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The Arhoolie Foundation's Strachwitz Frontera Collection of Mexican and Mexican American Recordings by Agustín Gurza, with Jonathan Clark and Chris Strachwitz (review)

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parte estadounidense. El espectro del capítulo es ambiciosamente amplio: desde los kamayurá y sus gigantescas flautas Uruá (232), pasando por el *baião* (239), las celebraciones de Yemajá en Bahía, hasta el icónico Heitor Villa-Lobos (268). El ejercicio de “bifocalidad analítica” (mantener en primer plano el juego entre la visión de conjunto y el acercamiento [*zoom in*] —término que aparecerá en una próxima publicación mía— a lo específico) está muy bien lograda. Por ser habitante del Caribe, tengo que apuntar que ese ejercicio no está logrado en el capítulo 5, “Cuba and the Hispanic Caribbean,” de Robin Moore. El mismo título del capítulo revela el sesgo, muy incrustado en escritos académicos estadounidenses, de utilizar a Cuba como un centro de gravedad musical y desde él hablar de Puerto Rico y la República Dominicana. Esta posición cubanocéntrica no solo rompe la “bifocalidad analítica” del capítulo, con respecto a las otras dos islas de habla española, sino que obvia por completo una de las problematizaciones muy interesante particular al Caribe, en general y a las Antillas en particular: los “haceres” musicales de cada isla son el producto de una fertilización cruzada que no toma en cuenta las diferencias de idiomas o metrópolis colonial, es transfronteriza.

Musics in Latin America promete una rica experiencia de didáctica y aprendizaje de los “haceres” musicales y el “musicar” en nuestra América, y los docentes que lo utilicen en sus cursos serán ampliamente satisfechos. La utilización del StudySpace (sitio cibernético virtual de estudio y audición) como herramienta pedagógica es insuperable. Lo que juntos tenemos que enfrentar es el reto que el libro nos presenta: cómo desde la América luso-hispano parlante producimos un texto similar para nosotros y para que los anglo parlantes de los Estados Unidos y Canadá puedan aprender nuestros “haceres” musicales desde nuestro punto de enunciación.

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AGUSTÍN GURZA, WITH JONATHAN CLARK AND CHRIS STRACHWITZ.

The Arhoolie Foundation's Strachwitz Frontera Collection of Mexican and Mexican American Recordings. Los Angeles: UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center, 2012. 136 pp. ISBN: 978-0895511485.

This book—by Agustín Gurza, with contributions by Jonathan Clark and Chris Strachwitz—provides an overview of the Strachwitz Frontera Collection of Mexican and Mexican American Recordings at the University of California, Los Angeles. As a companion to the eponymous website, it reveals the cultural richness of a digital treasure trove of sound recordings, the largest and most significant archive of its kind. Numerous pho-

tographs and images complement the text and visually enhance the book's overall appeal. Thematic discussions on the corrido and *canción ranchera* give the reader a sense of the expressive depth of these genres and the social history told through their lyrics. As a companion to the digital archive, this book is an excellent introduction to the recorded music and musicians that defined twentieth-century Mexican and Mexican American popular music.

Agustín Gurza is the principal author, and his personal approach reflects a deep appreciation for the music and its performers. A former staff writer for the *Los Angeles Times*, Gurza is well informed and displays considerable familiarity with the scholarly literature. His chapters "Transcending Machismo: Songs of Loss and Love from the Frontera Collection" and "Gringos, Chinos, and Pochos: The Roots of Intercultural Conflict in Mexican Music" stand out in this publication for their insight and quality of social critique. Gurza's writing style is engaging, and his ideas shed new light on the Mexican and Mexican American popular music repertory.

Jonathan Clark has been researching and writing on mariachi topics for more than thirty years. His overview of the modern mariachi tradition provides much-needed information on lesser-known groups whose recordings are also part of the collection. Groups that did not attain the same level of commercial success as Mariachi Vargas de Tecalitlán are nonetheless an important part of the story and are all too often overlooked in publications on the mariachi tradition.

A brief essay by Chris Strachwitz tells a short history of recorded sound and some information on his efforts at record collecting. Yet the entry leaves this reviewer wanting to know much more. For the purposes of this publication, Gurza's writings on Strachwitz (12–19) and the Frontera Collection (21–30) may be sufficient; however, the impact of Strachwitz and Arhoolie Records on the record industry, musical performance, and academic scholarship has been immense. An in-depth look into these topics as they relate to the Strachwitz and Arhoolie label would be a welcome addition to the literature and greatly enhance the awareness and understanding of this collection.

A typical review might not include specific comments about appendixes. In general, appendixes can be less than interesting, yet that is not the case here. For example, "Seventy-Eight Favorite 78s" provides a listing of personal favorites by Antonio Cuéllar, the main archivist for the digital project. Cuéllar is notable as the only person to have listened to all the 78s in the collection—a total of thirty-two thousand sides! Chris Strachwitz's "My Fifty Favorite Mexican and Latin Recordings" offers a glimpse into the Arhoolie founder's personal recollections of the artists and anecdotes about the recording process. His list is varied but tends to favor music

from south Texas and northern Mexico. Other less personalized appendixes include numeric tables indicating the number of recordings by particular artists, by genre, or by song. These tables reveal that Los Alegres de Téran have the most recordings in the archive, at 811. There are 15,572 *ranchera* recordings, and “Cielito Lindo” is the song with the most recordings, at 147. Beyond their usefulness as “fun facts,” these statistics serve as a useful guide for research. Knowing the fifty most-recorded performers, top twenty genres, and songs with the greatest number of releases, for example, can be of considerable help as researchers dive into this vast digital repository and investigate its contents.

The Strachwitz Frontera Collection digitization project began in 2001, with major funding from the Los Tigres del Norte Foundation. Digitization is ongoing. The goal of this project is to create a digital copy of Chris Strachwitz’s private collection of 147,000 individual recordings. Access to full-length recordings is limited to computers on the UCLA campus. Off-campus users are allowed access to the metadata and record-label images through the website (<http://frontera.library.ucla.edu>); however, sound clips are limited to the first fifty seconds of the recording. The database can be searched in both English and Spanish, and it includes numerous other popular genres, such as bolero, polka, *vals*, cumbia, tango, and mambo.

This companion book opens a path to exploring a one-of-a-kind collection of Mexican and Mexican American popular music. Academic researchers and aficionados alike will find this publication a welcome addition to the literature and a useful introduction to the Strachwitz Frontera Collection at UCLA.

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HELENA SIMONETT, ED., *The Accordion in the Americas: Klezmer, Polka, Tango, Zydeco, and More!* Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2012. 344 pp. ISBN: 978-0-252-03720-7 (hardcover); ISBN: 978-0-252-07871-2 (paperback).

Why did the chicken cross the road?
To get away from the accordion concert.

What do an accordionist and true music lover have in common?
Absolutely nothing! (40)

Not many scholarly studies centered on an instrument have a chapter devoted to jokes scorning it (aside from, perhaps, the viola), but as Helena