

Toward a Critique of Sonic Latin Americanist Reason: 'Latin Music' in the U.S.

Professor Jairo Moreno, Spring 2009

An impossible logic haunts musical and sonic production, mediation, reception, dissemination, and consumption in the U.S. by peoples described and/or self-described as 'Latin,' 'Latin American,' 'Latina/o,' or 'Hispanic.' On the one hand, these descriptions constitute a powerful dispositive for the inscription of people's lives in the U.S.: The state and its institutions, civic and social institutions articulated to these, and the market all make effective use of them. In turn, multiple forms such as citizenship, potentially being a social problem or a benefit, and a consumer segment consolidate around this inscription, evincing a persistent and problematic politics of the signifier peculiar to U.S. modernity. On the other hand, the complex heterogeneity in the geo-political and historical constitution of these 'people' mediates the constant transfiguration on American soil of what is meant by these descriptions and what their effective impact might be – e.g., at what level of the social field, in what social spaces, and at what demographic scale, among other variables. Yet, in the splendor of its innumerable contradictions, this logic is immanent to how musical and sonic events, practices, and texts become audible in a public sonic sphere embodied by, among many others, the recent MacArthur Fellowship awarded to saxophonist and composer Miguel Zenón, the improbable success of Osvaldo Golijov and the early prestige awarded to Carlos Chávez, the runaway popularity of reggaeton, the media-driven 'Latin Explosion' of 1999, the Latinismo of 1970s New York salsa and its eventual attenuation, the peculiar silence around the massive consumption of Mexican banda and conjunto music, the hesitant approach by U.S. radio broadcast conglomerates to pop superstar Shakira's English-language songs, and the formation and disbandment of the Afro-Latin Jazz Orchestra at Jazz at Lincoln Center.

This seminar studies these events, texts, and practices with a focus on the ways in which their material particularities as sonic and musical phenomena disclose an enigmatic supplementarity that enables and disrupts the labor of audibility and its constitution of subjects. (This supplementarity constitutes the 'Reason' in the seminar's title.) Emphasizing music after 1950 and ecumenically approaching genre and style categories, we will consider the question of limits imposed on cultural forms as a condition for their movement across disparate political histories of Latin peoples in the U.S.

Readings: music studies, anthropology, Latin American and Latina/o cultural studies, political theory, mass media journalism. Spanish reading skills are desirable, but not required.

Projects: Apart from a terminal project for the seminar (e.g., critical research paper, ethnography, media documentary, music analysis), two other projects are required:

- a) A joint critical review of recent music and/or scholarship with another seminar participant
- b) Participation in one roundtable session on a methodological or theoretical issue where students individually present a short position paper to be circulated in advance. There will be two such sessions to choose from.

Syllabus:

Week 1: Introduction: Heterogeneity and the Public sphere

Week 2: The Americas, Genealogies of Latin Americanism

Avelar, Idelber. "Toward a Genealogy of Latin Americanism."

Bolívar, Simón. "La Carta de Jamaica."

Martí, José. "Nuestra América"; "Madre América"

Vasconcelos, José. *La Raza Cósmica* (excerpts)

Link to Martí's writings: http://www.cubaminrex.cu/josemarti/jmarti_introd.htm

Week 3: Foundationalisms and Post-Foundationalisms

Brennan, Timothy. Introduction, Alejo Carpentier, *Music in Cuba*.

Carpentier, Alejo. *Music in Cuba*.

Rama, Ángel. *The Lettered City* (excerpts)

Optional: Post-foundationalist Latin Americanisms

Fernández Retamar, Roberto. *Calibán; apuntes sobre la cultura en nuestra América*, (excerpts). (F1408.3 F4213 1989)

Rodó, Ariel.

Zea, Leopoldo. *El Pensamiento Latinoamericano* (B1001 Z.43)

Huntington, Samuel.

Andalzuza, Gloria

Week 4: A Lettered Composer in the Americas: Chavez

Chavez, Carlos. *Musical Thought* ('A Latin American Composer'; 'Composer and Public')

Chavez, *Correspondence*, selected letters (Copland, Cowell)

Cowell, Henry, ed. *American Composers on American Music*, selected essays by Harris, Roldan, Chavez

Rosenfeld, Paul.

Copland, Aaron.

Crist, Elizabeth. "Expanding America," from *Music for the Common Man*

Saavedra, Leonora. "The Social Thought of Seeger and Chavez"

Week 5: Borderland Music, comparing Marxist and Cultural Studies approaches

Pena, Texas Conjunto

Madrid, Alejandro. Nor-Tec Rifa!

Week 6: Approaches to translocation

Muñoz, J. E. and Celeste Fraser-Delgado, *Everynight Life*, intro

Santos Febres, Mayra. “”

Kuhn, Josh, “Audiotopia”

Aparicio, Frances and Silverman Chavez Tropicalization, intro

Flores, Juan. “Latino Imaginary”

Week 7: Puerto Rican/Nuyorican

Glasser, Ruth. Music is my Flag

Flores, Juan. From Bomba to Hip-Hop

Week 8: Salsa in Pan-American context

Moreno

Aparicio

Washburne

Waxer

Week 9: Latin Jazz and the question of historiography

Moreno “Bauza”

Moreno JALC

Week 10: Afro-Cuban forms

Tim Brennan, guest

“Secular Devotion: Afro-Latin Music and Imperial Jazz

Week 11: Theoretical Interlude: Language

Sommer

Week 12: Pop Formations 1999-2005

Week 13

Week 14: Student presentations