Title
From Elite to Popular: Estudiantinas in La Paz, Bolivia, 1880s to 1940s

Permalink
https://escholarship.org/uc/item/05q4p768

Journal
Diagonal: An Ibero-American Music Review, 3(1)

ISSN
2470-4199

Author
Rios, Fernando

Publication Date
2018-06-28

License
CC BY 4.0

Peer reviewed
From Elite to Popular: Estudiantinas in La Paz, Bolivia, 1880s to 1940s

FERNANDO RIOS
University of Maryland

Abstract
In recent years, the estudiantina (a type of plucked-string orchestra of Spanish origin) has become a topic of increased interest among music historians, including Latin Americanists. The Bolivian case, however, has not been the focus of detailed historical research, even though music scholars long have acknowledged that in the early-to-mid twentieth century the estudiantina represented one of Bolivia’s most popular ensemble types and served as an important vehicle for the performance of typical criollo-mestizo musical expressions. This article traces the trajectory of La Paz’s estudiantina tradition, from its emergence in the 1880s as an upper-class criollo form of music making that centered on European repertoire, to its peak of popularity in the late 1930s and mid-1940s, when working-class mestizo musicians predominated in the milieu and most ensembles performed local genres (e.g., huayño, cueca) and indigenista (Indigenist) works. The principal goal of this essay is to document this major shift. In the pages that follow, I discuss various groups, but devote special attention to the Orquesta Típica La Paz. Founded in 1945, this estudiantina represents the earliest instance of a Bolivian state-sponsored music group whose establishment formed part of a broader state attempt to court urban blue-collar workers. Keywords: estudiantina, La Paz, Orquesta Típica, indigenista, huayño, cueca, bailecito, criollo, mestizo

The estudiantina (a type of plucked-string orchestra) recently has become a topic of increased interest among music historians. While most of these studies examine the tradition in its original Iberian context, a growing number investigate its history in Latin American sites (e.g., Luna Muñoz 1993; Andreu Ricart 1995; González Ríos and González Ríos 1998; Jurado Noboa 2006: 241–49; Torres 2007; Ponce Valdivia 2008; Rendón Marín 2009; Cornejo Díaz 2012: 381–88; Mullo Sandoval 2014). The Bolivian case, however, has not been the focus of detailed historical research, even though music scholars long have acknowledged that in the early-to-mid twentieth century the estudiantina represented one of Bolivia’s most popular ensemble-types, and served as an important vehicle for the performance of typical criollo-mestizo musical expressions (e.g., Alejo 1925: 360–61; Fernández Naranjo 1948: 273; Céspedes 1984: 218; Auza León 1985: 94; Cárdenas 1986: 39–40; Sánchez C. 1994: 6; Rossells 1996: 107–08; Bigenho 2002: 126–28).

In this article, I trace the trajectory of La Paz city’s estudiantina tradition, from its emergence in the 1880s as an upper-class criollo form of music making that centered on European repertoire, to its peak of popularity in the late 1930s and mid-1940s, when working-class mestizo musicians predominated in the milieu and most ensembles performed local genres (e.g., huayño, cueca,
bailecito) and indigenista (Indigenist) musical works. The principal goal of this essay is to document this major shift. In the pages that follow, I discuss the activities of various groups but devote special attention to the Orquesta Típica La Paz. Founded in 1945 during the administration of the RADEPA-MNR coalition government, the Orquesta Típica La Paz represents the earliest instance of a Bolivian state-sponsored music group whose establishment formed part of a broader state attempt to court the political support of urban blue-collar workers.

The Spanish estudiantina tradition and its dissemination to Latin America

In Spain, estudiantinas (also known as tunas, rondallas, and liras) first appeared in the Renaissance era in the university setting, hence the name of the groups (estudiantes = students). It was not until the late nineteenth century, though, that the tradition spread outside of the country (see Christoforidis 2017). At the time, Spanish estudiantinas usually consisted of several laúd players (who realized the melody, often with tremolo technique), bandurria performers (who played in harmony with the laudes), and guitarists (who executed bass notes and occasional flourishes, and strummed chords), along with a smaller number of violinists, cellists, flutists, and/or other instrumentalists; some ensembles included pandereta (tambourine) and castanet players.¹ Their repertoire, meanwhile, encompassed an array of traditional Spanish genres (e.g., jota, seguidilla, malagueña, pasodoble), internationally fashionable dances (e.g., waltz, habanera, mazurka), selections from popular operas and zarzuelas, and arrangements of orchestral pieces. The Renaissance-inspired outfits that Spanish estudiantinas adopted as their performance attire in the nineteenth century constituted one of the most visually distinctive aspects of the ensembles (ibid.).

It was largely through the efforts of Spain’s Estudiantina Fígaro (named after Mozart’s Spanish-themed opera buffa The Marriage of Figaro) that the tradition expanded to Latin America and beyond (Christoforidis 2017: 11–14). A professional (rather than student) group founded in 1878 in Madrid under the direction of Dionisio Granados, in 1880 Estudiantina Fígaro launched an ambitious tour of the Americas, which over the next six years would take the musicians to almost every country in the region (Martín Sárraga 2014). One legacy of this impressive feat was that the ensemble inspired the rise of estudiantinas in most if not all of the Latin American countries that it visited (for Chile, see Luna Muñoz 1993: 49–65; Andreu Ricart 1995: 15–169; for Venezuela, see Torres 2007: 21–34; for Colombia, see Rendón Marín 2009: 32–37).

Estudiantinas in La Paz, 1880s to 1920s

Near the end of Estudiantina Fígaro’s 1880–1886 tour, the ensemble traveled to Bolivia, where it offered concerts in the cities of La Paz, Oruro, and Cochabamba (El Heraldo [Cochabamba], July 31, Aug. 28, 1886). A newspaper columnist for El Heraldo could barely contain his enthusiasm for the

¹ Similar in construction and size to the mandolin, the laud and bandurria are double-coursed, steel-stringed instruments that are played with a plectrum. Laudes and bandurrias usually have six unison pairs of strings.
upcoming engagements in Cochabamba, which Fígaro apparently had added to its itinerary at the last minute, “without prior announcement” (July 13, 1886). The journalist, for one, only had learned that the group soon would be in town after spotting several “large billboards” in the city center that advertised the shows (ibid.). He also remarked, “we will have the immense pleasure of knowing what an estudiantina is” (ibid.). As the latter statement accurately suggests, prior to Estudiantina Fígaro’s 1886 visit, Bolivians had limited exposure to Spain’s plucked-string orchestras, and thus the prospect of experiencing an estudiantina performance certainly would have aroused curiosity and great anticipation among local audiences.²

Despite the Bolivian public’s unfamiliarity with this musical tradition, the repertoire that Spanish estudiantinas presented abroad in this period would have been well known to elite criollos and middle-class mestizos in Bolivia’s major cities (i.e., La Paz, Sucre, Potosí, Oruro, Cochabamba). As Soux documents for La Paz (1992: 87–125), excerpts from operas and zarzuelas, along with piano reductions of European orchestral works, and dance genres of non-Bolivian origin such as the waltz, habanera, and pasodoble, comprised the types of music that the city’s criollo-mestizo sector most favored in the nineteenth century. Satiating the local demand for this kind of entertainment were the many foreign touring soloists (vocal and instrumental) and music-theater companies that regularly spent a month or two in La Paz and nearby cities in the mid-to-late 1800s, after having fulfilled engagements in Peru or Chile (ibid.). The shows of Estudiantina Fígaro therefore characterized the kind of artistic experience that upper- and middle-class paeños (urban La Paz residents) long had been accustomed to, even though the group’s format and attire represented novelties.

Within a few years of Estudiantina Fígaro’s stay in Bolivia, the estudiantina tradition had taken root in elite criollo society. In La Paz city, an early performance by a local estudiantina occurred in 1889 at a recital organized by the Sociedad Filarmónica (Philharmonic Society) (El Imparcial [hereafter EI], Feb. 21 and 27, 1889). Led by a Mr. Polar, an unnamed estudiantina consisting of five bandurrias, eleven guitars, six violins, one mandolin, and a banjo opened the third portion of the program with a “Král March” (by Prince of Liechtenstein Johann Nepomuk Král).³ The group contained many of the same individuals who, earlier in the show, had sung in the choir that interpreted selections from the zarzuela El Anillo de Oro (The Golden Ring) and opéra comique Haydée, ou Le Secret (Haydée, or the Secret). The concert also featured various instrumental and vocal soloists, including a soprano who performed an aria from Vincenzo Bellini’s La Sonnambula (The Sleepwalker), and a piano-four-hands duo who played Louis Moreau Gottschalk’s Radieuse (Radiant). The estudiantina’s rendition of the march, meanwhile, elicited an animated response from the audience, as reported in El Imparcial.

² In her thorough studies on La Paz city musical life from 1845 to 1885, historian María Eugenia Soux makes no mention whatsoever of the presence of Bolivian or non-Bolivian estudiantinas (see Soux 1992, 1997, 2002).
³ The banjo player in the estudiantina was Mr. W. Olphert, who may have been a North American expatriate.
The estudiantina pleasantly surprised the public. ... The spectators experienced something of a frenzy of delirium: the public shouted, applauded, and even asked for an encore. The estudiantina complied: it repeated the Král March, in the midst of the enthusiasm [of the audience] (EI, Feb. 27, 1889).

Comparable to what transpired in the capitals of Chile, Peru, Nicaragua, and Guatemala (see Andreu Ricart 1995: 59, 72, 107–11, 119; Rendón Marín 2009: 34), women of upper-class socio-economic background had a strong presence in La Paz’s estudiantina circles in the late 1880s and 1890s (see EI, Dec. 20, 1888; Feb. 8 and 26, 1897). In the aforementioned ensemble, nine of the eleven guitarists, three of the six violinists, and all five of the bandurria players were female (EI, Feb. 21, 1889). By the turn of the century, all-female estudiantinas also could be found in La Paz city (El Diario [hereafter ED], June 7, 1905). That most of the women who joined these groups were unmarried indicates that upper-class sectors viewed this type of music making as a socially respectable pastime, no doubt because of the tradition’s European pedigree and ensembles’ predominantly elite membership. At some point in the early decades of the twentieth century, though, female participation in La Paz’s estudiantina scene experienced a sharp decline, perhaps as a consequence of the tradition’s growing association with unionized male laborers of working-class background (see below).

Estudiantina Paceña may have been La Paz’s earliest stable estudiantina. Zenón Espinoza, a violinist, headed the group (Alejo 1925: 360), which was active since at least 1889 (EI, Jul. 23, 1889). Mazurkas, jotas, polkas, waltzes, and Italian opera excerpts seem to have made up the core of its repertoire (ibid.; EI, July 12, 1891). By the early twentieth century, Estudiantina Española La Paz also appeared on the scene. Suiting its name, the group dressed in the manner of Spanish ensembles (ED, July 12, 1904), a Renaissance-style garb that in all probability the members wore when they paraded throughout the downtown in the Carnival processions of 1904 and 1905 (Rossells and Calatayud 2009: 295). Like Estudiantina Paceña, Estudiantina Española La Paz cultivated the genres that most appealed to the elite. Accordingly, even when the group paid homage to its home city, as occurred in 1904 at a concert attended by President Ismael Montes and other state officials, the tune it presented, “Bella Paceña” (Beautiful Woman from La Paz), was set to a non-Bolivian musical form, the mazurka (ED, Sep. 10, 1904).

Estudiantina Verdi was a contemporary of Estudiantina Española La Paz; the two marched in Carnival in the first decade of the twentieth century (Rossells and Calatayud 2009: 295). Established circa 1903, and directed by Juan Barragán, Estudiantina Verdi sported a uniform that was very similar to the one already used by Estudiantina Española La Paz, as noted by a columnist who mildly criticized Estudiantina Verdi for its lack of a distinctive outfit (ED, Jul. 12, 1904). At this moment in the

---

4 Outside of La Paz, Bolivian students established estudiantinas in Sucre and Cochabamba in the late nineteenth century. In Sucre, an estudiantina affiliated with the university’s medical school was active by 1897 (Rossells 1996: 181–82), while in Cochabamba, the Colegio de San Alberto instituted its own ensemble in 1899 (Sánchez C. 1994: 6).

5 In the early twentieth century, carnival exclusively was an elite affair in La Paz city (Guss 2006; Rossells and Calatayud 2009). When estudiantinas became part of the main procession, the groups may have been emulating Spain’s tradition. Since the nineteenth century, Carnival processions in Spain often featured estudiantinas (Christoforidis 2017: 2).
ensemble’s trajectory, originality appears not to have been a major concern. Verdi also followed in the footsteps of Estudiantina Fígaro, by interpreting the famed Spanish group’s hallmark number “Aires Españoles” (Spanish Airs), a fantasía by Dionisio Granados (ED, Apr. 11, 1905).6 The membership of Verdi, meanwhile, included the bandurria virtuoso Federico Otero de la Peña (who also played the laud and piano), and guitar soloists Nataniel Bravo and Federico Arancibia (El, Aug. 9, 1904)—three of Bolivia’s most acclaimed plucked-string performers of the day (see Alejo 1925: 361; González Bravo 1961: 94; Rossells n.d.). In addition to the presence of these esteemed artists, the size of the group also was an impressive feature. In the 1910s, approximately forty musicians made up Estudiantina Verdi, as this was the total number of artists who took part in the ensemble’s tour of Oruro, Potosí, and Sucre circa 1912–1914 (Rossells n.d.: 6). After making a mark on the Bolivian music scene, the group disbanded sometime in the late 1910s or early 1920s (see Alejo 1925: 360).

Unlike the estudiantinas Verdi, Española La Paz, and Paceña, another group of the era, the patriotically named 6 de Agosto (August 6th; Bolivian Independence Day), was composed of obreros or “workers” (i.e., blue-collar laborers), a distinctive facet of the group that newspaper writers repeatedly pointed out when discussing them (e.g., ED, May 31 and Jun. 12, 1908).7 This characteristic of 6 de Agosto caught the attention of the organizers tasked with arranging President-Elect Fernando Guachalla’s birthday celebration for 1908, who strategically invited the group to perform at the incoming head of state’s personal residence as part of the festivities. In the late hours of May 29, 6 de Agosto “interpreted beautiful and [tastefully] selected musical pieces” for the Liberal Party leader and his many guests, according to an El Diario writer, who also maintained that 6 de Agosto’s performance that evening “symbolized the affection that blue-collar youths [la juventud obrera] feel toward Doctor Guachalla” (ED, May 31, 1908). The journalist reported, furthermore, that the President-Elect not only pronounced his appreciation of the ensemble’s artistry but also personally requested that the musicians play a few “national airs,” to which the group obliged (ibid.).8 From the fawning tone of the article, to the very presence of Estudiantina 6 de Agosto at Guachalla’s party, the whole affair functioned as a promotional piece for the new administration. It also foreshadowed how subsequent Bolivian political regimes would express their affinities with el pueblo (the people) through state patronage of subaltern-associated musical expressions (e.g., RADEPA-MNR government).

By the 1920s, working-class paceño estudiantinas like 6 de Agosto no longer were such a rarity, as clearly seen in the portraits of photographer Julio Cordero (see Cárdenas 1986: 269–71; Cárdenas 1986: 269–71; Luna Muñoz 1993: 20).

6 In 1886, Estudiantina Fígaro played “Aires Españoles” at their debut in Santiago, Chile (Luna Muñoz 1993: 20).

7 The appearance of obrero estudiantinas also occurred elsewhere in Latin America in the early twentieth century. In Chile, Estudiantina La Aurora (founded in 1901) seems to have been the first example in the Santiago context. By 1905, numerous blue-collar ensembles were active in the Chilean capital, so much so that it prompted the Santiago Municipality to stage a Concurso de Estudiantinas Obreras (Andreu Ricart 1995: 125–28). Meanwhile in Arequipa, Peru, Centro Musical Obrero, a working-class estudiantina, emerged on the scene in 1905 (Cornejo Díaz 2012: 384).

8 On this occasion, 6 de Agosto had a musician from a higher social strata at the helm, Juan Barragán (ED, May 31, 1908). As noted above, Barragán was the director of Estudiantina Verdi.
Estudio Archivo Cordero: Bolivia 1900–1961 2004: 38–41, 58–59). One of the period’s most remembered estudiantinas, 1° de Mayo (May 1st; May Day), formed part of this trend. Whereas 6 de Agosto appears to have had an ephemeral existence, 1° de Mayo’s years of activity lasted from the 1920s to the 1950s. Instead of calling themselves an estudiantina, the members preferred the designation filarmónica or philharmonic, that is, Filarmónica 1° de Mayo—which illustrates the local estudiantina tradition’s ongoing indebtedness to the European orchestra model (other paceño estudiantinas called themselves orquestas típicas or conjuntos orquestales). In the official commemorative volume for Bolivia’s first centennial of political independence, music critic Benjamin Alejo’s overview of notable musical institutions mentions Filarmónica 1° de Mayo. He underscores the group’s socio-economic position twice in the same sentence, first by referring to the ensemble as “Filarmónica Obrera 1° de Mayo” (emphasis added), and then by praising it for its “beautiful cultural work among the obrero sector” (Alejo 1925: 360–61). Evidently, in mid-1920s La Paz the estudiantina continued to be mainly associated with the elite and upper middle class, otherwise Alejo probably would not have felt the need to highlight the social-class standing of the members of 1° de Mayo. Yet even if he had not brought up the group’s obrero status, the readers of the entry in the commemorative volume surely would have assumed it anyway, given that the name of the ensemble referenced May Day, also known as International Workers Day. As for the musical repertoire of 1° de Mayo, by the late 1920s it included the cueca and huayño genres, as evidenced by the recordings that the ensemble made in 1928 for RCA-Victor at the U.S. label’s Argentine branch in Buenos Aires (see Gobierno Municipal de la Ciudad de La Paz Oficialia Mayor de Cultura 1993: 65, 69; Arauco 2011: 157).

Estudiantina Centro Artístico Haydn (Haydn Artistic Center) similarly recorded traditional Bolivian criollo-mestizo genres under the RCA-Victor brand in 1928 (Gobierno Municipal de la Ciudad de La Paz Oficialia Mayor de Cultura 1993: 66–67, 69–71, 73). Of these tracks, the sole one I have been able to access is the bailecito “Ancha Chiri” (RCA Victor 30202-B). By A. Ferreyra, “Ancha Chiri” (Quechua for “Very Cold”) follows standard bailecito form (the bailecito is closely related to the cueca), that is, AABA (preceded by a brief introduction), with the tune repeated three times (see Music Example 1). The mandolins and bandurrias, played with tremolo on the long notes, carry the melody in unison and parallel thirds for much of the piece, while the guitars strum chords and supply a bass line. Dynamic changes offer variety and mark sections. The ensemble plays the introduction at medium volume, rises to forte for the A section (repeated once), drops to piano for the B section, and ends the piece back at full volume. Further differentiating the B section, the piece shifts to 4/4 time at

---

9 In Ecuador, the 1920s also saw the emergence of numerous obrero estudiantinas (see Mullo Sandoval 2014).
10 La Paz’s estudiantina scene of the 1920s included a group named 6 de Agosto (see Rossells 1996: 191), but in all likelihood it was an unrelated group. The renowned mandolinist and composer José Lavadenz Inchauste led this iteration of 6 de Agosto, which also counted in its ranks the guitarist Nataniel Bravo (of Estudiantina Verdi) (ibid.).
11 Estudiantina Verdi and Estudiantina Paceña are only other estudiantinas listed in Alejo’s chapter (1925: 360).
12 Bolivia would not have its own record label until 1949, which is why 1° de Mayo made the trip to Argentina.
13 On the opposite side of the disc, Orquesta Centro Artístico Haydn—the allied symphonic orchestra of Estudiantina Centro Artístico Haydn—performs Manuel Elías Coronel’s cueca “Soledad” (Solitude) (RCA-Victor 30202-A).
this point in the selection, an unusual occurrence for a bailecitos, as the genre traditionally fluctuates (only) between 3/4 and 6/8 meter.

Example 1: Bailecito “Ancha Chiri” as performed by Estudiantina Centro Artístico Haydn. Transcribed by Matthew Samson.

Throughout Latin America, elite and middle-class interest in locally distinctive musical genres experienced a major upsurge in the early decades of the twentieth century, as part of a wide-ranging search for region-specific traditions that demonstrated the nation’s cultural uniqueness (Turino
2003). The entrance of bailecitos, cuecas, and huayños into the paceño estudiantina repertoire in the 1920s, even among elite-affiliated groups with Eurocentric names like Estudiantina Centro Artístico Haydn, thus corresponds with a broader Latin American pattern. Nativist artistic currents in Peru, namely the criollo-mestizo movement termed indigenismo (Indigenism), in all likelihood also guided the localization of La Paz’s estudiantina tradition. When Bolivia developed its own indigenista movement in the early twentieth century, it drew heavily from the Peruvian counterpart. In the realm of Bolivian estudiantina practices, the adoption of the so-called Incan fox-trot genre or fox incaico by paceño estudiantinas and brass bands in the 1920s (see Cárdenas 1986: 57–58) represents a clear instance of Peruvian indigenista influence.

**Estudiantinas, indigenismo, and the working-class in the 1930s**

The flowering of Bolivian indigenismo in the 1930s was linked to the rise of the Chaco Generation. Bolivia’s defeat by Paraguay in the Chaco War (1932–1935) provoked widespread outrage and soul-searching and led to the emergence of new political actors who rejected the conservative stance of the traditional parties and conceived of a different Bolivia, one in which the masses had greater say in governance. In large part because indigenous people made up most of the Bolivian soldiers who fought in the war, the military debacle motivated prominent criollo-mestizo intellectuals, novelists, artists, and politicians to revisit the unresolved issues surrounding the so-called “Indian problem” (Klein 1969; Salmón 1997; Bigenho 2002: 25–28, 130; Sanjinés 2004: 107–36), in a manner similar to how Peru’s defeat by Chile in the Pacific War (1879–1883) spurred the consolidation of Peruvian indigenismo (see De La Cadena 2000).

Under the sway of indigenista ideology, as the 1930s advanced La Paz’s estudiantinas increasingly complemented their repertoire of standard criollo-mestizo genres with arrangements of indigenous wind-consort, or tropa, pieces (e.g., panpipe tunes), along with new works that referenced Andean indigenous culture through pentatonic melodies and titles/lyrics in Quechua or Aymará. Many ensembles further localized their practices by adding the charango (mandolin-sized stringed instrument used in the Andes) and kena (end-notched Andean flute) to their line-ups. It also became commonplace for the names of estudiantinas to express an imagined connection to indigenous people and pre-Columbian civilizations, especially the Inca Empire.

Lira Incaica (Incan Lyre, or Incan Estudiantina) embodied this indigenista current. The criollo-mestizo composer and multi-instrumentalist Alberto Ruiz Lavadenz founded the group in the early

---


16 Locally distinctive stringed instruments also made their way into estudiantinas in Peru (charango), Venezuela (cuatro), and Colombia (típica) (Torres 2007; Ponce Valdivia 2008; Rendon Marín 2009). In Chile and Ecuador, in contrast, artists did not localize the tradition in this manner (see Andreu Ricart 1995; Jurado Noboa 2006: 241–49; Mullo Sandoval 2014).
1920s, and by the mid-1930s, his estudiantina had risen to the summit of La Paz’s music scene (various documents, courtesy of Carola Cobo de Ruiz, the widow of Alberto Ruiz Lavadenz). Unsurprisingly, in January 1936 Lira Incaica obtained a privileged spot in the recital that closed the 2nd Semana Indianista (Indigenist Week), a large-scale indigenista exhibition staged by the elite civic association Los Amigos de la Ciudad (The Friends of the City). At this prominent event, Lira Incaica played Ruiz Lavadenz’s original work “Capricho Incaico” (Incan Capriccio), along with three pieces that incorporated rural indigenous tunes, “Huacacari” (Quechua for “Sacred Plant”), “Motivo Vernacular” (Vernacular Theme), and “Danza de Cullawas” (ED, Jan. 11, 1936). For “Danza de Cullawas,” Lira Incaica set aside their usual mandolins, bandurrias, and charangos, for a consort of tarkas (wooden duct-flutes) and caja drums, to emulate the musical style of carnival season Andean indigenous music making.

Ruiz Lavadenz’s recent sojourn in Argentina played an integral role in fostering his indigenista impulses. From 1929 to 1934, he set up base in Buenos Aires, where a niche market existed for stylized enactments of Andean indigenous music (see Kuon Arce et al 2009; Chamosa 2010). During this stay, Ruiz Lavadenz joined forces with Argentine and expatriate Bolivian musicians in small to medium-size ensembles, for which he often revived the name “Lira Incaica”—although these groups seldom approximated the number of members found in typical estudiantinas. In promotional materials, Ruiz Lavadenz’s ensembles of this period invariably are pictured in ways that match conventional Argentine stereotypes of Bolivians (i.e., “Bolivians are Indians”), by showing the musicians wearing ponchos and lluchus (Andean wool caps with ear flaps), and holding traditional instruments, most often the charango (usually ones made from armadillo shells) and kena (various documents, courtesy of Carola Cobo de Ruiz). A vivid example appeared in 1933 in the Buenos Aires newspaper Crítica (Aug. 20, 1933). Under the heading “A Touch of Native Soul” (Un Poco de Alma Nativa), Ruiz Lavadenz and three of his bandmates, arrayed in indigenous garb, posed alongside kena flutes while the members consumed chicha, the maize-based alcoholic beverage popular in the Andes since pre-Columbian times. The caption accompanying the photo asserts, “[i]t is necessary to have a

---

17 An early Lira Incaica performance took place on December 1923 at La Paz’s most prestigious venue, the Municipal Theater. On this occasion, the group interpreted Belisario Zárate’s Serenata Campestre-Tres Motivos Indianistas (Countryside Serenade-Three Indigenist Motives)—then one of the most celebrated examples of Bolivian indigenista art-classical music, and Peruvian composer N. Zamudio’s Corri Occlu (Quechua for “Interior of Gold”). Recalling the initial direction of the estudiantina tradition, Lira Incaica also played excerpts from the operettas of the Austro-Hungarian artist Franz Lehár, and non-Bolivian dance genres that were popular internationally such as the maxixe or Brazilian tango (e.g., “Tristeza do Caboclo”; A Peasant’s Sorrow) (Lira Incaica Program, Dec. 1, 1923).

18 The purpose of the 2nd Indigenist Week, according to a spokesperson from Los Amigos de la Ciudad, was to bestow value on “the enormous richness of the vernacular themes upon which will be based the national art of the future” (ED, Jan. 5, 1936). President José Tejada Sorzano’s Liberal Party regime provided logistical support for the event (ED, Jan. 6, 1936). The 1st Indigenist Week transpired five years earlier. At the inaugural recital in December 1931, Filarmónica n° de Mayo entertained the audience with “arrangements of indigenous melodies” (Wahren 2014: 103).

19 In Andean indigenous communities, though, the cullawas or cullagudas genre (a huayño variant also known as the cullawada and cullaguada) is traditionally played with a tropa of transverse flutes (i.e., pífanos, pitus), not tarkas.
drink of chicha before playing the kena,” and declares that doing so infuses kena melodies with “the soul of the mountain” (ibid.).

Whereas in 1936 Lira Incaica represented the vanguard of indigenismo among La Paz-based estudiantinas, by 1939 this nativist orientation had thoroughly permeated the scene. The Concurso Popular de Arte Folklórico (Folkloric Art Contest for the Masses) provides an illustration of this development, as the following commentary from the prize committee reveals:

It is interesting and worthy of applause to note that the majority of the orquestas típicas [i.e., estudiantinas] who participated in the competition turned to the roots of indigenous music, by using autochthonous rhythms and motives, and instruments that impart greater local flavor, such as kenas, charangos, etc.; unlike what previously had occurred, when the estudiantinas of the working-class sector thought that it was in good taste to assimilate music from abroad, making the centerpiece of their concerts [Spanish] pasodobles, [U.S.-style] fox-trots, and [Argentine] tangos, with instruments solely of European origin (guitars, mandolins), while ignoring the vernacular (ED, Nov. 4, 1939).

A state-sponsored music competition, the Concurso Popular de Arte Folklórico featured the participation of many of La Paz’s leading estudiantinas, including Kollasuyo (named after the Inca Empire’s designation for Bolivia’s Andean territories), Inca Huasi (Quechua for “House of the Inca”), Centro Artístico Illimani (named after La Paz’s Illimani mountain), Inti-Karkas (Quechua for “Fortress of the Sun”), and Huiñay Inti (Quechua for “Eternal Sun”) (ED, Nov. 4, 1939). The use of Quechua rather than Aymará (the indigenous language most widely spoken in the La Paz region), and presence of the word “Inti” (Sun) in the latter two ensemble names (which reference the Inca ruling class’s worship of the Sun deity), reflects the enduring influence that Peru’s Inca-centered indigenista movement exerted on paceño indigenista musicians.

After finalizing its deliberations, the prize committee awarded first place to Kollasuyo. With a line-up comprised of mandolins, guitars, charangos, kenas, and a concertina, the group had impressed the judges with its “faithful interpretations of indigenous music,” most of all the numbers “Aire Italaqueño” (Melody from Italaque)—which evoked the panpipe tropa style of Los Sikuris de Italaque (Bolivia’s most renowned rural indigenous ensemble tradition), and “Pusipí”—a selection that took its name from the four-holed, end-notched Andean indigenous flute of the same name (ibid.). Centro Artístico Illimani obtained the third-place prize and special plaudits from the jury for its original compositions, among which the judges singled out “Chiriguano,” a piece that simultaneously

---

20 In late 1936, Ruiz Lavadenz returned to Buenos Aires, where he remained until 1939. During his two stays in the Argentine capital, he recorded numerous tracks for RCA-Victor, often with ensembles named “Lira Incaica.” His compositions comprise the vast majority of these selections (various documents, courtesy of Carola Cobo de Ruiz).

21 For a discussion of some key factors that gave rise to Bolivian indigenismo’s Inca-centrism, see Kuenzli (2013).

22 The acclaimed musicians Adrián Páñio Carpio and Eduardo Calderón Lugones, along with an unidentified representative from Los Amigos de la Ciudad, formed the jury at the 1939 Concurso Popular de Arte Folklórico.
referred to Andean indigenous wind ensemble traditions, through the instrumentals “Kena-Kena” (Aymará for “Large Kena”), “Sicuri” (alternate spelling for “sikuri,” or panpipe player), and “Kaluyo Italaqueño” (Kaluyo from Italaque). Inti-Karkas’ unusual estudiantina configuration, which included five charangos and an unspecified number of kenas, foregrounded locally distinctive instruments, to the point that the kenas and especially the charangos must have drowned out the guitars and mandolins.

The 1930s also mark the moment when working-class musicians came to outnumber their elite counterparts in the paceño estudiantina tradition, to the extent that by the end of the decade the expression conjunto obrero or “worker’s group” operated as a synonym for estudiantina (e.g., ED, Sep. 17, 1939; May 4, 1940). This dramatic change in the socio-economic background of estudiantina members occurred as the labor movement was undergoing major expansion, and experiencing political radicalization (see Lora 1977; John 2009). In December 1939, the estudiantinas 1° de Mayo, Kollasuyo, Inti-Karkas, and Lira Andina made their political sympathies clear when they chose to unveil the Liga Matriz Folklórica Departamental—an entity that would oversee paceño estudiantina activities—at the Sociedad de Obreros ‘El Porvenir’ (Workers’ Club ‘The Future’) (ED, Dec. 18, 1939). A mutual aid society for blue-collar workers, the Sociedad de Obreros ‘El Porvenir’ was strongly associated with radical-Leftism, ever since the club had organized Bolivia’s first public celebration of May Day in 1908 (Lora 1977: 52, 98).

The radical-Leftist political dispositions prevalent among paceño trade-union members most likely influenced their decision to select the estudiantina as their favored ensemble. As Bolivian radio listeners of the day knew full well, the plucked-string orchestra format recently had acquired a new association internationally, communism, as a result of the activities of Eastern Bloc ensembles. La Paz radio stations often broadcast recordings of these state-sponsored professional “folk” groups in the late 1930s, leading one journalist to complain in 1939 about the frequency with which Radio Illimani transmitted recordings of Russian balalaika groups and other Eastern European ensembles (ED, Mar. 8, 1939). By this period, then, for paceños the plucked string orchestra configuration no longer primarily called to mind the mischievous and apolitical university students who gave rise to Spain’s estudiantina tradition.

---

23 A highland indigenous panpipe genre, the chiriguano or chiriwano references the lowland chiriguano people.
24 The kaluyo or kjaluyo is a variant of the huayño genre that Bolivian musicians normally play at a slower tempo.
25 Conunto de Cuerdas Arteaga (Arteaga String Band) earned the second-place prize. The article that details the contest provides little information on them, beyond noting that the members were musically literate (ED, Nov. 4, 1939).
26 By the late 1940s, Bolivia’s principal syndical associations would espouse their allegiance to Trotskyism and its notion of “permanent revolution” to a scale only comparable to the cases in Vietnam and Sri Lanka (John 2009: 4).
27 For detailed discussions of Eastern European plucked-string orchestras, see Olsen (2004) and Buchanan (2006).
The Villarroel-MNR administration and the Orquesta Típica La Paz

On December 20, 1944, state-run Radio Illimani devoted a full day of programming to commemorating the one-year anniversary of Colonel Gualberto Villarroel’s presidency. In the late evening portion of the broadcast, top-ranking RADEPA-MNR government officials addressed the nation. Before President Villarroel’s lecture, a military brass band played the National Anthem, while the talk offered by MNR chief (and future President) Víctor Paz Estenssoro was followed by Filarmónica 1° de Mayo’s rendition of “Danza Guerrera” (War Dance), the opening movement of José Salmón Ballivián’s Suite Aymara. 1° de Mayo also presented the rest of this indigenista art-classical composition (“Danza Religiosa,” “Auki Auki,” “Cuando Florecen Las Habas”), interspersed between the following three speeches. Next, the group performed the cueca “Raquel” (Rachel), and to round out its set, the taquirari “Alianza” (Alliance)—a piece that likely alluded to the freshly restored Villarroel-MNR alliance. 1° de Mayo then ceded the stage to another estudiantina, Los Andes (The Andes), who closed Radio Illimani’s transmission that night with “native music and dance” selections (ED, Dec. 20, 1944).

Besides simply reflecting the estudiantina tradition’s popularity, 1° de Mayo and Los Andes’ prominent roles in the broadcast, combined with their overtly indigenista repertoire, aligned well with the populist rhetoric of the RADEPA-MNR government, and more specifically, with the regime’s mounting overtures toward urban blue-collar workers and rural indigenous people (see Gotkowitz 2007: 164–232). Of the two sectors, capturing the support of the urban working-class proved to be the greater challenge. At the time, the bulk of this heavily unionized segment of the population had joined the ranks of Bolivia’s leading communist party, the Partido de la Izquierda Revolucionaria (Party of the Revolutionary Left; PIR). The PIR formed part of the opposition to the RADEPA-MNR regime, whom it considered to represent a moderate-reformist, rather than truly revolutionary, administration (ibid.: 165). If Radio Illimani were to feature only one ensemble format in its nationally transmitted homage to Villarroel’s first year in office, therefore, the estudiantina made the most political sense for the state-operated station, because of the extent to which the unionized blue-collar workforce identified with the tradition.

A few months after the broadcast, in July 1945, the Orquesta Típica La Paz was born. A state-sponsored estudiantina—the first of its kind in Bolivia, the “Typical La Paz Orchestra” exclusively interpreted Bolivian works/arrangements, mainly those in the indigenista vein. The repertoire of the ensemble thus possessed more than a passing resemblance to what 1° de Mayo and Los Andes had presented on the December 1944 Radio Illimani show described above. The task of conceptualizing

---

28 RADEPA is the acronym for the short-lived military order Razón de Patria (Cause of the Nation). MNR is the abbreviation for the then leftist Movimiento Nacionalista Revolutionario (Nationalist Revolutionary Movement).

29 In March 1944, the Villarroel/RADEPA regime had expelled MNR members from top state positions, as a result of U.S. pressure to do so. The MNR officially rejoined the administration in December 1944 (Klein 1969: 372–77). At the Radio Illimani transmission described above, the estudiantina 1° de Mayo performed the taquirari “Alianza” moments before MNR founding member Hernán Siles Zuazo gave his address in the program (ED, Dec. 20, 1944).

30 In the 1940s, Bolivians also used the compound term “orquesta típica” for tango ensembles (e.g., ED, Aug. 22, 1942). The context usually clarifies whether the person is referring to an estudiantina or a ‘typical’ tango band. In Venezuela, local estudiantinas similarly were sometimes known as orquestas típicas (Torres 2007: 43).
the Orquesta Típica La Paz fell to José Salmón Ballivián (of Suite Aymara fame), Eduardo Calderón Lugones (who served on the jury at 1939’s Concurso Popular de Arte Folklórico), and Radio Municipal director Luis Lavadenz (a relative of Alberto Ruiz Lavadenz), in their capacity as the “Music Committee” appointed by the La Paz Municipality’s Consejo Departamental de Cultura (Regional Council of Culture) (ED, May 3 and 11, 1945).

To lead the group, the committee hired the German émigré Erich Eisner, whose duties included creating musical arrangements for the ensemble (ED, Jul. 11, 1945). An art-classical musician, Eisner recently had taken over the position of conductor with the National Symphony Orchestra (ED, Apr. 26, 1945). It is doubtful that Eisner possessed much knowledge about Bolivian indigenous music and criollo-mestizo genres, given his training and foreign birth, which would seem to make him an odd choice to direct the ensemble. However, like their upper-class counterparts around the world, the Bolivian elite tended to unproblematically view Western art-classical music as the ultimate musical expression. Accordingly, for the society figures that made up the Consejo Departamental de Cultura, Eisner must have seemed exceptionally qualified for the task of heading the Orquesta Típica La Paz. Expressing their agreement with the appointment, music critics in the major newspapers frequently commended the Orquesta Típica La Paz and its German-born conductor for “elevating” national folkloric music (e.g., ED, Jan. 13, Apr. 6 and 25, 1946). Comments such as these sprang from the art-classical music aesthetics that pervaded the group’s interpretive approach (see ibid.), a style of performance that represented somewhat of a return to the nineteenth-century roots of the paceño estudiantina as an upper-class criollo tradition.

The live broadcasts of state-owned Radio Municipal functioned as the main venue for the Orquesta Típica La Paz (e.g., ED, Jul. 6 and 16, 1945; Jan. 13, 1946), although the ensemble made public appearances as well from time to time. One of the first took place on Día del Indio (Day of the Indian) at the salon of the Ministerio de Educación, Bellas Artes, y Asuntos Indígenas (Ministry of Education, Fine Arts, and Indigenous Concerns) (ED, Jul. 31, 1945). The concert also featured recitations of indigenista poems, carrying titles such as “The Red Poncho” and “Homage to the Indian.” The Orquesta Típica La Paz, in its set, offered renderings of Simeón Roncal’s “Kaluyo Indio No. 2” (Indian Kaluyo No. 2), Ismael Zeballos’s “Chokolulu” (named after an Andean plant), and the latest Salmón Ballivián work, Trilogía India (Indian Trilogy). Made up of the movements “Plegaria Copacabana” (Copacabana Prayer), “Sikuri Thokoñani” (Aymará for “Sikuri Dance”), and “Marcha Militar Indio” (Indigenous Military March), Trilogía India rapidly would join the pantheon of acclaimed Bolivian compositions.32

By the next year, Eisner had substantially expanded the group’s repertoire, with his arrangements of Belisario Zárate’s Wara Wara (Aymará for “The Stars”) and Serenata Campestre-Tres Motivos Indianistas (Countryside Serenade-Three Indigenist Motives), José Lavadenz Inchauste’s Alma

31 Unfortunately, contemporaneous accounts do not mention the names of the musicians who formed part of the ensemble. In all likelihood, the Orquesta Típica La Paz drew its members from several local estudiantinas.

32 To my knowledge, the Orquesta Típica La Paz never recorded, so I am unable to address how the group interpreted these works. In recent years, the orchestra-estudiantina Música de Maestros (discussed below) has recorded some of the same repertoire (e.g., Trilogía India), often after making modifications to the compositions.
As the previous two paragraphs suggest, the Orquesta Típica La Paz focused its energies on the oeuvre of Bolivia’s most praised indigenista composers, in particular those who enjoyed name recognition in elite circles. The artistic inclinations and upper-class backgrounds of Salmón Ballivián and Calderón Lugones no doubt steered the Orquesta Típica La Paz to specialize in this repertoire, considering the role these figures played in the group’s conceptualization. Born into an illustrious paceño family that included former Bolivian presidents, Salmón Ballivián was an eminent politician who composed music as a hobby, while improvising on the piano. He never learned to read musical notation, so it fell to his daughters to transcribe/arrange Suite Aymara and Trilogía India (Rivera de Stahlie 1995: 71–73). Calderón Lugones similarly was an avid composer and proponent of indigenista musical works, but unlike Salmón Ballivián, had extensive formal training in music. A graduate of the National Conservatory, where he had studied violin, in the 1920s he assumed the position of violin professor at his alma mater, and by then already had written pieces for his instrument that integrated “Aymara motives” (Alarcón A. 1925: 376). In the 1930s, Calderón Lugones authored Canción de la Puna (Song of the Mountain) and La Sombra de los Llameros (The Shadow of the Llama Herders), which established his reputation as an indigenista art-classical composer (ED, Jul. 13, 1937; Cárdenas 1986: 50).

For Salmón Ballivián and Calderón Lugones, Potosí’s Orquesta Sinfóklórica Arte y Trabajo (Folk-Symphonic Orchestra Art and Labor) may have been a source of inspiration for the Orquesta Típica La Paz. Founded in the 1930s, and alternately known as the Sociedad Arte y Trabajo (Bigenho 2002: 127–28), the Potosí ensemble made a few appearances in La Paz in July 1945 (ED, Jul. 21, 22, and 24, 1945), the very month when the Orquesta Típica La Paz had its debut. Along with the conventional Bolivian estudiantina instruments (i.e., guitars, mandolins, bandurrias, charangos, kenas), the group’s format included flutes, violins, cellos, clarinets, saxophones, trombones, piano, bandoneón, and various other instruments. With over sixty musicians, the Orquesta Sinfóklórica Arte y Trabajo truly approximated the size of a Western European-style orchestra, as a photograph taken at one of its recitals documents (ED, Jul. 22, 1945). Bolivian compositions seem to have made up the majority of its repertoire, particularly the works of Potosí’s most celebrated composer, Humberto Iporre Salinas (e.g., “Oración del Mitayo,” cueca “Tu Orgullo”).

The following year, the Orquesta Típica La Paz directly appealed to blue-collar paceños, by offering a “free concert for the workers” at the prestigious Municipal Theater (ED, May 13, 1946). It

---

33 The Orquesta Típica La Paz performed all of the pieces listed in the above paragraph at the Municipal Theater in mid-1946 (ED, Apr. 2, Apr. 6, and May 13, 1946). President Villarroel attended the recital held on April 6.
would be one of the group’s last public appearances before the July 21, 1946 coup d’état that not only deposed the RADEPA-MNR government, but also shockingly ended the life of Villarroel, at the hands of a mob that moreover desecrated the President’s cadaver by hanging it on a lamppost in the main plaza, Plaza Murillo. Notwithstanding the administration’s numerous efforts at obtaining the support of diverse sectors, by mid-1946 few Bolivians backed the regime, outside of the Andean rural indigenous population (see below). The obrero class, for one, largely was unmoved by the populist overtures of the RADEPA-MNR government, and what is more, it played an active part in the overthrow of the regime (Gotkowitz 2007: 191, 233).

The Orquesta Típica La Paz ceased to exist soon after the fall of the RADEPA-MNR government, perhaps because the ensemble was too closely associated with the ousted administration. Whatever the case may be, La Paz’s estudiantina tradition began to decline in its popularity in the late 1940s, while the brass band usurped its place as the ensemble of choice for the urban working class. Yet in 1949 the estudiantina scene still boasted a large following among this segment of paceños, as evidenced by the fact that President Mamerto Urriolagoitia and other top state officials took the trouble to announce to the public that they would be donating the “valuable prizes” that would be awarded to the winners of the Concurso de Música Folklórica Nacional, an estudiantina contest hosted by the militant Sociedad de Obreros ‘El Porvenir’ (ED, Jul. 4, 16 and 24, 1949). The Urriolagoitia regime had brutally suppressed mine workers’ strikes earlier in the year (Klein 1969: 389–90), and as a consequence of this hostile action, the conservative administration was in dire need of mending its relations with the obrero sector.

Epilogue

In the late 1980s, paceño musician Rolando Encinas launched a new artistic endeavor, the estudiantina-orchestra Música de Maestros (Music of the Masters). Over the next two decades, the La Paz-based group would record many of the signature works of Bolivia’s “master composers” from the early-to-mid twentieth century, including, on more than one occasion, Salmón Ballivián’s Suite Aymara and Trilogía India (Bigenho 2002: 122–34). From the ensemble’s mission of valorizing the output of the country’s pioneering “nationalist” composers, to the estudiantina-inspired instrumentation the group employs, Música de Maestros bears a striking resemblance to the Orquesta Típica La Paz. However, when Encinas created Música de Maestros, Potosí’s Orquesta Sinfolklórica Arte y Trabajo served as his primary model (ibid.: 127–29), seemingly because he was unaware that the Orquesta Típica La Paz had ever existed.

That the Orquesta Típica La Paz was short-lived, while the Orquesta Sinfolklórica Arte y Trabajo remained in operation for several decades (1930s to 1960s), partially accounts for why the former ensemble’s place in Bolivian music history slipped the notice of Encinas, as it also has for many other equally dedicated Bolivian folkloric-popular music researchers, artists, and enthusiasts. Another factor that possibly has contributed to the lack of local consciousness about the Orquesta Típica La Paz is the group’s connection with a failed state initiative, that is, the RADEPA-MNR government’s attempt to win over the urban working-class. The regime’s proposed alliance with Andean indigenous leaders and communities, on the other hand, reached fruition, and moreover paved the way for
future coalitions between the Bolivian state and indigenous people (Gotkowitz 2007). Of the RADEPA-MNR government’s initiatives involving musical practices, it is therefore not surprising that the only one that scholars usually mention is 1945’s Concurso Vernacular y Folklórico, a state-sponsored festival that showcased Andean indigenous tropas from numerous provinces of the La Paz region (e.g., Paredes 1949: 31–32; Buechler 1980: 339; Paredes Candia 1984: 170; Céspedes 1993: 99; Sánchez 1994: 7).

Some of the other La Paz estudiantinas that were active in the 1940s persisted into the next decade, including the venerable Filarmónica 1° de Mayo (ED, Jan. 12, 1953). Newly established paceño groups were few and far between in the 1950s, though, and none came close to attaining the recognition of their precursors. As the public increasingly viewed the tradition as being old-fashioned, a number of estudiantina musicians bade farewell to their bandmates, to form part of other ensemble-types, with which they hoped to maximize their career possibilities.

Two longstanding members of Estudiantina Huñay Inti, Estéban del Río and Nicolás ‘K’aquita’ García, chose this course of action. A Western transverse flutist whose musical arrangements include settings of Andean indigenous music (e.g., “Sicuris”), Del Río gained a nationwide audience in 1954 when he joined Radio Illimani’s newest house band, Conjunto 31 de Octubre (October 31st). Later in the decade, K’aquita García, who played the charango, teamed up with kena soloist Jaime Medinaceli in Conjunto Kollasuyo (unrelated to the estudiantina of the same name), for its tour of the USSR, Czechoslovakia, and China with the Fantasia Boliviana delegation. Conjunto 31 de Octubre and Conjunto Kollasuyo presaged an important direction in Bolivian music, the criollo-mestizo tradition known as the Andean conjunto or pan-Andean band. Four-to-six-member groups of this variety (i.e., kena/zampoña-charango-guitar-bombo)—whose indigenous-themed repertoire exhibits many parallels with that of the indigenista estudiantinas of the 1930s and 1940s—largely have come to define Bolivian “national folkloric music” from the late 1960s onward (e.g., Los Jairas, Savia Andina, Los Kjarkas). Paceño estudiantinas, therefore, played a critical early role in popularizing the practice of interpreting or stylizing Andean indigenous genres, within the field of criollo-mestizo music.

Nowadays, the estudiantina has experienced a resurgence in Bolivia. Two directions characterize the scene. The first one, which takes after the example of Música de Maestros, is defined by an ethos of nationalist-revivalism, and primarily encompasses groups of fairly recent origin (e.g., Estudiantina Primavera; Orquesta Típica Nacional de Bolivia ‘Teófilo Vargas’). However, older ensembles whose trajectories date back to the tradition’s heyday sometimes perform alongside these newer groups, as they are similarly invested in restoring Bolivia’s traditional music of yesteryear (e.g., Estudiantina 10 de Febrero, Estudiantina Challapampa). The second direction in Bolivia’s

34 Founded in 1936, Huñay Inti (also spelled Wiñay Inti) quickly established its reputation in the estudiantina scene, as evidenced by the many trophies they won at music contests (e.g., ED, Nov. 6, 1939; Jul. 11, 1940; Jul. 21, 1941; Feb. 21, 1942). Member Walter Guerra Peñaranda composed their theme song, the eponymous cueca “Huñay Inti”; Música de Maestros recorded this tune in 1994, 1998, and 2005. In a recent interview, Rolando Encinas recalled that his uncle, Antonio Vázquez, played in Estudiantina Huñay Inti in the 1960s (Últimas Noticias, Feb. 12, 2017).

35 For more on Conjunto 31 de Octubre and Conjunto Kollasuyo, see Chapter 5 of my forthcoming book. The nickname of Conjunto Kollasuyo’s Nicolás García, k’aquita, references a traditional type of Bolivian bread.
estudiantina scene has nothing to do with musical nationalism. Instead, this cohort of ensembles is devoted to recreating the original performance style of Spanish estudiantinas, through their repertoire, apparel, and instrumentation. Most of these groups are attached to universities, and prefer to be called tunas, apparently to distinguish themselves from local estudiantinas belonging to the nativist-revivalist current. The Eurocentric and nationalist orientations in Bolivian estudiantina practices that I have outlined in this essay thus exist side by side today in urban La Paz and the country’s other major cities.

References


