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Review

Reviewed Work(s): Agustín Lara: A Cultural Biography by ANDREW GRANT WOOD

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those two practices are seemingly discrete, Miller shows that interpretation lies at one end of the creative continuum, explaining how interpretation provides the internal structure for improvisation.

Miller dedicates three chapters of the book to describing and illustrating the different styles of improvisation used in *charanga*. The book includes a large number of very well notated musical examples, complete with written instructions for performance. Supplementing Miller's analysis of the *charanga* style is a chapter on mastering flute technique. *Charanga* flutists historically used the French baroque five-key wooden flute to play *charanga*. In the twentieth century, they began to also incorporate the modern silver Boehm-system flute into the *charanga* ensemble. For the wooden flute, Miller provides photos, illustrations of the components of the instrument, and two fingering charts.

To better inform her research, Miller formed her own *charanga* ensemble, Charanga del Norte. She recorded two albums, both of which were used as sources for the book. Through her own recordings, Miller demonstrates how analysis of recordings can be integrated with instrument practice. Her book also includes a very helpful glossary, complete with musical notation for entries that define rhythms and techniques. In addition to an extensive discography, two sample scores are provided. All in all, Miller's book is a valuable contribution to the scant research on *charanga*, and it is especially informative for those interested in improvisation, performance practices, analysis of popular music, flute performance, and, of course, Cuban music.

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**ANDREW GRANT WOOD.** *Agustín Lara: A Cultural Biography*.  
New York: Oxford University Press. 320 pp. ISBN: 9780199892457.

Agustín Lara is arguably the most prominent musical figure in early to mid-twentieth-century Mexico City. Often compared to Irving Berlin and

George Gershwin, his career touched on almost every major media industry, including radio, film, recorded sound, and theatrical plays (cabaret productions). His prolific career, celebrity lifestyle, and international success placed him squarely at the center of Mexico's cultural industry.

Lara's life and works have been the subject of several publications, the large majority in Spanish by novelists, poets, and bolero aficionados. Many of these authors employ a distinctly hagiographic approach. None contemplates Lara's life and work from a well-rounded perspective weaving together historical, social, economic, political, and cultural themes. Wood's goal in *Agustín Lara: A Cultural Biography* is precisely to fill that void, which he accomplishes.

Wood follows Lara's life and career chronologically, exploring the connections between sociopolitical events and the cultural production of the time. He begins by setting the musical and geographical scene with background information about the bolero and *danzón*, Mexico City's urban development, and early accounts of Lara's life. Wood's social and historical approach guides the book as he explores the connections between Lara's music and its sociocultural aspects.

Wood also contextualizes Lara's life and career within global and local politics. His discussion about the influence of the US Department of State, the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs, and powerful executives from NBC and CBS shed light on the ideologies and political interests that played important roles in the celebrated "golden age" of Mexican cultural industries and its connections with geopolitical events (122).

Overall, the book is a solid first step toward a scholarly approach to Lara's life and work. It presents an engaging narrative that will appeal to a general audience. Wood's extensive research, however, is not placed within theoretical frameworks that would aid in understanding Lara's life and times. In his discussion of the song "Veracruz," for example, Wood focuses on what it meant for Lara to be associated with the place itself, initiating an exploration of issues of authenticity and symbolic capital but failing to incorporate theoretical concepts that would have provided much-needed cultural insight while engaging scholars from other disciplines (42). When cited, important and relevant theoretical concepts such as Raymond Williams's structure of feeling are mentioned only in passing (158).

The book is supported by an impressive amount of archival research, with many of the sources in Spanish, but it includes at least a dozen mistranslations of simple song titles, such as "Un beso a solas," translated as "A Kiss for the Single Girls" (128), and "Puedes irte de mí," translated as "Could You Come to Me?" (129). Similarly, the song "Mía nomás," which is a trickier translation for nonnative speakers, means "Only Mine," not

“Mine No More” (164). These are minor mistakes, but there are enough of them to call into question the author’s interpretations and his ability to translate linguistic and cultural nuances.

The book includes many powerful visuals such as posters, advertisements, photographs of Mexico City in the 1950s, paintings, caricatures, and newspaper clips. Except for a brief explanation of the *cinquillo*, however, the book lacks musical examples and analysis that music specialists have come to expect from most of the other books in this Oxford series (Currents in Latin American and Iberian Music).

Wood’s book is well suited to anyone interested in popular music in twentieth-century Mexico. He skillfully negotiates historical material, iconographic analysis, urban legends, and myths surrounding the composer, weaving all into an engaging narrative. Music scholars will find valuable new information informed by a variety of disciplines (musicology, Latin American studies, and media studies, among others). The book is a long-overdue English-language biography of Lara, and it should be a welcome addition to the library of anyone interested in the history of sentimental music in Latin America.

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DAVID TREECE. *Brazilian Jive: From Samba to Bossa and Rap*.  
London: Reaktion Books, 2013. 232 pp. ISBN: 9781780230856.

In *Brazilian Jive*, David Treece strives to unpack the cultural struggles of music-making practices in Brazil by focusing on the development and trajectory of Brazilian popular music through analysis of the genres of samba, bossa nova, and rap. Treece suggests that through the study of music-making practices, one can discover deeper cultural connections than by studying the meaning of lyrics solely on a linguistic level. As a result, he chooses to focus on a thematic narrative of the above-mentioned musical genres rather than pursuing a broad survey of musical production practices in Brazil. He believes that Brazil is an ideal location for the study of music and meaning, as it is identified as a central component to Brazilian national identity.

The book is divided into six chapters, beginning with an introduction and general background. Chapters 2 and 3 present a detailed discussion and analysis of bossa nova, featuring three outstanding individuals who pioneered the genre: Antônio Carlos Jobim, Vinícius de Moraes, and João Gilberto. Chapter 4 pursues the avenue of Brazilian protest music in the