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MEXICAN MUSICAL THEATER AND MOVIE PALACES IN DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES BEFORE 1950

WELCOME TO THE PLAZA

To begin to tell the story of Mexican music in Los Angeles, you have to start in the Plaza.¹ The first site of Spanish colonial civilian settlement in 1781, it was also the city's first entertainment district.² Today the Los Angeles Plaza retains its historic Roman Catholic Plaza Church, Our Lady Queen of the Angels/Nuestra Señora la Reina de los Ángeles (also known as La Placita Church), dedicated in 1822, and still an active parish serving a principally Latino congregation. The historic Pico House hotel and Merced Theater (the city's oldest surviving theater space) opened in 1870, and Masonic Hall next door was built in 1858. Los Angeles civic leaders established touristic "Mexican" Olvera Street in the late 1920s, as representative of the Spanish-heritage fantasy myth.³ Italian Hall, built in 1908, long a multiethnic site for cultural, social, and political activities, features David Alfaro Siqueiros's restored outdoor mural *América Tropical* (Tropical America) of 1932.

The Plaza area has been reconfigured and repurposed numerous times over the centuries, and has always been in a state of adaptation and change.⁴ Before the building of Union Railway Station in Los Angeles

in the late 1930s, and before misguided urban redevelopment in the 1950s and the destruction of historic buildings and neighborhoods, it served as the center for the city's vibrant Mexican, Italian, and Chinese communities.⁵ Civic leaders such as Christine Sterling and *Los Angeles Times* publisher Harry Chandler, creators of the romanticized reimagining of Olvera Street, practiced what William Estrada calls "selective preservation," keeping some buildings such as those mentioned above, but almost entirely destroying the original Chinatown and gradually displacing most of the original Mexican businesses in the Plaza area.⁶

However, at different times from the mid-nineteenth century through the 1950s, Plaza-district buildings, especially along North Main Street, housed immigrant-oriented businesses, churches, restaurants and cafes, grocery stores, social clubs, billiard halls, saloons, music stores, dance halls, rooming houses, phonograph parlors, penny arcades, nickelodeons and ten-cent motion picture houses, and vaudeville theaters.⁷ The development of the Plaza area over time mirrors the transition of Los Angeles from a small Spanish and Mexican pueblo to an American frontier city, and ultimately to one of the world's major cities and metropolitan areas. As the city grew outward from the Plaza, the performing arts grew with the city, in a wide diversity of genres and styles and ethnic and racial origins and audiences. New artistic and entertainment genres were introduced, created, or adapted for local use, and older traditions were both maintained and discarded.⁸

With the large-scale influx of immigrants during the Mexican Revolution of the 1910s came the strong desire to import Mexican cultural practices to what Mexican writer, politician, and philosopher José Vasconcelos (1882–1959) and other elites called a *México de Afuera*, a Mexican diaspora abroad.⁹ As part of this desire to maintain strong connections to the homeland, these immigrants and exiles would establish their own popular music singing groups, *orquestas típicas* and *mariachis*, church choirs, dance and wind bands, and operatic and theater companies, creating a vitally alive and mutually supportive musical atmosphere in the Mexican community.¹⁰ A central aspect of this essay is how musical theater directly relates to physical location, civic identity, immigration, and ethnicity. A recurring process of cultural conflict, maintenance, and accommodation played out over time on stage in Los Angeles's Latino theatrical world.¹¹ Music and theater thus served as conduits for communal self-expression, as powerful symbols of Mexican identity, and as signs of tradition and modernity.

LOS ANGELES'S MEXICAN MUSICAL STAGES AND MOVIE PALACES

Beginning around 1906 a group of Mexican-oriented theaters, offering mixed bills of live theatrical acts and motion pictures, was established along North Main Street adjacent to the Plaza that would continue to be active for several decades.¹² They catered especially to the Spanish-speaking, but also to Italian, Chinese, and Japanese residents of the greater Plaza district.

For a brief time in 1907, an attempt was made to establish a legitimate theater for live Spanish-language drama and musicals in the Italian Mutual Benevolent Association hall at

THE FILM SHOW BOOM IN LOS ANGELES AND SOME OF ITS MORE VIVID RESULTS.

BY HARRY C. CARR.



SAVED!
The Associated Charities explains that it has no ambition to annihilate the fascinating moving-picture shows in Los Angeles. The arrest of a couple of blonde ladies—proprietors of a 5-cent theater in Sonoratown—was for quite another purpose. Their offense was admitting some dirty-faced urchins, not yet 14 years old—merely a sort of Curfew proposition. The film shows are actually the most interesting theatrical problem of the day. The film show may be said to be loose bovine, liable to charge in almost any direction—capable of almost anything—or of mere extinguishment.

ful hands. John comes shuffling with two or three Chinese girls paddling along in his wake—a great family treat. Chinese are devoted to picture shows. They have a quick intelligence that the pictures appeal to. They would probably be as fond of other theaters if they understood the language. The Chink girls giggle and are much ashamed when the ballet girls come onto the screen in tights. Americans, who have been, from childhood, going to theaters and see-

The development of an industry in Los Angeles, or the moving picture

"The Film Show Boom in Los Angeles," *Los Angeles Times*, October 13, 1907.

730 Buena Vista Street in Sonoratown, the predominantly Mexican district immediately north of the Plaza. A Mexican company, direct from Hermosillo, Sonora, presented Ruperto Chapí's Spanish zarzuela (operetta) *La Tempestad* (1882), a favorite repertory piece, there in February 1907. However, the enterprise failed because of lack of community support.¹³ A combination of films and vaudeville acts was more successful in the community than live musical drama at that time. In May 1907, the *Los Angeles Times* commented on the makeup of the typical nickel film theater audience, and that the nickelodeon had taken over from the penny arcade in popularity: "A canvas of the nickel theaters of Los Angeles last night revealed a very large percentage of foreign patronage in the plain wooden chairs. The Mexican, especially, is an enthusiastic devotee."¹⁴

TABLE 1. **PLAZA AREA THEATRES, 1913–14**

Theater	Location	Capacity	Admission (Cents)	Music	Exits	Sanitation	Lighting	Employees
Metropolitan	513–515 N Main Street	500	5	Poor pianist	3	Fair	Excellent	Ticketman, female cashier
Plaza	421–423 N Main Street	500	5	Poor pianist	3	Fair	Excellent	Trumpeter (also ticketman?), female cashier
Hidalgo	371 N Main Street	700	10	Orchestra and pianist	4	Fair	Excellent	Ticketman, female cashier
New Federal	300 N Main Street	240	5	Poor pianist	2	Good	Fair	Male cashier
Electric	212 N Main Street	640	5	Pianist	3	Fair	Good	Ticketman, trumpeter, female cashier

TABLE 2. **ATTENDANCE AT PLAZA THEATRES, 1913–14**

Theater	Date and Hour Observed	Capacity	Attendance	Mexican	Men	Women	Boys over 12	Boys under 12	Girls over 12	Girls under 12
Metropolitan	Monday, 11/10/13, 4:45 PM	500	69	92%	80%	4%	8%	0%	4%	4%
Plaza	Saturday, 3/21/14, 2:45 PM	500	100	90%	85%	7%	0%	4%	0%	4%
Hidalgo	Thursday, 1/1/14, 2:00 PM	700	525	75%	63%	12%	5%	10%	6%	4%
New Federal	Saturday, 4/4/14, 11:20 AM	240	60	55%	85%	5%	0%	5%	0%	5%
Electric	Monday, 11/3/13, 4:30 PM	640	100	75%	85%	4%	7%	1%	1%	2%

William Wilson McEuen's thesis from 1914 on the Mexican community in Sonoratown and the Plaza area is invaluable for the data it contains, especially concerning theatrical spectatorship. He included a survey of the Plaza's Mexican-oriented theaters in the mid-1910s: their audiences, musical component, cost of admission, sanitation, and seating capacities. Tables 1 and 2, abstracted from McEuen's study, list the five theaters on North Main Street whose audience was primarily Mexican in makeup in the mid-1910s.¹⁵ These tables show that the Teatro Hidalgo had the largest seating capacity. It offered the most elaborate music, performed by its house orchestra and pianist, and charged the highest admission—ten cents instead of the usual five. The other theaters only had a pianist to provide musical accompaniment, and, according to McEuen, three of them were “poor” musicians. Most of these theaters had “trumpeters,” that is, “barkers” who enticed potential patrons passing by on North Main Street to enter and buy a ticket by “spieling” loudly through a megaphone. Flashy or lurid posters also enticed passersby into the theater. And cashiers sometimes doubled as ticket takers. Since the five theaters all showed films, each had a projectionist. Adult Mexican men were in the majority in the audience, and many of them were probably

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"¡Brillante Inauguración del Teatro Hidalgo!" (Brilliant Opening of the Hidalgo Theater), *El Heraldo de México*, February 10, 1918.

unmarried railway or agricultural workers who lived in nearby rooming houses. Comparatively few children attended at the times that these theaters were visited. However, later newspaper reports indicate that Mexican children were spectators in film and live theater presentations, although for a time city regulations required children to be accompanied by adults.

THE TEATRO HIDALGO

The longest-lived Mexican venue in Los Angeles devoted to the presentation of live theater—musical and dramatic—and film exhibition was the seven-hundred-seat Teatro Hidalgo, which opened at 371–373 North Main Street, probably on September 11, 1912. The building in which it was housed was previously a livery stable, and the Portola Theater Company, which either bought or leased the property to “remodel [the] building into [a] picture theater” sometime in the summer of 1912, reportedly spent \$9,000 on the project.¹⁶ Early in 1913, the company advertised to lease or sell the theater for \$8,000, promising that that



Teatro Hidalgo Orchestra, circa 1926, Shades of L.A. Collection/Los Angeles Public Library.

amount would buy or lease the “only strictly Spanish theater in America, featuring vaudeville and pictures, [with an] \$800 monthly profit.”¹⁷

With its core audience of the Mexican and Mexican American population residing in downtown Los Angeles near the Plaza, it was appropriate that the Teatro Hidalgo was named after the Father of Mexican Independence, Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla (1753–1811). (The president of Mexico proclaims Hidalgo’s famous “Grito de Dolores” [“Cry of Dolores”] every September 15 at night from a balcony of the Palacio Nacional in Mexico City.) The Teatro Hidalgo was regularly advertised as the Teatro de la Raza (Theater of the Race), and, throughout the course of its existence from 1912 to 1936, its different owners or lessees stressed its *Mexicanidad* (Mexicaness) in their choice of theatrical repertory and personnel.¹⁸ The repertory performed there was similar to that of all the other Mexican theaters in the Plaza district, with its mix of various live theatrical and film genres, except that the Hidalgo particularly stressed vaudeville acts, accompanied by its house orchestra, and film exhibition.

During the 1930s, the Teatro Hidalgo also reached out to the larger Latino community through radio broadcasting. In August 1934, the Hidalgo sponsored a thirty-minute program from 7:30 to 8:00 PM simultaneously on stations KGER in Long Beach and KELW in Burbank, probably through a live wire telephone feed. The Hidalgo broadcast its musical vaudeville

and theatrical acts that summer, during the time slot immediately before that of the soon-to-be-famous country western music singing group the Sons of the Pioneers, with the future singing cowboy film star Roy Rogers, and also before Mexican operatic baritone Rodolfo Hoyos's local radio show.¹⁹ Imagine hearing Rogers sing the famous song "Tumbling Tumbleweeds" and Hoyos performing the "Toreador Song" ("Votre toast, je peux vous le rendre") aria from Georges Bizet's popular opera *Carmen* right after listening to the Hidalgo Theater company present its favorite *actos* (acts).

ROMUALDO TIRADO AND THE REVISTA

In the 1920s and 1930s, a group of Los Angeles-based artists created a local Spanish-language musical theatrical repertory that reflected the life experiences of Mexican immigrants in Southern California's México de Afuera, in humorous and serious ways. Their works responded directly to the place and time in which they lived, and coexisted with a much larger number of imported Mexican, Spanish, and European musical theater pieces, including operetta and opera. This group of theater folk included impresario and librettist Romualdo Tirado; playwright-journalists Gabriel Navarro (also a composer), Adalberto Elías González, Esteban V. Escalante, Daniel Venegas, and Brígido Caro; and composer-conductors Ernesto González Jiménez and Francisco Camacho Vega. Their collaborators—the singers, actors, dancers, instrumentalists, and stagehands who made up the local Mexican troupes—brought their works to life, at places such as the Teatros California, Capitol, Estella, Hidalgo, Mason, México, Novel, Principal, and Princesa, most of which were located along or near North Main Street.

The leading impresario in Los Angeles's Mexican theater scene in the 1920s and 1930s, although a Spaniard, was Mexican at heart: Romualdo Tirado (1880–1963), known affectionately as "Cachipuchi."²⁰ He was a multitalented man of the theater—a stage and film actor, singer, comic, director, manager, librettist, playwright, and radio performer. His career was similar to those of others in the ethnic theater in the United States. Like Boris Thomashefsky (1866–1939) in New York's Yiddish theater;²¹ Swedish American Hjalmar Peterson, "Olle i Skratthult" (Olle from Laughtersville, 1886–1960), in the Upper Midwest;²² Eduardo Migliaccio, "Farfariello" (1892–1946) in Little Italy in New York;²³ and Adolf Philipp (1864–1936) in New York's Klein Deutschland (Little Germany),²⁴ Tirado had a far-reaching influence on the immigrant theater. He was the single most important figure in the history of the live Spanish-language theater in the United States in his day.

Tirado's story and the sweep of history of the Mexican musical stage in Los Angeles are told in the extensive coverage given to cultural and artistic events in the local Spanish-language press. Close study of this reportage reveals the richly varied musical and theatrical repertoires offered to local Latino audiences.²⁵ This performing tradition was part of a vast network of theatrical connections directly linking Los Angeles and other California towns and cities to Chicago, Tucson, San Antonio, New York, and other US locations, all part of the México de Afuera, as well as to Mexico City, Madrid, Havana, Buenos Aires, and other Spanish and Latin American cities. The US Spanish-language theater ran parallel to and some-

times overlapped with the English-language theatrical world, especially vaudeville. But this web of artistic connections was not monolingual, since Spanish-speaking theater performers also moved within the larger, polyglot US entertainment world.²⁶

Tirado was instrumental in bringing the Mexican and Spanish forms of the *revista* genre of the 1910s and 1920s to Los Angeles. The *revista* (musical revue) was a topical musical theater work that usually lasted about an hour. It was often paired with other theater pieces, such as Spanish *zarzuela*. Singing and dancing were integral, essential components, and these were accompanied by the theater orchestra conducted by the *maestro concertador* (concert master) or music director. Usually about eight or fewer songs were spaced throughout a *revista*, performed by the female and male principals and the chorus line. The dialogue was spoken, and not sung as in operatic recitative. Popular *revista* songs were published in Mexico City in sheet music form, often with illustrated covers prominently featuring the performers who had made the songs popular, and recordings were released of some of the biggest hits.

The Mexican *revista* was different from its American counterpart, the Broadway musical revue, such as those produced by Florenz Ziegfeld. The Spanish-language *revista* often had a substantial political, erotic, or nationalist plot or theme running through its various *cuadros* (scenes), and often began with a prologue and ended with an apotheosis.²⁷ The Mexican political revue often commented on developments in Mexican society, especially during the Mexican Revolution of the 1910s and its aftermath in the 1920s. Ziegfeld's revues were comic, but usually not as satirical in nature. His revues were lavishly produced and combined a variety of disparate theatrical and musical elements; they featured leading performers such as Will Rogers, Fanny Brice, and Bert Williams, and ran for much or all of an entire season. *Revistas* produced in Mexico City also centered on their stars, such as María Conesa, Celia Montalván, or Mimi Derba, and were lavish, but were not on the same scale as Ziegfeld's revues. Because of budget constraints they were even less lavish in their Los Angeles versions. Mexican *revistas* were often scrappy, catchy, and risqué; they presented a humorous, sardonic take on the news of the day that was of immediate interest to audiences. (*Revista* also means "newspaper.")

During the 1920s, Tirado wrote a series of comic musical revues and *zarzuelas* that featured him in the titles and leading roles, often as a stereotypical wise-cracking, madcap character who repeatedly finds himself in outlandish situations, highlighting tensions between modernity and tradition in the immigrant community. He was called a "Mexican Chaplin" for good reason, and his *pelado* (urchin/tramp) characters resemble certain components of Charlie Chaplin's humor. Although the scripts and music of his *revistas* are thought to be lost, their titles and the reviews of their premieres strongly suggest aspects of their plots and flavors.²⁸ (See table 3.)

Tirado poked fun and cried at the trials of the recently arrived Mexican greenhorn *sastre* (tailor) in the various versions of his *revista De México a Los Ángeles* (From Mexico to Los Angeles), the most successful of his works. He may have critiqued the spread of communism, perhaps in its Mexican form, in song, comedy, and dance in *Tirado Bolsheviqi* (Tirado

TABLE 3. ROMUALDO TIRADO'S LOS ANGELES MUSICAL THEATER WORKS

The composers of these works are identified when known; the years in which the works were performed in Los Angeles are given at the end of each entry.

Work	Genre	Composer (if known)	Years Performed
<i>El árbol milagroso</i> (The Miraculous Tree)	<i>Zarzuela</i>		1927
<i>Aventuras de Daniel después de una noche en la Calle New High Street</i> (Daniel's Adventures after a Night Out on New High Street)	<i>Zarzuela</i>		1921
<i>Aventuras de un viejo verde en Long Beach</i> (Adventures of a Dirty Old Man in Long Beach)	<i>Revista</i>		1928
<i>Clínica moderna</i> (Modern Clinic)	<i>Revista</i>	Francisco Camacho Vega	1921
<i>Dancing—México</i>	<i>Zarzuela</i>		1927
<i>De Los Ángeles a México</i> (From Los Angeles to Mexico)	<i>Zarzuela (revista)</i>	Ernesto González Jiménez and Francisco Camacho Vega	1920, 1921
<i>De México a Alaska</i> (From Mexico to Alaska)	<i>Revista</i>		1924
<i>De México a Los Ángeles, o aventuras de Romualdo Tirado</i> (From Mexico to Los Angeles, or, the Adventures of Romualdo Tirado)	<i>Revista</i>	Ernesto González Jiménez	1924, 1929
<i>De México a Los Ángeles, o aventuras de un sastre</i> (From Mexico to Los Angeles, or, the Adventures of a Tailor)	<i>Revista</i>	Ernesto González Jiménez and Francisco Camacho Vega	1920, 1921
<i>De todo un poco</i> (A Bit of Everything)	<i>Juguete cómico</i>		1922
<i>La jaula de los leones</i> (The Lions' Cage)	<i>Zarzuela</i>		1927
<i>La mancha de sangre</i> (The Blood Stain)	<i>A propósito lírico</i>		1923
<i>Las mariposas de Hollywood</i> (The Butterflies of Hollywood)	<i>Revista</i>		1928
<i>Mexicanos al grito de la guerra</i> (Mexicans, Rise to the War Cry)	<i>Drama lírico patriótico</i>	Ernesto González Jiménez	1927
<i>Una noche en Los Ángeles</i> (A Night in Los Angeles)	<i>Revista</i>		1921
<i>El padrón municipal</i> (The Municipal Census)	<i>Zarzuela</i>		1927
<i>Los pantalones de Tirado</i> (Tirado's Pants)	<i>Revista</i>		1921
<i>Los pizcadores</i> (The Fieldhands)	<i>Revista</i>		1930
<i>Tirado Bolsheviqui/Tirado Bolshevike</i> (Tirado the Communist)	<i>Revista</i>		1924
<i>Tirado Bootlegger</i>	<i>Humorada</i>		1927
<i>Tirado dentista</i> (Tirado the Dentist)	<i>Zarzuela</i>		1921, 1928
<i>Tirado en el polo</i> (Tirado on the Polo Grounds)	<i>Revista</i>	Lauro D. Uranga	1925
<i>Tirado en la Republica del "Param"</i> (Tirado in the Republic of "All for Me")	<i>Revista</i>		1924
<i>Tirado en Long Beach</i>	<i>Revista</i>		1927
<i>Tirado torero</i> (Tirado the Bullfighter)	<i>Revista</i>		1922

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"De México a Los Angeles"

Romualdo Tirado's *De México a Los Angeles*

(From Mexico to Los Angeles), Teatro

México; advertisement, *La Opinión*,

August 4, 1929.

the Communist). He perhaps satirized the elite class in *Tirado en el polo* (Tirado on the Polo Grounds), especially since few of his audience members had the financial means with which to play this expensive sport. *Tirado Torero* (Tirado the Bullfighter) premiered on December 22, 1922, on the same bill as Oscar Straus's beloved continental operetta *El Soldado de Chocolate* (*The Chocolate Soldier*/*Der tapfere Soldat*) and Pola Negri's film version of *Carmen*, released in 1918, directed by Ernst Lubitsch.²⁹ We can imagine Tirado in his comic interpretation of the toreador Escamillo in his parody of the famous operatic tale of the gypsy Carmen, which on that day also became a parody of the Pola Negri film version of the Carmen story. In *Dancing—México* Tirado was either warning Mexican women about the dangers of the feverish dance hall craze then gripping Los Angeles society, or poking fun at it—perhaps both. In his musicals Tirado also became a dentist, a dirty old man ogling young women along the boardwalk in the nearby seaside city of Long Beach, a young man whooping it up out on the town, a lion tamer, a field hand, a bootlegger, and perhaps also a doctor and an Alaskan prospector. In writing these types of works, Tirado followed the tradition, structure, and musical style of the Mexican satirical revue, but with a distinctively Mexican American and local Los Angeles twist, even though he was a Spaniard.

In addition to his long career in the live theater, from the 1890s through at least the 1940s, Tirado also had an extensive second career in Hollywood films.³⁰ Tirado jumped wholeheartedly into the new medium of sound film beginning in the late 1920s, in the film musical revue *Charros, gauchos, y manolos* (released in 1930), directed by bandleader Xavier Cugat, in which he served as master of ceremonies. The film included several of Tirado's colleagues from the North Main Street Mexican theaters, along with leading Spanish and Latin American performers who had recently arrived in Los Angeles seeking Hollywood gold.

THE MEXICO CITY REVISTA IN LOS ANGELES

Many of the musical revues popular in the 1910s and 1920s in Mexico City's theaters were also performed in Los Angeles in the 1920s. For example, the politically oriented Mexican musical *revista El país de la metralla* (The Country of Shrapnel) of 1913, written by José F. Elizondo with music by Spaniard Rafael Gascón, was produced in Los Angeles in the 1920s.³¹ Tirado directed his company in it at the Teatro Novel in September and October 1920, and again in October 1924 at the Teatro Capitol.³² *El país de la metralla* musically dramatized and satirized the bloody events of the Decena Trágica (the Ten Tragic Days) of 1913. During this terrible ten-day period in Mexico City, from February 9 to February 19, President Francisco Madero, known as the "Apostle of Democracy," was ousted from power and imprisoned. On February 21 he was assassinated under orders of the US-aligned general and war minister Victoriano Huerta (1850–1916), known as "El Chacal" (The Jackal). Huerta replaced Madero as president, and governed from February 1914 to July 1914, acting as a dictator. After his defeat by forces under Álvaro Obregón and Francisco "Pancho" Villa, Huerta was forced to resign the presidency.

Elizondo and Gascón's *El país de la metralla* premiered in Mexico City on May 10, 1913, less than three months after the Decena Trágica, and was both scandalous and very success-



Libretto, *El País de la Metralla* (The Country of Shrapnel), 1913, José F. Elizondo (Libretto) and Rafael Gascón (Music), Collection of John Koegel.

ful. The revue commented satirically on the results of the violence and bombardment of Mexico City perpetrated during this still-remembered period in Mexican history. It also satirized US involvement in the Mexican economy and politics, especially when a group of eight singing Uncle Sams appeared on stage.

Because *El país de la metralla* was openly pro-Huerta, with the beginning of a new political regime under Venustiano Carranza, its librettist José Elizondo was exiled and its composer Rafael Gascón later committed suicide.³³ When it was performed in Los Angeles in the 1920s, *El país de la metralla* had not lost its political or dramatic satire or potency, nor had the Los Angeles community forgotten the tumultuous events of the Mexican Revolution, which had only ended recently. However, the sharp sting of the performances in 1913 may have been softened with the passage of time. And in 1927 Elizondo would be given a hero's welcome in Los Angeles for his contributions to Mexican theater and culture.

Other Mexican musical theater trends also had a favorable reception in Los Angeles. The invasion of Mexico City in 1925 of the famous Bataclán musical revue, named after Jacques Offenbach's French operetta *Ba-ta-clan* of 1855 (a *chinoiserie musicale*) and the Parisian theater of the same name, sparked a Bataclán fever on the Mexican stage that very soon extended north to Los Angeles.³⁴ With its army of scantily clad, almost nude female singing dancers, the French company scandalized and titillated Mexican audiences.³⁵ The ensuing parody *Mexican Rataplán* (*Mexican Ra-ta-plán*), with saucy music by the brothers Emilio D. and Lauro Uranga and an erotic and politically tinged satirical libretto by the stage star

Roberto “El Panzón” Soto, featured the *revista* star Celia Montalván. It was a smash hit in Mexico City in 1925 soon after the arrival of the French company and a response to exploding *Bataclanismo*.³⁶

The Bataclán-Rataplán vogue was first reported in Los Angeles in February 1925,³⁷ and was introduced in the city by May of that year, just a few months after it first appeared in Mexico City.³⁸ One of its main exponents was Mexican playwright, *revista* librettist, popular songwriter, and film screenwriter Antonio Guzmán Aguilera (1894–1958), known professionally as Guz Águila. Mayer Trallis, impresario at the Teatros Hidalgo and Capitol in Los Angeles, lured him north in 1924. Trallis gave Águila a contact of which he could “never have dreamed about” in Mexico: plentiful dollars; beautiful women, costumes, and scenery; and good will and faith in his talents.³⁹ Águila offered his new musical revues *Los efectos del Bataclán* (The Effects of Bataclán) and *El Bataclán oriental* (The Oriental Bataclán) to local audiences at the Teatro Capitol in July 1925.⁴⁰ Los Angeles thus followed the fashion established earlier on the Parisian and Mexico City stages. Águila also wrote popularly received *revistas* set in Los Angeles, such as *Los Ángeles vacilador* (Los Angeles on a Spree) of 1924 and *Los cuatro ases de la Calle Main* (The Four Aces of Main Street) of 1925, the latter in honor of the four leading Mexican theaters in Los Angeles, located on or near North Main Street by the Plaza: the Teatros Capitol, Hidalgo, Principal, and Estella.⁴¹

In the mid-1920s, Los Angeles troupes also performed Águila’s earlier satirical *revistas* on Mexican political and patriotic themes, such as *Alma Tricolor* (Three-Colored Soul) of 1922, with music by Manuel Rivera Baz—the title of which represented the three colors of the Mexican flag—and two works from 1920 about Mexican presidents: *El jardín de Obregón* (Obregón’s Garden) and *La huerta de Don Adolfo* (The Orchard of Don Adolfo), both with music by José Palacios.

The title of Águila’s *La huerta de Don Adolfo* wittily refers to Adolfo de la Huerta (1881–1955), interim president of Mexico from June through November 1920. After he was exiled from Mexico in 1924, de la Huerta settled in Los Angeles, living there until 1935. While an active politician in Mexico, he was also known as a talented tenor with an operatic-style voice, and as a pianist and violinist. (He was noted for breaking into song in Mexican cabinet meetings.) In Los Angeles he gave voice lessons to Hollywood stars and to performers from the local Mexican stage. In the late 1920s, de la Huerta taught voice to Enrico Caruso Jr., then in Los Angeles to capitalize on his famous father’s name and to appear in Spanish-language Hollywood musical films. However, de la Huerta’s prize pupil was tenor Roberto Guzmán Esparza, who performed frequently in the North Main Street theaters, on recordings, and in early Hollywood sound films, such as the first motion picture version of Sigmund Romberg’s beloved stage operetta *The Desert Song* (1929).⁴²

Many major stars of Mexico City’s *revista* stage also appeared in Los Angeles’s Mexican theaters in the 1920s and 1930s. The Spanish-born-but-Mexican-at-heart singer, dancer, and actress María Conesa (1890/92?–1978) was known for her voluptuous and picaresque images of *Mexicanidad*. She was the most famous Mexican representative of the *teatro sicalíptico* (erotic theater) and *teatro frívolo* (frivolous theater) traditions that emphasized the female



Maria Conesa as a China Poblana, 1920s, Collection of John Koegel.

body in revealing costumes, erotic situations, and the use of double entendre in song lyrics and dramatic situations, directed especially toward the male gaze.⁴³ Mexican poet, writer, and critic Luis G. Urbina (1868–1934) complained that Conesa could even read the *Padre Nuestro* (Our Father) prayer and make it sound salacious.⁴⁴

During one of her visits to Los Angeles, in 1930, Conesa attempted to break into Hollywood films without luck, at the same time that she was appearing on the local Mexican stage. The *Los Angeles Times*, which barely noticed the city's Mexican theaters, published a laudatory review of her performances at the Teatro California in February 1930: "At her request, the audience spontaneously joined her in the singing of the choruses of some of

her somewhat naughty songs, and again when, during her interpretations, she flirted with some of the men in the front rows.”⁴⁵ Conesa surely sang her famous version of the bawdy song “El tango del morrongo” (The Song of the Tom Cat) from the Spanish *zarzuela Enseñanza Libre*, which was familiar to Los Angeles audiences. Recordings of the song were likely available in the city at Mauricio Calderón’s Repertorio Mexicano music store on North Main Street, and its lyrics had appeared in numerous published *cancioneros* (songbooks) on both sides of the border, including in collections published or sold in Los Angeles.⁴⁶

CHANGING TIMES

The highpoint of the live Mexican musical stage in Los Angeles occurred in the 1920s. Impresarios such as Romualdo Tirado and Ernesto González Jiménez at the Teatro México and Teatro Capitol and Mayer Trallis at the Teatro Hidalgo promoted a varied musical theater repertory—of Spanish *zarzuelas*, European operettas, and Mexican *revistas*, and some standard Italian and French operas—alternating with dramatic plays and comedies, some written by local playwrights, and regular film exhibition. These theatrical forms served as a product of both commercial consumption and artistic edification. Musical theater especially provided a means by which Latino working- and middle-class audiences could reinforce a positive sense of ethnic and racial self-identification and enjoy up-to-date popular entertainment. Since not all Mexicano/a immigrants resident in Los Angeles had had experience with theatrical and film spectatorship before their emigration, by participating in these cultural forms they received a modern artistic education in their new surroundings.

The negative financial and social effects of the Great Depression of the 1930s, along with local-, state-, and federal-government-sponsored forced repatriation of Mexican nationals and Mexican Americans with US citizenship in that decade, caused a decline in the live Mexican musical theater in Los Angeles.⁴⁷ This decline forced local performers to adapt to new circumstances, including repatriation to Mexico, giving up the stage, reduced theatrical activity and income, and more extensive and less lucrative tours to smaller US towns with Latino populations. Some sought work as extras and secondary characters in Hollywood films, and others found employment in various projects sponsored by the Works Progress Administration.

The exhibition of Mexican musical films and some Spanish-language musical films made in Hollywood, as well as *variedades* (vaudeville or variety acts), filled this gap in the 1930s. It was less expensive for impresarios to present films, periodically interspersed with live acts, since the cost of supporting a constantly changing musical and dramatic repertory performed by a full company with a stage director, stars, supporting actors, singers, dancers, orchestra, and a technical stage staff was usually greater than the cost of film exhibition. However, the live drama, spoken or sung, never entirely left the boards.

In the early 1930s, the center of Mexican theatrical activity and film exhibition was still located on or near North Main Street, close to the Plaza. After that time, however, especially from the late 1930s through the 1950s, the Mexicano theatrical center shifted to nearby

South Broadway and its environs, where many of the large and elegant English-language vaudeville theaters and movie palaces built in the 1910s and 1920s were gradually being transformed into Spanish-language film and vaudeville venues.⁴⁸ And in the 1950s, much of the original Plaza district was being destroyed in the cause of “progress” and the completion of the Hollywood/Santa Ana Freeway (Highway 101), which bisected downtown Los Angeles. The Latino population in Los Angeles grew significantly during the immediate pre- and post-World War II periods, and as the financial effects of the Great Depression lessened, the community could increasingly support an ever-more-active film and live variety show scene again, albeit with a different artistic emphasis than in the 1920s and 1930s, and in a different theater district.

Frank Fouce (1899–1962), the leading theatrical and motion picture impresario in Los Angeles’s Latino community from the 1930s through the early 1960s, gradually came to control almost all the Mexican theatrical venues in downtown Los Angeles. Born in Hawaii to Spanish parents, he moved to California as a child. In the 1920s he worked in Hollywood silent film production, and had a connection to the great comic team Laurel and Hardy.⁴⁹ During his long career as an impresario, Fouce signed the best Mexican, Latino, and Latin American artistic talent for appearances at his large movie palaces—the Million Dollar, California, Roosevelt, Mason, and Mayan Theaters, among other venues, including the smaller Teatro Hidalgo. The list of the artists who appeared at his many theaters is a veritable who’s who of Latin American music, theater, and film: Antonio Aguilar, Cantinflas, Celia Cruz, Dolores del Río, María Félix, Juan Gabriel, Lalo Guerrero, Rodolfo Hoyos, Pedro Infante, José Alfredo Jiménez, Libertad Lamarque, Agustín Lara, Lydia Mendoza, Jorge Negrete, Tito Puente, Trío Los Panchos, Eva Quintanar, and many others. The Mexican government honored Fouce’s contributions to Mexican culture in 1948 when it made him a member of the Orden Mexicana del Águila Azteca (Order of the Aztec Eagle), the highest award given to foreigners. Fouce was one of the most important figures in the history of live musical and motion picture presentation in Los Angeles, although his contributions have not yet been sufficiently recognized or studied. He was also a pioneer in establishing Spanish-language television stations in the United States. His son, Frank Fouce Jr. (1927–2013), followed him into these same fields.⁵⁰ Fouce’s Million Dollar Theater at 307 South Broadway continued to present Mexican films and regular variety performances by leading popular musicians until at least the early 1990s, when for a time it became a church. In the late 1990s, an attempt was made to revive the variety show tradition at the Million Dollar.⁵¹

IMAGINING MEXICAN MUSICIANS IN LOS ANGELES’S THEATERS

The front page of the issue of *La Opinión*, Los Angeles’s principal Spanish-language newspaper, from April 6, 1932, offers a good example of just how important music and the theater were to the local community. The large-type headline screamed “GUTY CARDENAS MUERTO A TIROS EN UN CABARET,” forcefully announcing the tragic killing of the beloved Mexican singer-guitarist-songwriter Guty Cárdenas (b. 1905), which had occurred just a few



Million Dollar Theater, Million Dollar Show, Variedades, 1999, Photo by Gary Leonard, Gary Leonard Collection/Los Angeles Public Library.

hours earlier in the Salón Bach in Mexico City, a bar frequented by musicians and other artists.⁵² Los Angeles readers lamented Cárdenas's terrible death, especially since they had loved and sung his songs, such as "Flor" (Flower), "Nunca" (Never), and "Rayito del sol" (A Little Ray of Sun). His songs had swept California and the rest of *México de Afuera* in the United States since the time the singer-songwriter had begun to record them in 1928 for the US Columbia record label.⁵³

Cárdenas probably first appeared in Los Angeles in December 1928, en route to Mexico City from New York, where he had recently made a group of recordings for Columbia Records.⁵⁴ Los Angeles residents had bought his best-selling recordings and sheet music at Mauricio Calderón's Repertorio Mexicano music shop, and they probably also heard them on local Spanish-language radio programs. In the fall of 1930 Cárdenas performed his songs live on Los Angeles radio.⁵⁵ On December 11, 1930, local residents had had a chance to see and hear him perform in person, when he appeared in downtown Los Angeles at the Teatro México in a special farewell gala in his honor, accompanied by Virginia Fábregas, Mexico's first lady of the theater, the popular film and stage performer Celia Montalvan, and many leading lights of local Latino musical and theatrical society.⁵⁶ They could also have seen



Adalberto “Resortes” Martínez with two costars of the Maria Antonieta Pons Revue at the Million Dollar Theater, circa 1948, Herald-Examiner Collection/Los Angeles Public Library.

Cárdenas sing his own songs “Ojos tristes” (Sad Eyes), a Yucatecan *clave*, and “Piña madura” (Ripe Pineapple), a *huapango*, in the Warner Brothers–First National melodramatic film *La dama atrevida* (The Daring Woman). It had played one week at the Teatro California in downtown Los Angeles (May 29 through June 4, 1931), in a successful run.⁵⁷ After Cárdenas’s death, Mauricio Calderón’s Repertorio Mexicano released a record in his honor.

The other leading Los Angeles Spanish-language newspaper of the era besides *La Opinión* was *El Heraldo de México* (The Mexican Herald), which called itself “El Defensor de los Mexicanos en Estados Unidos” (The Defender of the Mexicans in the United States).⁵⁸ Coverage of the local Mexican musical, film, and theatrical scenes was a prominent feature of both papers. Their pages also included articles about agricultural and railroad workers who sang *corridos* (narrative ballads) to guitar accompaniment about the deeds and heroes of the Mexican Revolution. Forced repatriation of Mexicans from California and the conflicts between ethnic groups and racial discrimination were also popular *corrido* topics. The heroic deeds of prominent Mexicans such as the brave aviators Emilio Carranza (The “Lindbergh of Mexico”) and Pablo Sidar, killed in tragic air crashes in 1928 and 1930, captured the attention of Los Angeles *corridistas* (corrido writers).⁵⁹ Mexican musicians also sang ballads about local disasters such as the failure on March 12, 1928, of William Mulholland’s St. Francis Dam (the San Francisquito Dam), and the resulting massive flood, which killed Mexicano/a farm laborers and others in the Santa Clara Valley in Los



“Corrido de Gutty Cárdenas” 1932, Released by Mauricio Calderón’s Repertorio Musical Mexicano; UCLA Frontera Collection.

Angeles and Ventura counties. Esparza and Camacho’s *corrido* “La inundación de Santa Paula” (The Santa Paula Flood) and the Cancioneros Acosta’s “La inundación de California” (The California Flood) were released very soon after the catastrophe, showing how quickly local musicians reacted to important events.⁶⁰ Many *cancioneros* (songbooks) were published that included *corridos* such as these, along with current and older Mexican and Latin American popular songs.

The Los Angeles Spanish-language press also reported that Angelenos attended musical and dramatic films from Hollywood’s own Cine Hispano, the locally produced, Spanish-language films released between 1929 and 1939 by major Hollywood studios such as Fox, MGM, Paramount, Universal, and Warner Brothers, and by some minor studios.⁶¹ These films featured prominent Los Angeles resident performers such as actors Romualdo Tirado, Lupe Vélez, and Antonio Moreno, and the famous operatic tenor and actor José Mojica, and the popular tenor Tito Guizar (who was operatically trained). (The Cine Hispano also improbably featured Hollywood stars such as Buster Keaton and Laurel and Hardy in Spanish-language versions of their English-language talkies of the early 1930s.) A large group of other Latin American, Spanish, and Latino actors and musicians also participated in the Cine Hispano, and in Hollywood’s English-language films in the 1930s and beyond.⁶²



Cancionero *Alma Norteña* (Northern Soul Songbook), 1944, with Cover Image of Ranchera Singer Lucha Reyes, Collection of John Koegel.

Angelenos saw an even greater number of Mexican, Spanish, and Latin American films in Los Angeles's many Spanish-language motion picture houses from the 1930s through at least the 1990s.

The local Spanish-language press also featured the activities of prominent local Mexican musicians, including the three performers profiled here: conductor and composer Ernesto González Jiménez; singer and actor Rodolfo Hoyos; and pianist, songwriter, and orchestra leader Eva Quintanar. Their experiences encompass the full spectrum of musical and

theatrical expression in Mexican Los Angeles, and in their careers they also engaged with the larger musical life of the city and region, and well beyond.

Composer, conductor, musical arranger, violinist, and pianist Ernesto González Jiménez (b. 1888) is one of the principal but unsung figures of Los Angeles's musical scene of the 1920s and 1930s.⁶³ Little is known currently about his life other than what was published in the local Spanish-language press and the information available in documentary sources such as census, immigration, border crossing, naturalization, and city directory records. A few of his musical compositions survive out of what surely was a much larger body of music, and some of his songs were recorded. Originally from Monterrey in Northern Mexico, he was residing in Los Angeles by 1920. He was Tirado's business and artistic partner in the 1920s at several North Main Street theaters. González Jiménez also ran his own private music studio, the Academia Chopin (Chopin Academy). As an *ofrecimiento* (offering) to its readers in 1921, *El Heraldo de México* published *Gracia y Alegría* (Grace and Joy), his large music collection, which includes a number of theatrically related songs, and solo piano works by local guitarist-composer Enrique Robles, arranged by González Jiménez from Robles's original guitar versions.⁶⁴ Besides *Gracia y Alegría*, *El Heraldo de México* also published González Jiménez's song collection *Canciones de mi tierra* (Songs of My Homeland) in 1921, which included "Yo soy pura mexicana" (I Am a True Mexican Woman) "Pensaba que tu amor" (I Thought That Your Love), and "Juchiteco."⁶⁵ As a *recuerdo* (souvenir), the collection also featured photos of three of the singing and dancing stars of Los Angeles's Mexican stage, Carmen Rodríguez, Amparito Guillot ("she of undraped legs"), and Esther Tapia.⁶⁶

González Jiménez was the principal conductor in many of Los Angeles's Mexican theaters in the 1920s and later. He also composed musical scores to plays, *revistas*, and *zarzuelas* performed in the city in that decade, most notably the music for Tirado's popular *revista De México a Los Ángeles*. He also wrote several film scores, conducted the Orfeón Español (Spanish Choir), and gave public concerts and private recitals with his students. His Terceto Clásico (Classic Trio), a chamber music group made up of piano, violin, and cello, broadcast on Earle C. Anthony's pioneering radio station KFI in the mid-1920s.

Mexican baritone Rodolfo Hoyos (1896–1980), a longtime Los Angeles resident, was equally at home in both vernacular and cultivated performance styles, and had an important career in opera, operetta, *zarzuela*, and popular music, and as a musical impresario and director of musical stage companies on both sides of the US-Mexico border, especially in Los Angeles and New York. In Los Angeles in the 1930s and 1940s, he appeared on radio, on the city's many Spanish-language stages, and in opera at the Hollywood Bowl, the Greek Theater in Griffith Park, and Philharmonic Auditorium downtown. He also appeared in singing roles in English- and Spanish-language Hollywood films.

Recalling that his early radio programs "were a mixture of live music, poetry, drama and discussion," Hoyos described his work with "early programs as a [radio] broker" and "the subsequent change to recorded programs." He remembered that "We would present artists, I would sing and have many artists. There were groups of singers. We would put

on radio dramas with recognized artists such as Romualdo Tirado and José Peña Pepén [Pepet], who were artists here in the theater. I would put dramas on the radio, first live and then using records. I began to use records and it became easier for us and less expensive.”⁶⁷

Beginning in the early 1920s, Hoyos made numerous recordings over several decades for many of the major American record companies, including the Edison, Columbia, Victor, Brunswick, Vocalion, and Okeh labels.⁶⁸ He was as talented at singing Mexican *corridos*, *huapangos* from the state of Veracruz, and other Latin American folk music as he was at performing recent romantic, urbane popular songs by the best Mexican songwriters, such as María Grever, Mario Talavera, or Jorge del Moral. He could sing in a crooning style à la Bing Crosby, and he recorded comic sketches, all in Spanish. Besides enthusiastically singing Mexican and American popular music in Spanish, he was a noted interpreter of the demanding title role of Verdi’s opera *Rigoletto* (although he never seems to have recorded it) and other major operatic baritone roles.⁶⁹ Hoyos sang in the premiere in 1932 of California composer Mary Carr Moore’s (1873–1957) English-language, American opera *David Rizzio* (about Mary Queen of Scots) at Los Angeles’s Shrine Auditorium. Los Angeles-based journalist Gabriel Navarro praised him as “el cantante mas sensational que se ha presentado en Los Ángeles después de Lawrence Tibbett” (the most sensational singer to appear in Los Angeles after Lawrence Tibbett).⁷⁰ Since Tibbett (1896–1960)—born in Bakersfield, California, and active in Los Angeles early in his career—was America’s leading operatic baritone in the 1930s, and a major star at New York City’s Metropolitan Opera, this was high praise indeed.⁷¹

Though men dominated the field of professional music in Mexican Los Angeles, there were key exceptions. Pianist, songwriter, and orchestra leader Eva Quintanar was once dubbed by the Mexican press as the “female Agustín Lara.”⁷² She was known for her fine pianistic skills, and her talent for composing well-crafted, sensitive, and sophisticated popular songs with rich harmonies, excellent orchestrations, and memorable melodies. She also wrote the lyrics for many of her songs. She especially favored the romantic bolero genre, numerous examples of which she recorded on piano with various vocal soloists and orchestras. Quintanar was noted for her ability to transpose on the spot whatever arrangement was set in front of her—a valuable talent for a pianist accompanying singers with a wide variety of voice types and ranges.⁷³

Born in El Paso, Texas, in 1915, and still playing piano as of 2016, Quintanar arrived with her family in Los Angeles by 1936, settling on North Grand Avenue in the northern section of the Bunker Hill area of the city.⁷⁴ She reportedly performed as a piano soloist on Spanish-language radio in Los Angeles while still a teenager, and studied music at the Los Angeles Conservatory of Music in the late 1930s or early 1940s.⁷⁵ She began her documented compositional career in 1939 with the *canciones-boleros* “Fue” (It Was) and “Déjame” (Leave Me), the *canción-fox* “Que va a ser de mí” (What Will Become of Me), and the *bambuco* “Te he vuelto a ver” (I’ve Returned to See You).⁷⁶ She would continue to write songs, many of which she recorded with her own orchestra and tenor Rubén Reyes for the



Eva Quintanar in the Recording Studio, Courtesy of John McGowan.

Los Angeles-based Discos Taxco, Imperial, and Tri-Color labels. Prominent Mexican and Mexican American singers such as Adelina García, Las Hermanas Águila, and Chelo Silva also recorded her songs. García made the first-known recording of a Quintanar song, the *bolero* “Tengo miedo” (I’m Afraid), in 1941, conducted by Los Angeles music composer and impresario Manuel S. Acuña.⁷⁷ It became one of her biggest hits.⁷⁸

Quintanar was very active in the 1940s and early 1950s as a pianist and orchestra leader in the Mexican movie palaces in downtown Los Angeles, such as the Million Dollar, Mayan, and Orpheum theaters. She and her orchestra accompanied some of Mexico’s greatest singers in their live performances at these theaters, such as film superstar Pedro Infante and the famous tenor Pedro Vargas. Quintanar also collaborated or alternated with African American musicians at the Million Dollar Theater, such as the great jazz vibraphone soloist and bandleader Lionel Hampton.

ENVISIONING THE PAST

Many resources exist that can help us envision and understand the musical and theatrical worlds in Mexican Los Angeles in their rich complexity. We can study the disparate but inter-related elements that made up these traditions: musical and theatrical repertoires; recordings of those repertoires; the lives of performers, composers, and playwrights; the audi-

ences who patronized their artistic offerings; critical and popular responses to performance; changing venues; the economic aspects of performance; social and political contexts and meanings; and issues of gender and ethnicity.

Some documentary sources have long been available in physical form, and others are increasingly being made available in digital format. In order to understand this topic, one would *read* about the history of musical and theatrical performance in local newspapers and periodicals. One can see *and hear* these performers in musical and dramatic films from the Mexican cinema and Hollywood's Cine Hispano.⁷⁹ One can *read and perform* Mexican and Mexican American popular music and Mexican- and "Latin"-themed music by American popular songwriters in digital sheet music collections such as UCLA's Sheet Music Consortium and Archive of American Popular Music.⁸⁰ One can *hear* the songs and dance music popular in the Mexican community in Southern California as recorded by the major American record companies such as Edison, Victor, Brunswick, and Columbia, and by local Los Angeles labels such as Discos Taxco, Azteca, and Imperial. Many of these recordings are available online on the Library of Congress's National Jukebox, UCLA's Strachwitz Frontera Collection of Mexican and Mexican American Recordings, Syracuse University's Belfer Cylinders Digital Collection, and the University of California, Santa Barbara's Cylinder Preservation and Digitization Project.⁸¹

We can also *experience* this music today since it continues to live on in public memory and performance. The current Mexican, Chicano, and Latin American music scenes of Los Angeles are unthinkable without these early foundations of music and musical theater. The art and business of making Spanish-language music are as old as the city itself, and they continue to shape contemporary Los Angeles in profound ways.

NOTES

1. César López, "El Descanso: A Comparative History of the Los Angeles Plaza Area and the Shared Racialized Space of the Mexican and Chinese Communities, 1853–1933" (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2002); Jean Bruce Poole and Tevvy Ball, *El Pueblo: The Historic Heart of Los Angeles* (Los Angeles: Getty Conservation Institute and the J. Paul Getty Museum, 2002); and William Estrada, *The Los Angeles Plaza: Sacred and Contested Space* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008).

2. The foundational study of Hispanic theater in Los Angeles and the United States is Nicolás Kanellos, *A History of Hispanic Theater: Origins to 1940* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990).

3. "Olvera Street might not be authentic Old California or even authentic Mexico, but it was better than the bulldozer": Kevin Starr, *Material Dreams: Southern California through the 1920s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 205.

4. George J. Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900–1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); and William Deverell, *White-washed Adobe: The Rise of Los Angeles and the Remaking of Its Mexican Past* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).

5. Mark Wild, *Street Meeting: Multiethnic Neighborhoods in Early Twentieth-Century Los Angeles* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005); and Isabela Seong Leong Quintana,

"Making Do, Making Home: Borders and the Worlds of Chinatown and Sonoratown in Early Twentieth-Century Los Angeles," *Journal of Urban History* 41, no. 1 (2015): 47–74.

6. Estrada, *The Los Angeles Plaza*, 245.

7. Colin Gunckel, *Mexico on Main Street: Transnational Film Culture in Los Angeles before World War II* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2015); and Jan Olsson, *Los Angeles before Hollywood: Journalism and American Film Culture, 1905 to 1915* (Stockholm: National Library of Sweden, 2008).

8. Steven Loza, *Barrio Rhythm: Mexican American Music in Los Angeles* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993); and Anthony Macías, *Mexican American Mojo: Popular Music, Dance, and Urban Culture in Los Angeles, 1935–1968* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008).

9. José Vasconcelos, "El México de Afuera," *La Opinión*, June 10, 1928, 9, 10.

10. The Mexican *orquesta típica* (typical orchestra), a primarily string ensemble related to the mariachi, is a popular orchestra of representative Mexican instruments typically used in Mexican ensembles such as *salterio* (a trapezoidal triple-strung metal-string instrument played with finger picks) and *bandolón* (a pear-shaped large guitar with metal strings), in addition to mandolin, violin, cello, guitar, flute, and harp, and sometimes other instruments.

11. Before World War II, much of Southern California's Latino population was of Mexican heritage, but now is much more diverse in national origin. In this study I use the terms "Mexican," "Mexicano/a," and "Mexican American" to refer to individuals of Mexican heritage.

12. The earlier, nineteenth-century history of music and musical theater in Mexican Los Angeles is covered in Kanellos, *A History of Hispanic Theater*; John Koegel, *Canciones del país: Mexican Musical Life in California after the Gold Rush*, *California History* 78, no. 3 (Fall 1999): 160–87, 215–19; and Koegel, "Mexican and Mexican-American Musical Life in Southern California, 1850–1900" and "Calendar of Southern California Amusements (1852–1897) Designed for the Spanish-Speaking Public," *Inter-American Music Review* 13, no. 2 (Spring-Summer 1993): 111–43.

13. "El Nuevo Teatro," *Los Angeles Times*, February 2, 1907, II, 3; "El Nuevo Salon Dramatico," *Los Angeles Times*, February 3, 1907, 14; "Histrionic Art Rudely Shocked in Classic Old Sonoratown," *Los Angeles Herald*, February 12, 1907, 12; and "Theater's Short Season," *Los Angeles Times*, March 9, 1907, 14.

14. "Now Nickel Eats Penny," *Los Angeles Times*, May 31, 1907, II, 8.

15. William Wilson McEuen, "A Survey of the Mexicans in Los Angeles" (MA thesis, University of Southern California, 1914), 74.

16. There is conflicting information about when the Teatro Hidalgo opened, in 1911 or 1912. Kanellos and a newspaper article say September 11, 1911 (Kanellos, *A History of Hispanic Theater*, 21; "El Aniversario del Hidalgo," *La Opinión*, September 9, 1934, II, 3). However, city records indicate that the building was first remodeled as a theater in 1912. See Application to Alter, Repair or Demolish, May 27, 1912, Los Angeles Department of Building and Safety records, www.ladbs.org/services/check-status/online-building-records; and recorded building permits, *Los Angeles Times*, June 2, 1912, VI, 2.

17. "Theater Exchange," *Los Angeles Times*, January 5, 1913, V, 18. It is not clear whether the Portola Theater Company had earlier bought or leased the property that it was advertising.

18. In 1914, McEuen stated that the Teatro Hidalgo printed its posters in Spanish and Italian since a sizeable number of Italians then lived in the Plaza area.

19. Radio broadcast listings, *Los Angeles Times*, August 4, 1934, 1, 2, and August 11, 1934, 1, 4. Station KELW broadcast several hours of daily Spanish-language programming at this time, including musical performances and discussion by Pedro J. González and his group Los Madrugadores.

20. Tirado's nickname Cachipuchi is a reference to Tío Cachipuchi (Uncle Cachipuchi), a character in Gerónimo Giménez's famous Spanish zarzuela *La boda de Luis Alonso* (The Wedding of Luis Alonso, 1897). Among other meanings, it is also a Chilean term for a comic or circus character.

21. Edna Nahsho, ed., *New York's Yiddish Theater: From the Bowery to Broadway* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016).

22. Anne-Charlotte Harvey, "Performing Ethnicity: The Role of Swedish Theatre in the Twin Cities," in *Swedes in the Twin Cities: Immigrant Life and Minnesota's Urban Frontier*, ed. Philip J. Anderson and Dag Blanck, 149–72 (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press and the Swedish-American Historical Society, 2001).

23. Hermann W. Haller, *Tra Napoli e New York: Le macchiette italo-americane di Eduardo Migliaccio* (Rome: Bulzoni, 2006); and Francesco Durante and Robert Viscusi, eds., *Italoamericana: The Literature of the Great Migration, 1880–1943* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014).

24. Extensive coverage of Adolf Philipp appears in John Koegel, *Music in German Immigrant Theater: New York City, 1840–1940* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2009), 197–380; and Koegel, "Non-English Language Musical Theater in the United States," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Musical*, ed. Paul Laird and William Everett, 29–53 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

25. I am examining all available issues of the Spanish-language newspapers published in Southern California from the 1850s to about 1950 for a book on Mexican musical theater in Los Angeles. The local Spanish-language press was active sporadically in the nineteenth century and continuously from the early twentieth century. However, almost all issues of local papers from about 1900 to about 1915 are currently missing or lost. See Nicolás Kanellos, with Helvetia Martell, *Hispanic Periodicals in the United States, Origins to 1960: A Brief History and Comprehensive Bibliography* (Houston: Arte Público, 2000).

26. Janet Sturman, *Zarzuela, Spanish Operetta, American Stage* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000); and Susan Thomas, *Cuban Zarzuela: Performing Race and Gender on Havana's Lyric Stage* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008).

27. Manuel Mañón, *Historia del Teatro Principal de México, 1753–1931* (Mexico City: Editorial Cvltura, 1932; reprint ed., Mexico City: Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes, 2009); Jorge Miranda, ed., *Del rancho al Bataclán: Cancionero de teatro de revista, 1900–1940* (Mexico City: Museo Nacional de Culturas Nacionales, 1984); Gerardo Luzuriaga, "Teatro y Revolución: Apuntes sobre la revista política en México," *Mester* 21, no. 1 (Spring 1992): 11–22; Pablo Dueñas, *Las divas en el teatro de revista mexicano* (Mexico City: Asociación Mexicana de Estudios Fonográficos, 1994); Armando María y Campos, *El teatro de género chico en la revolución Mexicana* (Mexico

City: Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes, 1996); and *El país de las tandas: Teatro de Revista, 1900–1940* (Mexico City: Museo Nacional de Culturas Populares, 2005).

28. Playscripts and music from Tirado's many *revistas* seem not to have survived. I have searched copyright records at the Library of Congress to determine if Tirado and other local Mexican playwrights registered their works for copyright, but without success; the case is not closed, however.

29. Pola Negri's German film *Carmen* of 1918 was released in the United States in 1921 as *Gypsy Blood*. In Spanish-language theaters in the United States it was called *Sangre Torera* (Bullfighting Blood).

30. Tirado's son Romualdo Arturo Tirado (1912–98) followed his father into motion picture and theatrical presentation, as an owner of Mexican movie theaters and producer of musical variety acts in Southern California and Fresno, from the 1940s through the 1980s. See Manuel G. Gonzalez, "Arthur Tirado and the Teatro Azteca: Mexican Popular Culture in the Central San Joaquin Valley," *California History* 83, no. 4 (2006): 46–63.

31. José F. Elizondo, *El País de la Metralla*, 2nd ed. (Mexico City: Talleres de Imprenta y Fotograbado "Novedades," 1913); and Pablo Dueñas and Jesús Flores y Escalante, *Teatro de revista, 1904–1936*, *Teatro mexicano: Historia y dramaturgia* 20 (Mexico City: Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes, 1995).

32. The Teatro Novel was later known as the Teatro Capitol.

33. Eduardo Soto Contreras, "Su Majestad el Hambre, soberana del *País de la Metralla*," *Tramoya* 70 (January–March 2002): 99–110.

34. The French expression "et tout le bataclan" (meaning "et tout le reste" or "and all the rest") might be translated colloquially as "the whole nine yards."

35. Ageeth Sluis, *Deco Body, Deco City: Female Spectacle and Modernity in Mexico City, 1900–1939* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2016).

36. Recordings from *Mexican Rataplán* were reissued on the LP album *El País de las Tandas: Mexican Rataplán* (Mexico City: Museo Nacional de Culturas Populares, MNCP-0011, 1983).

37. Salvador Gonzalo Becerra, "Teatrales," *El Heraldo de México*, February 13, 1925, 5. Numerous reports of the *Bataclanismo* fever in Mexico City were published in Los Angeles's *El Heraldo de México* in the following months.

38. "Nuestros Teatros Locales: Se Bataclanizan en el Hidalgo," *El Heraldo de México*, May 19, 1925, 5.

39. E. de A., "Teatrales," *El Heraldo de México*, June 7, 1924, 5. Guz Águila reportedly wrote more than five hundred theatrical works.

40. Advertisements, *El Heraldo de México*, July 16, 1925, 5.

41. The Teatro Capitol was located at 338 South Spring Street, one block west of Main Street.

42. "A. de la Huerta desea radicarse en Los Ángeles," *El Heraldo de México*, March 12, 1924, 1; "De la Huerta in Los Angeles Saturday," *Los Angeles Times*, November 24, 1924, 2; "Voice Film Gives Exile a Vocation," *Los Angeles Times*, November 16, 1928, II, 5; and Roberto Guzmán Esparza, *Adolfo de la Huerta, el desconocido* (Mexico City: Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, 2009).

43. Paulina Suárez-Hesketh, "The Frivolous Scene: Cosmopolitan Amusements in Mexico City's 1920s," *Global South* 9, no. 2 (Fall 2015): 103–30.
44. *El Imparcial* (Mexico City), November 11, 1907.
45. Salvador Baguez, "Actress Receives Ovation," *Los Angeles Times*, February 15, 1930, II, 7.
46. For example, "El tango del morrongo" appears in chapbooks illustrated by José Guadalupe Posada, published by Vanegas Arroyo; Tirso Campos included it in his *cancionero Lira Mexicana* (Los Angeles: Imprenta de "El Correo Mexicano," n.d. [ca. 1910s]); and it appears, with Conesa's photograph, in *El Ruiseñor Mexicano: Colección de canciones populares*, 3rd ed. (San Antonio: Casa Editorial Lozano, 1924), 63, 111.
47. Francisco E. Balderrama and Raymond Rodríguez, *Decade of Betrayal: Mexican Repatriation in the 1930s* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2006).
48. Robert Berger, Ann Conser, and Stephen M. Silverman, *The Last Remaining Seats: Movie Palaces of Tinseltown* (Santa Monica: Hennessey and Ingalls, 2004).
49. When Laurel and Hardy were honored on Ralph Edward's famous television show *This Is Your Life* in 1954, Frank Fouce appeared as a surprise guest. The episode is included on the DVD set *This Is Your Life—the Ultimate Collection, Vol. 1* (Ralph Edwards Productions DVD set, 2005).
50. Frank Fouce Jr., "A Study of the Los Angeles Spanish-Speaking Television Market" (MBA research project, Pepperdine University, 1972). For extensive discussion of the involvement of Frank Fouce Jr. and Sr. in the creation of an infrastructure for Spanish-language television in the United States, see Kenton T. Wilkinson, *Spanish-Language Television in the United States: Fifty Years of Development* (New York: Routledge, 2016).
51. Ramón Inclán, "Rescate del Million Dollar," *La Opinión*, August 6, 1999, E1, E7.
52. Luis Gonzaga y Armendáriz, "Balazos después de muchas copas: Como fue el asesinato de Guty Cárdenas, un ídolo," *Revista de la Universidad Autónoma de Yucatán* 239–40 (2006–07): 62–70, www.cirsociales.uady.mx/revUADY/pdf/239-40/ru239-408.pdf.
53. Richard K. Spottswood, *Ethnic Music on Records: A Discography of Ethnic Recordings Produced in the United States, 1893–1942*, vol. 4, *Spanish, Portuguese, Philippine, Basque* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990), 1739, 1999–2000, 2043, 2157.
54. "Martín," "Comentando Desde el Cuarto Muro," *El Heraldo de México*, December 27, 1928, 6.
55. "Cuatro Años de Vida Cumple el 16 'La Opinión,'" *La Opinión*, September 15, 1930, 1; and Los Angeles radio station KHJ program advertisement, *San Diego Evening Tribune*, November 7, 1930, 8.
56. Álvaro Vega and Enrique Martín, eds., *Guty Cárdenas, Cancionero* (Mérida: Instituto de Cultura de Yucatán, Centro Regional de Investigación, Documentación y Difusión Musicales "Jerónimo Baqueiro Foster," 2006), 38; "El Apoteosis de la Canción Mexicana," *La Opinión*, December 11, 1930, 6; and "Fue un Noche de Arte y Entusiasmo la Despedida de Guty Cárdenas," *La Opinión*, December 13, 1930, 6.
57. *La Opinión* advertisements for those dates; and Alan Gevinson, ed., *Within Our Gates: Ethnicity in American Feature Films, 1911–1960*, American Film Institute Catalog (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 248.

58. Although hardly any issues of *El Heraldo de México* seem to exist past 1928, in which year it was still a daily paper, it was likely published on a weekly schedule sometime thereafter for several decades, at least up to about 1952. Its continued weekly publication is noted in 1947 in Robert F. Brand, "Survey of the Spanish-Language Press in the United States," *Modern Language Journal* 31, no. 7 (November 1947): 434; and in 1951 in Marjorie C. Johnston, "Spanish-Language Newspapers and Periodicals Published in the United States," *Hispania* 34, no. 1 (February 1951): 86.

59. Rodolfo Hoyos and Eduardo Arozamena's recordings of Arozamena's *corridos* "Sidar y Rovirosa" (Sidar and Rovirosa), Brunswick 41034, and "La muerte de Sidar" (The Death of Sidar), Brunswick 41033.

60. Esparza and Camacho's recording of "La Inundación de Santa Paula" (Brunswick 40426); and Cancioneros Acosta recording of "Inundación de California" (Okeh 16285, Columbia 4883X), with lyrics by Esteban V. Escalante, recorded March 28, 1928. See also Agustín Gurza, "Disaster Songs: Telling Tragedy in Any Language," Strachwitz Frontera Collection of Mexican and Mexican American Music, blog post, May 19, 2016, <http://frontera.library.ucla.edu/blog/2016/05/disaster-songs-telling-tragedy-any-language>.

61. Juan B. Heinink and Robert G. Dickson, *Cita en Hollywood: Antología de las películas norteamericanas habladas en castellano* (Bilbao: Ediciones Mensajero, 1990); John Koegel, "Mexican Musicians in California and the United States, 1910–1950," *California History* 84, no. 1 (Fall 2006): 7–29, 64–69; Charles Ramírez Berg, *Latino Images in Film: Stereotypes, Subversion, and Resistance* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002); and Lisa Jarvinen, *The Rise of Spanish-Language Filmmaking: Out from Hollywood's Shadow, 1929–1939* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2012).

62. Susan Racho and Nancy de Los Santos, dir., *The Bronze Screen: 100 Hundred Years of the Latino Image in Hollywood* (Chicago: Questar, 2002, DVD).

63. Ernesto González Jiménez was born on July 4, 1888, in Monterrey, Mexico (Declaration of Intention application to become a naturalized US citizen, dated November 30, 1932, Ancestry.com). His date and place of death are currently unknown.

64. *Gracia y Alegria* (Los Angeles: El Heraldo de México, 1921); copy in author's collection.

65. A copy of *Canciones de mi tierra* has not yet been found.

66. Advertisement, *El Heraldo de México*, January 12, 1922, 3.

67. Rodolfo Hoyos, interview, March 26, 1974, Los Angeles, California; quoted in Felix F. Gutiérrez and Jorge Reina Schement, *Spanish-Language Radio in the Southwestern United States* (Austin: University of Texas at Austin, Center for Mexican American Studies, 1979), 6, 16.

68. For Hoyos's recordings, see Spottswood, *Ethnic Music on Records*, 1739, 1840, 1964–65, 1993, 2088–89, 2162, 2330.

69. Although Hoyos made a few recordings of Spanish *zarzuela* arias, it is not known if he made any commercially released operatic recordings.

70. "Rodolfo Hoyos cuenta los dias que faltan . . .," *La Prensa* (San Antonio, Texas), January 31, 1932, 1.

71. Hoyos's recordings are available on the Library of Congress's National Jukebox (<http://www.loc.gov/jukebox/>), and UCLA's Strachwitz Frontera Collection of Mexican and Mexican American Recordings (<http://frontera.library.ucla.edu>).

72. *El Eco de México*, September 1942, magazine article in the possession of John McGowan, Eva Quintanar's son. I thank McGowan for his assistance.

73. Eva Quintanar interview with John Koegel, Fullerton, California, May 4, 2014. See also Agustín Gurza, "Eva Quintanar: A Living Musical Legacy," "Biography, Quintanar, Eva," and "Q & A: John McGowan, Son of Eva Quintanar," blog post, Strachwitz Frontera Collection of Mexican and Mexican American Recordings.

74. The Quintanar family begins to be listed in Los Angeles city directories in 1936, all at the same address on North Grand Avenue; Eva is listed separately, as a musician, for the first time in the 1939 directory.

75. The Los Angeles Conservatory of Music was established in 1883 and merged in 1961 with the Chouinard School of Art to become the California Institute of the Arts, now located in Valencia in northern Los Angeles County.

76. Library of Congress copyright registrations.

77. "Tengo miedo" by Eva Quintanar, recorded by Adelina García in Hollywood, California (Columbia 6099X/OKeh 9420); Spottswood, *Ethnic Music on Records*, 1895.

78. Many of Quintanar's recordings are available on the Strachwitz Frontera Collection of Mexican and Mexican American Recordings website.

79. The UCLA Film Archive, the Library of Congress, and other US archival film collections hold surviving films from Hollywood's Cine Hispano, and many classic Mexican films are available commercially on DVD. The Filmoteca Nacional of the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México also has a collection of classic Mexican film musicals; see www.filmoteca.unam.mx. See also Jacqueline Avila, "'Los Sonidos del cine': Cinematic Music in Mexican Film, 1930–1950" (PhD diss., University of California, Riverside, 2011).

80. UCLA Sheet Music Consortium, <http://digital2.library.ucla.edu/sheetmusic/>; and UCLA Archive of American Popular Music, <http://digital.library.ucla.edu/apam/>.

81. Syracuse University Belfer Cylinders Digital Collection, <http://library.syr.edu/splash/cylinders/>; and University of California, Santa Barbara Cylinder Audio Archive, <http://cylinders.library.ucsb.edu>.