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*Creating Our Own: Folklore, Performance, and Identity in
Cuzco, Peru* (review)

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documenting and advocating for Indian music, earned her a place of honor as the namesake of the audio archives of the Comisión Nacional para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas.

Chapter 5, “Consideraciones finales,” calls for the recognition of the social, cultural, and intellectual underpinnings of ethnomusicology in Mexico. Alonso posits that this process of taking stock of the past is necessary to forge a new approach to the applied study of Mexican Indian music, one that fully recognizes the living, constantly evolving nature of Indian cultures, as opposed to seeing Indians as static keepers of cultural antiquities. She looks to disengage past perspectives that shackle public policies and practices and scholarly approaches to outmoded and deleterious attitudes of cultural “purity” and externally imposed notions of authenticity. She calls for an anthropology of music that explains music in its cultural context and treats “informants” as interlocutors in the research process. She closes with a definite statement: “Aún falta mucho por hacer” (141).

Marina Alonso breaks new ground in mining historical records to reveal on-the-ground practices of Mexican cultural policies during its critical era of post-Revolution construction of national cultural identity. Her broadbrush conceptual history of musical scholarship in the 20th century goes well beyond música indígena in its usefulness to understanding intellectual attitudes of the time. While her principal intended audience seems to be her Mexican cultural colleagues, her historical analysis and her call for a more collaborative approach in scholarship carry relevance far beyond the boundaries of Mexico.

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MENDOZA, ZOILA S. 2008. *Creating Our Own: Folklore, Performance, and Identity in Cuzco, Peru*. Durham: Duke University Press, 234 pp.

Reading Zoila Mendoza’s pithy study of folkloric performance in early 20th-century Cuzco, I was reminded of an incident that I experienced in 1999, while living there. The scholarly JALLA congress (*Jornadas Andinas de Literatura Latinoamericana*) coincided with my stay, and the organizers had arranged a folkloric showcase at a local theater. It featured performers associated with *Inti Raymi*, an annual spectacle meant to celebrate the city’s Inca roots. As young women danced in a fantasy version of Inca attire, and an actor representing an ancient emperor declaimed a stentorian welcome to foreign visitors, audience response became noticeably bifurcated. From the front rows, where local dignitaries and intellectuals had gathered, bursts of fervent applause filled dramatic pauses in the peroration. These contrasted starkly with the sounds emanating from visiting scholars at the

rear, where incredulous titters and audible groaning registered distaste for the heavily stylized presentation of indigenous culture and history unfolding onstage.

I mention this instance of intellectual churlishness because it seems to me to exemplify much current academic thinking on the field of endeavor denoted "folklore." This forms a key part of the context in which Mendoza's book was written, and in which it will be received. It can be safely stated that folkloric performance no longer bears quite the cachet it did during its early 20th-century heyday. At that time intellectuals throughout Latin America (and elsewhere) made music, dance, and theater prime sites in which traditional performance genres were catalogued and stylized, acts intended to cultivate in the consuming public a sense of common investment in the practices of "the people." Usually desiring to construct collective identities that recognized minority cultures, many scholars embraced this sort of "folklore" as a crucible wherein shared, often national identities could be staged and transformed. Recent studies have taken a much more critical stance. Scholars have instead shown how folklorists arrange minority expressions according to metropolitan understandings of the valuable and the beautiful, and argued that such work often surrenders to the public's desire for a spectacular, minimally challenging experience of difference, rather than celebrating difference *per se*. In brief, folkloric activities have often replaced the auto-representations of minority peoples within the public sphere, and have also become vehicles for disseminating stereotypes and deracinated tropes of minority identities. These results are all the more insidious, given that such activities are usually undertaken in the name of appreciation and dialogue.

The murky ethics and esthetic compromises involved in folkloric performance being well established, however, it is perhaps time for another swing of the scholarly pendulum. Though ambivalent in its effects, folkloric performance remains a beloved activity throughout Latin America. Members of all communities often turn to it as a source of personal identity, and minority peoples targeted for folkloric representation can exert considerable agency in shaping those representations. It is for this reason that Mendoza's book is a welcome addition to the canon of folklore and performance studies. It focuses on activities in Cuzco between the 1910s and the 1950s, a time and place particularly important for understanding Peruvian folkloric activity more generally. Cuzco, former capital of the Inca empire, has long been the intellectual center of the highlands. It is the spiritual home of the indigenista scholars who, in the early 20th century, sought to build a Peruvian and pan-American identity rooted in indigenous culture, defying a prevailing nationalism that sidelined such peoples. Most of the socio-esthetic ideologies that still guide folkloric activity in contemporary Peru

were forged over this period, and they were shaped both by the participants who worked and lived in Cuzco, and by the highly rarefied ideological context in which they worked.

However, beyond merely documenting the role of key individuals in consolidating cuzqueño folklore Mendoza has a bone to pick with existing literature on this topic. The book sets out to challenge an ascendant viewpoint in which staged Andean folklore is seen primarily as the misrepresentation of indigenous Peruvians by their mestizo social superiors, the latter mainly drawn to indigenous arts as raw material to further their own identitarian goals. Instead, Mendoza argues that representations of cuzqueñismo were negotiated between variously positioned actors, ranging from elite mestizo intellectuals to humble indigenous peasants, and if each individual approached folkloric activity with different ends in mind, all borrowed ideas, images, and sounds from one another. She argues that indigenous peoples played a larger role in representing both indigenous and mestizo practices than has been assumed to be the case, and that the agency of indigenous actors has been widely underestimated. Her conclusion is that the cuzqueño subject presented in folkloric activities is richly collaborative, the property of all and none. This may explain its persistent valuation by elite and subaltern cuzqueños alike.

The book seems to be pitched in part as a response to the work of Peruvian scholar Marisol de la Cadena, whose monumental 2000 study *Indigenous Mestizos: the Politics of Race and Culture in Cuzco, Peru, 1919–1991* explores the same issues as *Creating Our Own*, while taking a much more pessimistic stance. This is left unstated in the body of Mendoza's text, but several of the book's footnotes are extended critiques of de la Cadena's work. *Indigenous Mestizos* is dedicated in part to the proposition that Cuzco's mestizo folklorists shaped a regional identity by co-opting images and sounds of their subalterns, stylizing them into distorted, erudite, and more "decent" forms for public presentation, thereby robbing indigenous peoples of representational power and reinscribing the very power hierarchies they meant to challenge. Taking issue with the harsh light in which this thesis places her subjects, many of whom come from the same families and intellectual ranks that de la Cadena critiques, Mendoza responds by instead stressing the sincerity of their efforts, and repeatedly underlining the ways that indigenous performers participated in the process of "creating our own." In five case studies focusing on important persons or institutions, she shows how conversations about the "capture" (captación) and presentation of mestizo and indigenous expressions for collective consumption drew together interested parties from across boundaries of race and class. In the process, she raises productive questions about whether or not it is possible to make definitive statements about the "elite"

or “subaltern” nature of cuzqueño folklore, and challenges scholars to rethink indigenous actors’ participation in the processes of objectification intrinsic to folkloric activity.

The book’s first chapter focuses on the 1923–1924 tour of *Misión peruano de arte incáico*, a folkloric troupe from Cuzco whose travels to Argentina, Bolivia and Uruguay inspired transnational conversations about the place of indigenous history within a pan-American identity. Mendoza registers the participation of indigenous performers in this group, and she argues that the shows signaled changes underway in the representation of cuzqueño identity. They included selections from the quasi-operatic “Incaic dramas” of the 19th century, as well as more recent stylized arrangements of native songs and dances, and Mendoza emphasizes that the latter represent revolutionary attempts to tie cuzqueñismo to contemporary performance, rather than to a romanticized image of the ancient Inca empire. The second chapter follows up on these beginnings, showing how the *misión* laid the foundations for the later *Centro Qosqo de Arte Nativo*. This institution continued to develop the elements present in the earlier effort, and it has exerted a huge influence on Peruvian folklore since its establishment in the 1920s. Especially central to this chapter, and to the book’s argument as a whole, is the case of Manuel Pillco, a local harpist, and member of Cuzco’s popular classes, whose contributions to the *Centro*’s early activities exemplify the kinds of lower-class participation in cuzqueño folklore that Mendoza seeks to recover.

Though they deal with different periods and different institutions, the book’s third and fifth chapters treat the growing importance of tourism to Cuzco’s economy, and describe the way that folkloric activities became bound up with touristic promotion. Mendoza shows how those involved in touristic development advocated the inclusion of living representatives of cuzqueño folklore, even as the city’s projected image came to revolve around a romanticized rendering of its Incaic past. Even more interestingly, she argues that some of the impetus for touristic development came from the desire of folkloric performers themselves to tap the pockets of potential visitors. On the whole, this meant increasing remuneration for traditional and folkloric performance, and Mendoza provides solid information indicating that indigenous and mestizo performers took full advantage, establishing spaces in which they could shape an image of Cuzco for the world while reaping financial rewards.

The book’s remaining chapter focuses on the radio show *La hora del charango*, an important space in which various charango traditions, representing different regional and ethnic entities within the Cuzco area, were brought together and played without distinction. Mendoza shows that this program was a central mediator of cuzqueño identity, key to naturalizing intellectual visions of cuzqueñismo as a field open to various subject

positions. Her discussion of early folkloric musicians, Pancho Gómez Negrón and Julio Benavente Díaz, is especially valuable here, given their centrality to later folkloric efforts, and though their playing style has been discussed elsewhere (Turino 1983), the biographical information now provided is new and stimulating.

Creating Our Own adds a great deal of nuance to the stark picture of dominance and exclusion painted by de la Cadena and other scholars of folkloric performance. Mendoza shows that indigenous people participated avidly in folkloric work, that their contributions were central to the emergent representation of cuzqueñismo, that the folkloric imaginings of the age were often adopted by less privileged cuzqueños as eagerly as they were by the intellectual elites, and that an important effect of all these activities was work for performers of all kinds. This account of fluidity, with various actors using the folkloric frame at various times to achieve their own ends, recalls some of the best recent work in this area, including Heidi Feldman's *Black Rhythms of Peru*. Furthermore, like that book, *Creating Our Own* raises, without fully settling, questions about the ownership of cultural practices. Often missing from other works, such ambiguity should provide grist for further fruitful discussion. Having said this, however, the book's argument is best considered in tandem with de la Cadena's opposed account. While *Creating Our Own* documents subaltern contributions to folkloric performance, underlining the agency of indigenous peoples and other non-intellectuals in their creation, Mendoza declines to reprise the questions that de la Cadena has grappled with, about the negative representational effects that the images under discussion may have in the later course of interethnic relations. These two poles of interpretation are equally provocative, and surely they must be balanced in any future consideration, not only of folkloric performance in Cuzco, but rather of the parallel modes of performance that that resonated throughout Latin America, over the course of the entire 20th century.

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MARTÍNEZ, PEDRO, AND ROMÁN DÍAZ. 2008. *The Routes of Rumba*.
Round World Productions/Round Whirled Records 844185096942.
Compact disc.

Contrary to presenting a nostalgic collection of folklore, this recording focuses on the contemporary sound of Cuban rumba, particularly the guarapachanguero style. A freelance producer and assistant professor of performance studies and Latino/a studies at Williams College, Berta Jottar has brought together two of the top Cuban musicians in the United States in