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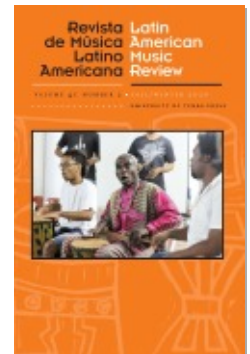
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*In Search of Julián Carrillo and Sonido 13* by Alejandro L.  
Madrid (review)

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## Reviews



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**ALEJANDRO L. MADRID.** *In Search of Julián Carrillo and Sonido 13.*  
New York: Oxford University Press, 2015. 328 pp. ISBN: 9780190215781.

The idea of Mexican composers often brings to mind such famous names as Carlos Chávez and Silvestre Revueltas. After all, these two composers are mostly known for their incorporation of a certain brand of Mexican-ness in their musical output. How did Julian Carrillo, a Mexican composer from the same period, fit into this paradigm? The easy answer is that he did not. *In Search of Julián Carrillo and Sonido 13* tells the story of why he did not, but more important, it questions the historical and political processes that determine what “fits.” To readers unfamiliar with Madrid’s scholarship, the book might look at first glance as a rediscovery of a forgotten composer, a figure overlooked by history, or even an attempt to include him in the canon. Carrillo, a prolific composer and educator, was often at odds with nationalistic narratives and the people who promulgated them (34, 35), a situation that effected his exclusion from the postrevolutionary Mexican music canon and its focus on nationalism (27). The book is not an uncritical celebration of Carrillo’s life and works but rather a “cultural critique that takes him, his work, and his reception as points of departure for a study of cultural change, experimentalism, distinction, marginality, and cultural capital in twentieth-century Mexico” (3).

Madrid’s point of departure is the problematic approach to Mexican music scholarship built on binaries and grand narratives. According to him, the problem with such scholarship is “its assumption that Carrillo’s music is either a good or bad imitation of Austro-German models; it fails to consider consumption as an active process that transforms what is consumed . . . into different cultural artifacts whose meaning should be understood in relation to their specific cultural and historical circumstances” (16). The author explores Carrillo’s positionality as a composer and as a Mexican, interacting in a country in the middle of a nation-building process that required cultural actors to negotiate nationalistic rhetoric and government-sponsored aesthetic agendas, all while in search of their own artistic voices. The author sheds light on how academic discourses continued to exclude Carrillo from those nationalist and modernist projects into the later twentieth century and even into the twenty-first (36, 37). It

also traces the audience reception of Carrillo's work in Germany and Mexico (49). The book includes extended examinations of some of Carrillo's works, most notably his opera *Matilde*, which was originally intended to be premiered in 1910 but was not performed until 2010. Madrid's analysis of the opera invites the reader into the scores by labeling important themes and their meanings, and he draws from archival documents and interviews, providing a rich and nuanced understanding of the work then and now. The result is a "metaphor of the political, social, and cultural struggles that had to happen before Mexico could become an independent country" (71). The author contradicts previous accounts and scholarship on Carrillo to argue against a teleological approach that encapsulates the composer as an imitator of Romantic, German, and European music. He instead proposes taking *Sonido 13* (Carrillo's microtonal proposition) as "the result of Carrillo's individual search for identity . . . [and as] an attempt to reposition himself within a changing society where older forms of representation were being contested and new cultural codes formed" (105). He traces the origins of Carrillo's exploration of a microtonal system and his intellectual output as a composer and author, exposing where Carrillo's writings and his predictions for the future were adapted, tweaked, or altered depending on the narrative (141). Madrid also explores Carrillo's work under new social frameworks of *nueva mexicanidad* and New Age spirituality by Carrillo's current followers.

Those familiar with Madrid's academic production know that his intellectual output rarely sits in one discipline. As a self-identified cultural theorist, Madrid's approach to music scholarship transcends musicological and ethnomusicological epistemological and methodological axioms. In the book under discussion, the author continues this trajectory by exploring the music in its social, cultural, historical, and transhistorical context, drawing a beautifully analogous process with Carrillo's own work. *In Search of Julián Carrillo and Sonido 13* represents the maturity of an academic who, without needing to make explicit use of theories and names associated with them, references important theoretical concepts (phenomenology, field theory, and symbolic capital, among many others) for the sake of inviting and informing academics from other disciplines. Madrid's other publications have destabilized and decentralized ethnomusicological discourses from their comfort zones (e.g., identity, nationalisms, and multiple combinations of these) in favor of transnational and transcultural approaches. In this book, he gives the same treatment to historical narratives through a transhistorical stance. Taken as a whole, Madrid's work can be said to represent a trans-epistemological turn in music scholarship, a turn needed to understand the cultural practices of a country like Mexico, where reconfiguring narratives is crucial for the advancement and contemporary understanding of the country as a whole. *In*

*Search of Julián Carrillo and Sonido 13* offers possibilities for music scholarship that breaks away from such limiting labels. As such, it is a welcome addition to the shelves of those interested in new approaches to music in Mexico and its complex social and political negotiations.

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IVÁN CÉSAR MORALES FLORES. *Identidades en proceso: Cinco compositores cubanos de la diáspora (1990–2013)*. Havana: Fondo Editorial Casa de las Américas, 2018. 506 pp. ISBN: 978-959-260-514-5.

The waves of migration that accompanied Cuba's political and economic shifts since the 1959 Cuban Revolution account for the creation of avant-garde music that both conformed to and opposed ideologies of the government. Although the artistic and professional endeavors of musicians remaining in Cuba initially demonstrated a strong affinity with the revolutionary government, these same affinities weakened in the face of scarcity and poverty during the Special Period, or the *Período Especial* (1991–2000). The acute economic crisis, arising from the collapse of the Iron Curtain on which Cuba had depended financially since 1959, resulted in the rationing of food, oil, gasoline, and diesel fuel, as well as a rapid decline in imports from the Soviet Union. For many artists and musicians, this period forced them to seek financial and performance opportunities abroad (58).

Iván César Morales Flores's book *Identidades en proceso: Cinco compositores cubanos de la diáspora (1990–2013)* examines the careers of five post-modern composers who sought careers abroad during the Special Period. Trained at the Instituto Superior de Arte de La Habana, now Universidad de las Artes–Instituto Superior de Arte (ISA), Ileana Pérez Velázquez (1964), Eduardo Morales-Caso (1969), Keyla Orozco (1969), Ailem Carvajal, and Louis Aguirre (1968) demonstrate varying levels of loyalty to Cuban stylistic and popular elements that blend influences from European art music. The author uses analytical techniques (set theory and textual, harmonic, temporal, and rhythmic analysis, among others) to interpret a wide range of genres and mediums, including chamber, choral, guitar, piano, vocal-instrumental, and electronic music. Through these methods Morales Flores emphasizes the stylistic changes each composer displayed after leaving Cuba, attributing the shifts to new environments that included access to equipment technology and an increase in opportunities for performance and exposure. These individual compositions exhibit an avant-garde musical language mixed with a Cuban heritage that emerged from the pedagogical foundation of the ISA, Cuba's national institution