

reporter from *La Opinión* sitting next to me doesn't take a note.



Kelly Madison from LA State layers detail in the discussion of racism in media.



Francisco Javier Iribarren crunches numbers and reports on complexities inherent in deriving appropriate commonalities from discourse. Iribarren is Assistant Director of the CSRC.



Noticias 22 gets a head shot with Nogales while a sound man documents the talk.

At Autry: Musicologists Rock Oldies

“Music has charms” and all that sprang to mind Sunday afternoon in the atrium of the Autry Museum in Los Angeles’ Griffith Park. The occasion was the second in a three-lecture series on Los Angeles chicana chicano music, 1945 to 1965.

The final program arrives Sunday, December 11, 2011.

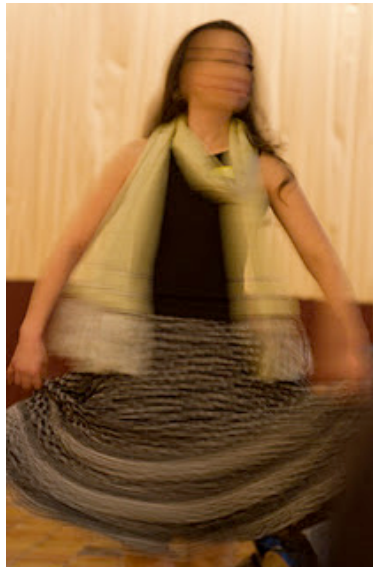
As the series general title promises, “Art Along the Hyphen: The Mexican-American Generation,” Sunday’s program celebrates music and dance for creating linkages between two cultures, despite the oxymoronic potency of that hyphen.



Antonio Gonzalez places an historian's perspective around the music.

During the expository segment, the panelists illustrate how Mexicanness enters awareness of a wider US public through both authenticity and artifice. One presenter relishes myth-breaking disclosures--news to some in the audience--that artists like Huggy Boy or Little Julian Herrera were not chicanos.

With the audience universally bobbing heads and tapping their feet during snippets of fine oldies, Hope abounds that this awareness of Mexicanidad might influence racist tipas tipos to put aside Jaime Cuervo laws. Maybe Russell Pearce and his ilk John&Ken should be forced to learn some zapateados to alter their perception of Mexicritude.



Argelia Andrade, tarima (dancing surface), zapateado

The panel emphasizes lo Mexicano of the post-war generation’s music and recordings, placing a key emphasis on rock and punk variations of the traditional “La Bamba.”

Heavily Mexicentric today, the panelists promise their final session will

wrap up matters spotlighting homegrown syncretism of the east los sound of the 60s. In all likelihood, they'll take a trip down Whitter Boulevard saying "na, na-na na / na, na-na-na na / na-na na / na-na na". (*Leave a Comment below if you can name that tune!*)

Like the subject matter, hybridization carries the day in the form of this delightful academic panel refashioned for a relaxed sitting in a family museum. The speakers, doctorate-level musicologist performers, include Hermanos Herrera (whose father accompanied his sons on arpa), Argelia Andrade, Antonio Gonzalez, and Alexandro Hernandez.

The series is one of those small hopeful steps that can generate big waves, if an audience comes to get it. Music and dance, perhaps, might stand in counterstatement to hate speech in competition for the public mind. Perhaps growing museum membership will afford the cash to archive productions like these for a wider audience. My wife and I joined today to reaffirm that sliver of hope.

Sunday's perspectives took the Mexican-American hyphen as a correlative conjunction. In its most hopeful sense--and that is what these times of ours require today, no?--the program illustrates ways of injecting charming cultural fusion into a listening and dancing audience.

The historical perspective, provided by linguist and dancer Argelia E. Andrade, "The Historical Performance of Mexican Identity in Mexico and the United States (1950s)," traces commercial origins of popular music to Mexican government initiatives that collected regional music and dance to create an arts industry. Cultural origins--organic she terms them--of music and dance are what they are, property of the people in general, *musicos* in particular.



Argelia Andrade's zapateado follows the music of father and sons.

People travel, bringing with them their home traditions. Where they land, they pick up and adapt available musical resources. Mix this cultural menudo with money, and the public gets the El Monte Legion Stadium, Art Laboe, Ritchie Valens' 9-month career, "La Bamba's" popularity among a general listenership--the recording won the first Grammy for R&B.

Cultural fusion appears not only as a subject matter but in the structure of the event itself. The toned-down scholarly approach assumes folks know about Ricky Ricardo, Disney's 1940 *Three Caballeros*, the nature of musical genres. One element that may not have been effective for this audience was bilingualism.

The lead Herrera brother apologizes in advance that an improvisation may contain sexist affront (and would be met by equal insult to numerous sacred cows). Indeed, he sings a Huapanguera in Spanish, in one comic verse calculating a woman's worth as dos bueyes. No one laughs.



Alexandro Hernández playing a 5-string Jarana

Musicologist performers have abilities that breathe life into audiences and subject matters. When the scholars segued to performers they brought the subject matter into keen focus and a satisfying conclusion. People left excited.

I heard several people extol the content, others take issue. "That's not what I heard," one member declared, "Little Julian was Armenian and was adopted by Mexicans." A vinyl collector I know expressed disappointment several rare--perhaps "lost"--artists in his own collection were not listed. Others, like me, smiled in recognition, I grew up with this.



Argelia Andrade and husband dance the finale. Alexandro Hernandez joins Hmnos Herrera and dad.

A notable guest was Frank Zappa's sister. Zappa composed "Memories of El Monte." She reminisced about her brother's musical career. In addition, numerous gente participated in the Q&A, sharing personal details of growing up with this music.



Paulina's sister was seated near the door.

I'd like to have a few minutes with Armando Gonzales to help him abandon the "you know" journalism that severely betrays him, appreciating his wealth of knowledge.

Today's lecture-demonstration comes as the Autry's role in *LA Xicano*. See the Autry's [site](#) for details on this important arts initiative. The Autry resides in the northeast corner of Griffith Park in the crossroads of the 5 and 134 freeways, across the road from the Zoo.



Alexandro Hernandez plays his quijada. Shake, rattle, and cool. Click the image for a blow-up.