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Music and Nationalism: Annotated Playlist

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Abstract: This is an annotated playlist on the topic of music and nationalism. It can be used to accompany the World Music Textbook article "Music and Nationalism."

Keywords: activism, global, immigration, nationalism, playlist, politics

The online version of this chapter includes all embedded content and is available at <https://worldmusictextbook.org/nielsen-vallejo-playlist-2022>.

This is an annotated playlist on the topic of music and nationalism. It can be used to accompany the World Music Textbook article "[Music and Nationalism](#)." These pieces are available through most standard music services, but they are compiled in a Spotify playlist at the link above.

Eight Slavonic Dances Op. 46: No. 1 in C (Presto) by Antonín Dvořák

This dance by Dvořák is in the style of folk music. Despite the folkness it invokes, however, Dvořák composed the melodies himself. This example is in the form of a dance known as a furiant, which is a fast triple-meter dance commonly found in Eastern Europe (Anderson 1988; Tyrrell 2001).

***Sinfonía India* (Symphony No. 2) by Carlos Chávez**

Chávez's *Sinfonía India* draws on musical themes from Indigenous communities in Mexico and employs Indigenous Mesoamerican percussion instruments. Written in the mid-1930s, the piece uses European nationalist strategies of integrating folk music, though Chávez was culturally distant from the Indigenous communities whose melodies he borrowed. This compositional strategy reflects Mexican models of *indigenismo* that co-opted Indigenous culture for nation-building projects.

“Pasacalle” by Daniel Alomías Robles

In 1913, Peruvian composer Daniel Alomías Robles composed music for the zarzuela (a form of Spanish musical theater) *El Cóndor Pasa*. In the vein of other Peruvian works of music and theater at the time, the piece seized on a nationalist style that employed indigenismo and ideals of mestizaje, or cultural mixing. The “Pasacalle” from this zarzuela became popularized as the song “El Cóndor Pasa.” While Robles was not Indigenous, his piece quickly became a prominent symbol of Peruvian Indigeneity and nationalism. Yet the song has also been contested as some have claimed the melody originated from Indigenous songs that were also popular in neighboring Bolivia (Mejía 2014; Einarsdóttir and Hafsdein 2018). The song reflects the complexities of cultures not fitting neatly with national boundaries and legacies of states appropriating musical forms for nationalist projects.

“Explorations: Hi-Life Structures” by The Pan African Orchestra

Although based in Ghana, the Pan African Orchestra performs on instruments from across Africa. Kofi Agawu points out that the music performed by the Pan African Orchestra often strikes listeners as traditional even though the pieces they perform are recently composed (2003:19). This misperception speaks to some of the challenges that emerge in thinking about what constitutes “tradition.”

“Oh! Susanna” performed by the 2nd South Carolina String Band

Among the many U.S. songs composed by Stephen Foster, “Oh! Susanna” was popularized in minstrel shows across the United States in the mid-nineteenth century (Root 2013). This version is performed by the 2nd South Carolina String Band, a group of Civil War reenactors who perform popular songs from the Civil War era. In the 1920s, automobile tycoon Henry Ford invested in preserving the composer’s home and promoting Foster’s songs alongside those of other composers that he deemed representative of the country’s Anglo musical heritage. A nazi sympathizer, he sought to distribute and promote music from the countryside that he saw as culturally and morally superior to other popular musics (Warnock 2009). The history of this song and others rooted in minstrel shows have come under renewed scrutiny in places like music classrooms, where national ideals of inclusivity increasingly confront racist music histories.

“Home on the Range” performed by Dom Flemons

Sitting around the campfire, the American Western movie *Lone Star Midnight* (1946), features actor Ken Curtis crooning the song “Home on the Range.”

Among the songs most associated with cowboy culture, the song invokes the emblem of today's quintessential American cowboy—a figure who is nearly always depicted as white. Despite this popular portrayal cemented through U.S. popular media there were many Black, Mexican, and Native American cowboys. The song “Home on the Range” was recorded by American song collector Alan Lomax from an unnamed Black musician in Texas (Lomax 1945). This song is among the Black cowboy and folk songs that have been subsumed into U.S. national music while erasing its Black roots (Flemons 2018).

“Polly Ann’s Hammer” by Our Native Daughters

“Polly Ann’s Hammer” was written by Amythyst Kiah and Allison Russell for Our Native Daughters’ 2019 release on Smithsonian Folkways. Whereas some tracks on this album are covers or reinterpretations and revivals of Black songs transcribed as early as the 1700s, members of Our Native Daughters have composed original songs like “Polly Ann’s Hammer” to honor and commemorate historical Black figures in the United States who have often been overlooked. In the case of this track, Kiah and Russell wrote about the strength of Polly Ann Henry who, prior to 2019, had only been referenced in some verses of songs about her husband, John Henry (Nelson 2006).

“El Relámpago” by Mariachi Herencia de México

Mariachi Herencia de México is a Latin GRAMMY-nominated community ensemble composed of students from the Chicago area. They are an outstanding example of how schools and community youth ensembles across the United States have invested in creating high-profile student programs that focus on Mexican music. “El Relámpago” was released on their debut album. This track is an arrangement of a standard mariachi song representative of the genre of traditional *sones* (polymetric and polyrhythmic songs) common in Central and Western Mexico.

“He Aloha N ‘O Honolulu” composed by Lot Kauwe and performed by The Kahauana Lake Trio

Lot Kauwe was a well-known singer, songwriter, and teacher who wrote songs in the Hawai’ian language during the early 1900s. His song “He Aloha N ‘O Honolulu” uses metaphors, double-meanings, and Hawai’ian poetic conventions to sing about love and the Hawai’ian islands (Huapala 1997; Honolulu Advertiser 1922:7). Kahauanu Lake or “Uncle K” was a Hawai’ian scholar, historian, composer, and musician celebrated for his left-handed ukulele playing. He formed the Kahauana Lake Trio with bassist Tommy Lake (his brother) and guitarist Al Machida. Kahauana Lake’s music was influential in creating a contemporary Hawai’ian style. During the second Hawai’ian Renaissance

Movement in the 1960s and 1970s, Lake, his bandmates, and Ma'iki Aiu Lake—an eminent hula dancer, teacher and his wife—inspired a new generation of Hawai'ian hula dancers and musicians who resisted colonialism and American imperialism by promoting traditional Hawai'ian music and dance as well as singing contemporary music in the Hawai'ian language (Hula Records 2013; Stillman 1982:49-50).

Sanjuanitos: Carabela/por el Valle Voy/Pobre Corazón/ Carnaval de Guaranda performed by Roberto Zumba

Roberto Zumba is regarded as one of Ecuador's founding singers of a popular music style known as *rocolera* (Wong 2012). Over the course of his career, Zumba and his contemporaries shifted their singing styles to reflect discourses about Ecuador's national music. Through music, they participated in national conversations about racial identity, ethnicity, social class, and differing generational perspectives on what it meant to be Ecuadorian. Zumba's medley of sanjuanito songs draws on Andean Indigenous musical styles and are performed in the *música chicha* style featuring synthesizers and electronic drum tracks. Working-class Ecuadorians began to embrace this music as a national music style after the 1980s, but middle- and upper-classes also celebrate some sanjuanito songs, such as "Pobre Corazón," as a national symbol (heard between 5:05 until 6:32 in this recording).

***In the Steppes of Central Asia* by Alexander Borodin**

Borodin was among a cohort of Russian composers, known as The Mighty Five, who sought to create what they perceived as a truly "Russian" sound in the late nineteenth century. Borodin sought to paint a sonic landscape, connecting music to geography—in this case Central Asian territories that Russia had recently seized in a climate of European imperialism. The piece draws on musical exoticism, or the portraying other peoples and places distant from the composer (Locke 2001).

"Sastanàqqàm" by Tinariwen

The Tuareg residing in northwestern Africa are an ethnic group with a shared language and culture, but who do not currently have their own nation-state. Music provides a means for creating a sense of nationhood for Tuareg communities residing across different nation-states in northwestern Africa. The electric guitar has become a particularly symbolic instrument among the Tuareg since the 1990s (Backer 2015; Schmidt 2018).

"Joyfulness" by Liu Mingyuan (1958)

This Chinese orchestra piece from 1958 draws on folk music themes and presents them in an orchestrated format. The modern Chinese orchestra

(MCO) style integrates a range of traditional Chinese instruments that have historically been played in ensembles like the Silk and Bamboo ensembles (sizhu) of tea houses. The MCO took its current form in the 1950s as an extension of government efforts to promote a shared Chinese national heritage and the prevailing ideas of modernization (Kuo-Huang and Gray 1979:17).

“The First House in Connaught/The Copper Plate Reel” by Séamus Ennis

This reel—a traditional Irish dance form in a quick duple meter—is among those collected and performed by Séamus Ennis. Ennis collected thousands of Irish tunes and he performed on the uilleann pipe that is featured in this example. Ennis gathered music from across Ireland for the Irish Folklore Commission that, as was the case in many national projects, saw its role as collecting and preserving Irish traditional music (Carolan 2001; National Folklore Collection 2022).

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