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ESPAÑÓLES, INDIOS, AFRICANOS Y GITANOS.  
EL ALCANCE GLOBAL DEL FANDANGO EN MÚSICA, CANTO Y DANZA

SPANIARDS, INDIANS, AFRICANS AND GYPSIES:  
THE GLOBAL REACH OF THE FANDANGO IN MUSIC, SONG, AND  
DANCE

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# RE-CONTEXTUALIZING TRADITIONS AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF SOCIAL IDENTITIES THROUGH MUSIC AND DANCE: A FANDANGO IN HUETAMO, MICHOACÁN

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## **Resumen:**

Desde la década de 1920, el gobierno postrevolucionario mexicano apoyó a intelectuales y artistas para que llevaran a cabo la tarea de encontrar, describir y catalogar distintas expresiones de la cultura popular. Música, baile y poesía fueron algunas de las expresiones que sufrieron un proceso de selección y descontextualización en ese afán gubernamental de crear expresiones regionales típicas que representaran un México y una identidad mexicana determinada, lo cual dio como resultado una invisibilización de la diversidad cultural del país. En la actualidad, con un renovado interés por el estudio y el *performance* de diversas tradiciones musicales, se está intentando recuperar contextos sociales más cercanos a aquellos en que estas tradiciones musicales se originaron y ejecutaron, resignificando su carácter popular en espacios compartidos. En fiestas populares —e incluso en eventos un poco más formales— los sones mexicanos se han convertido en el centro de atención de músicos, promotores culturales y públicos que reclaman los contextos originales de producción y ejecución, contextos que entrelazan música, baile y poesía, lo cual es reflejo de una forma de entender la vida. Así, el fandango se ha convertido en una manifestación de identidad, raíz y reclamación de “cultura propia” en varias partes de México. La revitalización de la experiencia del son conlleva una conexión con el pasado, lo cual incorpora un poderoso elemento cultural e identitario a la práctica actual. Mi trabajo presenta un fandango en Huetamo, Michoacán, como ejemplo del proceso de recontextualización de tradiciones musicales y la construcción de identidades sociales a través de la música y el baile.

## **Palabras Clave:**

Música y baile, identidad, recontextualización de tradiciones

*Re-contextualizar Tradiciones y la construcción de identidades sociales a través de Música y Danza: Un fandango en Huetamo, Michoacán.*

## **ABSTRACT**

From the 1920s onwards, the post-revolutionary Mexican state supported intellectuals and artists in their quest to discover, describe, and catalog expressions of Mexican popular culture. Music, dance, and poetry were among such expressions that suffered from

a process of selection and de-contextualization as the state aimed to create prototypical regional traditions to represent Mexico and Mexican identity, thus narrowing the country's actual cultural diversity. Now, with a renewed interest in both the study and performance of these traditions, some are trying to bring them back to the social contexts in which they originated and were once performed, authenticating their popular nature in shared spaces. At popular fiestas—and in more formally organized events—Mexican *sones* have become the center of attention as practitioners, cultural promoters, and audiences reclaim the original context of their production and performance, embracing their music, dance, and poetry to reflect a way of understanding life. Thus, the *fandango* has become a statement of roots, identity, and ownership of one's culture in various parts of Mexico. The revitalization of the *son* experience entails a connection with the past, which brings a powerful element into the practice. My paper deals with a fandango in Huetamo, Michoacán, as an example of re-contextualizing traditions and the construction of social identities through music and dance.

**Keywords:**

Music and dance, identity, re-contextualization of traditions

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**RE-CONTEXTUALIZING TRADITIONS AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF SOCIAL IDENTITIES THROUGH MUSIC AND DANCE: UN FANDANGO EN HUETAMO, MICHOACÁN**

As a popular fiesta, a community-rooted celebration that incorporates music, dance, and poetry, the *fandango* in Mexico is particularly associated with the festive experience and expression of the Mexican *son*.<sup>1)</sup> Over the last twenty years, fandangos have gained

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<sup>1)</sup> Throughout this paper, I use the singular (*son*) or plural (*sones*) of the term interchangeably. In either case, the semantics and contextual meaning do not change and are dependent on context.

momentum throughout Mexican regions. As fandango practices date back more than three centuries, they are an important vehicle for collective memories and practices. In this paper, I present the fandango as a means for the construction of social identities and a collective sense of community. I review some factors that contributed to the near extinction of some regional son traditions in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and I also examine the idea of re-contextualization of musical traditions that is taking place across Mexico. Through this paper, I understand re-contextualization as the process in which actors (musicians, audience, and so forth) draw on existing traditions and practices, and relocate such practices (in time and space). In such processes, identities are articulated in a constant selection of elements that get re-signified in a process of redefinition, such that the sense of “belonging” to a collective or to a social group is linked to an ideology that legitimates that belonging.<sup>2)</sup>

At present, fandangos are being framed as events where all aspects of the Mexican son—dancing, singing, playing music, and poetry—are lived and experienced along with food, attire, language, verbal interactions, and a myriad of other cultural expressions. The Mexican son is a musical style that contains specific musical, lyrical, and choreographic components. Son can be understood as a generic term that describes the various regional traditions, each type associated with certain instrumental ensembles, dance styles, performance practice nuances, and texts, as well as the complex they form. Embedded in the son are the musical heritage of the regions, a social history, a worldview, and a way of living. Son is an individual and collective musical and social experience, which shares particular ways of production and circulation, ideologies and affections.<sup>3)</sup> Sones establish a link between past and present and provoke a sense of belonging to a time and place and to a group of people that for many is fundamental to their existence. The music making and human interactions that sones convey are key to the resulting sonic and affective experience.

Towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the son spread in popularity in rural areas and flourished as regional styles that synthesized formative elements into original forms. These sones (vocal and instrumental pieces common to several regional repertoires) crystallized over time into a tapestry of regional musical cultures, each more strongly identified with its particular region (and even locality) than with the nation as a whole. At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, sones reached their peak, serving as a means of musical and political expression for the masses and conveying the nationalistic feelings inspired by the Mexican

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<sup>2)</sup> This statement is founded on the notion of identity as the representation of selected habits that function as a way “to define self to oneself and to others by oneself and by others” (Turino 2004:8).

<sup>3)</sup> In the same line of thought, Madrid and Moore consider the *danzón* as a “performance complex” in order to emphasize the music making and human action involved in the *danzón* experience rather than categories of terminology (2014:11).

Revolution. A great number of popular musicians endowed the genre with specific regional and local stylistic nuances.

By the late 1950s, many of the original rural contexts in which *sones* were performed had disappeared, including the *fandango*. Since the end of the 1980s, *sones* have been gaining social and cultural relevance as they are consciously embraced as an embodiment of identity and community. At present, the very nature of the *tarima*,<sup>4)</sup> a catalytic element within the tradition and the symbolic center of the *fandango*, is being re-appropriated as a cultural product able to articulate cultural meaning, and retaining cultural and social memory.<sup>5)</sup>

*Fandangos* have a ritualistic aspect that is made explicit through conventions learned by participating in them. In this sense, we can understand *fandangos* as “a product of a *habitus*” and discern how participants’ roles and behaviors are produced as a result of *habitus* or, according to Bourdieu, the “disposition that generates meaningful practices and meaning-giving perceptions” (1984:170). Practices, meanings, structures and perceptions are shaped by those of the past, or at least by our perception of them. Within the organizing and perception of practices that *habitus* presupposes, the perception of the social world, peoples, symbols, and behaviors within the *fandango* are the product of internalization: they are defined by their intrinsic properties and by the relational properties determined by the *habitus*.

The festive occasion transcends the notion of a mere celebration by linking culture with formative social behaviors. Although *fandangos* vary across regions, common to all of them is the *fandango* as a shared experience that connects past and present through collective memory, which is closely related to all kinds of group identity.<sup>6)</sup>

As mentioned earlier, the *fandango* lost momentum during the second quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and particularly at the turn of the century, regaining strength towards the end on the 1980s not only in the Jarocho, Huasteca, and Tierra Caliente regions, but also in other

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<sup>4)</sup> A *tarima* is the wooden platform atop which dancers showcase their patterned steps while dancing *sones*.

<sup>5)</sup> According to Regula Qureshi, musical instruments have a dual capacity as both a physical body and its embodied acoustic identity. Thus, musical instruments offer a special kind of material memory and function as both cultural products and tools to articulate cultural meaning through sound (2000:811).

<sup>6)</sup> My take on collective memory is informed by Halbwachs’ work on collective identity. For Halbwachs, the way an individual socially interacts with the members of his or her group determines how experiences are remembered and what is remembered. It is the particular nature of the group and its collective experience that shapes its collective memory. Groups reconstruct past experiences collectively and the particular nature of these experiences creates a shared memory of the event and identity. See more on Halbwachs in Russell 2006:796-800.

Mexican regions such as the Costa Chica, Tixtla (Guerrero), and the Sierra Gorda de Xichú, where the fandango or *huapango* is called *topada*. Its rebirth runs parallel to the revival that some Mexican son traditions have been experiencing since the end of the 1980s: musicians, audiences, promoters, and researchers, among others, are reclaiming both the text and context of sones as roots music. Music, dance, and poetry are being re-contextualized around the tarima in fandangos where the musical tradition is brought back to the community.

The fandango revival also runs parallel to redefinitions of notions of identity. Although the sense of self and selves and the notion of belonging that identity implies are not new concepts, it has been since the mid-1980s, and even more so the end of the 1980s, coinciding with sweeping changes wrought by globalization processes, that the notion of identity has been subject to relentless discussion across academic disciplines and other social circles. Essentialist notions of identity have been reconsidered and the situational characteristics of the fragmented and modern conception of identity (have been and) are being grasped in the midst of globalized contexts. Current views of individual and group identities (ethnic and social) consider them as negotiated, fragmented, multiple, fluid, relational, and in constant formation and reformulation. Identities are situational and are constructed within discourse.

In Mexico, the construction of identities through musical traditions is taking place across regions, and traditional music forms are being redefined to incorporate more inclusive ethnic discourses as well as new discourses of Mexicanness. Certainly, the sonic and social experience of the Mexican son is part of a larger phenomenon of musical communities grappling with social mobility, musical change, globalization, and representation of social, ethnic, class, regional, cultural, and collective identities from constructivist positions, that is, identities constructed “from cultural resources available at any given moment,” rather than from essentialist and seemingly immutable qualities (Rice 2007:24). We can understand the aforementioned redefinition of discourses and identities partly, as a response to Mexican cultural politics as well as various social and economic conditions during the 20th century that were decisive in the outcome of Mexican cultural expressions.

## **POST-REVOLUTIONARY NATIONALISM AND MUSIC INDUSTRY FROM THE 1920s TO THE PRESENT**

Cultural policies through the history of colonialism, nationalism, and liberalization have determined cultural processes and the deployment of particular cultural expressions to represent a nation, a region, a locality, a people. Such representations are constructs, imaginings created by official discourses to fit particular agendas.

The history of Mexican traditional music is intertwined with the social and political history of the country. The son is a clear example. The genre was associated with a nascent Mexican identity and was considered a national symbol during the Independence

movement in the early 19th century. Towards the end of that century, the son was thriving in different regions and its regional variants were consolidated. Then, at the beginning of the 20th century, the son peaked in terms of both reach and popularity, coinciding with a significant reconfiguration of the country's mindset: the nationalist and revolutionary fervor that culminated in the start of the Mexican Revolution in 1910 and that would give the country a sense of pride in "lo mexicano" (that which is Mexican), a reassessment of its own culture (Gradante 1982:43; Jáquez 2002:168).

The nationalist movement in post-revolutionary Mexico set out to construct a nation, and emphasized a common past that could help agglutinate a heterogeneous group of people into an articulated nation. Mexican nationalist discourse appeared as a fundamental resource for the political, economic and cultural elites as well as for the urban and rural popular classes.<sup>7)</sup> Politically and culturally, it attempted to define the particular racial and historically "core" characteristics of that Mexicanness.

Though the Mexican government's educational and cultural programs aimed to acknowledge the country's cultural diversity, the "cataloguing" of this diversity proved difficult. National stereotypes were useful in reducing that diversity into something more manageable to represent Mexico and Mexican identity. Post-revolutionary nationalism promulgated stereotyped images of folkloric music practices and genres. While music genres and ensembles from Jalisco were established as representative of Mexicanness, various Mexican son subgenres went into decline. The late Monsivais harshly criticizes the creation of stereotypes, arguing that what is called "popular culture" is the result of the will of the ruling classes, a development of film and radio, and is largely responsible for the recreation and creation of "lo mexicano" (1978:112). Thus, post-revolutionary nationalism was built stereotypes and identities that film industries, radio, and record companies commercialized. Folkloric ballets also contributed to creating and consolidating stereotypes of regional folkloric expressions. Musically and contextually speaking, *sones* were transformed on those stages.

Mexico's emergence in the late 1920s into the era of mass media (radio, phonograph, and cinema), the intense migration of rural populations to urban areas, and a strong post-revolutionary nationalist sentiment rapidly transformed the cultural and social fabric of the country. The 1930s saw the triumph of *ranchera* songs, evoking love and the rural life that was quickly disappearing. Its success coincided with the flowering of radio and movie industry. Films such as "Allá en el Rancho Grande," "Rayando el sol," or "Pajarillos" created stereotyped images of rural life, always accompanied by mariachi music.<sup>8)</sup> *Ranchera* singers such as Lucha Reyes, Jorge Negrete, Pedro Infante, Lola Beltrán, Vicente

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<sup>7)</sup> See more in Pérez Montfort 1994.

<sup>8)</sup> See more in Gradante 1982:43-44, Nájera-Ramírez 1994, and Sheehy 2006:32.

Fernández, Jose Alfredo Jimenez and many others, articulated sensibilities and experiences of an audience that, in turn, idolized and identified with the songs and singers they loved (Broyles-Gonzalez 2002:184). Music and singing style were transformed and were part of the marketing in this new commercial process.

If the Golden Age of Mexican cinema shaped the sound and visual image of the modern mariachi and consolidated the ensemble as a symbol of Mexican identity,<sup>9)</sup> radio broadcasts of the powerful XEW (Mexico's first nationwide radio broadcasting system which began broadcasting in 1930) and record companies were responsible for creating stereotypes of not only ranchera songs, but of other musical styles including sones: length, number and content of stanzas were standardized, and playing techniques were adjusted to recording and broadcasting needs.

Moreover, musicians who moved to Mexico City during the 1930s and 1940s looking for performing opportunities introduced changes into their performances to fit urban scenarios and public demands. They transformed renditions of sones, created new musical styles, and came up with new musical instruments and performance practices.<sup>10)</sup> Like other musicians, when they returned to their places of origin, they brought with them musical practices already transformed.

Another important element affecting the selective and transformative process of traditional music during the first half of the century was the folkloric ballet. Under the nationalistic banner, the government sponsored festivals that featured regional folk dances. Choreographers in dance companies begin to experiment with incorporating indigenous and folk dances into their ballet presentations (Nájera-Ramírez 2009:279). They sought to promote Mexican culture by creating staged performances of dance and music, informed by anthropological as well as historical research of the people and customs of ancient and contemporary Mexico.

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<sup>9)</sup> See more in Jaúregui 2007:105-137.

<sup>10)</sup> A well-known case is that of Huasteco musicians Nicandro Castillo (1914–1990) and Elpidio Ramírez (1882–1960). They played an important role in creating the neohuapango or canción huapango (huapango song). These compositions, with fixed music and lyrics, are in cuarteta, and occasionally quintilla, form; lyrics often praise the beauty of the Huasteca region and the people, and features such as long falsetto sections are used as a catchy performance element. The neohuapango genre was extremely popular in that period and remained a favorite as it was later popularized by ranchera singers such as Vicente Fernández, David Záizar, and Linda Ronstadt, as well as mariachi groups. Another well-known case is that of Jarocho musicians Lorenzo Barcelata, Andrés Huesca, and Lino Chávez, who transformed their renditions of son jarocho by playing faster, reducing the number of stanzas, and using a larger harp that allowed the musician to play standing.

Although concerned with notions of authenticity, it is difficult to overlook the manipulation and de-contextualization that these dance performances brought to the stage, ripping Mexican musical cultures of their contextual and musical richness in order to create a suitable product for audiences. They selected specific characteristics to distinguish one ethnic group and one region from another, creating strong symbols of identification to be discerned from within and outside the group. Folkloric ballets performed a selective process between the broad spectrum of Mexican traditional dances and created stereotypes and representations of cultural expressions that, in the long run, affected the development of folkloric traditions in their regions of origin.

Mexico's urbanization occurred along with industrialization (1940-present) and the opening of its economy to foreign investment and trade (1986-present). Migration to urban centers transformed ways of living, kinship and social processes: family's function as personal and economic support disappeared, along with the idea of community and traditional values of solidarity. As can be easily imagined, social contexts, occasions, and ways of performing and experiencing traditional music changed rapidly.

At present, the revival of musical traditions throughout Mexican regions is trying (at times not very successfully) to move away from those stereotypes and de-contextualization. Although different regions have undergone different phases, common denominators permeate the process: the re-appropriation of the tradition as a community expression with the fandango at its core is one of them. The fandango is considered the social and communitarian platform where regional sones are lived and performed. It is shared knowledge. It brings together music, poetry, and dance into a creative space in which symbiotically, these three elements are meaningful. Dancers dialog with musicians and poets, musicians bring their energy into a renewed performance, and poets recite or improvise verses. If one of those elements is not present, the musical tradition suffers a de-contextualization process it suffered in the past, weakening and losing its social, cultural, and symbolic meaning.

### **RE-CONTEXTUALIZING THE TRADITION AND THE APPROPRIATION OF SOCIAL IDENTITIES THROUGH MUSIC AND DANCE**

In an attempt at re-contextualizing the tradition, or at least, bringing back as many elements as possible (dance, music, and poetry around the tarima), the fandango has become a statement of roots, identity, and ownership of one's culture. A critical consciousness about regaining control of cultural practices and the conception of the cultural expression as a whole signals a turn towards cultural politics. Reclaiming cultural practices also signals the appropriation of social identities along with the collective agency social identity implies. Social identity is a symbolic construction and depends upon evolving categories that are not naturally given. Individuals play an active role in shaping their social identity through membership in (a) social group(s). According to Brewer,

collective agency implies a deliberate sense of group agency and emphasizes common characteristics shared by the groups and around which the identity is forged (2001: 117–119).<sup>11)</sup> I like to refer to these shared attributes as Belinda Robnett does, as “cultural capital” (2002:267).

Following Linell’s ideas, re-contextualization can be broadly described as a dynamic process, in which there is a transfer and transformation from one interaction to another (Linell 1998). Re-contextualizing musical traditions transforms the meaning of the various elements involved into the “act:” music, dance, musicians, actors, repertoires, audiences, etc.

The act of re-contextualizing creates a connection with the past, which brings a powerful element into the setting. Three generations of musicians may be playing or dancing together at a fandango. The oldest dances with the youngest, and vice versa. If you ask, everyone says that the tradition belongs to them, that they are part of the tradition, they carry it out, and will pass it on to future generations. Moreover, they are the actors of this re-contextualization, which feeds meaning to new contexts and exercises the power that appropriation gives to these new actors of Mexican traditional music cultures.

Bauman and Briggs<sup>12)</sup> argue that both meaning and context emerge from ongoing social practice, performance being a mode of social production (1990:77). Thus, re-contextualizing a tradition embodies the power of social production and exercises the power of “an act of control” (ibid., 76). It legitimates the tradition and validates our present, creating a sense of continuity and connection with the past that relocates our sense of community and cultural identity. It challenges other musics imposed by mass media marketing, and signifies the musical experience as owned culture.

In the past, the dancing was one of the aspects of the son that suffered the most in the de-contextualization processes. In my recent fieldwork in different Mexican regions I have witnessed how the dancing of sones becomes the core of the fiesta. *Sones’* dance use

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<sup>11)</sup> Key to my understanding of social identity is Brewer’s definition of social identity as “aspects of the self that have been particularly influenced by the fact of membership in specific social groups” (Brewer 2001:118). He distinguishes between four types of social identity, out of which, person-based identity is relevant to my study case of the fandango in Huetamo. Person-based social identities emphasize the content and acquisition of customs, beliefs, and ideologies associated with the belonging to a particular group. Person-based identification, then, refers to the importance that a particular group membership has for a person’s sense of self and the meaning that results from such identification (ibid.).

<sup>12)</sup> Bauman and Briggs deal with the study of verbal art in the social interaction between performers and audiences. They are concerned with the study of language as indexical meaning—rather than solely referential or symbolic—as it occurs at discourse, and the assumption that speech is heterogeneous and multifunctional. I am applying their ideas to musical performance.

mostly zapateado or footwork, a syncopated, rhythmic stomping and tapping of the feet on the tarima. The zapateado is an essential percussive element in the musical ensemble. The dance codifies and negotiates social identities and ideologies: it truly is a marker of cultural, social, and regional identity as well as a powerful means to ideological re-appropriation of the tradition. It also signals to the importance of dance expressions as a powerful force in the construction and negotiation of class, race, gender, and nationality, and their power structures.<sup>13)</sup>

When dances are de-contextualized, they often go through a process of standardization and stylization, losing spontaneity and more importantly, improvisation capabilities. Mexican musicians and practitioners are aware of the fact that every transmission is not without transformation, losing or gaining something in the process. When re-contextualizing takes place, the new habitat brings new conditions and elements that are incorporated into the musical tradition. In this case, re-contextualizing implies not only introduction to a form or style to a different context in time and place, but to infuse meaning into this particular experience through musical and dance particulars, as well as meaning and social structural constructions. As Hanninen argues, both sonic and contextual criteria are key to the process and the essence of re-contextualization (2003:63).

#### **AN EXAMPLE OF RE-CONTEXTUALIZATION: THE PLANTING OF THE TABLA FOR THE FANDANGO**

In the past, in the Tierra Caliente region of Central Mexico (see figures 1 and 2), fandangos used to take

Figure 1. The Tierra Caliente region



<sup>13)</sup> See more in Desmond 1997:39-41.

Figure 2. The Tierra Caliente close-up



(© CONACULTA. Regionalization [2003] by Programa de Desarrollo Cultural de Tierra Caliente)

place where there was a tarima or a *tabla*—as the tarima is called it in this particular region—or in its absence, where it could be planted, that is, to make a hole in the ground to place the tabla on top of it.<sup>14)</sup> Lost over time, this custom is one of the elements that at present is being reclaimed in a renewed effort to bring back as many elements as possible into a given performance. The video “The Planting of the Tabla”<sup>15)</sup> is an example of an attempt to reclaim and recontextualize musical practices from the past. In this video you will see how a particular group of musicians from the Tierra Caliente, Los Jilguerillos del Huerto, carry a tabla and nearly ritualistically, plant it in the ground, under the shade of a tree, where the fandango will take place (see figures 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8).

<sup>14)</sup> Tablas used to be planted under a tree, which is very much needed in the extreme high temperatures of the Tierra Caliente region.

<sup>15)</sup> “The Planting of the Tabla” was recorded in Huetamo (Michoacán), June 11, 2011. The video may be viewed at <<https://vimeo.com/133244148>>. Epifanio Merlán Granados, “El zurdo de Tiquicheo,” plays violin accompanied by Alanís Figueroa Ziranda (guitar) while the tabla is being planted. Members of Los Jilguerillos del Huerto are Huber Figueroa Ziranda, violin; Martín Dagio Almonte, guitar; Alanís Figueroa Ziranda, guitar; and David Durán Naquid, tamborita. Dancers are Flor Dalia Barajas Cerbín, Elizabeth Avendaño Sayawa, Xochiquetzal Durán Barrera, and Xaren Yunuen Durán Barrera. Young boy dancing is David Durán Barrera.

Figure 3



Figure 4



Figure 5



Figure 6



Figure 7



Figure 8



This group, Los Jilguerillos del Huerto, performs music (sones in particular) from both Michoacán and Guerrero. They are part of a bigger collective of people that gathers researchers and music lovers who believe in traditional music as a way to re-establish social values and identities through music. The group's cultural capital is traditional music and cultural heritage. Many of their shared values sprung from activities centered around the learning, transmission, and performance of traditional music.

The tabla, properly tuned and expertly played, delivers a fantastic interplay with the little drum called tamborita. In the past, two pots were placed in the hole to achieve different sonorities. Even if the pots are not placed, a well-planted tarima could offer great depth to complement—rather than substitute—the tamborita. Men and women get differentiated pitches as the woman keeps the basic beat, by marking either on- or offbeats, and the man does intricate footwork, combining different steps, and improvising. If the tabla is not placed over the hole in the ground, there is not adequate depth of sound, and the instruments' function and connection to the dance gets lost. The tamborita, for example, loses function and meaning if dancers cannot achieve the sound quality and pitch differentiation that complement its playing. The tabla on the hole brings back the dance as part of the ensemble. (See Video-The Planting of the Tabla).

The planting of the tabla speaks of place as meaningful and central to the performance of these traditions: place as a symbolic recall for the community and as the core of the fiesta where the tabla is located. In it, audience, musicians, and dancers constitute meaning (Duffy 2005: 678). According to Cohen, music produces place as “a concept or symbol that is represented or interpreted” (1995:434). Pertinent to my work is the idea that both music and dance produce a “place” that is addressed symbolically, connecting past and present. Actors deliberately choose a place in which the tradition is meant to be recreated as faithfully as possible. In urban settings, for example, I have seen how the choice of a place to hold a fandango is a way to deliberately re-appropriate public spaces for the “musical tradition” (e.g., 4<sup>th</sup> Décima Festival at the Revolution Monument in downtown Mexico City, October 29, 2011; a two-day Fandango Central at Mexico City's Main Square on November 19 and 20, 2011; and weekly workshops and fandangos in public parks and plazas, among others). It is within this ideological mindset that the musical experience is gaining momentum and strength. It is community building as well.

## CODA

One could say that the identity (national, regional, cultural, etc.) constructed through this process of re-contextualization refers to a certain aesthetic that connects past and present, giving practitioners a sense of their roots. A musical experience is able to recreate a memory, a sense of belonging. Cultural memories are evoked through the sonic experience as well as an idiom of feeling, what for William would be a “structure of feeling” (1977:129). Without a doubt, the re-appropriation of performance contexts for these

traditions, and the dancing as the center of the fiesta, are seen as a vehicle for a performance of identity, as well as a means through which identity is built and defined.

In this process, past and present become connected through music. Music, poetry, and dance feed upon spontaneity and are grounded in an interaction among dancers and musicians, allowing individual freedom and creativity, which is something that hardly takes place when sones are de-contextualized.

I believe that musical traditions that incorporate dance as a symbolic center carry a strong connection to the past. Community and continuity are present in sones through audience participation, music, poetry, and dance, which bridge time and space and reinforce a sense of belonging while expressing and experiencing culture. For musicians and audiences I have been in contact with, music and dance is a language that functions as an avenue for the creation of social identity. When performed for commodification or mass production, music lifts meaningful idioms from their contexts. If disembodied from its context, the fandango loses its important social dimension within a community. If music is bound up with identity and memory, so is the fandango and the re-contextualization process that attempts to bring back to the community what once belonged to it.

The aim is not to reproduce something “authentically.” The very idea of “authenticity,” the mechanism to reproduce a cultural product as it has been imagined that could have been, does not exist. Each musical performance, each musical event (re)creates something that is both new and renewed. It is a constant transformation that each performer/participant brings to life and sets in motion through his/her interpretation of cultural material. Each (re)interpretation adds fluid and multiple cultural meanings that make up the cultural product. Some elements from the past remain. Others do not.

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