to a few accounts, it was claimed that it was a token gesture made to further encourage the cachacos (a somewhat pejorative term for people from the interior, or non-costeños) to continue returning to the competition. Nevertheless, for the 2008 festival Vejarano concentrated on refining the ensembles’ repertoire, which was to include the performance of original compositions—which is not a requirement at the aficionado level. The exigencies of gaita performance, in terms of musical technique, content, and presentation, thus, would not only be met by Marioneta, but exceeded. That is, with respect to the rules of the competition and

outlining the festival’s organizational structure, the competition arenas, presentation requisites (dress code and instrumentation), the elimination system, causes for disqualification, selection of judges and judging process, etc.

224 While urban cachacos are not discouraged from competing in or attending the festival, regional tensions are evident nonetheless, a result of Colombia’s history of infrastructural neglect, poor communications, and race and class divisions between coastal and urban populations (costeños vis a vis cachacos).
traditional gaita praxis, Vejarano hoped to go above and beyond the judges’ (and the audiences’) expectations for an aficionado-level conjunto de gaita, especially a non-indigenous one to the region. Judges evaluating each of the competitions are selected by the festival organizing committee. Acknowledged as authorities on gaita, they are drawn from local experts, musicologists, folklorists, and historians, including even a producer of popular vallenato. While contestants generally accept the judges’ final rankings, audiences sometimes express dissatisfaction with the final results, stridently protesting in support of their local favorites.

On the evening of August 14th, the opening ceremony for the XVIIth Festival Nacional Autóctono de Gaitas took place on the larger of two stages, with the main stage located just across from San Jacinto’s town plaza, and a smaller stage for local and visiting gaiteros set in the center of the plaza itself. After a blessing from a Catholic priest and introductions of local dignitaries and festival officials by San Jacinto’s mayor, the town’s municipal band played the Colombian national anthem, followed by the municipality’s anthem. A high school marching band took the stage playing porro and gaita melodies while teenage majorettes danced with the hip movements particular to Afro-Colombian costenõ dance (see Simon 1994). The festival’s main sponsor, Cerveza Aguila, was promoted repeatedly by announcers, amplified to ear-splitting levels through the public address system. Vallenato and cumbia recordings could be heard playing from nearby vehicles and market stands, adding to the unyielding soundscape. Next up on the main stage was a pelayera band playing corraleos, porros, and fandangos, which in this cattle-raising and livestock
herding region remains very popular. To accompany even younger dancers, a children’s conjunto also performed gaita and vallenato, giving everyone a clear picture of the pedagogical function of both genres to the region. At one point, the festive feeling of the ceremony was tamped somewhat when a local poet recited a lengthy poem about alcohol consumption and the damage it can cause; ironically, this was followed by more *Cerveza Aguila* product promotion and copious public drinking of *Ron Medellin Añejo*, a favorite among festival goers. Culminating the festival’s opening event, local favorites, Gaitambu, a young, very traditional gaita ensemble from San Jacinto performed a short but dynamic set, which was followed by an incredible display of dancing, fireworks, and unbridled celebration.

Throughout the opening night’s festivities, the Latin Grammy Award received by *Los Gaiteros de San Jacinto* was often referred to by several of the event speakers while the stage’s backdrop prominently featured the cover image that appeared on the 2006 Grammy award-winning Smithsonian Folkways recording (see Figure 4.7).
In fact, when one enters San Jacinto’s archeological museum, which also serves as the festival’s center of operations, the Latin Grammy award is prominently and conspicuously displayed, front and center, in the entry foyer, indicating its significance as a source of local pride. All of the Festival’s program flyers, posters, official festival publication (Revista Cultural, 2008) and related promotional literature features the same photographic image, demonstrating a well coordinated publicity effort to highlight the Grammy-winning gaiteros and the regional and international recognition the award represents (see Figure 5.7).

At the conclusion of the festival’s opening event, we met up with members of Marioneta at the entrance to the town plaza. Despite Camilo’s lingering stomach illness they were clearly excited and looking forward to performing. Vejarano
however was particularly concerned about Camilo’s health, especially since the competition was due to begin the next day, the first real day of the festival competition. Despite everyone’s exhaustion, a group of fifty to sixty young gaiteros and their supporters gathered for a post-opening *cumbiamba*—a sort of festival parranda, or celebratory parade that wound its way through the town. Heading northeast to a more residential section, we soon arrived at the house of one of the festival patrons, where chairs were set up, a musicians circle formed, and contributions were collected to purchase more *Ron Medellín*.

The *cumbiamba* started at about eleven pm as a core gaita of five musicians began playing classic tunes. Occasionally, in the middle of a song, one musician would replace another with remarkably smooth transitions—even as each musician takes turns playing different instruments; among this group of young musicians, unlike most older generations of gaiteros, each is capable of playing all of the gaita ensemble instruments. Couples danced along with the hip movements typical of cumbia, in the long-established display of coquettish male-female courtship and seduction. The sense of camaraderie among the musicians is strong and appears to be less a competitive display of technique and skills than a demonstration of friendly rivalries and the sharing of musical knowledge among colleagues. After all, with the participation of very talented individuals such as Damian Bozio, Ivan Salcedo, Juan Carlos “El Chongo” Puello, and Ulianoth Daza Perez, these are some of the young gaiteros whom are re-energizing the present gaita revival movement regionally and nationally. Demonstrating the seriousness with which they approach their study of
gaita, the young Afro-Colombian gaitero from Soplaviento, Daza Perez states: “Gaita is entered into gradually and slowly developed. These musicians know well the history of the repertoire as well as the changes being made” (interview, August 15, 2008, my translation). After much dancing, drinking and playing music, the crowd finally dispersed in the early morning hours, hoping to get at least a few hours of sleep before the next day’s final rehearsals, last minute preparations, and the start of the competition.

**Concurso: Competition and Reception**

*En el festival, todos los conjuntos que llegan aquí a nuestro pueblo son buenos, los admiramos. En especial ustedes que son [de] tan lejos, como hizo Toño Fernández que se traslado a otras partes. Entonces considero que lo mismo debe ser para ellos. Admíralos, en especial por la inquietud que tenemos. Cualquier otra dificultad que tengan, eso se debe anular un poco. El por qué? Porque tienen la voluntad, el animo de venir siquiera a unos pueblos de estos, donde ellos vienen a recoger algo que de pronto ellos no tienen—la experencia.*

In the festival, all of the ensembles that arrive here in our town are good, we admire them [all]. Especially those like yourselves who come from far away, [traveling] like Toño Fernández traveled to other parts [of the country]. I imagine it is the same for them. We admire them for sharing the same anxiety we have. Whatever other difficulties they might have [during the competition], that should be annulled somewhat. Why? Because they have the will and the energy to come to one of our villages, where they come to get something they might not have—experience. (Tomás Hernández interview, August 16, 2008)

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The next day, Marioneta’s rehearsal was held at the home of Camilo Torres, Martín’s friend and a vallenato accordionist with several recordings in the vallenato romántico style. During a break from the gaita material that Martín and his musicians were rehearsing, Torres was joined by Jose Gallegos on guacharaca and Adolfo Rodriguez on tambor alegre to play what he called a “Twin Towers vallenato.” With lyrics about the Taliban set to the tune of “Josa Mavilades,” a standard of the vallenato repertoire, they demonstrated vallenato’s topical character as performed in the highly localized space of a San Jacinto barrio, a display of popular and folk tradition meeting modernity head on.
The rules of competition are clearly outlined in the festival’s *Revista Cultural* (2008) and include details about who can participate, the requisite instrumentation, required number of gaita musicians, performance uniform or dress code, the selection of *aires* (songs), juror selection and judging procedures (rules for elimination or disqualification), and prohibitions (e.g., the use of microphones by contestants to address the public directly is prohibited). In the *aficionado* competition, two elimination rounds are followed by a *finalistas* round, from which first, second and third place winners are chosen to receive plaques and cash awards. Cash awards considerably vary between levels and can be a source of contention for winning contestants, who often find themselves having to negotiate with festival directors to receive their entire monetary awards upon the festival’s conclusion.

The competition’s first round requires the performance of all four genres, or *aires* (more accurately termed *ritmos*), whose order is decided upon by a three-member panel of expert *jurados* (judges), made up of a noted musician, a music educator, and a local producer—all costeños. Conjuntos that advance to the second round competition must subsequently play two of the four subgenres associated with gaita; again, these are also chosen by the judges. While most young gaiteros are primarily concerned with proper *ejecución de gaita*, that is, performing *aires* or *ritmos* in a traditional manner while adhering to strict performance standards, there is a self-conscious awareness, as Daza Perez noted above, that a new form of gaita is
developing organically and by necessity.\textsuperscript{226} Not unlike Martín, Daza Perez also believes in the evolutionary process that gaita is presently undergoing, but as a local costeño from Soplaviento (Bolivar), his view is perhaps more radical since his etic subjectivity as a black gaitero makes it somewhat more difficult for him to break with established conventions or traditions. Although both Vejarano and Daza Perez recognize the importance of maintaining traditional resources, as they create or expand upon extant musical praxis, Vejarano’s Marioneta proposal, as Tomás Hernández’s opening comments above suggest, is welcomed and perhaps allowed greater flexibility in terms of both juror and audience expectations. Nonetheless, when asked how he felt going into the first round, Vejarano responded saying that he has done all he could do to prepare and now needs to just relax and have a good time (personal communication). With more than twenty participating conjuntos de gaita and musicians from all over the nation as well as the diaspora, the aficionado level competition is exhaustive, punctuated with everything from drunken brawls to power outages that run well into the early morning hours.\textsuperscript{227} Nonetheless, each gaita presents itself rather formally, as “professional” as possible, exercising great caution.

\textsuperscript{226} At the beginning of the competition, in order to provide a fair and equitable basis from which to judge the conjuntos, the audio engineers set microphone and audio levels so that each gaita performs with the same “sound” settings. In addition, the performance of each ritmo is limited to four minutes, which if exceeded can result in point demerits from the judges.

\textsuperscript{227} Among the aficionado gaita conjuntos in the competition there was Gaitambu (San Jacinto), Son de Gaita (Cartagena), Grupo Etnía (Bogotá), Makuna (Baranquilla), Son Sabana (Montería), Grupo San Felipe, Grupo son Batuca, and Son Baracu (Bogotá).
so as to not incur any infraction that could either hurt their possibility of advancing to the next round or result in their disqualification.

On the second full day of the festival, as young gaiteros milled about the town plaza waiting to compete, powerful rainstorms descended with unexpected frequency. Vallenato, salsa, and the music of *bandas pelayeras* competed fiercely for sonic space. When Marioneta was finally called to the stage in the early hours of the following morning, as the penultimate aficionado ensemble to compete, they were met with a welcoming round of applause, signaling perhaps recognition and/or acknowledgement of the Bogotá/NYC conjunto’s previous appearances in San

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228 Earlier that evening, as I prepared to film the first round of all the aficionado contestants, my field methodology and the logistics of interviewing audience members following Marioneta’s first round performance, posed certain clear challenges. First, I had to generally identify audience members (including locals), taking into account (as much as possible) details such as racial, class, gender, and age makeup, where they came from, and if they attend the festival with any frequency. With only a small window of time available between performances, I was limited to the possible number of interviews that could be prudently collected after Marioneta’s set. As a result, the questionnaire presented three key questions to interviewees: (1) Did you like Marioneta? (2) Why did you like (or not like) Marioneta? and (3) Do you think Marioneta’s work is good for the festival? This line of inquiry was designed to measure the popular appeal of Marioneta and to record, specifically, what musical or performance elements were most appreciated, or not. Most critical to this study, however, were the responses to my third question, which targeted Marioneta’s perceived cultural contribution and overall public reception within the context of the San Jacinto festival. In addition, the necessary collection of respondent information was achieved subsequently by asking each respondent their name, the name of their hometown and region, and if this was their first festival attended. Thus, I maintain that the process of conducting brief yet highly focused interviews *immediately* after Marioneta’s performance yielded sufficiently significant reception data about the audience’s reactions. Although admittedly drawing from a rather small sample of randomly selected audience members, I suspect that the value and usefulness of the audience’s comments lies in large part in the immediate and spontaneous public reactions they document.
Jacinto. Opening their set with Toño Fernandez’s classic porro, “Porro Magangueleño,” early on indicated a problem with hearing the gaitas through the stage monitor mix. One of the judges came forward to listen for himself and, standing behind the gaiteros, gestured toward the other judges, confirming the volume issue. Marioneta nevertheless remained focused and continued to play the porro for nearly nine minutes—well beyond the four-minute time limit allowed for each aire. Immediately after the song, Martín went over to the audio engineers to again point out the problem with the monitor mix, then to the judges table to offer further explanation for the interruption, even while the MC reminded Marioneta of the strict time limit rule. After audio engineers checked and readjusted volume levels (with some rowdy comments voiced by a few people in the audience), Marioneta proceeded with their second ritmo, “Pachanga”, an original cumbia written by (a version of the song appears on Marioneta (2006), music example 7) contains the following refrain between cantador and coro:

**(singer) Hay Pachanga (chorus) La gaita esta sabrosa.**

Colombia! Alla la gente goza.
Colombianos! Cantemos por la paz.
Hermanos! Hagamos ya la paz.
Mujeres! Armen una rueda,
Mujeres! y prendan las velas.

There’s Pachanga The gaita is delightful
Colombia! There the people enjoy.
Colombians! Let’s sing for peace.
Brothers! Let’s make peace.
Women! Make the circle,
Women! And light the candles,
The recorded version of “Pachanga” closely follows traditional gaita performance practice in so far as the gaitas’ instrumentation and melodic hocketing, drumming patterns, and arrangement; the use of call and response is also somewhat characteristic, although the coro is much more dense on the recording (attributable to multitracks) than usually performed in a live setting. The original lyrical content however—an element that explicitly communicates a collective call for peace—is rather distinctive, if not altogether rare.

In turn, these were followed by Juan Lara’s gaita, “El Pensador,” and the set closer, Toño Fernández’s and Jose Lara’s uptempo puya, “Maridita.” Although the momentary disruption seemed to have caused some concern among the audience, contestants, and jury alike, the remainder of Marioneta’s performance was impressive and powerful, clearly winning over the audience, whom by the end of the set were dancing and clapping along with the music. A few reactions:

“Estaba chevere, o sea, fue espectaculo de los Bogotanos que llegaron aqui a San Jacinto”… “para ser de Bogotá y tocar gaitas Sanjacinteras estuvo elegante”
“It was great, it was a sight [to see] the Bogotanos that came here to San Jacinto”… “to be from Bogotá and play San Jacinto gaitas was elegant” (Omar Belina interview, August 14, 2009).

“Tocan alegre. Los muchachos son buenos. Tienen una facultad muy especial que [es]el animo”
“They play joyfully. The boys are good. They have that special ability to play with energy.” (Tomás Hernández interview, August 14, 2009).

“Saben cantarlas, [y] tocar los instrumentos de una buena forma”
“They know how to sing them (gaitas), [and] play the instruments with good form.” (Oscar Anillo interview, August 14, 2009).
“Si me gusto, y por lo que escuche de mas personas tambien quedaron encantados con el grupo”
“Yes I liked it, and from what I heard from others, they were also delighted with the group.”
(Marjelis Castro interview, August 14, 2009).

By performing classic gaitas while embedding an original composition into the program, Marioneta cleverly broached the subject of repertoire in a manner that did not offend either the judges or the audience. Thus, the first round ended, and, in spite of awkward interruptions, Marioneta appeared to emerge undaunted.
Nevertheless, questions lingered: would the excessive duration of the porro, the technical disruption, or Marioneta’s handling of it result in penalization, or otherwise adversely impact their chances of advancing to the second round? That evening, there was evident concern among the musicians and, personally, I could not imagine how the judges would overlook or reconcile the events surrounding that first round performance. The next day the official results were posted in the museum courtyard, with Bogotá’s Marioneta listed among the half dozen conjuntos de gaita that would advance in the competition.229

The second round of aficionado competition began late Saturday night, August 16th. Marioneta had spent the morning resting before rehearsing the two-song set comprised of a gaita followed by a puya. As the closing performers scheduled to play that evening, they selected the gaita “Golpe de Chácara,” most often attributed to

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229 Among the gaitas that advanced to the second round competition were Grupo Costumbres del Folklor (Tumaco), Gaitambu (San Jacinto), Tabagá (Bogotá), Son de Gaita (Cartagena), Los Gaiteros de Soplaviento, and Grupo Maigame (Cartagena).
Mañe Mendoza, which feature some of Marioneta’s more experimental arrangements, including stop-time rhythms (or cortes) and carefully executed melodic entrances, pauses, and unison lines rarely heard in San Jacinto (music examples 8 and 9).\(^{230}\)

Closing with Juan Lara’s puya, “La Palma,” Marioneta’s set displayed inspired intensity and musical ability, which virtually assured them a place among the top three finalists. Audience members seemed to agree, responding favorably:

“Me gusto la puya!”
“I liked the puya”
(Maria Guzman interview, August 14, 2009)

“Hombre! Si clasificaron, si estan en el final, es porque lo merecen.”
“Man! If they qualified, if they are in the final, it is because they deserve it.”
(Lila Leyva interview, August 14, 2009)

“Había una muy buena energía entre ellos y estaban muy concentrados y lo transmitían; fue un buen rollo.”
“There was a really good energy between them and they were focused and they got it across; it was a good ride.”
(Victor Peñaloza interview, August 14, 2009)

“Los instrumentos, los instrumentos, los instrumentos! Y realmente ellos lo hacen como si fueran Sanjacinteros. Los interpretan como si fueran Sanjacinteros.”
“The instruments, the instruments, the instruments! And they really play like they are Sanjacinteros. The interpret as if they were Sanjacinteros.”
(Alberto Gomez interview, August 14, 2009)

“Es una agrupación maravillosa que se merece el premio por que lo hizo muy bien.”

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\(^{230}\) On LCE’s La Palma (2010) release, there are two versions of “Golpe’e Chácara.” One version (on disc 1, music example 8) features a traditional interpretation; the second version (on disc 2, music example 9) is an arrangement for conjunto de gaita to which a NYC-based brass section (of non-Colombians) has been added; the first version is a conspicuously more traditional interpretation. Indeed, the two CD release highlights and comparatively illustrates Vejarano’s *modus operandi*, particularly where gaita technique and adherence or departure from the San Jacinto paradigm are concerned (cf. music examples 8 and 9; see Discography.)
“It’s a marvelous group that deserves the prize because they did it very well.”
(Zekiel Peña interview, August 14, 2009)

While most of the respondents reactions were positive, there were also some negative comments made, at times even with underlying racial overtones, as when Juan Pablo Assmus (my research assistant) overheard a local costeño man critique Marioneta, referring to Martín as “el blanquito de ojos verdes” (the little white man with green eyes). Paraphrasing the man, his commentary expressed a concern that Vejarano had not, in fact, composed “anything” of value, and yet, he (Vejarano) wanted to change both the traditions and the rules of the festival. Hence, even as rolos (a person from Bogotá) are welcome to compete, there will be a certain degree of resistance to infiltration by outsiders to the region. Nevertheless, when I saw Vejarano the following day, we both knew that Marioneta had reached the finals of the competition.

Earlier that morning (with very little sleep after the previous night’s performance) Marioneta had participated in the festival’s annual tribute to gaita ancestors, a ceremonial gathering during which all the gaiteros and dancers participating in the festival gather to parade from one end of town to the other, stopping at both of San Jacinto’s cemeteries to offer libations, play gaita, and dance in a celebratory display of reverence, remembrance and respect.
Las Finales/The Finals

On the evening of August 17th, the festival finals were held in each of the competition categories. Scheduled to perform between the Encuentro de Danzas folclóricas de la costa Atlántica (Congress of folkloric dances from the Atlantic coast) and Canción inédita (unpublished song) finals, gaita aficionado contestants were instructed to prepare a program of all four ritmos in a specific order or sequence: first a porro, followed by a cumbia (both vocal pieces), then a gaita and, finally, a puya to close out the set—the latter two genres are primarily instrumental genres, with puya a characteristically uptempo piece. After a final day of rehearsal,
Marioneta was ready, which became decidedly evident during the finals. In both the porro (“Cinco Notas” by Toño Fernández) and cumbia (“Cumbia Continental” by Juan Lara), one could clearly discern commonalities between these genres, particularly in the introduction of melodic material, the approach to percussion entrances, similar rhythmic patterns and tempos, and the use of vocals and coro (chorus) response. The relationship between cumbia and gaita however, while also apparent, goes beyond similarities in rhythms or tempos, or in that cumbias contain lyrics (with strophic verses and choruses) while in gaita vocals are typically limited to declamatory variations on uttered phrases such as “Úepa!”, or “Güepa-jé!”, or “Ui!” (local vernacular expressions of excitement and joy). That is, cumbia can be regarded as more closely associated to its related dance tradition while gaita is significantly more linked to the conjunto’s display of shared musical skills. It should also be noted however that the inclusion of cumbia as an official festival aire (style) is a relatively recent development. According to Daza Perez, cumbia was introduced into the festival well after gaita, puya and porro, and was also known as son jala or corrido (personal correspondence, March 7, 2009). Confusion arises from the fact that both cumbia and porro have song verses (and are therefore sung) while gaita and puya are primarily instrumental (Vejarano, personal communication, April 2, 2009).

Marioneta’s program nonetheless was cleverly arranged so that the porro and cumbia were performed in a rather conservative manner, observing traditional characteristics and stylistic features of these genres, such as a close interplay between male and female gaitas, and the intricate rhythmic interplay between the gaiteros and
tamboleros (flutes and percussionists). With the gaita ritmo (“Llego Mendoza” by Mañe Mendoza), the ensemble further demonstrated their ability to play traditionally while also applying uncommon methods, such as incorporating skillful musical breaks played in unison, for example. This specific type of musical element, which was not found in any other of the aficionado or professional gaita performances during the festival, underscores Marioneta’s experimental approach. Moreover, when performing “El Indio” (“The Indian”)—an original puya written by —there were some rather unconventional performance elements, such as when Vejarano provides gestural musical cues. During the introduction to “El Indio” Vejarano even cued the tamboleros’ entrance with a right leg backward kick; which may have necessary because of its difficult placement within the arrangement. This cueing gesture nonetheless highlights a performance aspect generally absent among traditional conjuntos de gaitas, that is, the role of a bandleader. Most gaitas instead emphasize ensemble cohesion through communal experiences that bring them together to play, and even in a festival context, where the notion of honoring the gaita tradition trumps individual or ensemble innovation per se, there is rarely a “leader” functioning as musical director or leader. This element is also evident in the cantador’s (or lead singer’s) role, where he or she is not leading as such, but participates as an equal member of the conjunto.

In any case, Marioneta’s closing selection of “El Indio,” a puya rapida (fast puya), is also significant, especially when compared to idiomatically more
conventional approaches to the subgenres. As the set closer, “El Indio” encapsulates Vejarano’s (and Marioneta’s) proposal through its application of creative and technical musical strategies: i.e., disruption of standard melodic formulas and rhythmic patterns; the use of expanded melodic registers and improvisational techniques; highly synchronized musical breaks; even the fast tempo is accentuated (i.e., $\text{♩}=160$ bpm; see footnote 24). Although percussion instruments are played in a technically prototypical style, with archetypal rhythmic patterns and adornments, the musical breaks that accompany the singer and coros’ gritos (during which they shout “Hey!” and the singer concludes with a cry of “El Indio!”) are highly uncharacteristic.

Moreover, the usual genre associations and functions of gaitas (macho/male and hembra/female) are reconfigured, as when the macho plays an underlining

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231 For instance, as can be observed in the tempo and rhythmic variances of Juan Lara’s “La Palma” or Freddy Arrieta’s “La Bajera”; or, in contradistinction, to Toño Fernández’s “Maridita,” a puya lenta (or slow puya) with vocals. According to an interview with Francis Lara, collected by Convers and Ochoa, “the puyas that the older gaiteros played were not very fast” (Part one, 2007: 85, author’s translation). This is further borne out in the different tempos observed between the 1960s recording of “Puya San Jacintera” by Los Gaiteros de San Jacinto, played at a tempo of $\text{♩}=152$ bpm, and the recording of Freddy Arrieta’s contemporary group Los Bajeros, who perform “La Bajera” at $\text{♩}=160$ bpm (CD 1 tr11, Convers and Ochoa 2007), considerably close to the traditional tempo. Significantly, during the first and second round of the competition, Marioneta performed both “La Palma” and “Maridita” (a fast and slow puya), each with an appropriate tempo; that is, Marioneta presented both types of puyas in accordance with standard tempos. It is important to note, however, that while all subgenres in the gaita tradition have “preferred” tempi parameters, many will exhibit at least some metric fluctuations within a song itself, especially in the fast paced puya rapida. It is also interesting that LCE’s recording of “El Indio” is at the slower tempo, i.e., $\text{♩}=152$ bpm (La Cumbiamba eNeYé. Marioneta, Chonta Records CD 003, 2006), whereas, in San Jacinto, the played puya in the same tempo as Los Bajeros (i.e., $\text{♩}=160$ bpm), while in NYC, they generally play at an even faster tempo.
repeated contrapuntal figure to the *hembra’s* melodic and fluttering ornamentations (also known as *gritos* or trills). Breaking from the standard whole tone per measure pattern, the macho’s triplet figure suggests a ternary division of the measure, instead of maintaining puya’s usually binarized duple meter, suggestive of an adoption of polyrhythmic African strategies that are manifested in an audible and perceptibly closer relationship between the male and female gaitas. As a result, female melodies share in a more dynamic musical exchange with the now more active male flutes. The hembra is “let loose” to sing while the macho responds in a more engaged yet still supportive role. Intertwined to a larger extent than usual, Marioneta’s gaitas thus generate greater musical force. Alex Marullo, one of the aficionado panel judges, succinctly describes Marioneta’s gaita dialogic relationship as follows: “the macho and hembra are like listening to a couple making love” (interview, August 19, 2008).  

Given the unconventional approach and experimental flavor that Marioneta brings to the festival, there was a sense among the audience and judges that these young gaiteros from Bogotá/NYC bring something fresh and revitalizing to the festival competition:

“*This year’s* aficionado groups appear to better than last year’s…the gaita from Bogotá (Marioneta) is very good… they innovated *paradas* (stops) in the puya in an entirely different rhythm than the puya of the others groups.

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232 There may be implications for changing dynamics in gender relations at the microcultural or local level, as evidenced in Marullo’s reading of Marioneta’s gaitas. However, while gender is not a central focus of the present chapter, it certainly figures large in the transnational movements of modernity per se. See the earlier chapter three on Lucía Pulido, where gendered voice is certainly a component of changing cultural values and norms.
(jokingly) This is the first time I see that gaita has deeply infiltrated los rolos.”
(Andres Castro interview, August 19, 2008, author’s translation)

“The public is the best judge, the principal judge…Marioneta is different from
the other groups; they brought something new. Like I said, you have to
innovate gaita, for good or bad; yet they did innovative things that all the
judges appreciated…we were happy, the public was also happy with
Marioneta’s evolution.”
(Emiro Cantillo interview, August 19, 2008, author’s translation)

“…their presentation drove the public…for me, personally, Marioneta’s work
is excellent…I’m convinced of their talent, of their desire, I admire their
project to carefully search and learn…a group from the interior [of Colombia]
that comes to investigate and admire the gaiteros of San Jacinto. They show
the capacity to do things that costeños cannot, or will not do.”
(Alex Marullo interview, author’s translation).

The judges’ evident approbation confirms the positive effects of Marioneta’s
contribution, both musically and culturally to the benefit of the gaita tradition. The
issue of representation however, which, although recognized, is left unexamined.
While each of the judges comments favorably on Marioneta’s innovative and
convincing musical talents, that they are a Bogotá-based ensemble is generally
accepted or understood. And while even many of the festival organizers, attendees
and judges, including Nicolás Hernández, are aware that Vejarano and some of his
musicians are in fact Colombians living in the New York City diaspora, not all of
them are. Marullo, for example, clearly believed Marioneta were simply cachacos
from the “interior,” raising questions of whether or not Marioneta can be said to
properly represent (or misrepresent) their regional, national, or transnational identity.

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233 Rolo is a costeño term exclusively reserved for people from Bogotá (Vejarano,
personal correspondence, April 2, 2009). The term cachaco refers more generally to
a person from the interior of the nation.
In either case, the end result seemed to override any serious concerns or possible controversies.

At the conclusion of Marioneta’s final set, the audience strongly cheered them, many wondering aloud if they would, or actually could win the aficionado competition. Although the festival winners would not be announced until all finalists had performed in their respective competition categories (early the following morning), Vejarano’s musicians seemed pleased with their efforts. After many hours, when the results of the aficionado competition were finally announced, Marioneta had won second place for the second year in a row. That they placed evenly between the two San Jacinto conjunto finalists—Gaitambu and Son de Gaita—is interesting and, perhaps, even fitting. They had achieved a degree of costeño authenticity through musical performance and a presentation that was replete with the usual markers of local identity: vueltaos (hats), mochilas (bags), the red neck bandanas, even the standard white clothing and footwear of traditional gaiteros. However, as they posed for photographs with their award citation, it was also evident that they had also retained their cosmopolitan character, with some sporting dreadlocks and others wearing T-shirts featuring political slogans, further attesting to their diasporic, non-costeño identity (see Figure 4.9). In the aftermath of the festival, then, one could experience how a local soundscape, and the various actors participating in the evolution and revitalization of a traditional Colombian music, may encompass multiple, sometimes opposing, subject positions (Sakakeeny 2010: 25).
After four long days and nights of music and celebration, the gaita festival concluded with very little fanfare. By midday, the rains had subsided and with the sun blazing again, San Jacinto returned to its state of normalcy, which is to say the town remains most definitely in the “third world,” existing somehow as if still in the late-19th or early-20th century. The streets lack drainage, trash is strewn about, the electrical grid continues to fail regularly, even as the central plaza’s market activity resumes, accompanied by the incessant blend of battery-driven vallenato and salsa blasting from boom-boxes. While a few festival stragglers remain, Sanjacintero gaiteros and tamboleros are less visible. For the moment, the gaitas and tambores have been put away. Visiting gaiteros have left, returning to their home cities and towns all over Colombia to prepare for next year’s festival, while others will prepare to compete at the larger Ovejas Gaita festival held during the month of October in the
department of Sucre. The military presence in the area, once again, becomes all too apparent.

Figure 4.10. Young soldiers resume patrol in San Jacinto soon after the festival’s conclusion. 
Photo used with permission, courtesy of Juan Pablo Assmus.

Shortly after returning to NYC, I had the opportunity to ask Vejarano to describe his reactions to the festival and Marioneta’s win, he said: “Well, the first thing I have to say is that coming in second place for the second time in a row it’s the highest level in terms of reward—personal reward…when you come first in a contest like that, it means a lot and it’s a lot of responsibility involved in that title” (interview, September 29, 2008). He goes on to say: “it’s a recognition; they recognize [that] we are good musicians but also it’s a way of showing the entire country that they accept and appreciate our efforts and our musical proposal. Which to me is the reward, the best reward I could ever have. Just giving you a second prize it’s a symbolic thing, but it’s more of a thank you; it’s more of a ‘well done, nice music, you guys are part
of the family.’…it’s a very moving experience for me, very touching experience, I’m very happy in the personal sense because I conceived these arrangements, I conceived the repertoire, I worked with my friends and we traveled a long way to get there and they gave us this recognition. That’s beautiful” (Ibid.).

Though he regards a second place win as “the highest personal reward,” Vejarano intends to return to San Jacinto, perhaps in 2013, most likely to compete in a professional capacity. Not only has he proven his musical abilities and dedication to gaita, he has also demonstrated the talent and drive required to compose and record new gaita—the contribution that is the mark of a true professional. Speaking further about what the professional level competition demands and requires, as well as why the local focus is on the traditional elements, Vejarano maintains that the difference lies between the musical production of people from the cities (like himself) versus people of the region. In this social dichotomy (and unlike the young Bogotá cosmopolitans interested in fusions and hybridity; cf. Calle 2012, Santamaria Delgado 2007), professionals focus more on the traditional repertoire rather than putting forward new and sophisticated arrangements: “It’s also because it’s not what they [gaita professionals] have to offer.” Unlike himself, “They didn’t grow up learning jazz or rock or classical music. They are not into that stuff. They are into vallenato, música tropical, and other things” (interview, September 29, 2008). Explaining what he hoped to achieve:

“I think it’s our mission to bring and to offer and propose this new approach and this new way of doing musical arrangements within the context of gaita music. Because if we do it in a well, good way, eventually, the people from the rural areas in Colombia, the real gaiteros, the real inheritors of this culture
will adopt our approach to arrangements, try to make sure the flutes are in tune all the time, break down every little part, [and] aspect of the melody, and the counterpoint with the other flute; that’s what we do. [We] make sure [to] try to work on the intonation of the background vocals, make sure the phrasing is accurate, and everything is in place. A more meticulous, sophisticated way of working. That’s what we offer, and eventually they would adopt this if we do it in a good way” (Ibid.).

Vejarano clearly regards Marioneta’s participation as a “win-win” situation for the San Jacinto festival organizers and audience, as well as for himself and his musicians. Upon closer examination of ’s comments however, issues of representation, appropriation, and power relations and their differentials arise between local and transnational gaita practitioners. It is not only a matter of the innovations and transformations of costeño expressive culture that Marioneta proposes, which are at issue here, but who can lay claim to and exercise authority over gaita’s evolution into modernity. Given Marioneta’s cosmopolitan positionality, a set of contradictions emerge as they insert themselves within a tradition that is not entirely their own. And despite “good” intentions—and often with the involvement and tacit support of local gaita traditionalists and cultural preservationist—there appears to be a large degree of accommodation from above; that is, with the good fortune of having access to education, international travel, and other trappings of modernity, Marioneta’s members justify their participation as an effort to advance gaita, providing it with a greater degree of sophistication of musical parameters: e.g., tunings, melodies, rhythms (to say nothing of production values). The strategies used to present their “new” proposal, while cognizant of traditional hierarchies, also raise residual social and regional tensions of race and class that have long existed between costeños and
cachacos. Why should Vejarano assume that Marioneta’s proposal is culturally appropriate for San Jacinto and gaita at large? And why should tempered tunings, sharp rhythmic breaks, expanded harmony and well-executed performances—all elements of modern European and North American musical aesthetics—redefine gaita? In the transnational process, a process which Los Gaiteros de San Jacinto themselves have long been active, how is it that these young Colombians from the diaspora, benefiting from the privileges of cosmopolitanism, hope and expect to alter the meanings and ways that gaita is and should be performed on the homeland? The provocative nature of their proposal poses a challenge to gaita tradition, which demands that all the parties involved both confront and articulate issues of cultural ownership (cf. Manuel 2010).

Moreover, since Vejarano’s proposal was so well received in San Jacinto, it also lends his LCE project in NYC a substantial cache of authenticity back in the diaspora, the cultural capital that helps to advance their musical and professional goals (cf. Flores 2009b). Establishing their place as actors on the San Jacinto gaita world music scene—a scene no longer bound to geographical, physical, or cultural boundaries, Marioneta’s edifying experiences undoubtedly help to mobilize and spread a carefully conceived and modified form of gaita across transnational borders. Paradoxically, by altering gaita to reflect a respectful yet cosmopolitan, post-ethnic
identity, Marioneta continues the work of traditionalists such as Los Gaiteros de San Jacinto, internationalizing gaita while simultaneously drawing attention to the expressive beauty, cultural resilience and social survival of local indigenous elements and people; such are the transnational flows between the diaspora and homeland.

![Image of Marioneta and Nicolás Hernández of Los Gaiteros de San Jacinto](image)

**Figure 4.11.** Marioneta and Nicolás Hernández of Los Gaiteros de San Jacinto. Photo used with permission, courtesy of Juan Pablo Assmus.

Having established themselves as vigorous representatives of the gaita tradition—sufficiently so as to expose gaita beyond regional or national borders—Marioneta achieves transcultural, cross-purpose, cosmopolitan goals even as they

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234 The term *cosmopolitan, post-ethnic* refers to a combination of cosmopolitan ethnicity (fluid, multidimensional, thick identities) and the multi-ethnic-racial cultural backgrounds and experiences of young Colombian transmigrant musicians in the diaspora. See Kasinitz et al. 2004, pp.361-91.
mediate local and regional concerns of the people of Los Montes de María. Through
their performance of gaita, San Jacinto, too, benefits from gaita’s broadening
transnational appeal. As a result, the small yet significant music festival gains greater
media exposure and, therefore, larger national attention, which helps to maintain all-
important institutional connections to regional and national cultural organizations that
provide support for local and regional presenters of autochthonous folklore.
Consequently, San Jacinto’s gaiteros are further revered and upheld as cultural
beacons of the region and the nation, empowering them as teachers and ambassadors
of gaita while they travel, migrate, or are displaced to Colombian cities and the
diaspora. Thus, the culture of the costeño hinterlands is preserved, disseminated and
valorized while the region benefits from an enhanced level of security due to public
exposure and heightened awareness.

**Conclusion**

Recalling the cover image of La Cumbiamba eNeYé’s recording *Marioneta*
(see figure 4.1, on page 278), which depicts a gaitero marionette dressed in full
traditional garb, we see a puppet whose face is obscured, three strings are attached to
the motionless figure as it holds a tambor alegre slack by his side. This image raises
several questions: Who is the marionette? What or whom does it represent? Is it a
musician in La Cumbiamba eNeYé? or is it a member of Los Gaiteros de San
Jacinto? Is it gaita itself? And who is working the puppet? Where are the strings
attached to? Where do they lead from? As a metaphor for La Cumbiamba eNeYé’s
musical hence cultural proposal, the image of a performing marionette raises
profound issues regarding cultural identity, and particularly how it is defined, and
toward what end. While Turino’s definition is useful

[Identity] is a public articulation of the sociocultural, economic, ideological
and political makeup of an individual or group’s identity, made patent through
musical performance. That is, people perform music in a certain way as a
natural product or extension of their personal and sociocultural identity…
(Turino 1984: 253),

it leaves unanswered what actually occurs when individual or group identity is a
product of vastly differing and unequal socio-economic, racial, and political
circumstances. Paraphrasing Turino, the status of gaita as an identity symbol
continually shifts, as does mestizo identity according to the context of definition
(Ibid.). While we can easily observe evidence of this in musical details (e.g., tempo
and meter variances; see fn.24 above), reflecting local versus trans-local/global
environments for example, Colombia’s self-definition as a predominantly mestizo
nation remains a problematic construct vis a vis the presence and persistence of
distinct indigenous, African, and criollo (creole) identities constituting the
homeland/diasporic population (Wade 2000). The internal- and out-migrations of
Colombians to large cities and cosmopolitan centers like New York City provide an
opportunity to observe, document, and gauge the movements of people and elements
of Colombian culture as they are transmitted transnationally via musical performance.
How these are received, then return to mediate and alter local “homeland” culture is
an ever-cycling phenomenon that sheds light on both processes of identity formation
and cultural conservation. After all, how is it possible that a conjunto de gaita
comprised of young Bogotá and NYC musicians (formed in eight hours) can arrive in
San Jacinto to compete and rank so highly among the local practitioners and authorities of “official” gaita?

By rhetorically asking *pa dónde vas Marioneta?* (Where is Marioneta going?), I have presented this case study as an example of how one group of young, cosmopolitan Colombian musicians (traveling between the cities of the interior, the diaspora, then to the hinterlands and back) learn, experience, and negotiate gaita musical tradition even as they work to transform that tradition. More than just an effort to discover or maintain cultural roots, I suggest that Turino’s notion of *modernist culturalist reformism* helps us theoretically understand how such projects demonstrate “the imagined possibility of forging a new synthetic social group and identity” (Turino 1999: 245). Nevertheless, intracultural exchange of musical and cultural values across the transnation often exposes problematic sites of negotiation which occur at the local level—whether the locale is the Serranias of *la costa* or the Borough of Brooklyn. Noting the resonant value of Anderson’s (1983) “imagined communities,” and building on his thesis of a Peircian semiotic model, Turino writes: “The creative juxtaposition of localist and modernist indices, typical of modernist reformism, was intended to serve as an icon for the new locally unique, yet ‘modern’ nation” (Ibid., 246). In this case however, the indices and icons of gaita serve a

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208 The source of this article’s paraphrased title derives from a bullerengue recorded by Los Gaiteros de San Jacinto, “Pa donde vas Morena?”, wherein the lyrics express curiosity, as the protagonist wonders where a young, black woman is headed: San Jacinto? Cartagena? or to a convent in Venezuela? It can be heard on *Historia Musical de Los Gaiteros* (2004); see Discography.
broader semiotic purpose, aiding in the symbolic construction of a diasporic transnation—as much for individual social identities in Marioneta’s *Nueva Colombia* community (e.g., in NYC) as for the communities of San Jacinto and the Los Montes de María region, where the intracultural exchange of symbols operates in multiple directions as cultural remittances from the local to the diaspora and back (Flores 2009b).

The second question, *Pa donde va la Gaita?* (Where is Gaita headed?), reflects even further back on itself, suggesting the real possibility that gaita and its set of substyles (cumbia, porro, puya and gaita corrida, for example) are on a “World Music” track, a trajectory from authentic localism to constructed global product to be commodified and consumed. As the number of world musics that have become increasingly accessible through technological advancements in global media and networked delivery systems (e.g., Internet, digital media files, portable drives, etc.), and sonic worlds travel further and faster than ever, to more people with the means to access and download digitized, hybridized ethnic sounds, what remains to be seen, heard, and understood is whether or not corresponding histories or authenticities will be lost in the translocal-global translation or, indeed, negotiation (Toynbee and Dueck 2011, Corona and Madrid 2007). As important as identifying the underlying motivations that drive gaita praxis—that is, hearing what people who play, dance and listen to gaita are actually communicating—scholars of popular and traditional musics will need to acknowledge that “only in recent years have proportional projects come into being, as there is an equalization effect between emerging social and economic
cultures, that are having a profound impact on how international, cosmopolitan music is being conceived and created, disseminated and enjoyed.”

As we consider multidisciplinary approaches to contemporary ethnographies of musical communities and genres (e.g., gaita—a genre that hitherto has remained generally unknown despite its music industry success and genealogical link to the worldwide cumbia phenomenon), we must note, too, the formation of new social identities by what they are telling us, discretely or openly, about shared Colombian realities and concerns.

While it would be reasonable (and perhaps simpler) to read the above text as a national narrative about young émigré Colombians in search of their homeland cultural roots and modern identity via indigenization, or as a regional model of cultural resilience and the preservation of musical iconicity, or as a local narrative about local indigenous artists achieving international recognition and attention for its regional affiliation, at its base lies the development of social identities in the process of shaping what some music scholars have identified as Nueva Colombia (Santamaría 2008, Ochoa 2003). Thus, the formation of the “nation,” or the “transnation,” is contingent upon the validation of internal and external discourses regarding social and political identity; that is, these processes rely as much on the global as on the local exchange of cultural material. As this case study demonstrates, this conversation takes place not solely within cosmopolitan fusionist experiments in Bogotá, or at the official gatherings of cultural authorities sponsored by the Ministry of Culture, it also occurs at the local level of traditional music festivals and Brooklyn

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235 Quote from producer Bob Belden’s liner notes to Miles from India (2007), the 2008 Grammy nominated recording for “Best Contemporary Jazz Album.”
hipster venues as well. Neither the modernization nor popularization of gaita is a new phenomenon—witness Lucho Bermúdez and Pacho Galán et al. in the 1950s—nor are the efforts to internationalize the music of Los Gaiteros de San Jacinto via recording and touring efforts. Música de gaita, in fact, has long been cultivated on different levels for different audiences: locally in San Jacinto as autochthonous folklore, nationally as cultural patrimony, and internationally as world music. What is most significant about Marioneta’s proposal as a grupo de proyección (Ochoa 1996), and its affect on local and world audiences however, is the cyclical transnationalism, transmigration, the multigenerational shifting of cultural proprietorship, and the extraordinary degree of acceptance and transcendence of cultural, regional, and racial and class integration—all with a populist goal toward socio-cultural development, unification, and the transformation of severe social realities.
CHAPTER FIVE

Performativity and Interculturalism

The theoretical frameworks from which I have observed the ethnographic field of Colombian musicians in the NYC diaspora come from performance studies and concepts of interculturalism. While the former provides insights into the embodiment of culture through performativities (i.e., actualization of expressive culture), the latter helps to explain how and when interaction among cultural groups can and actually does occur. Observing cohort musicians in performance and interaction for an extended research period of more than fifteen years has therefore allowed me to observe: (1) actual transformations and transitions in the communities’ presentation modalities, ranging from the traditional to contemporary and neo-traditional, (2) development of musical competencies and artistic skills, and (3) collaborative diversification in intercultural musical and presentational strategies. In another central element of the study, I have tried to provide commentary on audience reception by both Colombian and mixed audiences, to shed light not only on Colombian music’s growing popular appeal but the role music plays in the representation of Colombian identity and resignification processes for cosmopolitan transnationals in the diaspora. My findings suggest varying degrees of self-identification with Colombianidad among the musicians, often in accordance with audience makeup and expectations. For example, some musicians emphasize national identity when performing for general audiences, while downplaying regional associations (e.g., the Carnaval de Flores festival, held annually in New York’s
Central Park every September). On the other hand, in certain performance contexts artistic emphasis is oriented toward highly localized expressions of music and dance, particularly when the audience is primarily from a particular city or place (e.g., the annual Carnaval de Baranquilla event in Flushing, Queens). Moreover, on occasions when artistry and aesthetics take precedent over local, regional, or race, class, and gender delimits, the fluidity of identity and heterogeneous qualities evidenced in this study of Colombianidad/Colombianess are accented, highlighting underlying and complex layerings of race, class, gender and generational elements—as in the Encuentro de Músicos Colombianos en Nueva York event.

In tracing the trajectory of musician migration during the inclusive years of the study, I discovered that the first wave of musicians were primarily from educated, white, middle-class, and often Andean backgrounds; highly cosmopolitan, with socio-economic privileges based on long-standing Colombian hierarchies of race, class, and economic status. However, in the NYC diaspora, these advantages often leveled out; and, as a means to overcome social constraints imposed by dominant, local cultural and music industry powers, the agency of these New York-based musicians pressed against prevailing social hierarchies that have historically marginalized Colombian musicians and discouraged the inclusion of Colombian musics, including hybrids (or fusions) as viable forms of Latin/o cultural expression. Subsequently, and with the increase of the number of young musicians arriving in the diaspora, including musicians from Afro-Pacific, Atlantic coastal, and interior regions of the nation, the visibility and sonic presence of Colombian music in New York City has grown
exponentially, reflecting a wider representation of Colombian people. As a result, Colombian musical culture has entered mainstream pan-Latin/o consciousness in New York City to a far greater extent than recent history indicates, transforming the city’s cultural profile while becoming an important player in the arenas of popular and world musics—that is, a metacultural soundscape has emerged and developed through local and global media technologies and networks (see Samuels et al. 2010; Warikoo 2004; Waxer 2002b, 2002c). Whereas media technologies can and often do open pathways for commodification and marketing of local cultures, in contrast, live musical performance encourages cultural interaction to a greater extent since it responds to events “on the ground” as they occur in the moment and through the active presence and participation of both musicians and audiences. Communal expression of group identity among cultural cohorts has been discussed by both Turino (2008) and Currie (2009) in different cultural and musical contexts. Both draw upon psychologist Csikszentmihalyi’s (1991 [2008r]) research on creativity and invention, referencing the production of what he terms “flow” states. According to

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236 For a similar (though inverse) process, see also Sturman (2003), who examines Carlos Vives' use of technology and macondismo imagery to popularize vallenato; like Garcia Marquez's literary achievements with magical realism, these enabled him to harness and project simultaneous revisionings of past and present forms of vallenato as cultural expression of both regional and national Colombian identity. Technology, via the growing Colombian recording industry, together with assistance from global record companies, television (telenovelas), and video has been key to Vives' success—that is, the global marketing of local cultures. Technology, as an agent of media, Sturman argues, enabled Vives to exercise great influence vis a vis and across boundaries of region, race, class, and gender; Vives' "televisual power" (Ann Kaplan's term) gained for him a large audience in Colombia, which later promoted his influence on the music industry (171) and, henceforth, into world markets.
Csikszentmihalyi, a flow state is attained when a person is totally immersed in, or consumed by the act of creation. That is, the focus of the artist and musician is of such intensity that upon reaching such a state, the experience itself transcends space and time, elevating the consciousness of the individual or group, resulting in a feeling of elation or happiness—not coincidentally a requisite state for parranda, the party-like atmosphere essential to Colombian social events. Csikszentmihalyi’s theory of flow thus ties in well with (as I argued in Chapter One) the idea of performance as an exegesis: the act of exhibiting and expressing individual or group subjectivities through ideologically informed cultural forms and structures operating on different levels which transform actors, audiences, and temporal-spatial spaces.

Csikszentmihalyi’s formulation further holds that creativity emerges from interaction of “the individual who has mastered some discipline or domain of practice; …the cultural domain in which an individual is working; …and the social field—those individuals and institutions that provide access to relevant educational experiences as well as opportunities to perform.”

With their commitment to performing Colombian musics however, each of the musician case studies documented in the dissertation reflects an eclecticism that necessitated different analytical frameworks and methods particular to individually chosen musical genres, styles, instrumentation and, especially significant for intercultural processes, the selection of musicians with whom they collaborate.

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Whereas cognition and vocality were appropriate to Lucía Pulido’s gendered code-switching of *vaquería* signifiers, Pablo Mayor’s project necessitated a look at processes of recontextualization, jazz consciousness-raising in the service of cultural advocacy and institutionalization, and the strategic move toward pedagogy. Martín Vejarano’s *La Cumbiamba eNeYé* (Marioneta), on the other hand, demanded an entirely different approach: a consideration of local/intercultural intersections which took into account expansions and contractions of traditional and/or indigenous rural musics within a transnational context of cyclical festival and musical movements. Slobin notes that transnational movements can be very important for diasporic groups, since “musicians hear what their colleagues and competitors back home are playing” (1993:79); and conversely, musicians at home are listening to what’s being done in the diaspora. Significantly, in the cases documented here, intercultural and flow processes are operative as carefully conceived strategies for negotiating and asserting a place within the New York City scene and beyond, extending to the homeland.

Once regarded a multipurpose, somewhat vague concept, in the contemporary reformulation, interculturalism serves as a useful tool for ethnomusicology, comparative musicology, and the social sciences.\(^{238}\) Although the term’s usefulness

\(^{238}\) *Le interculturelle* is increasingly accepted even among our colleagues in comparative musicology. For example, aside from using the term, in the “Key Issues” section of the Comparative Musicology website ((http://compmus.org), the cultural evolution of music and music and human migration are noted for the discipline’s focus upon considerations of “processes of musical change that occurs as cultures come into contact”, thus resulting in the “creation of musical fusions"
has evolved gradually, shifting from Slobin’s generalized application to describe “cross-cutting trend[s]” (1998:12) that emerge from “linkages that subcultures set up across national boundaries” (Ibid., 64)\textsuperscript{239} to Rappaport’s use of the term with respect to issues of indigenous hierarchal relationships and culture. When considered in the modern, cosmopolitan Colombian context, interculturality illuminates ongoing shifts and realignments within Colombian-American diasporic environments.\textsuperscript{240}

**Musical and cultural transformation**

Achieving a certain degree of authority based on perseverance and artistic commitment to playing Colombian music, the musicians profiled in this study each have acquired a sort of veteran status in New York’s Latin, world, and ethnic music scenes. Although widespread commercial or popular success has proved elusive for most, save for a few cases, such as harpist Edmar Castaneda’s induction into professional jazz and world music circuits, there remains much for the musicians to do if they are to establish a place for themselves either locally or for the long term.

For nearly two decades of engagement with and fieldwork among the Colombian

\textsuperscript{239} Preferring the term *transregional musics* (1998:19), Slobin nonetheless acknowledges that interaction among intercultures goes on among all possible players (79) in the creation of joint aesthetics (8). Slobin’s synonyms for intercultural systems further support not only the continued relevance of the term but its broad descriptive applicability, offering a variety of alternative descriptors: “interactive patterns of various sorts”(5), “fluid, ambiguous relationships” (5); and, “interlocked world sound systems.”

\textsuperscript{240} Music critic Alex Ross suggests that “contemporary tribes are the arbiters of historical interpretation.”
musicians of New York City, I have witnessed the arrival of new musicians, intra- and intercultural group bonding and rivalries, and constant self-positioning for opportunities to make a living as musicians, dancers, artists. While a few of have subsequently departed for other US regions in search of new and better opportunities, others have experienced return migration and even deportation to Colombia.

Nonetheless, the NYC musician’s community continues to persevere. Indicative of a moment in Latin music history when new generations are choosing to introduce, explore, and further expose Colombian music to audiences outside of Colombia, Colombian musicians are pressing for greater inclusion within the global city’s cultural landscape. In the dynamic urban environment of New York City, where the only constant is change, perhaps one of the clearest examples of this cultural transformation is evident during processes where immigrant adaptation to intercultural soundscapes pose challenges to Colombian musicians, despite cosmopolitan desires for acceptance and artistic or commercial success. Whether due to personal, financial, or legal reasons (e.g., residency status), individual circumstances illustrate strategic choices made within the urban environment.

For example, since starting fieldwork with Martín Vejarano and LaCumbiamba eNeYé (LCE), the Colombian ensemble and its gaita-centered repertoire has evolved gradually, becoming somewhat dormant in favor of a more intercultural musical manifestation: Chia’s Dance Party. Chia’s musical proposal is based on an entirely different Colombian traditional music: chirimia, an ensemble
configuration from the Choco region of the Pacific coast. Vejarano’s shift to *chirimía*, suggests a strategic cultural move, playing highly festive music that recalls New Orleans street marching (second-line) bands, early jazz ensembles (e.g., Louis Armstrong’s Hot Five and Hot Seven, King Oliver, Bunk Johnson, Sydney Bechet, etc.) and Caribbean street festival bands. Marioneta, the subset of LCE’s transnational project discussed in chapter four, which demonstrated the cyclical transnational movement and multigenerational shifting of the cultural proprietorship of gaita, as well as the acceptance and transcendence of cultural, regional, and racial and class integration evinced within modern gaita praxis, exists in name only, while LCE continues to convene for public performances and events. Significantly, Chia’s musicians are all non-Colombian except for Vejerano, indicating an extreme example of intercultural integration within Vejerano’s project; unlike LCE, whose members were largely made up of Colombians, or Marioneta, who combined personnel from both New York and Bogotá. The LCE/Marioneta case study—and its morphing into Chia—clearly illustrates how one of Colombia’s most popular and traditional music cultural resources—gaita (and subsequently, chirimía)—in contemporary praxis, elucidate processes of transnational and global cultural transformation along the Colombian cumbia (and later chirimía) axis, to serve the needs of individual members of the musicians community in the New York City diaspora. As I noted in chapter

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241 Chirimá ensembles generally include *redoblante* (snare drum), *platillos* (hand cymbals), *clarinete* (clarinet), *trompeta* or *trombon* (trumpet or trombone), *bombardino* (euphonium) and *bombo* (large drum).

242 Chia primarily draws from Colombian *bandas pleyeras* and *chirimía* ensembles—the latter being a smaller subset of the former.
four, the play of local and transnational tensions between modern, cosmopolitan musicians playing traditional gaita (or chirimía), and the movement between homeland and diaspora environments, indicates insider/outsider dynamics and the cultural empowerment that can result for both sets of actors when “carriers” of a tradition are not necessarily the “bearers” of that tradition—a distinction that has to do with being entrained within a culture and cultural practice, or arriving at a cultural practice through an educational or mentoring process from outside of the culture. Therefore, Colombian musicians in NYC freely align themselves with Colombian popular musics even as they alter them through intercultural musicking. Colombian cultural identity, as lived experience by Vejerano and his musical cohorts, appears to be a malleable, eclectic construct, active and transitional, and always in motion.

Touring more regularly than LCE ever did, Vejarano’s more recent Chia project supports the evidence borne out by the case study: that is, Vejerano’s musical transnationalism accommodates a fluid, nomadic identity practiced by New York’s Colombian musicians that simultaneously advances cosmopolitan desires and traditional agendas through shared intercultural efforts with non-Colombians, whether at local festivals and events in the diaspora, Colombia, or for international audiences.

From the transnationalism of LCE/Marionetas’s gaita to Pablo Mayor’s local, entrepreneurial, and educational proposal, I have also shown (in chapter three) how efforts by Mayor to engage in community and institutional development through Colombian Jazz, Latin Big Band music, and pedagogy are central to his goals. Mayor prioritizes and advocates for the presence of Colombian music in New York City by
promoting it from within the institutional structures of Boys Harbor Conservatory in East Harlem, where he teaches and has established a Colombian music program; the *Encuentro de Musicos Colombianos en Nueva York*/Encounter of Colombian Musicians in New York, the annual showcase festival of Colombian music and musicians he founded and has produced since 2003; and, as pianist with Orquestra Broadway, itself a historically significant New York-based salsa institution. It is through the directorship of Folklore Urbano however that Mayor has shaped artistic and production direction in a variety of ways that meet different performance and programming needs, incorporating entertainment elements, such as folkloric dance exhibitions, or educational elements when presenting lecture-demonstrations or workshops, for example. Folklore Urbano further reflects intercultural adaptation of musicians and musical aesthetics. Initially comprised of mostly Colombian musicians, Folklore Urbano, too, has become an increasingly multicultural mixture of artists, although several offshoot projects and ensembles still lean toward the Colombian side with rosters of primarily Colombian musician. The ethnographic documentation of Mayor’s Encuentro festival production, and the musical aesthetics and innovation evident within the Folklore Urbano project, was analyzed in relation to pertinent sites of production: recordings (Chonta Records), composition and arranging, as well as musical analysis and technology. Mayor’s case study details the incorporation and blending of Colombian and intercultural musical artifacts resulting from an increasing entrepreneurial *presence* within a contemporary, post-diasporic urban complex. A highly motivated advocate for Colombian music and culture, with
a global cultural consciousness not rooted in a particular place, Mayor and Folklore Urbano represent yet another aspect of a new Colombian communal identity, and the cultural tensions that result from a desire to be grounded in one’s own indigenous culture while remaining free to incorporate intercultural local and global popular musical resources—i.e., jazz, salsa, popular Latin dance and big band orchestral music.

On the other hand, the dissertation’s opening case study (chapter two) began with an examination of Lucía Pulido’s rather radical example of a rural Colombian genre (cantos de vaquería) reconstituted as experimental or “avant-garde” music, through a uniquely personal and aesthetically affective approach to vocal performance. Pulido’s performance of a corpus of Colombian work songs are set against a discourse of regionality and innovation that take both interculturality and the world music aspect of her project to a new level, beyond so-called explorations of hybrid fusions and postmodernism. Instead, Pulido’s vocality (sound images, textures, and structures), when viewed through the lens of performance, mimesis, and music cognition studies, enables us to better comprehend her artistic individuality and integrity, underscoring the position she holds within the Colombian musical community; a position of authority that results from her creative facility with traditional and intercultural musical source material. From the synthesis of genre, gender, and cognitive networks in operation, Pulido’s vocality thus elevates, expands, and transcends reductive notions or characterizations of Colombian music, identity, and citizenship, displaying cosmopolitan tendencies and representational
constructions of an increasingly globalized, transcultural musical phenomenon.

While all of the case studies here emphasized interculturality and performativity, informed as much by Colombian musical sources as by the urban environment of the New York-Colombian diaspora, Pulido, perhaps more than any of her musical cohorts, has expanded her artistic reach by performing for international audiences throughout Eastern Europe and Latin America, with increasingly divergent circles of (often) non-Colombian musicians. Despite striking out as an independent artist, Pulido continues to be an important actor on the NYC-Colombian musicians scene, displaying her desire and goal to attain an international profile for Colombian music through vocal experimentation with world musics and musicians. Thus, I have shown how Pulido’s voice obtains both a personal artistic and representational communal identity, an identification with audiences that, while remaining fundamentally Colombian, is not fixed either in terms of strict historical musical praxis, cultural essentialism, or the geopolitics of locality and place.

In the final analysis, each case study has advanced an awareness of the New York Colombian music and the musician community’s growth, as well as the complexity of Colombian identity in diaspora manifested through the subjectivities and musicking of its members. The musicians themselves exhibit self-conscious construction of identity, where Colombianness is not defined solely by the nation-state or associations with its institutions, norms, and structures—or anachronistic social and historical stereotypes—but rather by the desire to demonstrate a collectively formed ideal of diverse, communal expressions of artistic and social
solidarity—a model of Colombian expressive culture that offers new aesthetic orientation and vision of intercultural global participation achieved through expressive culture.

I have provided a narrative about the development of an artistic musical community within a diasporic cultural community. Documenting selected key individuals, organizations, and institutions involved with the artistic creation, production, and performance of Colombian traditional, neo-traditional, and contemporary new musics in New York City—a community defined by cosmopolitan modernism, national and cultural heritage, and the shared experiences of transnational and cyclical migration—reveals the historical and cultural contexts in which the social production of music is embedded. While musicians of different race, class, and gender backgrounds arrive from different places and regions of Colombia, they bring musical projects with them that fall in line with and develop from cultural and historical continuities. As a result, whether derived from adherence to indigenous and folk authenticities, or from radical “fusions” thereof, the community’s musical production is similarly diverse, emblematic, and active in the production of meaning and identity. Through her unique vocality, Pulido engages rural, agrarian Colombian folk culture (e.g., work songs such as cantos de vaquería) to enter the World Music arena, thereby continuing the work of artists such as Toto la Momposina; the entrepreneurial pianist/composer/arranger Mayor presses forward from Latin Jazz, Big Band, and Salsa practices to produce Colombian Jazz, not unlike Edy Martinez or Hector Martignon before him, while also advocating for Colombian music and
pedagogy; and, Vejerano’s focus on learning and performing coastal popular music traditions—i.e., gaita and chirimía—then modernizing and bringing them into contemporary performance settings has precedents in internationally touring costeño Colombian ensembles such as Los Corraleros de Majagual and Los Gaiteros de San Jacinto. Although the music industry context was certainly different for Los Corraleros, and Los Gaiteros more recently, Vejarano’s project simultaneously represents a break with gaita tradition that nonetheless continues to experiment with and maintain direct linkages to traditional costeño musics. The combined efforts of new generations of New York Colombian musicians to share, achieve status, and garner a space for Colombian musics among Latin/o and world musics through performance and interculturality speak to the construction, representation, and transformation of Colombian identity at the levels of diaspora, nation-state, and global culture.

Conclusions

Through much of its history, Colombian music and musicians have contributed to the broader sphere of Latin music in the US, albeit in discrete fashion. While the Colombian presence on the American cultural landscape from the late 19th through the early 20th century has generally been overlooked and under-documented, increased migration during the mid-Twentieth century evidences a growing number of musicians living and working in urban areas, primarily in cities such as New York City, Miami, Chicago, and San Francisco. Often grouped alongside national and ethnic groups from near or neighboring South American countries, such as Ecuador,
Peru, Venezuela, with whom certain regional musical styles Colombia shares (e.g., pasillo, joropo, danza), transnational movements—attributed in part to domestic economic and civil unrest—have brought Colombian musicians and musics to bear more directly upon modern American society. Increasingly visible participants in national, global, and pan-Latin expressive popular cultures (i.e., Pop, Salsa, Latin jazz, *rock en español*), the regional diversity of Colombian music as well as its varied national topography is often invoked to explain the highly variegated aspects of its musical culture. While local and regional musical centrisms and hierarchies certainly persist in Colombia, and its diasporas—reproduced and even replicated to different degrees, the extent of their presence depends on factors such as urbanization, generational difference, and ongoing processes of hybridity and intercultural interaction.

This dissertation has examined the social production of musical culture mediated through performance and the development of communitas among a subset of Colombian cohort musicians living and working in the New York City diaspora.\(^{243}\) The argument proposed here is that interculturalism actualized through transnational interaction and exchange in a global metropole such as New York City provides a space for new Colombian musicians to reimagine, redefine, and materialize new musical products, identities, and structures of feeling associated with *Colombianidad* (Colombianess), while transcending outdated notions of Colombian identity and

\(^{243}\) For Turner, communitas is the sense of harmony and union achieved among groups during performance of social drama and ritual; see Turner 1969, 1984, 1986, 1990: especially pages 8 through 18.
transforming socio-cultural environments at local and global levels through musical performance.\textsuperscript{244} In this study of the contemporary performance of new forms of expressive Colombian musical culture in diaspora—based on traditional, popular, and experimental sources and approaches—I have focused upon indigenous and innovative elements evident in musical practices by members of the Colombian musicians community in New York City. The dissertation thus has sought to (1) document the emergence and growth of the musicians’ community, (2) provide analysis of active musical practices, (3) note the intercultural engagement and negotiation of cultural spaces within and among New York City’s music scenes, and the varied cultural group subjectivities, multiplicities, and musical experiments (i.e., innovations) that are being generated and performed, and (4) assess the cultural significance and transformations within New York City’s Colombian diaspora.

Musical innovation in contemporary New York, as elsewhere, occurs during creative processes of improvisation, experimentation, and composition, when novel musical ideas are generated, articulated, mediated, and then realized through performance (see Singer 1983).\textsuperscript{245} In asserting that Colombian musical practices are indigenous, I am referring to Turner’s concept and use of the term, wherein music invokes ritual performance with the intention to solidify and coalesce around a culture (or subcultural) group. In addition, my introduction of Rappaport’s (2005)

\textsuperscript{244} This is borne out generally in diaspora studies of identity and culture: E.g., de la Peza 2006; Dennis 2006; Flores 2009, Muller 2009; Pacini Hernández 2010; Rammarine 2007; Stokes 1994; Sugarman 2004; Turino 2008.

\textsuperscript{245} Paradoxically, innovation may also draw upon, or refer to rearticulations of less novel, even archaic musical material.
anthropological study of indigenous strategies of interculturalism among the Nasa (as they negotiate for inclusion within Colombian politico-linguistic cultural hierarchies) theoretically supports the idea that, for the New York Colombian cosmopolitans, there, too, is an underlying sense of pride (ethnic, national, and Latin/o) among members of the community that, as a feature of postnational identity, serves to transcend usual metrics structured around race, class, or regional difference (cf., Wade 1993, 2000). In other words, in teasing out parallels between indigenous and cosmopolitan interculturalism, it becomes evident how the community works to (1) valorize cultural source material (e.g., language, music), (2) strategize making claims for a staking its place within local political and cultural hierarchies (e.g., political/cultural politics), (3) maintain the community’s sense of identity in relation to the “other” (e.g., multiculturalism and diversity), and (4) and gain acknowledgment and recognition for the community. Hence, the New York musicians remain modern cosmopolitans yet unabashedly Colombian (“indigenous”) in their musical praxis, intercultural affinities, and social integration. I have thus argued for an indigenous discourse that takes into account Colombia’s cultural heterogeneity when made manifest in the diaspora.

I have examined representative musical projects by significant Colombian actors central to the New York Latin/o music scene. The inclusive years of the study are between 1995 and 2010. Each case study (chapters two, three, and four) clearly demonstrates the degree to which this coterie of Colombian musical cohorts participate, collaborate, and/or negotiate with both intra-group and out-group
musicians and audiences. In practicing social and cultural mobility through intercultural performance, this generational subculture illustrates the crystallization of a transcultural, transnational movement in diaspora. As such, I have sought to record and document the emergence and growth of this musician community, specifically noting its emergence through intercultural engagement and negotiation of cultural spaces within New York City’s local and global music scenes. Providing analytics to examples of live and mediated musical practices, New York’s active Colombian music scenes shows how diverse cultural group subjectivities are enmeshed and deeply involved in experimentation with and the creation of neo-traditional and hybridized fusions of Colombian and non-Colombian musical styles and genres—expressive culture actualized and performed before both for general and community audiences. I have also discussed the significance of transformations in Colombian musical forms as articulated by the members of the musician community itself, and the possible meanings these may hold for the Colombian diaspora in NYC and beyond. A major goal of this dissertation has thus been to provide a socio-historical text and politico-cultural metric of the emergence of Colombian musical culture in New York City at the end of the 20th Century, and as it unfolds in the early 21st Century.

For many of these musicians, new arrivals from primarily Bogotá and other urban centers, the influence of earlier generations of traditional Colombian musicians and música tropical bands, particularly those with ritmos (rhythms) synonymous with popular forms of costeño music and dance (i.e., cumbia, gaita, porro, mapelé), remain
highly important resources to be learned and mastered, then applied to traditional, neo-traditional (hybrid) and experimental musicking (Smalls). Distinct from, yet tangentially related to the musical movement *Nueva Música Colombiana* (NCM, or New Colombian Music, the term used to broadly describe fusions of traditional Colombian folk and popular forms with contemporary, urban, and experimental popular styles), New York-based Colombian musicians represent an entirely different phenomenon. This is attributable to a variety of factors, such as differences in individual social backgrounds (race, class, gender), levels of education, including musical training, which clearly set these musicians apart from their grass-roots cohorts, degree of transnational mobility, artistic goals and aesthetic sensibilities, and complex identifications with indigenous, national and global cultural referents (e.g., cosmopolitanism). In addition, the generational divide from earlier Colombian arrivals further marks these cosmopolitan musicians, whom, while enthusiastic practitioners of traditional music, do not regard themselves as “tradition bearers” *per se* but rather as self-conscious carriers of under-represented Colombian musical forms. Unlike previous generations of Colombian musicians, with distinctly local or regional affiliations, these young, cosmopolitan artists work instead to render, experiment with, and represent Colombian musics beyond local, regional, national, or even racial or ethnic parameters and boundaries (e.g., Afro-Colombians and indigenous cultures). Performing eclectic musical sets that shift between genres and regions—in ensembles of varied configurations, comprised of both Colombian *and* non-Colombian participants—they demonstrate not only the merger of a once a
loosely organized aggregation of artists but also the coalescence of a communitarian ethos impelled, motivated, and inspired by Colombian musical culture. Performing for audiences at venues throughout the metropolitan region, as well as internationally and transnationally to Colombia, results in the production of Colombian-inflected jazz, big band re-workings of Atlantic costeño porros, fandangos, cumbias, Pacific currulao, and rural work songs—a wide range of contemporary adaptations and elaborations of traditional popular music; experimental and avant-garde collaborations; and dance-club electronica geared for local and/or general audiences. Thus, while attempting to retain traditional forms and elements, modern and urban styles are incorporated through aesthetics of experimentation, hybridity and fusion. Ana María Ochoa describes NYC’s role in the process thus: “Colombian music is played not to symbolically return to the country but rather so that a city and its musicians find new ways to interact. That is why the musicians with whom they play, in addition to Colombians, are Japanese, Americans, Dominicans and from other parts. The possibility of resignifying place of origin is one of New York’s sensibilities.”

My efforts have been to document and describe intercultural and subcultural musical collaborations, activities, and exchanges as practiced by this subset of NYC-based Colombian musicians, whose work (1) creates new and uniquely local Latin/o

246 “Es decir, se hace música colombiana no para regresar simbólicamente al país sino para hacer que una ciudad y sus músicos encuentren nuevas maneras de interactuar. Por eso, los músicos con quienes tocan, además de ser colombianos, son japoneses, americanos, dominicanos y de otras partes. Esta posibilidad de resignificar el lugar de origen por medio de la música es uno de los sentidos de Nueva York” (Ochoa 2008, my translation and emphasis).
musical formations, (2) edifies a new Colombian identity within the pan-Latin/o cultural landscape, (3) orients the community toward shared efforts to strengthen bonds with available and developing intercultural resources and networks (cf., Callé 2012), and (4) fosters communal sentiments around shared experiences of the homeland and the diaspora. To deny a celebratory tone to this endeavor is pointless, and yet, while the local (and global) efflorescence of Colombian people and culture during the inclusive years of this study has been fortuitous for the image of the nation and society, reflecting positive social and historical changes, as a Colombian-American scholar, I readily admit to a measure of ethnic and cultural pride for the resilience, resolve, and sense of commitment and survival demonstrated by these young Colombian musical cohorts given the social realities of Colombia in spite of recent political and economic progress. Not unlike other social scientists that have straddled insider/outsider (emic/etic) dialectics, and been confronted with how to write about them, my own positionality and subjectivity preclude any true objectivity, due, in part, to my distanced location as a US educated Latin/o migrant and musician of an earlier generation. As such, my analysis of the new Colombian musicians community is (to some extent) informed by my own experiences as a New Yorker and Colombian, which has helped me to understand what they are doing, although, socially and culturally speaking, in a new time and place. In detailing a “narrative” around the real lives of these musicians, my observations and perceptions will of course be fraught with limitations. Nonetheless, the intention of the study has been to capture a small yet salient description and reading of this musical community’s
dynamic musical and cultural values, as they have developed and come to represent an emerging Colombianness.
AFTERWORD

Continuity and Transformation

Ethnomusicology research requires a thorough consideration of individual and group subjectivities as well as intensive focus on the social, political and economic forces that directly impact individuals, communities, and cultures. The outcomes of such projects are broad; the results of documentation include maintenance of cultural practices, edification and/or reification of cultural knowledge, and, perhaps, even effecting cultural change within local social spaces. This dissertation is the result of a long-term ethnomusicological inquiry into the Colombian immigrant community of musicians that live and work in New York City at the turn of the 21st century. When such research projects reach their conclusion however, whether by design or logic, ethnomusicologists are often faced with critical question(s), such as, what, in fact, has been produced, and whom does it serve or benefit? Is it a new theory, an epistemological contribution; a document for academic publication, presumably with hermeneutic or pedagogical use value; a cultural concept or ideology to be mediated, discussed and perhaps disseminated, either on film or by new or recent technology delivery system or network? These are just a few of many possibilities.

However, there also remains the matter of the nature of the relationships which continues between researcher and “object (or objects) of study,” and what it will henceforth be. My own research among the Colombian musicians community, for example, presents an ethnographic and historical view into the cultural
implications and consequences resulting from shared musical practices and cultural interactions among community members and affiliated artists. The project, without a doubt, is bounded by time and place. And yet, determining how ethnomusicology (and ethnomusicologists) might continue the relationships and commitments made to community members—that benefits the community—is to press for real world applications that maintain, respect, and honor those same subjectivities beyond the metrics or parameters of formally structured social sciences research.

Applied ethnomusicology—public sector music research, programming, production and advocacy, within or outside the academy—provides a variety of methods and approaches for continuing and furthering such projects. For example, as I neared the final write-up phase of this dissertation, I accepted a position at the Center for Traditional Music and Dance (CTMD), the New York-based not-for-profit arts organization, as project director for a community cultural initiative (or CCI; see Van Buren 2001; Zheng 2010). A CCI is a project-based format structured to assist with the cultural development of immigrant communities in the metropolitan New York region. Working with immigrant artists from distinct culture groups, CCIs support the maintenance and preservation of cultural traditions through performance, education, and public outreach. Under the auspices of CTMD, CCI members from different communities work in organizing committees or teams, gathering to

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247 Although somewhat a misnomer, I turn to the applied ethnomusicology section of the Society for Ethnomusicology for a definition of the term: “Applied Ethnomusicology…is devoted to work in ethnomusicology that puts music to use in a variety of contexts, academic and otherwise, including education, cultural policy, conflict resolution, medicine, arts programming, and community music. http://www.ethnomusicology.org/?Groups_SectionsAE, accessed October 2, 2012.
collectively curate, develop, and produce concert and event programs, educational workshops and lecture demonstrations for both the community and general public.

The process requires intense and continuing immersion in the cultural dynamics and politics unique to each CCI. By doing so, CTMD encourages immigrant communities to create an infrastructure of support for traditional arts, advancing awareness of peoples expressive cultures, which, in turn, contributes to the public life of the city and region.248

Fortuitously, I was assigned to work with the Colombian CCI project, which counts among its members several of the artists I have worked with during the dissertation’s research and fieldwork period. Without a doubt, my appointment was predicated on my familiarity with the community and its participants. The *FolkCOLOMBIA Música y Danza* (the name of the Colombian CCI collective) mission statement reads:

*FolkColombia Música y Danza* is dedicated to introducing the rich variety of traditional Colombian music and dance forms to Colombians, Colombian-Americans and the wider general public; and to exposing and educating all New Yorkers on the diversity, value and beauty of Colombian traditional arts while supporting creativity in the development of these artistic forms.

When applied to the business of fostering support for the development of immigrant cultural communities, ethnomusicologists can take on a variety of roles, including that of social advocate, where we are challenged to assist the community with culturally sensitive interventions. For example, the Colombian CCI must contend with the regular influx of new musicians arriving on the scene, responding

and assisting them with ways to transition into the urban cultural landscape of NYC. Working in the public sphere, we address issues and limitations, such as the lack of public performance venues, or the dearth of opportunities to find work within New York’s competitive, real estate market driven economy. With the closures of many of New York City’s historic night clubs, landmark performance spaces, and local venues (The Rose in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, discussed in Chapter Five, is just one local example), the need to find performance spaces that support Colombian music and musicians with regular performances and residencies becomes an act of ongoing cultural advocacy through promotion, network marketing, and public outreach.²⁴⁹

Equally important is the need for conducting new research that traces how new and current members of a community position themselves in relation to diversely cultural urban environments and the culture at-large. This aspect is critical, since, as sociologist George Lipsitz recently noted, “expressive culture…is one of the few venues where people [can still exercise] control” (personal communication, October 5, 2012). Chronicling musicians and dancers, or other cultural workers, further enables ethnomusicologists to proactively respond to artists movements while also working toward the stabilization goals set by community members themselves.

²⁴⁹ Freddy Castiblanco’s La Terraza 7 in Elmhurst, Queens, is one such venue, owned and managed by an owner/entrepreneur that has championed the Colombian new music scene since its emergence in the 1990s. In addition, Castiblanco regularly hosts programs called Dialogue, featuring invited speakers to discuss topics such as the Colombian peace movement, displacement, and violence. The Shrine in Harlem, El Taller Latinoamericano, and Barbès in Park Slope, Brooklyn are also noteworthy for their regular programming of Colombian music.
With respect to fostering the community’s development, still another challenge faced is determining how to continue working with constituents in a manner that addresses the interests of all stakeholders while fostering long-term communal goals of self-empowerment at local and national levels of institutional culture and politics. Any efforts to help advance community-defined cultural politics that are inclusive and conscious of both new generations of musicians as well as those of established, older generations of Colombian musicians is central to engendering an intergenerational coalition that will increase the potential for enhancing the community’s power. Cultural advocacy and politically engaged outreach therefore combines in ways that allow for the perpetuation of traditional culture and for new forms of expressive culture to emerge. In this sense, then, my work has only just started, for in order to comprehend the dynamics and values that define Colombian identity (or any identity for that matter) requires continuity with both the people and the cultural practices that indicate individual and collective transformations to themselves and the society for which music and dance is constitutive of social, economic, political, and cultural life.
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