

symbols, aimed either at a new, broader audience or at the same community audience but with the new purpose of coining group identity. This transition to a new role has raised important concerns among performers and communities. Often, when the symbolic value of a music or dance form is amplified, it may displace the culturally internal roles and meanings that gave the music life and social relevance in the first place.

When Afro-Cuban drummer, singer, and spiritual leader Felipe García Villamil came to the United States, he was asked to perform his private ritual music for general American audiences. He took on the challenge of demystifying for and instilling in others an appreciation of the *cultural* importance of the music, dance, symbols, and customs of his *lucumí*, *palo*, and *abakuá* traditions. To do this, he crafted performances that balanced the sharing of public knowledge of his religion with the need to maintain the secrecy of certain elements intended only for the initiated. In the North American context, García accepted the value of his tradition as a public, symbolic representation of Afro-Cuban culture, while at the same time keeping its spiritual integrity. Karol Aurora de Jesús Reyes is unreserved about the capacity of her *música jíbara* to proudly represent her culture without artistic compromise: "It will make us shine before the world, and then people will hear the music and say, 'Look, that is the music from Puerto Rico.'" She brims with pride in her music.

Tito Matos has shown the creative potential in the *panderetas* in Puerto Rican *plena* music. Photo by Daniel Sheehy



VAMOS A BAILAR: LET'S DANCE!

OLGA NÁJERA-RAMÍREZ

Dance forms an integral part of Latino cultures, occupying a special place as popular entertainment, in religious ceremonies, and as an expression of national pride. It is also vibrant and dynamic, shaped by the same processes of hybridization and transculturation that have continued to redefine culture, society, politics, and identity in the Americas since the colonial period.

In Spanish, "dance" is translated as both *danza* and *baile*. Technically, there is no difference between these terms, but in vernacular speech, *danza* often refers to ritual dance that is rooted in indigenous practice. During the process of colonization, *danza* gradually fused indigenous and Euro-Christian beliefs and practices. Today, *danza* continues to be performed throughout the Americas. Some of the best-known *danzas* include *la danza de moros y cristianos*, *la danza de los matachines*, and *la danza de la conquista*. Despite the broad variation in names and its syncretic nature, *danza* is almost always associated with "lo indio" or indigenism.

Baile refers to secular, social dance performed by couples at parties, commercial dance halls, and nightclubs. Waves of European immigrants brought popular ballroom dances, such as the polka, the waltz, and the *habanera*, that contributed to the development of mestizo regional dances. African-based traditions also sparked the creation of new song and dance styles. The *cumbia*, for example, emerged from the African-based traditions of coastal Colombia to become a favorite pan-American dance and musical style now played by regional ensembles such as the *chanchona* from El Salvador and the *mariachi* from Mexico. *Bailes folclóricos* represent another type of popular dance. Stylized and choreographed for staged presentations, *bailes folclóricos* promote national pride, cultural heritage, and tourism.

Today, globalization has increased the movement of peoples and cultures within and across national borders. As a result, regional dances are becoming more widely known beyond their place of origin. Localized traditions from Latin America are springing up in new cultural environments throughout the United States. Although dance is continually changing in form, function, style, and context, it remains one of the most important and widespread expressive forms in Latino cultures.

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