



Transposition

Musique et sciences sociales

11 | 2023

Socialisations musicales

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Electronic version

URL: <https://journals.openedition.org/transposition/8471>

DOI: 10.4000/transposition.8471

ISSN: 2110-6134

Publisher

CRAL - Centre de recherche sur les arts et le langage

Electronic reference

Pablo Palomino, "Vera Wolkowicz, *Inca Music Reimagined. Indigenist Discourses in Latin American Art Music, 1910-1930*", *Transposition* [Online], 11 | 2023, Online since 07 November 2023, connection on 23 January 2026. URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/transposition/8471> ; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/transposition.8471>

This text was automatically generated on January 23, 2026.



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Vera Wolkowicz, *Inca Music Reimagined. Indigenist Discourses in Latin American Art Music, 1910-1930*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2022, 256 p.

- 1 The impulse of inventing *Inca music* as an aesthetic rhetoric for nationalist and continentalist musical programs emerged simultaneously in several South American countries in the 19th century. They gained strength in the 1910s, and reached a mild success in the 1920s, to then fade away, although traces of it persist today. *Inca Music Reimagined*, by Argentine musicologist Vera Wolkowicz, based on her doctoral dissertation at Cambridge University, reconstructs with detail and originality a rich series of actors and circumstances in Peru, Ecuador, and Argentina behind the “reimagined Inca music” of the 1910s and 1920s. This is a musical history shaped by tensions between actual and imagined indigeneity, and between nationalisms, sub-national regionalisms, and the elusive evocation of a continental musical identity.
- 2 An ambiguity permeates what Wolkowicz calls “the history of a failure” (p. 215). “The Inca Indianist/Indigenist discourse in art music did not fully succeed in becoming the national and continental musical art form that composers and some critics had expected it to achieve” (p. 3). This was in fact part of an “overall failure to create a defined identity based on the Incas (anywhere in Latin America)” (p. 4), which in occasions turned the adoption of Inca music into a mere “fade”, “craze” (p. 8), or “vogue” (p. 136). More precisely, what failed to succeed were the “top-down schemes” aimed at imposing musical Incaism as national and continental identity for art music,

but not necessarily its later dissemination among scholars and in the fields of folk and popular music (p. 10), not studied here.

- 3 The book tells hence the history of a productively failed program, through a multitude of characters, histories, and musical works that influenced the art music of three countries rarely studied together, treated here with equal attention and nuance. Many of these works either remained unpublished, were performed just a few times – years or decades after being composed –, or provoked a lukewarm reception, if not harsh criticism. The narrative pays attention to all of them, seamlessly combining well-known musical pieces, like *El cóndor pasa*, with obscure works and texts. By demonstrating the persistence and ubiquity of the attempt to reimagine Inca music, this book locates the Andean musicological mythology around Inca music at the center of the broader discussion of Pan- or Latin-American musical regionalism.
- 4 The Incaist program was interpreted in multiple ways, according to each composer's position in national fields then under construction, and to sub-national regional hierarchies: in Peru, between Lima, Cuzco, Puno, and Arequipa; in Ecuador, between Quito and Guayaquil; in Argentina, between the Northwestern provinces and the Rio de la Plata. Artists and works moved between those cities, but also to Spain, France, Italy, England, and the United States. The musical sources and musicological arguments of their Incaisms were thus ample and varied. Their epistemological discourses too: "Inca music" was defined (and contested) under archeological, musicological, biological, historical, and ethnic premises, both by composers and critics. The book masterfully shows the differences, and overlaps, between musical *Incaism*, *indigenismo*, and *indianismo* for artists and audiences alike.
- 5 The book proposes to see Incaist operas and other musical pieces as examples of what Beatriz Sarlo called "peripheral modernity." But rather than Sarlo's *enfants terribles* turned to the future, here we have cultural elites, often at state institutions, turning to, and imagining, a mythical past. These cosmopolitan nationalists embraced indigenous music through a "civilizing" perspective, building musical fields as their oligarchic states attempted to *rhetorically* include their local populations, especially around the Centennial celebrations – as *criollos* in Argentina, as *mestizos* in a process of civilization in Ecuador, and as an invisible and mythical indigenous "other" within the modern Peruvian nation. Wolkowicz demonstrates that these varied versions of "Inca music" were Latin America's way to participate in the Western canon: an operation of "inclusive exclusion" (p. 90) that valorized musical features of past (and sometimes present) indigenous populations, but at the same time excluded indigenous audiences from the musical performance. A sociologically interesting feature of these *incaístas* is that – besides remaining peripheral vis-à-vis that Western canon and failing to produce a hegemonic cultural stream in their countries – they turned their Incaist imagination, with its fragmented corpus of works, often unperformed, ignored, or forgotten, into a symptom of their awkward place in societies experiencing deep social transformations.
- 6 The focus of the study is on Peru, Ecuador, and Argentina, but references appear about Bolivia, Colombia, and Chile, countries not fully included here. Bolivia developed its Incaism after 1930, while Colombia only partially recognized itself in the Inca empire, and Chile's *indigenismo* was built around the Araucanos or Mapuches, whom the Inca never managed to conquer. Readers may however miss a study of "Inca music" in Bolivia, a country so central to the very history of the Inca empire and to Andean *indigenismo*. Despite revealing connections across these national experiences,

Wolkowicz argues that the term “transnationalism” is “insufficient” to describe what she prefers to study as separate musical nationalist movements. Hence, the linkages across all these countries around Incaism – such as the Peruvian “Inca art mission” that performed in Buenos Aires in 1923 – do appear interspersed along the study but do not take center stage.

- 7 The discussion of the historical context and of Latin America as a region in the Introduction is less compelling than the sophisticated analysis of the rhetorical power of Indianism and *indigenismo*, which starts in Chapter 1. The book then advances by analyzing an exhaustive corpus of Incaist, Indianist, and *indigenista* musical compositions in three national politico-musical scenes. Each piece and text are interpreted in their biographical, cultural, and political contexts. The chapter on Peru, for example, analyzes the actual and imagined Inca heritage in that country, along tensions among indigenous (mainly Aymara and Quechua), mestizo, and creole identities at stake in musical compositions, and across power relations and identities between sub-national regions.
- 8 The chapter on Ecuador is fascinating. It uncovers the intellectual and musical imagination of works that remained unperformed, unpublished, or of limited circulation, in a country that rarely appears in the histories of Latin American music and history. In the texts and music scores of Pedro Pablo Traversari, Segundo Luis Moreno, and Sixto María Durán we find an amazingly contradictory set of truly original interpretations of the cultural sense and musical structure of a variety of aesthetic sources – the European canon, the pre-Hispanic indigenous music, the Ecuadorian folklore – animated by the question of *what is Ecuadorian music*, intertwined with a wider question about *American music*. Among the countless insights of this chapter, we learn that Traversari’s musical activism led him to present two texts at the Second Pan American Congress held in Washington D.C. in 1915-1916 (p. 105, n. 62) that, although dealing primarily with archeology and fine arts, did include music as well. In addition to another presentation at that same conference by the Panamanian Narciso Garay, the book shows that, even timidly, music was present in Pan American conversations *before* the more systematic regional and Pan-American policies of the 1930s. Traversari’s invocation of a shared continental musical background remained a rhetorical gesture, but this does not make it less relevant to the history of Latin American regionalism.
- 9 The chapter on Argentina, continuing previous works of the author, shows the origins of its musical nationalism as inextricably linked to an *Americanista* ideal, at once romantic and modernist, rooted in varied forms of folklore, and including Inca musical discourses. But the fifth chapter constitutes a tour de force. It dissects the making, context, and reception of several Inca-themed national operas in the three countries. These are performative works that dramatized both the history and identity of these countries, even if they “failed” as aesthetic programs, especially in Ecuador and Argentina. The erudite analysis displays an impressive range of sonic, visual, linguistic, and ideological choices of Incaist opera composition, performance, and audience’s reception.
- 10 *Inca Music Reimagined* shows the power of the Inca past as a mythical source for many musical actors four hundred years after the empire’s demise. Since the 16th century, the popular expectation of an Inca restoration remained a symbolic and political undercurrent in Peru, as Alberto Flores Galindo demonstrated in the 1980s, while Inti, the Inca sun, was re-signified in multiple ways – for example in the Argentine flag, later

transmuted into golden stars in the football association logo, perhaps the highest symbol of national pride. Hence, despite the intrinsic heterogeneity of each of these nations, and of the entire region, the very recurrence of “failed” projects based on regionalist imagination in the Americas, including that of Inca music, may be less a sign of their failure than of their necessity.

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