

Las Kantutas and *Música Oriental*: Folkloric Music, Mass Media, and State Politics in 1940s Bolivia

Fernando Rios

School of Music, Musicology and Ethnomusicology Division, University of Maryland
frios@umd.edu

Abstract

In writings on the early history of mass-mediated Bolivian folkloric music, the La Paz-based female vocal duo Las Kantutas is almost invariably mentioned as one of the most pioneering acts. This recognition, however, rarely extends beyond the mere listing of the group and its members, alongside the names of contemporaneous artists. This essay fills this void in the historical literature on Bolivian music, not only by providing many details on the career of Las Kantutas in their heyday of the late 1930s and 1940s, but also by exploring the ways in which the group's musical activities intersected with the tumultuous political developments of the populist Villarroel-MNR period (December 1943–July 1946) and conservative-reactionary *sexenio* era (July 1946–April 1952). I also examine the western highland fashion for eastern lowland folkloric genres (known as *música oriental*), a trend that reached new heights in La Paz city in the Villarroel-MNR years, and represented an important countercurrent to Bolivian musical *indigenismo*. As leading folkloric-popular music artists of the 1940s, Las Kantutas, ever present on nationally broadcast La Paz radio shows, played a critical role in establishing lowland genres as mainstays for highland *criollo-mestizo* musicians, although this aspect of their legacy has long been forgotten.

Keywords: Bolivian Folkloric Music, Female Duos, *Música Oriental*, Mass Media.

In scholarly and journalistic accounts of the early history of mass-mediated Bolivian folkloric music, the La Paz-based female vocal duo Las Kantutas (named after the national flower) is almost invariably mentioned as one of the most pioneering acts of the late 1930s and 1940s. This recognition, however, rarely extends beyond the mere listing of the group and its members, alongside the names of contemporaneous Bolivian *criollo* and *mestizo* artists (e.g., Cárdenas 1986, 66; Gobierno Municipal de la Ciudad de La Paz Oficialía Mayor de Cultura 1993, 38; Sánchez C. 1995, 80; Pekkola 1996, 62; Rossells 1997, 10; Arauco 2011, 160).¹ In

1. In this article, I use the term "*criollo*" to refer to the local elite, "*mestizo*" for the urban middle-class, "*cholo*" or "*cholo-mestizo*" for the urban working-class, "indigenous" for rural indigenous community members, and combine the terms "*criollo*" and "*mestizo*" into the compound designation "*criollo-mestizo*" when it is unclear if the individuals being discussed self-identify as *criollos* or *mestizos*. I also employ these ethnicized terms when discussing local musical traditions and styles that Bolivians strongly associate with these sectors of the population. In everyday life, though, Bolivians often will disagree on whether an individual is indigenous or *cholo*, *criollo* or *mestizo*, and so on, as these designations are not fixed, but rather are constructed by actors relationally and situationally on the basis of a variety of cultural, socio-economic, and phenotypic factors (see Canessa 2007; Albó 2008; Toranzo 2008).

works that devote more text to Las Kantutas, at most they include a few sentences on the duo (e.g., Sánchez C. 1996, 56; Coronel Quisbert 2013, 82). Thus, despite the prominence that Las Kantutas enjoyed during a critical moment in the consolidation of Bolivian folkloric music as a mainstream form of mass-mediated entertainment, the trajectory of this locally celebrated ensemble remains poorly understood.

This essay fills this void in the historical literature on Bolivian music, not only by providing many details on the career of Las Kantutas in their heyday of the late 1930s and 1940s, but also by exploring the ways in which the group's activities intersected with the tumultuous political developments of the populist Villarroel-MNR period (December 1943–July 1946) and conservative-reactionary *sexenio* era (July 1946–April 1952). I also examine the western highland fashion for eastern lowland folkloric genres (known as *música oriental*), a trend that reached new heights in La Paz city in the Villarroel-MNR years, and represented an important countercurrent to Bolivian musical *indigenismo* (Indigenism).² As this article uncovers, Las Kantutas gained fame most of all for their interpretations of the *carnaval* and *taquirari* (the main types of *música oriental* at the time), although neither member of the ensemble hailed from Bolivia's eastern lowland region (i.e., the *departamentos* of Santa Cruz, Beni, and Pando). From the 1940s onward, most Bolivian *criollo-mestizo* folklore performers would present *música oriental* numbers in their sets, even when this lowland-themed repertoire contrasted strikingly with the musicians' image as highland music folklorists (e.g., Andean *conjuntos* or Pan-Andean bands). As leading Bolivian artists in the sphere of folkloric-popular music in the 1940s, Las Kantutas, ever present on nationally broadcast La Paz radio shows, played a critical role in establishing the lowland *carnaval* and *taquirari* genres as mainstays for subsequent generations of highland *criollo-mestizo* musicians, although this aspect of their legacy has long been forgotten.

Female Vocal Duos and the Radio in 1930s and 1940s Latin America

In much of Latin America, the female vocal duo format experienced its golden age in the 1930s and 1940s, when the most influential radio stations regularly broadcast music performed by this type of ensemble (see Moreno Rivas 1989, 85, 93; Koegel 2002, 99, 105–6; González Rodríguez 2005, 256–61; Dent 2009; Wong 2012, 64; Santamaría-Delgado 2014, 179). Regardless of the country, these duos, mostly comprised of sisters, sang primarily in parallel thirds, with occasional solo passages. That the pairs often were siblings imparted a wholesome quality to the tradition because it evoked the image of typical rural music-making at informal family gatherings. Radio station X.E.W. from Mexico City played a key role in internationally popularizing the female folkloric vocal duo configuration in this period (as well as many other Latin American musical traditions, including the *bolero* genre and *bolero trío* format). Founded in 1930 and known as "The Voice of Latin America from Mexico", the station's powerful signal reached listeners as far away as South America. Guadalajara's Las Hermanas Águila (The Águila Sisters) represented one of the earliest Mexican female vocal

2. Prior studies on Bolivian *música oriental* focus on developments in the eastern lowlands, and not on its performance and reception in the western highlands (e.g., Becerra 1959; Becerra 1998; Sanabria 1964; Terceros and Parada 1989; Parejas 1999). In the period covered in this article, Bolivia's leading artists in the field of musical *indigenismo* drew their inspiration from indigenous traditions of the *altiplano* (high plain) rather than the lowland region. For detailed discussions of 1930s and 1940s Bolivian musical expressions of the *indigenista* variety (e.g., nativist art-classical works, mass-mediated folkloric music, staged enactments of rural indigenous genres), see Chapters 2 and 3 in Rios forthcoming.

ensembles to gain local and international recognition via the live transmissions of X.E.W. The sisters made their inaugural appearance in 1934, and over time earned the honorific nickname of “The Best Duo of the Americas” (Moreno Rivas 1989, 85, 93).

Meanwhile in the Bolivian context, state-run Radio Illimani of La Paz was the station that most influenced local musical trends in the 1930s and 1940s. Named after the snow-peaked mountain overlooking La Paz city, Radio Illimani came into existence in 1933, in the midst of the Bolivian-Paraguayan Chaco War (1932–1935), which was fought entirely in the eastern lowlands. During the conflict, the station often featured recordings and live performances of traditional Bolivian *criollo-mestizo* genres (e.g., *huayño*, *cueca*, *bailecito*, *carneval*), as well as *indigenista* art-classical orchestral works (José Salmón Ballivián’s *Suite Aymara*), a programming that corresponded with the Bolivian government’s objective of heightening the citizenry’s national consciousness and patriotism (see Cárdenas 1986, 50, 66–67; De la Quintana and Duchén 1986, 40–43; Fernández Terán 2002, 235–36). Vocal duos received regular airplay on Radio Illimani’s shows in the war years, with two examples being the Dueto Aymara-Illimani and Dueto Murillo-Catacora (Cárdenas 1986, 50). Unfortunately, newspaper reports of the era only note the names of the ensembles, but do not provide additional information, including the gender of the members. This also holds true for most of the duos listed on Bolivian radio programs in the period immediately following the Chaco War (e.g., Dueto Nacional Luna-Tellez, Dueto de Arte Nativo).³ Dueto Las Pampitas, though, was unquestionably a female duo, given the presence of the definite article “Las” in their name, and use of the feminine noun “Pampitas”. This short-lived group performed on La Paz’s Radio Nacional in January 1938, with a repertoire consisting of Bolivian “*canciones criollas*”.⁴

Las Kantutas, The Early Years

1938 also heralded the birth of Las Kantutas. Members Irma Vásquez (1st voice) and Alicia Sáenz (2nd voice) were seasoned musicians by then, and no strangers to Radio Illimani’s audiences. Prior to joining forces in Las Kantutas, Vásquez had performed numerous times as a vocal soloist on the station’s broadcasts,⁵ while Sáenz often had teamed up with her sisters Dely and Ana in El Trío Sáenz (De la Quintana and Duchén 1986, 86).⁶ The management of Radio Illimani, noticing Vásquez’s adeptness at interpreting melodies, and Sáenz’s abilities in harmonization, believed the two singers would make a perfect combination. Besides convincing them to form a duo, Radio Illimani named the ensemble Las Kantutas, after the bell-shaped, red, yellow, and green-colored national flower of Bolivia. During much of their time together as a duo, Vásquez and Sáenz also held receptionist jobs, with flexible schedules that facilitated their pursuit of musical careers. Vásquez worked at a U.S. firm called MacDonalds, which, conveniently, was only a short walk away from the Radio Illimani studio. Sáenz’s position at the Netherlands’ Embassy, like Irma’s work, represented a respectable type of employment for a *criollo* woman.⁷

3. “Programa de la Radio Illimani para la semana”. 1936. *El Diario*, January 13, 3; “Programa de la Radio Nacional para toda la semana”. 1936. *El Diario*, January 27, 3.

4. “CPX CP# Radio Nacional”. 1938. *El Diario*, June 17, 4.

5. Irma Vásquez de Ronda, personal communication to author. March 8, 2001.

6. Also see “Programa de la Radio Illimani para la semana”. 1936. *El Diario*, January 13, 3.

7. Irma Vásquez de Ronda, personal communication to author. March 8, 2001.

By December 1938, Las Kantutas already had acquired a glowing reputation, so when Radio Illimani planned its Christmas Eve broadcast, it was no surprise that the duo would be invited to appear on this high-profile extravaganza. From 7 p.m. to midnight on December 24, Bolivian audiences gathered in their homes for the holiday and counting down the hours and minutes until Christmas Day, listened to a cavalcade of entertainers, from well-known figures to up-and-coming acts. Present among this roster was the prominent *indigenista* composer and pianist Julio Martínez Arteaga, various *estudiantinas* (a type of plucked string orchestra) including the celebrated Filarmónica 1º de Mayo (Philharmonic Group May 1st, or May Day), and art-classical music conductor Jorge Parra, who directed two orchestral and choir sets that evening. Pepa Cardona, then in the early stages of her career as a vocalist, performed solo numbers, and was described in the newspaper advertisement as a "precocious singer". Right before Las Kantutas took to the stage at 9:15 p.m., Alicia Sáenz's brother Carlos and his artistic partner Julio Rodríguez provided a few moments of comedic relief, as the cross-dressing slapstick act "Las Dos Comadres", which parodied the mannerisms of female *mestiza* market vendors or *cholas*. The vocal duo tradition, meanwhile, had ample representation on the airing, not only through the performances by Las Kantutas, but also through the musical numbers offered by Las Hermanas Tejada (discussed below) and Dúo Los Mistianos.⁸

Over the course of the trajectory of Las Kantutas, the group's repertoire included the *huayño*, *cueca*, and *bailecito*.⁹ Of Andean association (in the Bolivian context), these three genres represented the mainstays for the vast majority of highland *criollo-mestizo* folkloric groups of the day. Similarly, as was common practice in the urban La Paz music scene, Las Kantutas often performed musical numbers with lyrics in Quechua or Aymara (e.g., huayño "Laduyquimanta Ripusac" [I'm Leaving Your Side], *ronda aymara* "Ajllan Quritua" [I am from Ajlla]). Of the two widely-spoken Andean indigenous languages, Vásquez was most comfortable with Quechua, which she had gained plentiful exposure to during her childhood in the Cochabamba town of Totora, where her family owned an *hacienda* (large rural estate) that employed indigenous workers.¹⁰ Yet rather than specializing in traditional Andean Bolivian music-dance genres such as the huayño and cueca, Las Kantutas made their names as folklore artists primarily through their renditions of *música oriental*, even though Vásquez and Sáenz were *kollas* (highlanders) rather than *cambas* (lowlanders).¹¹

8. "Radio Illimani dará esta noche una audición extraordinaria". 1938. *El Diario*, December 24, 7.

9. The musical aptitudes of Las Kantutas extended to genres of other Latin American countries. In 1940, they sang Chilean folkloric tunes at a Radio Illimani homage to Chile ("Homenaje radial a la República de Chile". 1940. *El Diario*, September 18, 4), while the next year they interpreted the Paraguayan guarania "India" (Indian Woman) and Uruguayan tune "Margarita Punzo" in the Bolivian composer-choreographer José María Velasco Maidana's ballet *Ritmos de América* (Rhythms of the Americas) ("Ritmos de América". 1941. *El Diario*, February 14, 5). *Marineras* and *fiestajes* of Peru and *corridos* and *sones huastecos* of Mexico also featured among the genres that Las Kantutas performed on occasion ("Interesante audición de folklore peruano transmitió Radio Illimani: Las Kantutas ejecutaron música que ilustró con glosas Amadeo Grados". 1943. *El Diario*, February 27, 5; "Homenaje al aniversario de México: interesante actuación en la escuela que lleva su nombre". 1945. *El Diario*, September 15, 5). The group maintained a diverse repertoire of non-Bolivian numbers in large part because Sáenz's position at the Netherlands' consulate afforded them many opportunities to entertain foreign visitors. As Irma Vásquez de Ronda recalled (personal communication to author, May 31, 2001), embassies often invited Las Kantutas to sing, and to please their hosts, the duo usually incorporated musical selections from the corresponding country into their set.

10. Irma Vásquez de Ronda, personal communication to author. March 8, 2001.

11. In Bolivia, the term "kolla" is often used to refer to the residents of the *departamentos* of La Paz, Cochabamba, Oruro, Potosí, and Chuquisaca, while the designation "camba" denotes the inhabitants of Santa Cruz, Beni, and Pando.

The *carnaval* of Beni and *taquirari* of Santa Cruz constitute the two primary forms of *música oriental* that entered the repertoire of highland-based Bolivian folkloric-popular musicians in the early-to-mid 20th century. According to the Santa Cruz historian Hernando Sanabria (1964, 12), the *carnaval* genre initially became part of the La Paz music scene due to the efforts of touring La Paz brass bands, starting with Captain César Achaval's 6th Battalion ensemble, which assimilated the genre during the group's 1913 visit to the Santa Cruz region. Sanabria also states that by the mid-1920s several other leading highland brass bands had taken up the *carnaval*, including the Army Band led by Adrián Patiño Carpio (Sanabria 1964, 12). By the next decade, La Paz musicians had added the *taquirari* to their *música oriental* repertoire as well. Beni ethnologist and musician Rogers Becerra (n/d., 2) asserts that the *taquirari* was unknown to most *paceños* (La Paz residents) until 1937, when a delegation of musicians and dancers from his home region performed a *taquirari* sketch at La Paz's Hernando Siles Stadium, while taking part in the Primera Olimpiada Escolar Boliviana (First Bolivian Olympics for Schoolchildren).¹²

Despite their eastern lowland origins, the *carnaval* and *taquirari* share much common ground stylistically with traditional *criollo-mestizo* genres of Bolivia's western highland region (e.g., *huayño*, *cueca*, *bailecito*), an aesthetic compatibility that facilitated the rapid incorporation of these *música oriental* expressions by highland musicians. The *carnaval*, which can be written in either 6/8 or 3/4, exhibits the *sesquiáltera* hemiola, which also characterizes the *cueca* and *bailecito* (as well as many other Latin American genres of Spanish colonial origin). Most *carnavales* are in the major mode and employ AABB or AABBC section form, though, while Bolivian *cuecas* and *bailecitos* typically are in AABA. *Taquiraris*, which are in simple-duple meter and use either the major or minor mode, have the same sectional form as the *carnaval*. Reminiscent of the galloping pulse of the *huayño*, the rhythmic ostinato of the *taquirari* consists of one eighth-note followed by two sixteenths. However, *taquiraris* stress the downbeat, as opposed to the off-beat, as *huayños* do.¹³

Jorge "Chapi" Luna's fondness for *música oriental* strongly influenced Las Kantutas' initial dedication to this repertoire, in large part because in the late 1930s and early 1940s the duo often sang his compositions on Radio Illimani shows while he accompanied them on the piano.¹⁴ From the highland city of Oruro, Luna played a major role in popularizing *música oriental* countrywide in this period, through his regular appearances as a piano accompanist and soloist on the station's live broadcasts. He joined Radio Illimani's staff during the Chaco War, after having been discharged from the Army for wartime wounds suffered during a battle in the *departamento* of Santa Cruz (Rojas Rojas 1989, 15; De la Quintana 1999, 232). Although Luna's stay in the *oriente* was brief, the *carnaval* figured prominently in his compositional output from this point onward (see Rojas Rojas 1989, 15–16). His musical talents found a fan in President Germán Busch (term in office: 1937–1939). Born in Santa Cruz and raised

12. It should be noted, though, that the Santa Cruz music-dance contingent that also participated in the Primera Olimpiada Escolar Boliviana similarly offered an interpretation of the *taquirari* tradition. See "La demostración de danzas típicas bolivianas". 1937. *El Diario*, August 13, 8.

13. Rather than pointing out the rhythmic similarities between the *taquirari* and *huayño*, Bolivian musicians and writers instead typically stress the *taquirari*'s ostensible roots in a traditional lowland indigenous genre from Beni, the *takirikire* or *danza de la flecha* (Arrow Dance) (e.g., Becerra 1959; Becerra 1990; Parejas 1999, 21). In all likelihood, however, having similar-sounding names represents the full extent of the historical connection between the *criollo-mestizo taquirari* and indigenous *takirikire* genres. For a discussion of Beni's *takirikire* tradition, see Becerra 1990.

14. Irma Vásquez de Ronda, personal communication to author. March 8, 2001.

in Beni, Busch relished playing the guitar with his *beniano* friends, as a distraction from his duties as President (Rivera de Stahlie 1995, 84), and from time to time he requested Luna's artistic services for these informal musical occasions (Rojas Rojas 1989, 15).

Two of Luna's most popular *carnavales*, "Palomita del Arrozal" (Little Dove of the Rice Fields), and "Pena Camba" (Grief of a Lowlander), were signature numbers for Las Kantutas. The acclaimed Santa Cruz poet Raúl Otero Reiche wrote the lyrics for both songs, as he also did for several other *música oriental* tunes that Luna authored in the 1930s and 1940s, including "Alma Cruceña" (Soul of Santa Cruz), and "Poema Beniano" (A Beni Poem) (Rojas Rojas 1989, 15–16). The text of "Palomita del Arrozal"—which Otero Reiche completed by 1936 (Sanabria 1964, 13)—sprinkles in the *oriente* regional dialect (e.g., *-inga* diminutive suffix, *voseo* second-person address form), lowland indigenous words (e.g., *guapurú*, *ocoró* [both are tropical fruits]), and references to the local topography (e.g., *arrozal* = rice fields, *arenal* = sand dunes).

These literary devices, which also appear in Luna-Otero Reiche's "Pena Camba" and many other *música oriental* songs of the era, draw attention to, and thus highlight, geographical and cultural markers that clearly distinguish the eastern lowlands from the western highlands. *Música oriental* songs such as these no doubt elicited a complex set of associations for Bolivian *kollas* in the late 1930s and 1940s, particularly for the tens of thousands who, as enlisted men, had first set foot in the lands of the *oriente* during the brutal conflict. For many of them, the sound of a *taquirari* or *carnaval* likely brought to mind bittersweet memories, given that the Paraguayan military forces ultimately prevailed on the battlefield, even though the Bolivian troops had outnumbered them.¹⁵

About four years after Las Kantutas' Radio Illimani debut, the duo crossed paths with the soon-to-be internationally famous Peruvian soprano Yma Sumac (What Beauty; Zoila Augusta Emperatriz Chávarri del Castillo is her birth name) and her husband-manager Moisés Vivanco. While on their way to Buenos Aires, in June 1942 the two artists spent a few days in La Paz where they headlined a recital held at the Ministry of Education. Las Kantutas also took part in the concert, as did the duo Las Hermanas Tejada, who specialized in indigenous-themed songs that evoked Aymara cultural traditions.¹⁶ Exhibiting their respective strong suits, Las Kantutas entertained the audience with a "precious *carnaval* from Santa Cruz," whereas Las Hermanas Tejada offered a "beautiful Aymara piece."¹⁷ The Ministry of Education's scheduling of Las Kantutas and Las Hermanas Tejada for this prestigious occasion represented an artistic validation for the groups. In the eyes of the *paceño* elite, the two duos had risen to the top of Bolivia's folkloric music scene, entirely as a result of their numerous live appearances on La Paz radio broadcasts, as neither ensemble counted any music recordings to their name yet.

15. For a recent, and enlightening, discussion of the dynamics of Bolivian participation in the Chaco War, see Shesko 2015.

16. Initially formed by María Luisa and Yolanda Tejada (their sister Elsa would later the group), Las Hermanas Tejada debuted on Radio Illimani around the same time as Las Kantutas (María Luisa Tejada, personal communication to author. March 10, 2001). Other La Paz-based *criolla-mestiza* female vocal duos of folkloric stylistic orientation whose careers overlapped with that of Las Kantutas include Las Hermanas Travesí ("Con un excelente programa reinició sus labores la radioemisora Nacional". 1941. *El Diario*, January 3, 5), Las Hermanas Mejía ("El centro artístico Huiñay Inti celebra su aniversario". 1942. *El Diario*, April 25, 9), Las Pacheñitas ("Radio Continental se presenta hoy en el Municipal". 1943. *El Diario*, September 11, 3; "Radio Municipal inaugura su nuevo equipo". 1944. *El Diario*, June 10, 4), Las Indiecitas ("Radio Illimani". 1944. *El Diario*, December 20, 4), Las Ñustas ("Actuación de un conjunto estable de radio teatro". 1945. *El Diario*, April 23, 3), and Las Collitas ("Hoy: Monje Campero". 1946. *El Diario*, September 3, 2).

17. "Se realizó anoche una fiesta de arte folklórico peruano-boliviano". 1942. *El Diario*, June 12, 4.

To Buenos Aires

Until the establishment of the country's first record company in 1949, Discos Méndez, Bolivian musicians who wished to immortalize themselves on vinyl had little choice but to make the long journey to Buenos Aires. A few months after the June 1942 concert at the Ministry of Education, Las Kantutas, along with Las Hermanas Tejada (accompanied by their father, the guitarist and composer-arranger Zenobio Tejada) and string band Los Sumac Huaynas (The Good-Looking Guys), departed for Argentina, with their expenses partially covered by President Enrique Peñaranda's administration.¹⁸ During their month-long stay in Buenos Aires, the duos taped approximately seventy tracks at the studios of RCA Victor.¹⁹ Las Kantutas and Las Hermanas Tejada's trip followed on the heels of the one undertaken by another La Paz female vocal duo, the ad hoc group formed by Pepa Cardona and Yola Rivero. Earlier in the year, Radio Nacional had dispatched Cardona and Rivero to the Argentine capital to record for the ODEON label.²⁰

To publicize the recordings of Las Kantutas and Las Hermanas Tejada, the Buenos Aires newsletter *La Voz de RCA Victor* (The Voice of RCA Victor) printed a short informational piece on the ensembles, which included an eye-catching photograph.²¹ Dressed in full *polleras* (Andean multi-layered skirts), embroidered shawls, bowler hats, and dangling earrings, and with their hair styled in long, braided pigtailed, Las Kantutas looked the part of the *chola paceña*, whose elaborate, factory-made outfits proudly display their entrepreneurial success. The Tejada Sisters donned simpler attire, one reminiscent of the handwoven, striped dresses that rural indigenous women often wear in the Andes. This was an appropriate apparel choice for Las Hermanas Tejada, as it matched the ensemble's musical focus. For Las Kantutas, though, the *chola paceña* image was discordant with the duo's trademark repertoire of *música oriental*, but matched longstanding Argentine stereotypes about the ethnic make-up of the Bolivian population.²²

Las Kantutas and Las Hermanas Tejada's time in Buenos Aires coincided with the release of the blockbuster Argentine film *La Guerra Gaucha* (The Gaucho War), which reenacted a key battle in the Wars of Independence. Set in the northern Argentine province of Salta, *La Guerra Gaucha* aroused a wave of curiosity among the Buenos Aires public about the history and traditions of the country's northwestern Andean region (which borders Bolivia), and helped launch Los Hermanos Ábalos to national stardom (Chamosa 2010, 165).²³ A Buenos Aires-based folklore group formed by artists from Santiago del Estero, Los Hermanos Ábalos were cast as musicians in *La Guerra Gaucha*. One scene depicted the members, garbed in *ponchos* in a village setting, performing a lively *carnavalito* (the Argentine term for the *huayño* genre) that

18. "Artistas paceñas van a Buenos Aires". 1942. *El Diario*, October 25, 5; "La radio del día". 1942. *La Noche*, December 12.

19. "De Buenos Aires llegaron Las Kantutas, que obtuvieron éxito en sus actuaciones". 1942. *El Diario*, December 5.

20. "Anoche actuó en Radio El Mundo de Buenos Aires el conjunto de arte de Radio Nacional". 1942. *El Diario*, February 6, 7.

21. "Artistas del folklore boliviano". 1942. *La Voz de RCA Victor*.

22. In the 1930s and 1940s (as well as later), Bolivian *criollo-mestizo* folkloric musicians who performed in Buenos Aires almost invariably outfitted themselves as Andean *cholos* or 'Indians' (e.g., Alberto Ruiz Lavadenz; see Rios forthcoming), which reveals that Argentine audiences expected Bolivian folklore artists to enact this exoticist trope.

23. Víctor "Vitillo" Ábalos, personal communication to author. February 21, 2002.

bore the descriptive title of "Carnavalito Quebradeño" (Carnavalito of the Mountain Pass). On this Andean-themed musical number—which became the ensemble's first commercial hit, Los Hermanos Ábalos complemented their usual "Argentine folklore" ensemble format of several guitars and a *bombo legüero* (or *caja*), with the *kena* and *charango*.²⁴

As one of Argentina's top three stations, Radio El Mundo of Buenos Aires was always on the lookout for local trends, and may have been looking for a way to capitalize on the sudden *porteño* (Buenos Aires resident) interest in stylized folk music of the Andes, when the management learned that Las Kantutas and Las Hermanas Tejada were in town. In any event, Radio El Mundo offered them contracts, and featured the duos in its broadcasts on at least ten occasions in late 1942.²⁵ From the perspective of Argentine listeners who tuned in to the programs, the groups must have been alluring because, as folklore artists from Bolivia, they offered a touch of exoticism while conforming to conventional aesthetic standards. The polished, almost detached-sounding vocal delivery of Las Kantutas, always realized in the natural range of each singer, with only the occasional, and subtle, dynamic changes, was very much in keeping with the norms of the day for mainstream popular music vocalists in Latin America. Interestingly, Las Kantutas used virtually the same vocal approach on every track they recorded in their career, regardless of the regional, class, or ethnic associations of the genre.²⁶ When singing *huayños* that referenced Andean indigenous traditions, for example, Las Kantutas made no attempt to emulate the sound quality of highland indigenous or *chola-mestiza* vocalists, who favor shrill timbres and often sing at the very limit of their ranges. This strained vocal style would not have gone over very well at Radio El Mundo, or, for that matter, on any Bolivian stations in this period (e.g., Radio Illimani).

In La Paz, meanwhile, the leading newspapers dutifully documented the duos' musical activities in the Argentine capital.²⁷ After the vocalists returned to La Paz in December 1942, periodicals often reached out to them for interviews about their accomplishments abroad, thereby allowing the musicians the chance to promote themselves to the Bolivian public. These publications repeatedly emphasized the prestige the singers had garnered by virtue of having performed on Radio El Mundo and recorded for RCA Victor.²⁸ Without a doubt, Las Kantutas and Las Hermanas Tejada obtained a new level of prominence in Bolivia as folklore artists following their sojourn in Buenos Aires.²⁹

24. Los Hermanos Ábalos eventually would become best known for non-Andean repertoire, though, especially their *zambas* and *chacareras* (e.g., "Zamba de Mi Pago," "Chacarera del Rancho") (see "Vida y canciones de Los Hermanos Ábalos" 1991).

25. "De Buenos Aires llegaron Las Kantutas, que obtuvieron éxito en sus actuaciones". 1942. *El Diario*, December 5, 4.

26. I wish to thank Juan Ronda, the son of Irma Vásquez de Ronda, for dubbing several of Las Kantutas' RCA Victor tracks for me, along with selections that the duo recorded in 1947 for ODEON and in the 1950s for Discos Méndez.

27. "Actuará en el Teatro Alvear de Buenos Aires el conjunto folklórico boliviano". 1942. *El Diario*, November 21.

28. "Retornó la delegación artística que viajó a Buenos Aires". 1942. *La Razón*, December 4; "La radio del día". 1942. *La Noche*, December 12.

29. Pepa Cardona and Yola Rivero also received considerable Bolivian press coverage in 1942 for the duets they recorded in Argentina (e.g., "Radio Nacional de Bolivia transmitió anoche las primeras grabaciones del conjunto de arte boliviano". 1942. *El Diario*, February 27, 9). Two years later, Rivero joined Yma Sumac and Moisés Vivanco's troupe, with whom she performed under the pseudonym Cholita Rivero ("Yola Rivero junto con Imma Sumack y Moisés Vivanco". 1944. *El Diario*, July 30, 6).

Music and Populism during the Villarroel-MNR administration (December 1943–July 1946)

In late 1943, Bolivia underwent a dramatic political shift that would have a major impact on the course of Las Kantutas' career. A few weeks before the end of December, the "secret military society" Razón de Patria (Cause of the Fatherland), with the support of the Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario (Nationalist Revolutionary Movement—MNR), overthrew Peñaranda and installed a new President, Major Gualberto Villarroel (Klein 1969, 369). Setting the tone for his term in office as a populist-nationalist leader, Villarroel, shortly after the coup, proclaimed the line for which he would become best known, "We are not enemies of the rich, but we are better friends of the poor" (Peñaloza 1963, 64).³⁰

The rural indigenous Andean population was one key sector that Villarroel and the MNR courted for political support. As is well known among Bolivianists, the country's first indigenous political assembly of national scope, the 1945 Indigenous Congress, took place in La Paz city with the consent of the Villarroel-MNR coalition government. This groundbreaking event attracted around 1,500 indigenous delegates, many of whom had traveled considerable distances to attend the meeting. At the conclusion of the Indigenous Congress, President Villarroel, to the delight of the indigenous representatives and dismay of conservative *criollos* and mestizos who wanted to maintain the status quo, declared the abolition of the abusive institutions of *pongueaje* and *mitanaje* through which *hacendado* landowners traditionally had forced indigenous male and female farmworkers to provide unpaid personal services for them (Gotkowitz 2007, 192, 219–24).³¹

A few months after the Indigenous Congress, another precedent-setting development involving indigenous people occurred in the city of La Paz, the Concurso Vernacular y Folklórico (Vernacular and Folkloric Contest). It was the first Bolivian state-sponsored folklore festival of the post-Chaco War era that was devoted almost exclusively to typical Andean indigenous *tropa* (wind consort) music-dance styles. Over the course of the event, which drew a crowd of about 50,000 to Hernando Siles Stadium, President Villarroel and the rest of the spectators witnessed a panorama of rural highland indigenous musical traditions, including *suri sikuris*, *loco palla pallas*, *choquelas*, *waka tokoris*, and *auqui auquis*.³² To entice the ensembles to participate, the Municipality had pledged to reward the top groups with cash prizes, and to reimburse all of the contestants for their travel and lodging expenses.³³ In total, seventeen music-dance troupes, from various provinces in the La Paz region, displayed their talents at the Concurso Vernacular y Folklórico.³⁴

30. For insightful analyses of the Villarroel-MNR regime, see Klein (1969, 369–82) and Gotkowitz (2007, 164–232).

31. Until the 1952 Revolution, however, most *hacendados* continued to enforce *pongueaje* and *mitanaje* obligations (see Gotkowitz 2007).

32. "Extraordinario éxito alcanzó el concurso folklórico efectuado ayer en el Estadio". 1945. *El Diario*, July 16, 5; Paredes 1949, 31–32.

33. "Habrá un concurso nacional el 15 de Julio". 1945. *El Diario*, March 3, 4; "Concurso vernacular y folklórico". 1945. *El Diario*, March 13, 2.

34. "Los premios del concurso folklórico". 1945. *El Diario*, August 5, 5. In the final weeks of the Villarroel presidency, the La Paz Municipality staged a second Concurso at Hernando Siles Stadium. This event also placed the spotlight on rural indigenous music. See "Varios conjuntos vendrán al concurso folklórico de Julio". 1946. *El Diario*, June 28, 11; "Concurso folklórico de Julio". 1946. *El Diario*, July 7, 8; "El concurso folklórico". 1946. *El Diario*, July 12.

wooing the Andean region's urban blue-collar workforce was another priority for the Villarroel-MNR regime. Known as *cholos* or *cholo-mestizos*, this sector cultivated a variety of musical traditions, but the *estudiantina* served as their most emblematic ensemble format in this period. Well aware of this, in 1945 Villarroel-MNR officials set into motion the creation of the Orquesta Típica La Paz (Traditional La Paz Orchestra).³⁵ A state-sponsored *estudiantina*, the first of its kind in Bolivia, the Orquesta Típica La Paz exclusively interpreted Bolivian compositions, primarily ones by renowned *indigenista* art-classical musicians (e.g., José Salmón Ballivián's *Suite Aymara* and *Trilogía India*, Armando Palmero's *Poema Indio*, Belisario Zárate's *Serenata Campestre-Tres Motivos Indianistas*, Jorge Parra's *Escenas Incaicas*).³⁶ In so doing, the ensemble's plucked string orchestra arrangements of *indigenista* musical creations simultaneously referenced two separate constituencies, *cholo-mestizos* and indigenous people, through a performance style that aesthetically appealed to mainstream *criollo-mestizo* audiences.³⁷

The Villarroel-MNR years also mark the moment when the La Paz Municipality enacted a "national music" ordinance of singular breadth in Bolivian history.³⁸ Apparently modeled after the similar pieces of legislation that Argentina's military-led populist government had begun to implement the previous year (for a discussion of the Argentine decree, see Chamosa 2010), the La Paz ordinance compelled (1) radio stations to begin and conclude their daily programming with thirty-minute "national music" segments, and integrate "national airs" into dance music shows, (2) military bands and *orquestas populares* (i.e., *estudiantinas* and *orquestas de jazz*) to perform three "vernacular" or "national" tunes at the start of their sets, (3) owners of nighttime locales featuring live entertainment (e.g., *boîtes*, *confiterías*) to ensure their house bands presented "national" selections every half hour, (4) managers of elite artistic events (e.g., literary readings, theater productions) to intersperse "native music by national composers" such as the *indigenista* art-classical works of José Salmón Ballivián, and (5) promoters of spectacles geared toward the masses (e.g., soccer games, boxing matches) to feature "national music" acts at various moments in the proceedings. Those who violated the ordinance would receive fines and, as a "moral sanction," experience the indignity of having their names printed in the newspaper.³⁹ The extent to which *paceño* musicians and business operators complied with the decree is hard to determine, owing to the current lack of available documentation, although it appears that the ordinance bolstered the local vogue for *música oriental* (as I discuss further on).⁴⁰

35. "Consideró varios asuntos en su reunión de ayer el Consejo Departamental de Cultura". 1945. *El Diario*, May 3, 9; "Organización de una orquesta de música nacional". 1945. *El Diario*, May 11, 4.

36. "Actuación oficial preparada con motivo del Día del Indio". 1945. *El Diario*, July 31, 5; "Alcanzó éxito el concierto ofrecido por la Municipalidad". 1946. *El Diario*, May 13, 5; "Concierto de música boliviana". 1946. *El Diario*, April 2, 7.

37. For an extended discussion of the Orquesta Típica La Paz, and the transformation of La Paz's *estudiantina* tradition from a Eurocentric to an *indigenista* musical expression, see Rios n/d.

38. "Es acertada la ordenanza que impone la difusión de la música nacional". 1944. *El Diario*, December 20, 9.

39. *Ibidem*.

40. In the area of radio programming, several La Paz stations that rarely if ever scheduled "national music" segments in the early months of 1945, suddenly began to present folkloric acts later in the year (e.g., Radio Fides, Radio El Cóndor, Radio Amauta) (1945. *El Diario*, January–August). In the case of Radio Fides, this change came about after state authorities ordered the station to comply with the ordinance ("Notificación a Radio Fides". 1945. *El Diario*, May 10, 4; Brun 2000, 54–56).

The Voice of Bolivia

The Municipality unveiled its “national music” edict on the first anniversary of Villarroel’s ascension to the presidency. Radio Illimani, meanwhile, devoted a full day of programming that day to the “Revolution of December 20”.⁴¹ In the late evening portion of the broadcast, which began around 9:30 p.m. and ended about two hours later, high-ranking state officials took to the airways to address the nation. Musical performances flanked each speech. Before Villarroel’s lecture, a military band played the National Anthem, while the talk offered by MNR chief (and future President) Víctor Paz Estenssoro was followed by *estudiantina* 1° de Mayo’s version of the first movement of Salmón Ballivián’s *Suite Aymara*.

As the official radio station and propaganda vehicle for the Villarroel-MNR government, Radio Illimani, then known as “The Voice of Bolivia” (Coronel Quisbert 2013, 190), had to keep in mind the administration’s agendas when it planned the entertainment for the commemorative show. From this perspective, 1° de Mayo’s overtly *indigenista* number fit well in the program. Yet maintaining ideological consistency was not the sole consideration the station had to weigh. After all, the management could not guarantee that a large audience would tune in that day to Radio Illimani, and thus needed to take into account the aesthetic preferences of the listenership—even if the tastes of the public had little to do with government priorities in the area of solidifying political alliances. Notably, the *taquirari* and *carnaval* compositions of Chapi Luna and fellow *orureño* pianist Gilberto Rojas (profiled below) had pride of place in the station’s programming in the three hours leading up to Villarroel’s address (i.e., circa 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.),⁴² which reflected the status Luna and Rojas enjoyed in La Paz as beloved folkloric music composers, as well as widespread local popularity of eastern lowland genres.

Various female vocalists, all of non-*oriente* heritage, sang *taquiraris* and *carnavales* in this high-profile broadcast. Irma Vásquez and Alicia Sáenz took part, but not as Las Kantutas, as the two recently had put the group on hiatus. Vásquez briefly pursued a solo career as a performer of romantic *boleros*, Peruvian *vals criollos*, Ecuadorian *pasillos*, and other non-Bolivian genres,⁴³ while Sáenz joined forces with Maruja Lavadenz in a new duo, Las Kjenayitas (The Little Kenas).⁴⁴ With Gilberto Rojas on the piano, Las Kjenayitas opened their set on the Radio Illimani program with a rare Rojas composition in the *indigenista* style, “La Danza Incaica es Así” (That’s How Incan Dance Is), and then moved on to *música oriental*, with Rojas’s *carnaval* “Qué Lindos Ojos” (What Beautiful Eyes; lyrics by Ricardo Cabrera), and Román Sandoval’s *taquirari* “Espina de Cristal” (Crystal Thorn). In the prestigious slot right before the performance of the National Anthem, Vásquez sang three *vales*, two of which evoked the charms of the Santa Cruz region, Luna’s “Alma Cruceña” (Santa Cruz Soul), and Rojas’s “Bajo el Cielo de Vallegrande” (Under the Vallegrande Sky).⁴⁵

The Villarroel-MNR government’s one-year anniversary constituted a delicate moment for the regime. The previous month, in November 1944, state agents had clandestinely

41. “Espectáculos Públicos: programas de teatros cinematógrafos, radio y variedades”. 1944. *El Diario*, December 20, 4.

42. *Ibidem*.

43. Irma Vásquez de Ronda, personal communication to author. June 27, 2001.

44. “Sociedad de artistas bolivianos unidos”. 1944. *El Diario*, May 28, 3; “Sociedades peruanas de beneficencia”. 1944. *El Diario*, July 27, 7; “Audiciones radiales”. *El Diario*, August 4, 5. “Radio Illimani”. 1944. *El Diario*, October 10, 6.

45. “Espectáculos Públicos: programas de teatros cinematógrafos, radio y variedades”. 1944. *El Diario*, December 20, 4.

executed several members of the opposition who were plotting a coup. The group of murdered individuals included congressional representatives, ex-cabinet ministers, and other eminent politicians. Assassinating such high-ranking society figures, the President and his chief officers soon realized, amounted to a massive "political miscalculation" on their part (Klein 1969, 377). Although it was far from unheard of for Bolivian political regimes to use violent means to keep themselves in power, these actions traditionally targeted the *cholo-mestizo* sector or indigenous people, not the upper socio-economic class. The Villarroel-MNR government rashly broke from this precedent. With the impending political storm looming, the administration frantically tried to portray itself in a positive light, as the champion of the people. It was in this context that state officials ratified a string of populist measures during the 1944 Christmas season (see Klein 1969, 378), including the La Paz Municipality's national music ordinance. In the end, these efforts were in vain. Over the next months, as the public increasingly became aware of the regime's shocking actions, large sectors of the elite and middle-class would join the opposition, eventually forming a coalition that would unite the Left and Right (Klein 1969, 377–82; Gotkowitz 2007, 233–34).

A few months after Radio Illimani's homage to Villarroel's presidency, Vásquez and Sáenz decided to reestablish Las Kantutas.⁴⁶ For the rest of the Villarroel-MNR era, the duo was one of the station's most popular acts, along with Las Hermanas Tejada, Gilberto Rojas, Los Sumac Huaynas, Voces del Oriente (discussed below), and Chapi Luna (director of musical programming). With this impressive line-up of folklore artists, Radio Illimani publicly displayed its compliance with the "national music" ordinance. On a few occasions, the station sent its house musicians to other parts of the country, to spread goodwill on behalf of the Villarroel-MNR regime. In 1945, for instance, Las Kantutas, Los Sumac Huaynas, Voces del Oriente, and singer Chela Rea Nogales a.k.a. Kory Chuyma (Heart of Gold) performed in the Potosí mining towns of Llallagua, Catavi, and Siglo XX—strongholds of the Bolivian labor movement, as part of a concert series that Radio Illimani jointly coordinated with the government's Dirección General de Propaganda (Propaganda Department).⁴⁷

Notwithstanding Las Kantutas' role as musical ambassadors for the Villarroel-MNR government, the duo's artistic image was not completely attuned to the regime's political objective of strengthening relations with the Andean *cholo-mestizo* and indigenous sectors. Their hallmark *música oriental* numbers, after all, conjured up images of the tropical lowlands of Santa Cruz and Beni, rather than the highlands and valleys of the Southern Andes where most Bolivians lived. To be sure, besides *taquiraris* and *carnavales*, Las Kantutas also interpreted *huayños*, *cuecas*, and *bailecitos*, a repertoire that Bolivians most strongly associated with the Andean region's *mestizo* and *cholo* populations. However, as previously explained, the performance practices of Vásquez and Sáenz were a far cry from the typical vocal style of *chola-mestiza* singers, and instead followed the approach of internationally famed Latin American popular music artists of the day. Las Kantutas, moreover, increasingly cultivated the look of cosmopolitan celebrities, with their impeccably applied makeup, stylish wardrobe, and fashionable Victory Rolls hairstyles á la Hollywood starlet Betty Grable, which intimated that Vásquez and Sáenz had more in common with international movie stars than non-elite Bolivians.⁴⁸ The apolitical stance the duo expressed in the lyrics they sang, and when speaking

46. "El Dúo Las Kantutas en Radio Illimani". 1945. *La Razón*, March 9.

47. 1945. Newspaper clipping missing title of article and name of newspaper, November 15.

48. Reinforcing this persona, La Paz newspaper articles about Las Kantutas sometimes adopted a flirtatious tone, and

to newspaper reporters, further distanced the members from the contentious social issues of the day, including those involving female laborers of the lower socio-economic classes—at a time when the Villarroel-MNR regime increasingly reached out to *chola-mestiza* workers, and the possibility of granting voting rights to non-elite women was a topic of heated debate in the Bolivian legislature (see Gotkowitz 2007, 174–87).

Amidst the country's escalating political polarization, Las Kantutas' cosmopolitan image made them appear above the fray to most Bolivians. The duo's negligible association with subaltern sectors of the population—whom the Villarroel-MNR regime courted in an attempt to offset its dwindling approval rating among the elite and upper-middle-class—certainly was an asset for their musical career. It considerably broadened the appeal that Las Kantutas enjoyed in *criollo-mestizo* society, even in socially conservative circles. As the next section demonstrates, a similar scenario held true for other *música oriental* artists who were based in La Paz city in this period.

Other *Música Oriental* Figures in Mid-1940s La Paz

A regular act on Radio Illimani in the mid-1940s, Voces del Oriente (Voices of the Orient) counted four eastern lowland musicians in their line-up: singers Luis Eugenio Velasco (1st voice) and Ángel Camacho (2nd voice), and guitar players Medardo Cuellar and Jorge Brown; Cochabamba guitarist Tito Véliz rounded out the group (Terceros and Parada 1989, 172). One of their earliest performances took place in October 1944 at Boîte Embassy, a fashionable La Paz venue located adjacent to the Sucre Palace Hotel. With their matching checkered shirts, scarves, and wide-brimmed hats, the musicians looked every bit the rustic figure of “typical” *camba* peasants, which helped transport the *paceño* audience to the laid-back fantasy image of the tropical lowlands.⁴⁹ Musically, Voces del Oriente's *taquiraris* and *carnavales* must have sounded a lot like Las Kantutas' rendition of the same genres, as the vocalists of both groups realized the melodic material chiefly in parallel-third harmony, to homophonic accompaniment.

In terms of their membership, though, Voces del Oriente were an exception to the rule in La Paz's *música oriental* scene, which was dominated by Andean rather than eastern lowland artists.⁵⁰ This situation applied equally to performers and composers. Among the latter,

even played up the singers' “personal charms” (e.g., “Uno de los grandes valores de nuestro cancionero popular. Las Kantutas, en la Revista de América”. 1945. *El Diario*, September 15). One writer went as far as to list Vásquez's body measurements, in the manner that Bolivian gossip columnists of the era often unproblematically discussed the physical attributes of famous foreign actresses (“En las estaciones radiales: A cargo del diablo cojuelo”. Circa 1945. n/t., n/d, 7).

49. “Boîte Embassy”. 1944. *El Diario*, October 20, 5.

50. Before the birth of Voces del Oriente, the trio Conjunto Radial Cruceño (Santa Cruz Radio Group) and quartet Conjunto Oriental appear to have been the only La Paz-based *música oriental* groups whose members hailed from the eastern lowlands. Of the two, Conjunto Oriental gained the largest following. Headed by Medardo Cuellar (who would later join Voces del Oriente), the group performed on Radio Illimani in the late 1930s and early 1940s, until it disbanded in mid-1942 (“Obtiene mucho éxito el Conjunto Oriental”. 1939. *El Diario*, October 27, 12; “Radio La Paz inaugura hoy sus nuevas instalaciones”. 1942. *El Diario*, May 16, 9). The next year, Conjunto Oriental's brief comeback triggered a bidding war for their services among Radio Illimani, Radio Los Andes, and Radio La Paz, which attests to the group's popularity in La Paz (“Existe expectativa para escuchar al prestigioso Conjunto Oriental”. 1943. *El Diario*, April 20, 4). The short-lived Conjunto Radial Cruceño, meanwhile, was led by Vito Prado, a guitarist from Santa Cruz's Vallegrande Province (“Conjunto Radial Cruceño”. 1940. *El Diario*, July 5, 5).

Gilberto Rojas—who would team-up with Las Kantutas in 1946—was the primary new figure. His life mirrored that of Chapi Luna's, as Rojas also was a pianist and native son of Oruro who began his professional musical career on Radio Illimani.⁵¹ By late 1944, his fame as a tunesmith was such that on the station's tribute that year to the "Revolution of December 20", the show featured more compositions by Rojas than by any other artist.⁵²

Los Indios Latinos (The Latin Indians) had introduced many of his songs to *paceño* audiences in the months prior to the broadcast, through their radio appearances, and shows at *boîtes* and *confiterías*.⁵³ A La Paz duo founded in the early 1940s by Jorge Landívar (1st voice) and Hugo Claure (2nd voice), in 1944 Los Indios Latinos united with Rojas, who besides his role as piano accompanist, acted as the group's artistic director.⁵⁴ From this moment on, Los Indios Latinos mainly sang Rojas' *música oriental* numbers. In 1945, for instance, Los Indios Latinos scored a Carnival season hit with Rojas' light-hearted *taquirari* "Negrita" (Dark-Complexioned Woman) (Rojas Foppiano 1991, 55–56, 71–73). Other La Paz ensembles swiftly took up this soon-to-be classic song, from the Army Band led by Adrián Patiño Carpio, to Fermín Barrionuevo's *orquesta de jazz*.⁵⁵ Further disseminating Rojas' oeuvre, Los Indios Latinos and Rojas toured Bolivia from mid-to-late 1945, with stops in each *departamento* except for Pando (Rojas Foppiano 1991, 57–75). They then traveled to Buenos Aires to record for ODEON.⁵⁶ Available for purchase in La Paz the following year, this batch of releases included "Negrita" and other trendy *taquiraris* by Rojas, such as "Los Indios Latinos" (their theme song), "Flor Benianita" (Flower of Beni), "Sentimiento Camba" (Sentiments of a Lowland Bolivian), and the nonsensically-titled "Tiquiminiqui".⁵⁷

The *orquesta de jazz* (U.S. swing band-style groups) was another popular ensemble format for the performance of *música oriental* in mid-1940s La Paz, as attested by contemporaneous accounts of the city's nighttime entertainment venues that highlight the growing presence of *taquiraris* and *carnavales* in the local *orquesta de jazz* repertoire.⁵⁸ The mainstays for these *paceño* ensembles, though, were the *bolero*, *son*, *rumba*, and *guaracha*.⁵⁹ This penchant for

51. "Radio Illimani celebrará hoy la magna efemérides de la República del Perú". 1940. *El Diario*, July 28, 9.

52. "Espectáculos Públicos: programas de teatros cinematógrafos, radio y variedades". 1944. *El Diario*, December 20, 4. The previous year, Rojas had traveled to Santiago, Chile to publish scores of several of his songs, including the *carnavales* "Cambita" (Eastern Lowland Girl) and "En Tus Brazos" (In Your Arms), and *carnaval-taquirari* "Jenecherú" (Eternal Flame) ("Compositor". 1944. *El Diario*, January 29, 5). On the Radio Illimani program that I described in the text above, Rojas performed each of these compositions, along with his *carnavales* "Arenita" (Little Sand; co-authored with Ricardo Cabrera) and "Qué Lindos Ojos" (What Beautiful Eyes), and his *taquiraris* "Sentimiento Camba" (Sentiments of a Lowland Bolivian) and "Amargura" (Bitterness).

53. "Actúan con éxito Los Indios Latinos". 1944. *El Diario*, August 23, 5; "Boite Utama: grandioso debut del trío Los Indios Latinos". 1944. *El Diario*, September 14, 12; "Número de atracción en la Confitería La Paz, es el conjunto el Trío Latino". 1944. *El Diario*, October 1, 4; "Nuevas actuaciones del Trío Latino". 1944. *El Diario*, November 4, 7.

54. "Actúan con éxito Los Indios Latinos". 1944. *El Diario*, August 23, 5; "Número de atracción en la Confitería La Paz, es el conjunto el Trío Latino". 1944. *El Diario*, October 1, 4.

55. "Retreta de gala en la Plaza Murillo". 1945. *El Diario*, May 13, 5; "Programa para la hora nacional de hoy". 1945. *El Diario*, December 16, 4.

56. "Gilberto Rojas: La obra de este compositor nacional dentro del país y fuera de él". 1945. *El Diario*, December 30, 3.

57. "Llegaron discos ODEON". 1946. *El Diario*, July 16, 7.

58. "Boite Utama, su casa". 1945. *El Diario*, September 23, 7; "Boite y grill Utama". 1945. *El Diario*, December 20, 7; Rojas Foppiano 1991, 71–73.

59. "Se inaugura el sábado la boite Aruma". 1945. *El Diario*, February 7, 7; "Cúpole destacada actuación a la orquesta de los Hermanos Molina". 1945. *El Diario*, February 24, 6; "Espectáculos Públicos: programas de teatros cinematógrafos, radio y variedades". 1945. *El Diario*, July 14, 6; "Boite Utama, su casa". 1945. *El Diario*, September 23, 7; "Programa para

Cuban-derived genres may have eased the incorporation of *música oriental* genres into the sets of La Paz's *orquestas de jazz*, because the two repertoires shared somewhat compatible associations, as “tropical musics”.

The assimilation of Bolivian folkloric genres by La Paz city's otherwise cosmopolitan-oriented dance bands articulated with a broader Latin American trend in the *orquesta de jazz* tradition.⁶⁰ Local musicians were aware of this recent development, because non-Bolivian *orquestas de jazz* often visited the city in the 1940s. To endear themselves to the audience, these travelled groups typically played at least one *carnaval* or *taquirari* during their La Paz shows, rather than Andean criollo-mestizo genres.⁶¹ This choice of “local” repertoire indicates that the bandleaders considered *música oriental* to be a better fit for their musical programming, and recognized the popularity that eastern lowland-themed musical numbers enjoyed at the time in Bolivia's highland cities. The Mexican folkloric trio Los Tarascos and Salvadoran “tropical music” singer Ricardo Cabrera realized this as well, as shown by their La Paz concert programs.⁶² Even Yma Sumac, whose carefully fashioned image was that of an Incan Princess, performed a *música oriental* song in La Paz, a *carnaval*, during her second visit to the city in 1944.⁶³

The Municipality's “national music” decree, which state officials pronounced in late 1944 and began enforcing in early 1945, played a part in fostering La Paz's *música oriental* boom. As already explained, this piece of legislation compelled local musicians to interpret a designated amount of “national” repertoire at public events. The terms “vernacular” and “folkloric” also appear in the ordinance, as synonyms for “national”. Nowhere in the decree, however, were these terms defined, nor were specific genres highlighted or even mentioned. Because of this ambiguity, musicians could comply with the ordinance by performing any repertoire that could be construed as traditional and national. Given this option, many *paceño* artists chose to increase the quantity of *música oriental* tunes in their sets. In all likelihood, they made this decision with the knowledge that this particular type of Bolivian national music had minimal association with the Villarroel-MNR regime and its agendas, including the administration's controversial outreach to the rural highland indigenous sector. The mid-1940s La Paz city vogue for *taquiraris* and *carnavales* thus appears to have articulated with a still lingering Bolivian elite and middle-class ambivalence over the notion that nationally representative folkloric-popular music styles should take their primary artistic inspiration from the traditional musical expressions of Andean rural indigenous people.⁶⁴

la hora nacional de hoy”. 1945. *El Diario*, December 16, 4.

60. For the Chilean case, see González Rodríguez and Rolle (2005, 404–8). For Colombia, see Wade (2000, 116–25).

61. “El Maestro Norton actuará en la boîte Khantuta”. 1944. *El Diario*, December 29, 7; “Boite y Grill Utama”. 1945. *El Diario*, December 20, 7.

62. “Composición de un carnalito en homenaje de Bolivia”. 1944. *El Diario*, October 28; “El trío ‘Tarasco’ consagra el valor del folklore mexicano”. 1944. *El Diario*, December 19, 4. Cabrera further endeared himself to Bolivian audiences by co-authoring the *carnaval* “Arenita” with Gilberto Rojas (“Composición de un carnalito en homenaje de Bolivia”. 1944. *El Diario*, October 28). Around the same time, Cabrera collaborated with Apolinar Camacho on the *cueca* “A Bolivia” (To Bolivia). In 1947, Las Kantutas recorded this patriotically-themed song (see discussion below), which is known nowadays as the classic “Viva Mi Patria Bolivia” (Long Live My Homeland Bolivia).

63. “Imma Sumack en el Municipal”. 1944. *El Diario*, June 9, 5.

64. In the 1940s, *paceños* may have associated *música oriental* with Santa Cruz's racialized discourses of whiteness and Spanish heritage, which regionalist intellectuals constructed to culturally differentiate the eastern lowlands from the ostensibly more ‘indigenous’ highlands (see Soruco et al. 2008; Pruden 2012). However, I have not uncovered evidence that La Paz residents attached these particular meanings to *música oriental* tunes and genres in this period.

Around the world, State initiatives concerning cultural practices such as music making usually coincide imperfectly at best with the presiding administration's ideological positions and political priorities, often because the agencies that draft the legislation seldom accurately foresee its effects (see Askew 2000; Tochka 2016). Given that for the Villarroel-MNR government's highland-based leadership the *oriente* represented a remote and sparsely-inhabited part of the country, the Municipal decree's indirect nurturing of La Paz city's *música oriental* vogue minimally advanced the administration's most pressing political initiatives. To some extent, moreover, this Bolivian "national folkloric music" trend ran counter to the regime's Andean-centered vision of the nation.⁶⁵

The Fall of the Villarroel-MNR Government

That the Villarroel-MNR regime came to a violent conclusion is not entirely surprising, given the brazen acts of brutality that it inflicted upon its opponents. Nevertheless, the events of July 21, 1946 shocked even those who longed for the overthrow of the administration. On that fateful day, a mob stormed the Presidential Palace, executed Villarroel, and then left his bloodied body hanging on a lamppost across the street, in Plaza Murillo (Céspedes 1966, 244–51). The coup d'état was a victory for the Frente Democrático Antifascista (Democratic Antifascist Front), a coalition that encompassed a diverse array of sectors on the Left and Right who temporarily found common cause in their condemnation of the Villarroel-MNR government (Klein 1969, 382; Gotkowitz 2007, 233). With Villarroel's gruesome slaying and postmortem hanging, Bolivia entered a new political era, one characterized by conservative-reactionary regimes that the MNR would label *el sexenio* (the six-year period), when the party regained power following the 1952 Revolution.

In the last week of Villarroel's presidency, ironically, a *taquirari* that opened with the line "Long Live the Movement, Glory to Villarroel" (*Viva el Movimiento, Gloria a Villarroel*) earned first place at a folkloric music contest that the La Paz Municipality staged for Fiestas Julianas (July Festivities). The fourteen-year-old son of MNR founder Gastón Velasco, Mario Velasco Otero, authored the song, which he titled "Siempre" (Always).⁶⁶ One of the best-known *taquiraris* of the 1940s, and one that would be sung at MNR gatherings for decades to come, "Siempre" attained the status of *movimentista* theme song in the *sexenio* (see Paredes 1949, 150; Peñaloza 1963, 140). At this critical juncture, the party faithful apparently believed that in the crusade to win over the masses, a surefire way to gain their attention, and thus have a better chance at conveying the MNR message, was through the allure of a catchy *música oriental* song.

Las Kantutas in the Sexenio

Soon after the ouster of the Villarroel-MNR government, the new administration unleashed a persecution campaign against anyone suspected of being *villarroelistas* or *movimentistas*, a move that had negative repercussions for many former state employees. The singer Pepa Cardona,

65. For a discussion of the Villarroel-MNR government's embrace of *mestizaje* (cultural fusion) as a nation-building ideology that privileged an idealized Andean *cholo-mestizo* citizen, see Gotkowitz (2007, 164–91).

66. "Precoz compositor obtuvo el primer premio en un concurso folklórico". 1946. *El Diario*, July 16, 4

who read the news on Radio Illimani during the years of Villarroel-MNR rule, was charged by the authorities with being a “spy for the deposed regime”.⁶⁷ Las Kantutas, meanwhile, saw their contracts at Radio Illimani abruptly terminated, as did other acts that regularly had performed on the station’s shows over the last couple of years (e.g., Las Hermanas Tejada). An additional cloud of suspicion may have hung over Las Kantutas, because the brother of Alicia Sáenz, the actor and comic Carlos Sáenz, was a known MNR member. In 1946, he was briefly arrested because of his party affiliation, as was his sidekick in *Las Dos Comadres*, Julio Rodríguez (Peñaloza 1963, 102).

Amid the political uncertainty, Vásquez, Sáenz, and Rojas decided that it was the right moment to spend some time away from La Paz. A few weeks after the coup, they left for a tour of the country, with stops in Oruro, Potosí, Sucre, Cochabamba, Beni, Santa Cruz, and Tarija—thus reprising many of the engagements Rojas had fulfilled the year before with *Los Indios Latinos*. In what would become a signature look for Las Kantutas, the duo’s new outfit for the trip entailed matching striped gowns with white cotton embroidered ‘peasant’ blouses, that were topped with overcoats, with a corsage of kantuta flowers adorning their lapels. The women’s trendy hairstyles and makeup complemented their polished stage attire. Rojas’ sartorial choice was a vest made out of the same striped material used for Las Kantutas’ dresses, along with a tassel that hung at his waist. The overall visual effect of the outfits was one of fashionable folksiness that did not call to mind a specific Bolivian region.⁶⁸

While on the road, their concert programs consisted of segments that were devoted to each of the nine *departamentos* of Bolivia, and showcased Rojas’ songs. At their recital in the capital of Potosí, for instance, Las Kantutas extolled the charms of Beni, Potosí, and Tarija, respectively, by singing Rojas’ *taquirari* “Flor Benianita” (Flower of Beni), vals “Potosí”, and *tonada tarijeña* “Guadalquivir” (Tarija’s emblematic river).⁶⁹ To highlight Bolivia’s musical diversity, Rojas and Las Kantutas presented various genres at each concert, although their favorite genre at this point in their careers was unquestionably the *taquirari*. At the performances they gave in Cochabamba, Tarija and Potosí, *taquiraris* comprised about half of their musical offerings, and more often than not, a *taquirari* number closed the show.⁷⁰ In Trinidad, the capital of Beni, eleven of the fifteen selections that Rojas and Las Kantutas presented fell into the *música oriental* category, with nine of the songs being *taquiraris*.⁷¹

After completing the Bolivian leg of the tour, Vásquez, Sáenz, and Rojas continued onward to Buenos Aires, where they appeared on *Ritmo de Quena y Maraca* (Rhythm of the Kena and the Maraca), a show that aired weekly on Radio Belgrano; the Brazilian singer Lupe Cortés and her band supplied the “*maraca*” portion of the program.⁷² The logic behind having Brazilian

67. “Pepa Cardona fue detenida”. 1946. *La Noche*, August 10.

68. Irma Vásquez de Ronda generously allowed me to photocopy concert programs, photographs, and other memorabilia from Las Kantutas’ 1946 tour.

69. “Programa”. 1946. Concert Program (Potosí), October 20.

70. “Teatro Achá: Gran debut de Las Kantutas”. 1946. Concert Program (Cochabamba), August 28; “Programa”. 1946. Concert Program (Potosí), October 20; “Las Kantutas y Gilberto Rojas: Programa”. 1946. Concert Program (Tarija), November 29.

71. “Concierto de música boliviana: Las Kantutas y Gilberto Rojas”. 1946. *El Eco del Beni*, September 20.

72. “Ritmos de quena en marzo”. 1947. *Democracia*, February 28; “Los Ruiseñores del Altiplano”. 1947. *Democracia*, March 1.

and Bolivian musicians in the same slot apparently was that the station viewed both acts as foreign and exotic. Las Kantutas adopted an alternate stage name on the show, Los Ruiseñores del Altiplano (The Nightingales of the High Plain), presumably because they suspected few Argentines would know that the kantuta was the Bolivian national flower. The word "*altiplano*", in contrast, offered the audience a clearer indication of the artists' country of origin, even if it gave a mistaken impression about the main focus of their repertoire.

Besides performing on Radio Belgrano, Las Kantutas and Rojas added to their output of recordings, by taping approximately twenty-one tracks for ODEON at the label's Buenos Aires studios.⁷³ *Música oriental* comprised many of these selections, although they also recorded *huayños* and *cuecas*. These 1947 ODEON tracks include what may be the first recording of "A Bolivia" (To Bolivia), a *cueca* more commonly known in recent times as "Viva Mi Patria Bolivia" (Long Live My Homeland Bolivia). Composer Apolinar Camacho's claim to fame, this *cueca* (with lyrics by Ricardo Cabrera) would gain widespread popularity in Bolivia after the 1963 South American Soccer Cup (which Bolivia hosted and won), and henceforth serve as an unofficial national anthem. In the 1940s, though, few Bolivians had heard of the song.⁷⁴

On their ODEON recordings, regardless of the genre, Las Kantutas employed the same vocal style, with little hint of regional variation, as was their usual approach (as noted previously). The musical accompaniment further minimized regional differences. On the *carnaval* "Pena Camba" (discussed above), *huayño* "El Chutillo";⁷⁵ *cueca* "Tu Ausencia" (Your Absence), and *taquirari* "El Pregonero" (The Town Crier), for example, Las Kantutas used the same backing band, which consisted of a pianist (Gilberto Rojas), one or two guitarists, and a harp player. The studio's *orquesta de jazz* filled out the texture on several of the other numbers, including the *carnavalito-taquirari* "Coctelito" (A Little Cocktail), and *ronda aymara* "Ajllan Quiritua" (I am from Ajlla). Although the *ronda aymara* "Ajllan Quiritua" bore an Andean indigenous-sounding (albeit entirely fanciful) genre name, the *orquesta de jazz* executed the standard rhythmic accompaniment for the *taquirari*, blurring highland-lowland musical and cultural distinctions even further.

By late October 1947, Las Kantutas were back in La Paz, and had found a new station to call home, Radio Bolívar.⁷⁶ For the rest of the *sexenio*, the group successfully stayed in the public eye. In 1948, they went abroad again with Gilberto Rojas, this time to the coastal Chilean city of Antofagasta. As had become customary, the Bolivian press glorified the musicians' artistic achievements on foreign soil.⁷⁷ Offering a clear signal that the duo had been exonerated of any suspected political loyalties, in 1949 they sang at the Club de La Paz's Fiestas Julianas luncheon, a traditional elite society event whose attendees this year included Bolivian President Mamerto Urriolagoitia.⁷⁸ Las Kantutas repeated their role at the function

73. "Grabaciones de Rojas y Las Kantutas". 1947. *El Diario*, September 8, 7

74. Irma Vásquez de Ronda, personal communication to author. June 27, 2001.

75. Chutillo is the name of a patronal fiesta celebrated in Potosí.

76. "Radio Bolívar". 1947. *La Noche*, October 30. Two years later, Las Kantutas would join the team at yet another La Paz station, Radio El Cóndor ("Las Kantutas y el conjunto Los Provincianos actúan en una notable audición radial". 1949. *Última Hora*, June 17).

77. "Las Kantutas y Gilberto Rojas pasaron el folklore boliviano en Antofagasta, Chile". 1948. *Última Hora*, September 1.

78. "Alcanzó gran éxito la reunión de 'Los Amigos de la Ciudad' en homenaje al 16 de Julio". 1949. *El Diario*, July 18.

the following year, and even posed with Urriolagoitia for a photograph that appeared in the social pages of *El Diario*.⁷⁹

Vásquez and Sáenz also tried their hand at acting, in the productions of the *Compañía Nacional de Comedias Carlos Cervantes*.⁸⁰ In *La Revolución de Las Mujeres* (The Women's Revolution), a twelve-act work billed as a “formidable fantasy of a political-satiric theater”, Vásquez and Sáenz had prominent roles, as the “chief leaders” of the *Movimiento Revolucionario Femenino* (Feminist Revolutionary Movement) that plots to overthrow the government and replace it with an all-female administration (La Revolución de Las Mujeres Program, December 17, 1949). The production was clearly poking fun at the *Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario* (MNR), which had recently failed in its attempt to topple the Urriolagoitia regime during the August-September 1949 Civil War (see Peñaloza 1963, 195; Klein 1969, 390).

Las Kantutas' draw seemed to have no bounds in La Paz city. They comfortably navigated audiences from every spectrum of society. Only a few days after Las Kantutas had delighted the *criollo* elite at the Club de La Paz luncheon in July 1950, the duo sang to the masses at the Teatro al Aire Libre (Open Air Theater). Organized by the Municipality, this performance inaugurated a free-to-the-public concert series that would take place weekly for the rest of the year at the spacious locale, which seated approximately 12,000.⁸¹ Las Kantutas also participated in the second Teatro al Aire Libre series. This edition presented an even wider range of acts, from orchestral renderings of Salmón Ballivián's *Suite Aymara* and *Trilogía India*, to brass band interpretations of the *morenada* genre (“dance of the blacks”), to Andean indigenous panpipe *tropa* music by Los Sikuris de Italaque, to romantic *bolero* songs by La Paz's Trío Panamérica Antawara (Pan-American Sunset Trio), Colombia's Trío Atlántico, and Mexico's internationally famed Trío Los Panchos.⁸² At the conclusion of the 1951 season, Municipal officials announced that Las Kantutas represented one of the most “distinguished” local artists who had graced the Teatro al Aire Libre that year.⁸³ As the *sexenio* entered its final months, Las Kantutas, without a doubt, retained their position as one of Bolivia's most popular *criollo-mestizo* folkloric music ensembles.

Reflections

After the 1952 Revolution, Las Kantutas would continue to perform in La Paz (e.g., 1953 *Concurso de Arte Nativo*),⁸⁴ and also record many EPs, taking advantage of the opportunities afforded by the establishment of La Paz's Discos Méndez (see Gobierno Municipal de la Ciudad de La Paz, *Oficialía Mayor de Cultura* 1993, 65–73). As the decade advanced, though, the duo's musical engagements lessened and eventually stopped, as Vásquez and Sáenz

79. “Crónica Social”. 1950. *El Diario*, July 19.

80. “Compañía nacional de comedias”. 1949. *El Diario*, December 6.

81. “La Alcaldía Municipal fomentará a los conjuntos artísticos”. 1950. *El Diario*, July 23, 9.

82. 1951. *El Diario*, various.

83. Gilberto Rojas, military brass band director Adrian Patiño Carpio, *indigenista* art-classical composer Eduardo Caba, and folkloric ballet director Graciela “Chela” Urquidi also received this honor (“Clausurará hoy su temporada el Teatro al Aire Libre”. 1951. *El Diario*, November 18, 5).

84. “Aviso a los participantes del concurso de arte folklórico boliviano”. 1953. *El Diario*, January 12, 3; “Concurso de arte folklórico”. 1952. *El Diario*, January 20, 3.

shifted their attention to domestic matters. By then, a new cohort of La Paz-based female duos had made names for themselves as national folklore artists, with the standouts being Las Hermanas Espinoza, Las Hermanas Arteaga, and Las Imillas (The Girls). In the 1950s and early 1960s, these sibling ensembles—whose members looked up to Las Kantutas (and also to Las Hermanas Tejada)—rose to the summit of the country's folkloric music scene. Yet never again has the female *criollo-mestizo* vocal duo format enjoyed such prominence in Bolivia. Moreover, from the 1960s onward, the field of Bolivian "folkloric-popular music" has been overwhelmingly dominated by male artists (see Rios forthcoming), although a handful of female vocal soloists have been able to carve out a niche (e.g., Zulma Yugar, Gladys Moreno).

While today many Bolivian musicians and folklore enthusiasts acknowledge Las Kantutas' trailblazing role in the folkloric music movement, the duo's identification with *música oriental* in their glory days of the late 1930s and 1940s has long slipped away from popular memory. That the recordings of Las Kantutas passed into oblivion many decades ago largely accounts for this state of affairs, along with the members' *kolla* (highland) heritage—the latter appears to have led many Bolivian folklore writers to assume that the group specialized in Andean-themed repertoire. The names of their chief accompanists Gilberto Rojas and Chapi Luna, in contrast, continue to be associated with this important early moment in the national popularization of eastern lowland genres. This is because generations of Bolivian lowland and highland artists have interpreted Rojas and Luna's *música oriental* compositions, of which many have become regional and national classics (see Rojas Rojas 1986, 15–20; Terceros and Parada 1989; Casa de la Cultura "Raúl Otero Reiche" 1990, 33–35, 58; Rojas Foppiano 1991). Since the 1950s, though, artists of *oriente* heritage or *cambas* have far overshadowed their *kolla* counterparts in the realms of *música oriental* composition as well as performance (see Terceros and Parada 1989), so much so that the 1940s mark the last time that *criollo-mestizo* musicians from the Andean region of Bolivia ranked among the leading figures in the category of eastern lowland folkloric musical interpretation.⁸⁵

In most Latin American countries, the early-to-mid 20th century constitutes a pivotal conjuncture in "national music" history, because it was during this period that artists, audiences, writers, and politicians canonized "popular" and "folkloric" styles as nationally representative traditions. Famous examples include Brazilian *samba*, Cuban *son*, Dominican *merengue*, and Mexico's *mariachi* ensemble style. In these four cases, the music-dance expression mediated across longstanding socio-cultural divisions within the country, especially those relating to race, ethnicity, and/or regionalism, and thus sonically embodied the nation-state ideal (see Austerlitz 1997; Moore 1997; Vianna 1999; Jáuregui 2007). In other Latin American

85. Rubén Ramírez Santillán a.k.a. "Jaime del Río" also made his name in the La Paz circuit as a *música oriental* artist in the 1940s. A singer and composer from Cochabamba, he performed several times in the *sexenio* with Gilberto Rojas ("Jaime del Río: la voz más fiel del taquirari". 1948. *El Diario*, March 19, 8; "Jaime del Río en audiencias PAL: por Radio Illimani". 1949. *El Diario*, April 23, 4). Usually pictured with his signature fedora, suit and tie, the elegantly-dressed Del Río garnered a procession of accolades from La Paz critics, who described him as "the singer of the neighborhoods of La Paz" ("Artista nacional que triunfa". 1947. *El Diario*, April 13, 7), "the finest interpreter of the taquirari" ("Jaime del Río se despide de La Paz". 1948. *El Diario*, September 17, 9), "the best Bolivian folklorist" ("Jaime del Río en audiencias PAL: por Radio Illimani". 1949. *El Diario*, April 23, 4) and "Bolivian folklore's most representative figure" ("Mañana actúa Jaime del Río". 1950. *El Diario*, July 19, 6). Most of Del Río's compositions were *taquiraris*; examples include the hits "Haragán Cochabambino" (Lazy Cochabamba Man), "No Podré Olvidarte" (I Won't be Able to Forget You) and "Oh Cochabamba". The latter song, which he debuted in 1948 ("Actuación artística". 1948. *El Diario*, November 21, 7), eventually became an unofficial anthem for his home region. Apparently, Cochabamba residents' appreciation of this *música oriental* number overrode any concerns about having a *taquirari* rather than a more traditional local genre of the region (e.g., *cueca*) serve as an emblematic Cochabamba tune.

countries, however, such as Peru, Ecuador, and Colombia, the music-dance tradition that gained “national” status in the early-to-mid 20th century possessed little if any stylistic basis in the expressive practices of the majority-population (e.g., Peruvian *vals criollo*, Ecuadorian *pasillo*, Colombian *bambuco*). For this reason, scholars have argued that elite ambivalence over the very idea of incorporating the subaltern population into the nation was a driving factor behind the establishment of such non-representative forms of national music (Wade 2000, 48–52; Turino 2003, 198; Wong 2012).

The 1940s La Paz vogue for *música oriental* thus appears to more closely resemble the second Latin American pattern, when one takes into consideration that *cruceños* and *benianos* made up only a minor proportion of Bolivia’s total inhabitants at the time, while the vast majority of the citizenry then resided in the Andean highlands and valleys. However, in the Peruvian, Ecuadorian, and Colombian examples mentioned above, the national music genres had long been highly identified with the national capital, or a nearby region, whereas this could not be said of Bolivian *música oriental*. No doubt this partially explains why, despite the booming popularity that *música oriental* experienced in the country’s major cities in the 1940s, neither the *taquirari* or *carnaval* ever reached a canonic standing in La Paz to the degree that the *vals criollo*, *pasillo*, or *bambuco* attained, respectively, in Lima, Quito/Guayaquil, and Bogotá. Although the *taquirari* and *carnaval* became fully incorporated into the highland *criollo-mestizo* folkloric music scene during this period, this process, moreover, did not displace the *huayño*, *cueca*, *bailecito*, or other traditional highland genres from the “national” repertoire of *kolla* musicians, but instead added to the diversity of locally-distinctive musical expressions that made up the Bolivian folklore canon.⁸⁶

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86. Bolivia’s lack of a singular “national music genre” in the 1930s and 1940s stems from various factors, including the country’s political instability, and non-existence of a local recording industry (see Rios forthcoming).

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