

ICS Seminar Series

INSTITUTE FOR CULTURE AND SOCIETY

Rhythm, Metre and the Mobility of Musical Practices

Alejandro Miranda

Date

Thursday 30 October

Time

11.30am - 1pm

Venue

EB.2.21 Parramatta South
campus

Abstract

Music making, amongst a myriad of cultural practices, is on the move. This phenomenon has been reflected in the increasing interest of scholarly debates on how music is practiced across social spaces. However, studies of mobilities have emphasised spatial dimensions while glossing over its temporalities and social rhythms (Kaufmann 2002: 22). Drawing on ethnography conducted in various locations of Mexico and the United States, this paper discusses the mobility of musical practices and its rhythms as a way to analyse the transportation of ways of making and experiencing music across networks of relationships. The notion of rhythm is advanced as a heuristic device to analyse the reproduction, appropriation and recreation of musical practices.

The specific case of *son jarocho* is addressed to explore and discuss this notion. *Son jarocho* is a musical practice originated in southeast Mexico and it is believed to be a combination of African, Nahua and Spanish-Andaluz traditions. Practitioners have used *son jarocho* to elaborate discourses of authenticity and preservation of a regional musical heritage; however, it is currently also sustained, informed and reshaped by translocal linkages. Furthermore, the transformation of various aspects of this musical practice has been a noticeable outcome of its putative recuperation. These changes can be traced to very concrete elements, such as ways of improvising, articulating verses and playing musical phrases. I suggest that *son jarocho* is not confined to a bounded and coherent community or ethnic group, but constitutes a complex practice in which repertoires of bodily gestures, routines and improvisational forms are mobilised across social spaces.

Biography

Alejandro Miranda is a PhD Candidate at the Institute for Culture and Society at the University of Western Sydney. His research addresses the mobilities of cultural practices across social spaces and their relationship with belonging, attachment, amateurship and transnationalism. He holds a Masters in social sciences from Linköping University and an undergraduate degree in sociology from the National Autonomous University of Mexico. He has performed as professional guitarist in several countries. In 2004 he was awarded with the first prize at the National Competition of Guitar Ensembles, and also at the Chamber Music Competition of the French Embassy in Mexico.