NOSOTRES EXISTIMOS:
MEXICAN CHORAL HISTORY & REPERTOIRE

Raul Dominguez

Mexican choral repertoire has a rich history yet is largely absent in the choral literature. A few publishers have acknowledged repertoire from Central and South American countries, but the repertoire of México remains largely underrepresented and unknown. In the United States, the percentage of those with Mexican heritage is growing at a significant rate[1] during a time when students long to see themselves represented in the repertoire they perform. This article is an introduction to Mexican choral music history and repertoire. After a brief overview, readers will learn about the compositional styles of this music through categorized time periods; the article concludes with a discussion of resources and a repertoire list suitable for all voicings.

Scan the QR code below for a listening list of compositions referenced in this article. In addition, corresponding YouTube links are listed in the end notes.

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History: Of Conquest and Cathedrals

The primary event that led to the creation of *Nueva España* (New Spain) was the fall of the *Mexica* (Aztec Empire) in 1521 at the hands of the Spanish conqueror Hernán Cortés and his *conquistadores* (explorer-conquerors).[2] Like other cultures, music was an integral part of *Mexica* life prior to the conquest. In her chapter, "Music, Conquest, and Colonialism," in *Musics of Latin America*, Dr. Susan Thomas explained:

> In *Mexica* society, musicians enjoyed high social status. They trained in special schools, known as *cuicacallis*, dedicated to the performing arts. As in modern Western conservatories, expert faculty taught specific instruments and, while students received general training in all aspects of the performing arts, advanced students would specialize in a chosen instrument. In *Mexica* culture, musicians were an important part of public and ritual life. They accompanied most sacred rituals, performed for dances, celebrated births and mourned deaths, and accompanied soldiers into battle.[3]

Because there are no extant recordings from this period, it is impossible to know how Mexica's music sounded; however, "Archeological evidence and descriptions written by early Spanish explorers stress an enormous diversity of musical expressions."[4]

Post-conquest, the Roman Catholic Church sought to convert the indigenous population through musical evangelism and coercion. Capitalizing on the inhabitants' musical abilities, the Spanish established Western European music schools in the Americas, which trained students to perform Western European compositions and to construct European instruments. Spanish composers appealed to indigenous peoples by writing music in their language, *Nahuatl* (one of many indigenous languages in this corner of the world). Conversely, Spanish composers mocked those of African descent by writing music in *habla de negro*, a Creole language spoken by the enslaved people brought into *Nueva España* by the Spaniards. Genres like the sacred *villancico de negro*, which utilized *habla de negro*, deliberately mock African people, portraying them as unintelligent, comedic relief characters within the Spanish Catholic Church.[5]

Tyrone A. Clinton Jr.'s dissertation surveyed this subgenre's performance practice, and he stated:

> This music promotes racism in a way that is reflective of other racist art forms in the Global North. Although a paraliturgical genre, the *villancico de negro* resonates more with secular music that uses poor imagery of black people, as observed in minstrelsy. Performing the *villancico de negro* specifically in the Global North ignores a brutal past of white supremacy… Therefore, I cannot condone performing it regardless of a performer's contribution or geographical location.[6]

It should be noted that some may feel this historic repertoire should not be dismissed but rather a way to understand secular music that existed outside the church. Regardless, it is imperative that conductors understand *Nueva España's* choral music through an evangelical lens in order to contextualize these events for their ensemble and take great care when encountering compositions written in *habla de negro*.

Tracing Composition Styles

Readers can use the QR code on page 7 to access a listening list that will follow this article. Noting the musical examples and their correlative years, stylistic properties of earlier musical works do not exactly align with European style periods from this same time. In his dissertation, "Manuel de Sumaya: A Musical Analysis of Two Masses by the Baroque Mexican Composer," Stephen Stanziano explained why Nueva España delayed in embracing compositional practices simultaneously with Europe:

> While [Nueva España] was experiencing its musical Renaissance, Europe was well into the Baroque era and undergoing major reforms characterized by progressive works that emphasized tonality instead of modality, homophony instead of counterpoint, and more

sophisticated dissonances than in the past. The development of new forms such as the concerto and opera began to take hold in Europe.[7]

Stanziano continued, describing how the Council of Trent, led by Pope Paul III, reacted to Martin Luther and the Protestant Reformation. The Council concluded that music resembling secular compositions was forbidden, music that pleased the listener was prohibited, and text within polyphony (which should be sung in Latin and not the vernacular) must be intelligible. Another goal was uniformity in the celebration of the Mass and the Divine Office throughout the church.[8] For these reasons, Stanziano outlined the following arguments for why European compositional trends arrived "late" to Nueva España:

- The geographical isolation of España to its colonies versus the rest of Europe
- A Catholic Church that was resistant to the Reformation
- A resistance of the Catholic Church to adopt newer styles that challenged the established order
- The prohibition of solo and operatic singing in the Spanish Liturgy[9]

Resisting the reformation, in conjunction with Nueva España's distance, meant this country embraced newer compositional trends later than Europe. For this reason, there are more composers who represent Renaissance and baroque styles, as deemed acceptable by the Council of Trent, than those who represent classical tendencies, seen as a shift toward secularism. As noted below, Nueva España gained independence when they began to embrace classical styles, which caused a major shift in choral music's relevancy and existence. Since the music period designations of Renaissance, Baroque, Classical, and Romantic align with European musical development, this author suggests using the following periods when describing the development of Mexican choral music:

- Colonial Period, 1521–1821
  - Renaissance
  - Baroque
  - Classical
- Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries
  - Opera
  - Neoclassicism and Nationalism
  - Avant-garde
- Contemporary
  - Intertextuality
  - Stories and Social Justice
  - Arrangements

History: Colonial Period (1521–1821)

The colonial period encompasses Nueva España's viceroyalty period beginning in 1521, with 1821 marking its independence from España. European styles condensed within these three hundred years include the Renaissance and baroque, with classical trends overlapping in the 1820s. Scholars are primarily aware of sacred genres during this period, including masses, motets, psalms, cantatas, and villancicos. Cathedral archives have protected these compositions despite war, flooding, and other disasters. Unfortunately, little is known about contemporary secular composition among the indigenous population at this time.

Based on the records at the cathedral in Mexico City, *Catedral Metropolitana de la Asunción de la Bienaventurada Virgen María a los cielos,* typical *coros* (choirs) comprised fifteen to twenty altos, tenors, and basses (all men), as well as six to eight choirboys or the *coro de seises*, who sang the *tiple* (soprano) parts.[10] Though early Nueva España repertoire did not contain instrumental parts, cathedral orchestras often reflected contemporary European orchestras and doubled the choral parts before gaining their own independent parts in the eighteenth century. The most common forms of accompaniment were the harpsichord, organ, and harp as *basso continuo*,

though it is hard to know how a harp realized a bass line.[11] The compositions of the early *maestro de capillas* were often plainchant, polyphonic, polychoral, or concerted works, reflecting their dutiful adherence to the Council of Trent's conservative polyphony.

Hernando Franco (1532–1585) was one of the earliest notable maestro de capillas. Born in España, he studied with Tomás Luis de Victoria's teacher, Gerómino de Espinar, before immigrating to Guatemala to assume the position as chapelmaster at their cathedral in 1573. Two years later, he was appointed maestro de capilla of the cathedral in Mexico City. Though only a handful of his works survive, his *Magnificat* settings are considered significant; there were eight settings, one for each tone, but the third tone *Magnificat* has been lost. Each setting alternates verses between plainchant and polyphony.[12] Scan the QR code on page 7 or see the link in the end note to hear this alternation and restrained polyphonic texture in Horacio Franco's ensemble performance of *Magnificat del 5 Tono.*[13]

Also Spanish born, Juan Gutiérrez de Padilla (1590–1664) served as Puebla's maestro de capilla from 1629 until his death. His choral works, often composed for double chorus, included various masses, motets, and villancicos in the vernacular and are indicative of Europe's Renaissance styles. The style of the Venetian school (whose trends had migrated to España) not only influenced Nueva España's composers but also its architects.[14] Like the cathedrals of Europe, two separate choir stalls allowed the choirs to face each other to facilitate polyphonic and antiphonal compositions. Padilla's *Deus in adiutorium* honors this Renaissance double chorus tradition, beginning with the *incipit*, a tutti choral statement, followed by antiphonal statements from both choirs as heard in The Sixteen's recording on the listening list.[15]

Born in Mexico City, Manuel de Sumaya (or Zumaya; 1678–1755), was the first native-born person to become the maestro de capilla in Mexico City and was responsible for bringing the Italian baroque style to Nueva España. Michael Dean's dissertation on Sumaya's villancicos hypothesized that Sumaya must have traveled to Europe between 1700 and 1708, where he learned the Italian baroque style, while Nueva España's output continued to match Renaissance styles:

> Modernization would finally come with Manuel de Sumaya, who, after drastically revolutionizing the Mexico City chapel in the early eighteenth century, proceeded to do it all over again in Oaxaca a few decades later.[16]

The genre villancico feels separate from the European canon though relevant to early Mexican choral repertoire; it is worth a note on this genre before listening to *Celebren Publiquen*. The villancico genre used an ABA ternary form where A represented the term *estribillo* or refrain, and *coplas* or verses represented the B section. This style contained contrasting solos, chorus, and instrumental parts in the vernacular.[17] *Celebren Publiquen* is a concerted villancico for double chorus, trumpets, and strings on the subject of the assumption of Mary. Comparing the recording of *Celebren Publiquen* to the *Magnificat* by Franco, listeners will hear a stark contrast between the restrained polyphonic Renaissance and the florid concerted baroque styles from Nueva España.[18]

European liturgical music became more and more secular as the musical trends of Europe and Nueva Espana continued to, as Thomas phrased it, "dialogue":

> Latin American musical culture did not develop in isolation, nor did it merely borrow from sources elsewhere. Rather it developed in dialogue with Europe and, by the end of the Colonial period, with the United States as well. The latest musical trends from France and Italy, as well as Spanish and Portuguese styles, sounded in Latin American cathedrals, theaters, and ballrooms.[19]

The Italian-born composer Ignacio Jerusalem (1710–1769) was considered Mexico City's *el milagro musical* (the musical miracle). While working as a violinist in a theater in España, he was recruited to a theater in Nueva España, where his talents were labeled "miraculous." Eventually, he applied for and became the new maestro de capilla in Mexico City. Listeners will hear his use of the galant style, which favored light and elegant homophony over polyphony. In comparison

to his predecessors, his harmonic rhythm is slower, he gives preference to repeated phrases over sequences, and his counterpoint sounds light and effortless. He is also known for greater rhythmic contrast, shifting between repeating eighth notes, sustained passages, dotted rhythms, triplet subdivisions, and Lombardic rhythms (stressed sixteenth note followed by a dotted eighth note). Based on his manuscripts, instruments in his orchestras began receiving more independent parts, where he also expected players to double within the woodwinds and brass (e.g., oboe players were expected to double on flute).[20] These traits, and more, can be heard in the "Gloria" from the *Mass in G*.[21]

As the years moved forward, orchestral parts gained more independence, segmented phrases were more prominent, solo singing became increasingly virtuosic and aria-like as in opera, and the galant style continued to pervade.[22] These characteristics are notable in Echenique's recording of the "Kyrie" from the *Mass in D Major* composed by Manuel Arenzana (1791–1821).[23] The instrumental introduction features different segments of motives followed by the chorus's entrance, all set in homophony. The contrasting middle "Christe" section highlights soloists with aria-like music and ornamentation. The final composers in this section, and their stylistic traits, signal a clear shift toward Europe's classical era as Nueva España approached independence during 1821, the same year Arenzana died. This classical shift was brief; along with independence, the population's musical taste would soon shift away from choral music.

History: The Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries

The colonial period ended in 1821 with the creation of the First Mexican Empire as the Mexicans declared independence from España. The Mexican War of Independence

Repertoire List: Mixed Chorus

- ***Dios itlaçonantzine***, Hernando don Franco, arr. Ahmed Anzaldúa
  - SATB, unaccompanied
  - Marian motet in Nahuatl (Indigenous language)
  - Publisher: Border CrosSing
- ***Christus factus est***, Antonio Juanas, ed. Raul Dominguez
  - SATB, violins, flutes, cello, continuo, or piano reduction
  - Publisher: La Voz
- ***Tres Epitafios***, Rodolfo Halffter
  - SATB (div.), unaccompanied
  - Sets the text from the tombs of Don Quixote, Dulcinea, and Sancho Panza
  - Publisher: Presser
- ***El Ángel Gabriel*** arr. David García Saldaña
  - SATB, cajon (opt.)
  - Up-tempo *villancico de navidad*
  - Self-published on davidgarciasaldana.com
- ***Adiós bien amado***, Julio Morales
  - SATB (div.), unaccompanied
  - Hope and healing after loss
  - Publisher: La Voz
- ***Tipitin***, María Grever arr. Raul Dominguez
  - SATB and SSAA, unaccompanied, TTBB version coming in 2026
  - *Vals mexicano*, love song
  - Publisher: Alfred Music (Lawson-Gould Series)

(1810–1821), led by José María Morelos—a priest of African, Indigenous, and European descent—not only called for independence but also the abolition of slavery and the end of oppression against the Indigenous population. Morelos's ideals of racial equity and civil rights made their way into choral compositions in the twentieth century.

Sacred choral music experienced a decline during this period that began in the eighteenth century due to several factors. The musical taste of the people gradually shifted toward opera, and funding for cathedral musicians declined, forcing reductions in the size of cathedral ensembles. The arrival of European musicians also declined, and the ones who came were primarily trained in opera. Likewise, cathedrals could not afford to send Mexican musicians to study with liturgical musicians in Europe.[24]

The following section will highlight two opera-choruses from two composers who represented different sides of the political-favor spectrum. Cenobio Paniagua (1821–1882) was raised in Tlalpujahua, Michoacán, and studied at *la Academia de Armonía y Composición*. His musical archive was only discovered in 2002, and as of this writing, no recordings exist of his full body of works. While his chorus, "La independencia," is featured on the listening list,[25] he is perhaps best remembered for his opera, *Pietro d'Abano*, which commemorated the Mexican liberal's victory in the war against France.

As music history progressed in the Mexican Empire, Toscano and Gruzinski, in their *Historia Mexicana* article, explained that the relationship between music and politics was difficult for composers to navigate. Composers had to "gain" permission from authority figures to have their works performed, or at least maintain good relations with them. In Paniagua's case, conservatives and supporters of the French intervention stopped attending his concerts and ended all support for his work. Paniagua's life became so difficult that he fled Mexico City and spent the remainder of his life in Córdoba, Veracruz.[26]

Melesio Morales (1838–1908) was born in Mexico City and wrote his first Italian opera at the age of twelve without much formal training. His second opera, *Ildegonda*, also in Italian, was such a triumph that the Mexican society elite paid for Morales to travel and study in Europe. Overseas, *Ildegonda* had a successful performance in Florence, and he returned home to Mexico City a hero, where he would teach music for the remainder of his life. Though some critics referred to his works as "European-izing,"[27] he remained in good political favor throughout his career. The listening list features the "Coro Introduzione" (Chorus Introduction) from *Ildegonda*.[28]

In further dialogue with European trends, nationalistic tendencies began to appear in the repertoire as a reaction to a variety of elements built around the idea of identity and societal elements. These trends became more mainstream with the Mexican Revolution (1910) but was distinguishable as early as 1871, with the opera *Guatimotzin* by Ancieto Ortega de Villlar (1823–1875). In this opera, Ortega orchestrates indigenous pieces including the *tzotzopizahuac*, a national dance, and the Mexican tune, "El Perico." There is a soldier's chorus march, "Marcha y Danza Tlaxcalteca," where soldiers sing above repeated musical material sourced from Mexican folk songs and indigenous elements.[29] Unfortunately, a recording does not yet exist. This form of hybridity, incorporating indigenous or popular elements into compositions, continued into the twentieth century as choral repertoire came back into popular favor.[30]

Nationalism continued within the realm of neoclassicism as the twentieth century approached, mostly by composers who lived between the two world wars. A neoclassical composition is likely to exhibit traits such as extended tonality, modes, or atonality, balanced composition forms, and exert an element of restraint when it comes to emotion—all in reaction to the fleeting Romantic era. It is not a revival of classical era properties but rather a reaction to the decadent Romantic era, where composers exercised emotional restraint to convey their nationalism.[31]

Named "the Creator of the Modern Mexican Song," Manuel Ponce (1882–1948) is known for setting mestizo folk styles and concertizing popular music through the lens of nationalism. He showed musical promise from an early age and was a student of Martin Krause in Berlin. Ponce taught at the Conservatorio Nacional de Música in Mexico City.[32] His piece "Pasas por el

abismo de mis tristezas" ("You pass through the abyss of my sadness") is on the listening list. His unaccompanied piece is mostly tonal, homophonic, and nationalistic with text from a Mexican poet.[33]

Carlos Chávez (1899–1978) is another composer who concertized indigenous sounds and popular styles. He was born in Mexico City and, like Ponce, studied at the Conservatorio Nacional de Música. The nationalistic composition on the listening list is his "Corrido del Sol" for chorus and orchestra.[34] A *corrido* is a "narrative ballad genre that arose in association with the Mexican Revolution of 1910." According to Amber Waseen's thesis:

> For a majority of Mexicans during the [Mexican] revolution, the most important form of media for spreading news about agrarian reform and other primary issues and events was the *corrido*. Historically, the *corrido* has treated an array of subjects from love to war, comedy to tragedy, and history to current events… Most *corridos* were transmitted through an oral tradition…[and] encouraged solidarity, one of the genre's most powerful attributes.[35]

"Corrido de el Sol" premiered in 1934 in a concert memorializing the late President Obregón on the anniversary of his assassination. To assemble this work, Chávez pulled from his previous compositions, referenced the music of other composers, and used melodies and rhythms indicative of indigenous and corrido styles.[36]

Spanish-born composer Rodolfo Halffter (1900–1987) became a professor of musical analysis at Conservatorio Nacional de Música. During his thirty years at the conservatory, he instructed several significant composers, including Mario Lavista, who is featured in the next section. Halffter's use of harmony extended from tonal into polytonal, and he used asymmetrical rhythm to convey his texts in a manner that fa-

Treble Chorus

- ***Cantate Domino***, Jesús López Moreno
  - SA, piano
  - Has "opener energy"
  - Publisher: VocalEssence Music Press
- ***La Ofrenda***, Sabina Covarrubias
  - SA + Small group, guitar
  - For Día de Muertos
  - Publisher: VocalEssence Music Press
- ***Maríposa candorosa***, José Antonio Rincón (Colombian)
  - Mexican danzón
  - SSA, flute, guitar, and percussion
  - Publisher: Carus
- ***Xicochi***, Gaspar Fernandes, arr. Ahmed Anzaldúa
  - SSA, continuo, percussion
  - Christmas lullaby in Nahuatl
  - Publisher: Border CrosSing
- ***Allí había una niña***, Jorge Córdoba Valencia
  - SSAA, unaccompanied
  - Extended techniques
  - Publisher: PH Publishers

vors syllabic stress. His three-movement work for unaccompanied mixed chorus, *Tres Epitafios*, sets the epitaphs of the three main characters of *Don Quixote* by Miguel Cervante using strophic forms, homophony, mixed meters, and extended harmony at cadential points. Despite his exile to Mexico in 1939, his Spanish nationalism endured through this composition (on the listening list), while some of his contemporaries looked for musical inspiration outside their home country.[37]

Alongside nationalistic trends, composers began experimenting with new sounds for their compositions—what might be referred to as "twentieth-century tendencies." Well before Josef Matthias Hauer and Arnold Schoenberg developed twelve-tone techniques around the 1920s, Julián Carrillo (1875–1965), a musician from *Ahualuco*, developed *sonido trece*, or the "thirteenth sound," in 1895. Sonido trece is a microtonal theory utilizing sounds smaller than twelve semitones, which paved the way for new musical systems, instruments, and compositions.[38] The listening list features Carrillo's microtone style in the "Gloria" from his tenor-bass chorus mass, *Misa a S. Juan XXIII*, where singers bend the dictated pitches to access the sounds between each semitone.[39]

Manuel Enriquez (1926–1994) was born in Ocotlán, Jalisco, and studied composition at the Juilliard School. His composition periods began and ended with nationalistic styles, and in between he composed using techniques such as dodecaphony, minimalism, aleatory, and graphic notation.[40] He also experimented with electroacoustic sounds in a variety of compositions like *Contravox*, written for mixed chorus, percussion ensemble, and tape in 1976. To date, a recording of this work does not exist (or cannot be found) but is worth mentioning here to highlight the experimental nature of choral music in this period.[41] The listening list features his cantata, "A Juárez," a work for chorus, baritone, and orchestra commissioned by the State of Oaxaca honoring the former president Benito Juárez.[42] His use of twentieth-century sounds with a nationalist subject combines two of the largest compositional trends of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

History: Contemporary

Mexican choral repertoire takes on a variety of forms in contemporary choral literature. Compositions can feature the sounds of the past and the present to create something new, communicate a social justice message, tell a story, or take the form of arrangements of traditional and popular tunes. In a market saturated by the "choral European canon," the contribution of choral arrangements of traditional and popular tunes are viewed as a culture continuing to endure, adapt, and thrive.

Mario Lavista (1943–2021) was born in Mexico City. He studied with notable composers Carlos Chávez, Nadia Boulanger, and Karlheinz Stockhausen, and received multiple accolades for his compositions, including a Guggenheim Fellowship and the Tomás Luis de Victoria Composition Price in 2013. Dr. Ana Ruth Alonso Minutti describes Lavista's output as "intertextuality,"[43] meaning Lavista includes musical borrowings or references to other styles within his compositions. His *Stabat Mater* (on the listening list) represents this style with the merging of Renaissance plainchant and twentieth-century techniques for chamber choir and cello octet playing natural harmonics.[44]

Jorge Cózatl (b. 1973) is a well-known singer, conductor, and composer who has been recognized for his work with choirs, in opera, and for his arrangements of Latin American folk songs.[45] Significant within his output is his arrangement of *El Cascabel* (the Rattle) on the listening list. The original folk tune fuses musical elements from the indigenous, Spanish, and African populations.[46] Cózatl's arrangement is significant because the original recording was included on the Interstellar Golden Record. This record was launched into space on both Voyager ships in 1977, making Mexico one of two Latin American countries included in this interstellar time capsule.[47]

While Mexican choral repertoire is traditionally excluded from the larger narrative of choral literature, more so are the compositions of women of color. The following are some of the first Mexican female composers. Though not all have composed choral music and some may be lost to time, including the music of convents from the colonial period, it is worth men-

tioning their names for readers curious about their solo voice or instrumental works: Sofía Cancino (1897–1982), Consuelo Velázquez (1916–2005), Gloria Tapia (1927–2009), Rosa Guraieb (1931–2014), and Graciela Agudelo (1945–2018). Those listed below have noted choral compositions.

Gabriela Ortiz (b. 1964) is a Grammy Award-winning composer who engages in works combining traditional and avant-garde sounds with both popular and folk elements. Originally from Mexico City, she received her education from the University of London and now teaches composition at the Mexican University of Mexico City.[48] Her composition *Yanga*, for orchestra, mixed chorus, and percussion ensemble, tells the story of Gaspar Yanga, a freedom fighter who was forcibly brought to Nueva España and made a slave. To highlight the origins of this story's protagonist, the percussion ensemble plays African percussion instruments. In Ortiz's words, "*Yanga* is a work of immense expressive force that speaks of the greatness of humanity when in search of equality and the universal right to enjoy freedom to the fullest."[49]

Composer and singer Diana Syrse (b. 1984) studied voice and composition at Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México. As a performer-composer, "her sonic language often incorporates voice, electronics, and traditional instruments from Latin America to evoke powerful, theatrical images…[and] deals with socially relevant issues and makes an artistic contribution to the discourses of our time."[50] For the VocalEssence ¡Cantaré! program, which connects selected composers from Mexico with schools and organizations in Minneapolis, Minnesota, Syrse offered "Mar de Sueños," a hauntingly beautiful piece for mixed chorus and piano, evoking imagery of a sea, dreaming of reaching the moon but never touching it.[51]

Mari Esabel Valverde (b. 1987) was born in north Texas but comes from Mexican roots. She holds degrees from St. Olaf College, the

Tenor-Bass Chorus

- ***Cielito Lindo***, arr. Juan Tony Guzmán (Dominican Republic)
  - Unison, optional 3 parts, and piano
  - Mexican folk song
  - Publisher: Boosey & Hawkes
- ***De Colores***, arr. Mari Esable Valverde
  - TB, T solo (or TTB, treble version also available), and piano
  - Mexican folk song
  - Publisher: La Voz
- ***Guadalajara***, arr. Raul Dominguez
  - TTBB and piano or mariachi ensemble
  - An up-tempo, spirited arrangement with pride for Guadalajara
  - Publisher: La Voz
- ***Yo ya me voy a morir a los desiertos***, arr. Ahmed Anzaldúa
  - TTB, unaccompanied, treble version also available
  - Cardenche singing; ripped out of the body
  - Extreme emotion and vocal range required
  - Publisher: Border CrosSing
- ***Aleluya***, Jorge Córdoba Valencia
  - TTBB, unaccompanied
  - Up-tempo and rhythmically complex
  - Publisher: VocalEssence Music Press

European American Musical Alliance, and the San Francisco Conservatory of Music. Valverde's choral offerings range from lush and beautiful to social commentary pieces.[52] "Border Lines" is on the listening list and is scored for mixed chorus and guitar or cello. The composer sets the text of Harlem-based Afro-Latina poet Yesenia Montilla, which calls for empathy for immigrants who have been separated from their families. Simultaneously, Yesenia's text highlights the idea of imaginary borderlines on a map while imploring the listener to recognize our collective humanity.[53] Valverde also arranged the popular Mexican folk tune "De Colores" for two- or three-part treble or tenor-bass choir, an optional solo (if performed in two parts), and piano. The adaptable voicing makes this arrangement available to a wide variety of ensembles at multiple ability levels. This setting is another example of an arrangement that seeks to give voice to a relevant—though often, unheard—culture.

Lastly is this article author's choral arrangement of María Grever's (1885–1951) love song, "Tipitin." Grever is the first well-known Mexican female composer who made a career as a composer at a time when the compositional field was dominated by men. She is known for her song "What a Difference a Day Makes," popularized by Dinah Washington, originally a Mexican tune titled "Cuando vuelva a tu lado." The *vals mexicano* (Mexican waltz), "Tipitin," was written in 1938 as a solo song. Raymond Leveen wrote new English lyrics for her tune, and Big Band leader, Horace Heidt, debuted Leveen's version in the United States. The Andrews Sisters released a version in 1957 but negated the feel of the waltz by adding a beat to the melody. This author's arrangement for unaccompanied mixed and treble chorus (tenor-bass arrangement coming in 2026) restores both the original Spanish text and vals mexicano style.[54]

The history outlined here is only a glimpse into the full depth of what Mexican choral repertoire has to offer. Knowing the history is only part of the work, and conductors must know where they can find this repertoire and carefully consider how they present these works to their singers and communities. The following section provides an overview of repertoire sources for the conductor. In addition, there is a listing of suggested repertoire for all voicings distributed throughout the pages of this article.

Repertoire Sources

The *Seminario de Música en la Nueva España y México Independiente* within UNAM is a website that contains scans of manuscripts from composers in the colonial period and the nineteenth century. To access this website, which is in Español, visit www.musicat.unam.mx/ and peruse the following databases: *Catálogos de música*, Red Digital Musicat, and *Colección Estrata*. From here, with the consultation of UNAM, users can assemble industry-standard editions of each individual part to facilitate modern-day performances.

The Latin American Music Center at Indiana University Bloomington contains a variety of resources pertaining to the music of Latin America. Founded in 1961, they have one of the largest collections of physical and digital repertoire and resources in the United States and offer a minor in Latin American and Caribbean Music. To access their collections, visit https://lamc.indiana.edu/index.html to search through their database through Interlibrary Loan (ILL) or visit them in person.

The *Tesoro de la Música Polifónica en México* are fifteen volumes that contain a good portion of the polyphonic music from the colonial period. The volumes are written in Español and contain literature for mixed chorus, double chorus, and solo voice with genres ranging from masses, motets, magnificats, lamentations, villancicos, psalms, and more. Each volume can be accessed online for free at https://raulconducts.com/repertoire/ or requested through ILL. The resources below are publishers with websites where users can directly purchase copies of repertoire.

Mapa Mundi is a publishing company founded in 1977 that specializes in Latin church music from the sixteenth century to present day. Of their two catalogs, Mapa Mundi (same name as the company) has Series F, which contains mixed chorus and double chorus Mexican church music.[55]

Graphite Publishing is a publisher of digital scores founded by composers Jocelyn Hagen and Timothy C. Takach. Within their marketplace, they have two series

of note: the Border CrosSing and VocalEssence Music Press. Border CrosSing is a Minnesota-based organization that provides performances and school programs that reflect the multiracial identities of their surrounding community. Founder Ahmed Fernando Anzaldúa El Samkary, a Mexican conductor and pianist of Egyptian descent, has a concert series called Puentes that focuses on Latinx music through their community chorus, Heritage Choir. The repertoire from their series comes with detailed performance notes and translations and is available for purchase through Graphite for a variety of voicings and difficulty levels.[56]

The aforementioned VocalEssence ¡Cantaré! program also publishes their offerings through Graphite. Their selections, like Border CrosSing, come with translations and resource guides. VocalEssence's repertoire is available for a variety of voicings with a special emphasis on treble repertoire for children's choirs.[57]

La Voz Music Publishing is a platform that seeks to elevate the unique sounds and composers of Latin American choral repertoire. Founded in 2022 by José Rivera, Ángel M. Vázquez-Ramos, and Carlos E. Rivera-Aponte, their growing catalog contains sacred and secular repertoire for a variety of voicings in a variety of languages. Each piece is also equipped with translations and performance notes.[58]

Pockets of Mexican choral music can be found within other publisher's catalogs as well. Readers searching for a more immediate list should consult the suggested repertoire lists in this article for mixed, treble, and tenor-bass choir.

Mexican Music Research

The author's website, raulconducts.com, shares the latest information and sources on this topic in the Mexican Music Research section, which includes a side-by-side history timeline—Mexican history on the left and Mexican music history on the right—in an effort to make sense of the development of Mexican choral music. There is a more extensive choral repertoire list that provides links to all fifteen *Tesoro* volumes and links to other notable repertoire categorized by mixed, treble, and tenor-bass repertoire.

Inspired by Dr. Marques L. A. Garrett's playlist, "Beyond Elijah Rock: The Non-Idiomatic Choral Music of Black Composers," there is a YouTube playlist of repertoire ranging from the colonial period to contemporary. "The Spanish Diction Resource" and "Performance Practice Resource" are excerpted chapters from this author's dissertation.[59] For those who struggle with Spanish diction, this resource goes through all vowels, consonants, and possible elisions with correlative IPA distinctions and explanations. For anyone who encounters works from Nueva España with older forms of Español, Drew Edward Davies's guide to modernizing Spanish letters is also available. The performance practice guide mainly concentrates on music from the colonial period, surveying literature about Nueva España's cathedrals, accompaniment, genres, and more.[60]

Conclusion

This article served as an introduction to Mexican choral history and repertoire. There is, however, far more work to do, voices to include, and music to share. For conductors who ascribe to principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion, this is not an endpoint but a beginning. In an effort to promote inclusion and belonging amongst our ensembles and communities with growing populations of Mexican heritage, this author hopes Mexican choral repertoire will one day become famaliar in our rehearsal rooms and on our concert stages. CJ

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