

UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA

DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC

**Partially-Automated Live Performance
by Latin American Musicians in Two Canadian Cities:
Musical Identity and Authenticity in a Globalized
Cultural Economy**

by

Brigido Galván

In partial fulfillment of the requirements of the

Master in Music [M. Mus.]

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Abstract

This ethnographic study examines the roles digital technologies (sequencers, drum machines, synthesizers, samplers, and computers) play in the musical practices of nine Latin American musicians participating in the local live music scenes of Ottawa and Montreal in the 1990s. Music has historically played a fundamental role in the construction of collective identities for Latin American musicians in the diaspora. A declining local musical economy combined with prevalent aesthetic value systems have made the use of automation in live performance an attractive and/or necessary alternative for some local Latin American musicians. The use of digital technologies, and in particular the use of automation, has particular implications for established notions of musical competence, creativity and ultimately of musical and cultural authenticity. This study looks at the notion of musical authenticity and its indelible connection with cultural, political, social and economic issues. It investigates the effects technology has on the ability of Latin American musicians to assert individual and collective identities in two of Canada's highly multicultural urban environments. As a site of social, economic and cultural struggle, exchange and interaction, the live performances of Latin American musicians are historically situated within the global/local cultural economic nexus of Canada's late twentieth-century.

Pour Nicole toujours

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INTRODUCTION

Partially-automated live performance brings issues of musical identity and authenticity to the centre of ongoing debate particularly amongst Latin American musicians now living in Canada and experiencing the massive social, cultural, economic, and political restructuring of late twentieth-century globalization.

Too mechanic...

Creativity suffers... It was bad enough having to sound like the record and now having to sound like the machine, or as the machine prescribes. It inhibits arranging and improvisational skills. This is because *sequences* [MIDI song files]¹ are fixed in time and in length... Creativity suffers. The machine rules.

Jorge Calero, keyboard player and leader of the group *Chico Band*, Montreal Jan., 1995.

Many Latin musicians criticize and put it down, but if they had access to it, then it becomes a question of [self-] interest that makes them change their minds. If they see that it sounds good, that they make money and have work, they accept it. Of course, there are some who make war against small groups working with sequences. So the two or three *salsa* places that exist here hire big bands with fourteen or fifteen musicians because they pay them the same price as they pay a small combo. They chose them over small combos using machines because they say the visual thing is important.

Rubén Arancibia, freelance musician, arranger and programmer, Montreal, Feb., 1995.

I do not have anything against machines but the artistic aspect is dying out. Many musicians are leaving out natural talents that you cultivate as you grow up. All of these things are being lost, we are becoming musical robots and technicians. You no longer need to be able to play to produce music. It is not very convincing when you hear an orchestra and you see only one musician playing guitar. One has to be careful with that because, instead of being player of music, one becomes player of sequences. One only presses a button and becomes a musician. You are playing your sequence, you are not playing your music. You have to think about that when you program. Even though I am very laid back and shy, it is important that people see what I do musically on stage. They must see that. So my movements in some cases, when doing this kind of performance, become more conscious as if to say, look at me, I am playing.

Ramón Flores, keyboard player, percussionist of duo *Felicidad*, Ottawa, Jan., 1995.

This thesis is an in-depth ethnography of the musical activities and views of nine fellow professional musicians of Latin American origin who are involved in the use of partially-automated live performances in the cities of Ottawa and Montreal. By partially-automated live performance, I mean the implementation of music technologies allowing, for example, one or two musicians to produce in live performance the sound of a complete band or orchestra. MIDI² technologies make this possible through musician's live performance interaction with the digitally pre-programmed automation of any given number of musical parts.

The nine musicians who agreed to participate in this study include: in Ottawa, keyboardists Marco Zarco and Ramón Flores from Mexico of the duo *Felicidad*, and solo singer-keyboardist-guitarist Carlos Avila from Peru; in Montreal, Rubén Arancibia, a freelance musician arranger and programmer from Argentina; also all five members of the group *Chico Band* consisting of keyboardist Jorge Calero and bass player Danilo Brizuela from El Salvador, singer Delsa Germosen from the Dominican Republic, percussionists Lazaro René and Roberto Martel from Cuba. Each of these collaborating musicians has immigrated to Canada between the early 1970s and late 1980s. I have selected these nine musicians for my study on the basis that their respective positions are related to various important musical and social aspects of current uses of music technology in the local live music scenes of Ottawa and Montreal. Under pressure from the drastic economic decline, which has unfolded in Canada since the early 1980s, these musicians have been faced with serious professional dilemmas. Wider accessibility to digital music technology has enabled these nine musicians to maintain a certain viability in a dwindling live music market. It has also allowed them to maintain currency with aesthetic codes prevalent in the current global popular music contexts.

However, by virtue of the automated nature of their performances, these musicians often face criticism concerning musical competence, creativity, and the very validity of their musical performance.

This is precisely the object of my study: to examine how these concerns and opportunities have been formulated, negotiated, and debated. My particular interest is to examine how professional Latin American musicians who are involved in partially-automated live performances in the Canadian urban centres of Ottawa and Montreal formulate, negotiate, debate, and otherwise deal with some of the dilemmas and opportunities (re)presented by digital music technologies. More specifically, I aim to investigate the ways in which Rubén Arancibia from Argentina, Lazaro René and Roberto Martel from Cuba, Jorge Calero and Danilo Brizuela from El Salvador, Carlos Avila from Peru, Delsa Germosen from the Dominican Republic, and Marco Zarco and Ramón Flores from Mexico, through their specific use, rejection and/or criticism of specific music technologies, assert their individual and cultural identity within the complex multicultural Canadian urban context. I hope to demonstrate how notions of musical competence and authenticity, as articulated in the musical practices of these Latin musicians, are implicated in notions of collective and individual identity and cultural authenticity and how these notions themselves are lately bound up increasingly with the phenomenon known as globalization.

BRIEF REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Digital music technology and the redefinition of live performance: emerging concerns

My study owes much to the few but very valuable contributions which have been made towards understanding the roles digital technologies play in the production and significance of music since the mid-1980s. Paul Théberge's works dealing with the social and economic dynamics of digital music technology markets provide useful insights into the ways in which the production-consumption nexus has been problematized by the mutually influential relationship between technological innovations and musical practices since the emergence of MIDI (1987a; 1987b; 1991; 1993). Wallis and Malm (1990) have also examined technology's role as an integral part of a process of global "transculturation" facilitated by a dynamic transnational music industry. The studies by Andrew Goodwin (1990) and Ross Harley (1993) focus on the disruptive effects of digital technology on the politics of musical representation. Their studies have provided me with helpful perspectives on how uses of digital technologies have resulted in the questioning and reformulation of notions of creativity, competence and, ultimately, of musical authenticity.³ My intention in this study is to contribute to the scope of such ongoing research on music technology by focusing specifically on its effects on live performance. To my knowledge, virtually no study exists that deals specifically with the use of digital automation technology in live performance. Thomas Porcello's (1994) study on some of the recording practices of the popular music industry has highlighted for me how issues of representation for a number of popular stars in the 1990s are based on particular ideological premises surrounding notions of live performance. In a similar vein, Steve Jones' survey of

technology (1992) and its role in the creation of rock aesthetics and economy has provided me with valuable insights into the ways new music and recording technologies in the recording studio have mediated, and thus influenced, the nature and significance of live performance.

Popular music and technology: economic determinism versus human agency

Simon Frith is clear on the issue of the benefits and perils new technologies pose for musicians and culture at large. According to him, technological development, which propitiated the rise of global power monopolies such as the multinational music industries, has now yielded “new forms of cultural democracy,” providing new opportunities of individual and collective expression (Frith, 1986:278). Explaining the cultural significance of technology in absolute terms-- good or bad-- is, in his opinion, highly problematic. While technology’s design and purpose may not only originate from, but also reinforce particular “hierarchical regime(s) of power” (Arnowitz, 1994:28) in social and market structures, increasing proliferation and accessibility have also made some technologies highly susceptible to the subversion of those established power arrangements (Penley and Ross 1991b:xi). Thus despite claims of imperialist commodification of indigenous music cultures, a phenomenon such as world music, for example, also emerges as a sign of increasing democratization facilitated through technology and manifested in the emergence of international music markets and independent labels that are not necessarily controlled by Northern Western corporations. In short, while the corporate creation of the controversial “world music” category supports

claims that technology is generating post-industrial brands of colonization, it can also be argued that technology has facilitated new modes of individual agency (Frith 1986:278; Wallis and Malm, 1990:161).⁴

Appropriation of technology and processes of hybridization: theoretical and methodological problems

Appropriation of music technology has come to be recognized by some scholars as part of the process of hybridization. At the same time, hybridization has been increasingly recognized as integral to the construction of cultural identity. The underlying assumption is not only that cultural appropriation can no longer be simplistically considered a matter of cultural and economic survival exclusive to the underprivileged nor the means exclusive to hegemonic domination and co-option.⁵ Instead, hybridization is increasingly being recognized as the underlying process through which power relations and aspirations are articulated, transformed, and negotiated by groups and individuals. As a result, the conceptual pairs of opposites such as hybridity/authenticity, syncretism/purity, are being challenged (Collins and Richards 1981:13; also, Mitchell 1993:311). However, some scholars charge that random appropriation does much to disperse the historical specificity of cultural expressions such as music (Jameson 1983:119).⁶

Will Straw states that to resolve such dilemma a more focused methodological approach is needed that deals with music cultures on a "case-by-case basis." In reference to black and indigenous music cultures and their particular "entry into a global pop culture," Straw argues that "while it is apparent that a global pop music culture now (early 1990s) exists as a repertory of resources for any given musician, the criteria by which those resources

are deemed appropriate to a given conjuncture are nevertheless worked out in an ongoing and complex elaboration and definition of values” (Straw 1991:250; also, Mitchell 1993:333). Ultimately, my goal in this study is to follow up on Straw’s recommendations for a more focused methodology by addressing the cultural and historical specificities of social relations in which individual musicians engage in cultural interactions and exchanges through music.

Local music practices and the need for ethnography

All of the studies so far mentioned have dealt almost exclusively with musical practices and production strategies in the wider context of the music industry. Local music practices at the “lower end” of the economic scale in urban Western contexts have been largely ignored in popular music studies and ethnomusicology.⁷ This oversight has, in my opinion, skewed the roles technology and individual agency may play in the construction of cultural and social identity in music (Frith, 1987:149). My ethnographic approach owes much to Sara Cohen’s recommendations that local live music scenes must be recognized as an important and integral part of the global exchange involving micro and macro economies and cultural landscapes in the post-industrial era (1993). In this study, I therefore aim to address the complex historical specificities of music practices of urban popular musics, in particular in Ottawa and Montreal.

Thus at a more particular, yet interrelated levels, I wish to address the roles technology plays amongst Latin musicians within the specific historic and cultural conditions of the Canadian diasporic context in the cities of Ottawa and Montreal. Latin American immigrant communities have become one of the largest and fastest growing in Canada since

the early to mid-1970s.⁸ The 1991 national census reported over 215, 000 Latin Americans Canada-wide with over 130,000 living in Ontario and about 40, 000 in Quebec. Documentation of Latin American cultures that address issues of adaptation and cross-cultural relations in the Canadian multicultural context is urgently needed. Already, there have been important studies dealing with the roles of Latin musics in the United States and their important roles in American culture.⁹ While the roles of Latin musicians and audiences in the United States and other important locales are highly relevant to any study of Latin American popular music, the historical, social and cultural specificities within which Latin American musicians and audiences live in Canadian contexts must be independently addressed. In this regard, Lise Waxer's study dealing with the roles Latin music and musicians play in the social and cultural interaction and exchange in Toronto's complex multicultural contexts (1991) has provided me with extremely important perspectives on crucial issues.

The MIDI revolution and Latin American music: new challenges to musical authenticity

Regardless of any particular position in ongoing debates about its benefits or perils, it is widely acknowledged that technology, with its productive and reproductive powers, lies at the very core of the existence, and thus the history, of popular music at large (Frith 1987). But what is crucial to any study of late twentieth-century popular music is that the advent of digital music technology has signaled a definite new era whereby modes of production, consumption and, ultimately, the significance of music have drastically changed. Since the emergence of MIDI in the mid-1980s, with its performance automation and its sound production and reproduction capabilities, established notions of live performance and musical

competence have been, and continue to be, questioned and revised in most popular music spheres (Goodwin 1990:262). The proliferation of digital automation and sound synthesis have given rise to new aesthetic value systems based on new ways of producing and listening to music (Wallis and Malm 1990:171). Moreover, the rise of such music technologies and techniques has contributed as well to the forging of new musical languages.

For many Latin musicians in North America, access to such technologies has been necessary and/or even desirable in order to continue to participate as professional musicians in the current rapidly changing and highly fragmented global economy and social environment. Given the historical significance attached to long-held notions of live performance and musical competence in many Latin American and other music traditions, the dilemmas and questions faced by some musicians are anything but easy to resolve. For many, the very notion of musical authenticity is in crisis.

I intend to examine the paradoxical roles digital technology plays in the significance of the live presentations of the nine Latin American musicians collaborating in this study. Appropriation of music technology by Latin musicians has brought to the fore the issues of cultural identity and authenticity. These issues are particularly crucial in the diasporic context. For Latin musics, as is the case with other “peripheral” forms of popular music often subsumed under the controversial heading of “world music,”¹⁰ authenticity sits astride a historical paradox. On the one hand, Latin people’s musical histories and traditions have been largely constructed on the margins of modernity under the discursive category of

'underdevelopment,' the 'simple,' and the 'rustic.' On the other, as the 'exotically authentic.' they have also formed integral and active part of modern global cultural and economic networks.

Under such circumstances, a number of important questions arise. How do individual Latin musicians in the complex Canadian urban context make use of sound synthesis and automation technology to mediate the cultural, historical, and political significance of their music in their live presentations? How do they articulate notions of cultural and individual identity in relation to complex and heterogeneous audiences? In which ways are sound synthesis and automation implicated in musical discourses based on notions of nationality, race, culture, ethnicity, gender and social status amongst Latin musicians? How does music technology mediate social relations integral to the music practices of Latin American musicians? How are Latin American musicians, through music technology, implicated in the creation of space and time, integral aspects of the historical discourses articulated through live performances? In other words, how do the pre-programmed or "fixed" aspects of partially-automated performance affect the historical specificity of performance when they are transposed across various historical realms. And finally, how does this process advance or inhibit a musician's ability to evoke a particular senses of history and of origin, senses which are crucial towards the opening of social spaces within a particular cultural economy?

Such questions have become crucial in the late 20th century as massive geo-political reconfigurations, mass population displacements and a globalized economy and culture have dramatically intensified conflicts over local identity. Current conditions have brought about a crisis where the *nation-state* paradigm, once conceived upon mythic notions of homogeneity,

is being redefined. The conditions in which Latin musicians find themselves in the complex multicultural Canadian urban context present optimum and, at the same time, specific examples of the ways in which current global conditions affect such processes as adaptation and the forging of national identities. My theoretical perspective and methodological approach aims to discern how, intentionally or not, Latin American musicians position themselves politically, culturally and socially through music in the complex multicultural Canadian context. The overarching question is: as part of the so-called processes of cultural hybridization, what roles do appropriations of digital technology play in Latin musicians' ability to assert cultural and individual identity while participating in a multilateral and polyphonic cultural and economic exchange? (Guilbault, 1993a; Appadurai 1990:306).

METHODOLOGY

Historical specificity and ethnography

The following comments illustrate how individual Latin American musicians in Ottawa and Montreal selectively manipulate, emphasize, or even suppress the use of certain technologies according to specific conditions of performance.

I do not like to make my sequences sound like an orchestra. I still prefer to make my performances sound like a [small] group. I do not like to accompany the machine, I want the machine to accompany me. It is very important. Many musicians commit that error of using the advantages of these machines to overproduce sequences. But that is not the goal of the machines. The machine should complement your work not you complement the machine.

Ramón Flores, Ottawa, Jan., 1995.

Today, I cannot imagine playing some of the types of music we do in this band with only acoustic drums. People would not feel the same.

Marco Zarco, Ottawa, Jan., 1995.

You don't take your sequencer to play at the [Montreal] Jazz Festival.

Rubén Arancibia. Montreal, May., 1995.

Cohen argues that appropriate ethnographic approaches are needed to address the specific historical circumstances within which individuals and groups interact and define and articulate their identities through music (Cohen, 1993). As Cohen (ibid.), Straw (1991) and Frith (1987:149) remark, discourses on authenticity are indelibly tied to notions of locality and history, notions whose theoretical conceptualization in the so-called postmodern era have become increasingly elusive. That is the reason why the construction of Latin histories and localities emerging in musical performance in Ottawa and Montreal should not simply be accounted for in overarching typological terms which would render musicians ahistorical and monolithic. Instead, attention should be paid to the ways in which musical authenticity becomes, for the individual musician, the means to assert social space and to evoke a sense of place and history.

It is clear that music technologies are invested with multiple meanings. It is necessary, then, that I address the specific significance invested in specific technologies and their particular uses by individual musicians. As mentioned earlier, my intention here is to problematize the significance of music technology beyond the confines of economic determinism as well as utopian postmodernism. As I will argue in this project, issues of representation emphasized by the use of partially-automated live performance dramatically blur distinctions between economic, cultural and political criteria. Timothy Druckrey emphasizes that, given the radical reconfiguration of forms of representation brought about by technology, it has become necessary to deconstruct representation itself. It is no longer

productive to deterministically subsume each single technology under its own neatly defined monolithic function and cultural effect. Implicit in Druckrey's argument is that there is a need to address specific technologies and their multidimensional historical and social implications for individuals in specific circumstances (1994). Ultimately Druckrey's insights, Cohen's recommendations, and those of other scholars usefully allow me to address what is at stake in this study, that is, the recognition of the *historical agency*¹¹ exercised by individual Latin American musicians in the cities of Ottawa and Montreal.

This study is primarily an ethnographic examination of live performance, musical practices and related discourses amongst Latin American musicians. My role as an active musician with past and present musical interactions and professional relationships with some of the individuals involved qualifies my ethnographic strategy as that of participant observation. My ethnographic inquiry consisted of interviews and observations of live performances and rehearsals. It also included dialogues about the roles of music and musicians in the diaspora and the way technology has been helping to shape those roles. It focused on the musical/technical aspects of partially-automated live performance. The disruptive nature this type of performance has on long-established music practices dramatically emphasizes how an individual's aesthetic value systems, notions of musical competence, knowledge and creativity often intersect with political, cultural, and ideological notions. The purpose of my ethnography is, therefore, to underline the role of live performance as a site where individual and collective representations take place. It is also to demonstrate how, through their live performances, Latin American musicians in Ottawa and Montreal not only cross, but belong to a multiplicity of social, cultural and historical localities.

The interviews

My interviews with the musicians were oriented particularly towards two interrelated areas: their oral histories based on their personal musical trajectories, and their positions on issues of competence, musical knowledge and creativity in relation to music technology. The body of ethnographic material for the study was collected and dated in Ottawa and Montreal during the period of November 1994 and June 1995. Most of the twenty-two interviews conducted were audio-taped. Hand-written data was collected simultaneously in some instances. Most of the taped interviews with single individuals were conducted at each musician's residences. These interviews lasted from one to two hours. Group interviews only occurred at venues of performance and site rehearsals. Those and other informal interviews, such as dialogues over the telephone and more informal conversations, have been collected in the form of hand-written notes. Although I invested considerably more time with the persons directly involved in the handling of the technologies in question, all musicians fully participated in the project. This allowed me to examine different positions within the musical ensemble. I have translated from Spanish all quotes of the musicians, views and comments included.

Technological innovations and theoretical scope

The theoretical scope and orientation of my inquiry was based on a survey of the novelties of digital technology combined with my own professional experience. The purpose was to provide a solid background for discussion with the participants on the opportunities and limitations digital technology presented. My survey dealing with these and other

significant aspects of partially-automated live performance was documented from product users publications, popular magazines dealing directly with music technology, and spec-sheets of some the most important products in the market. As a user of such technology at the professional level since 1986, I have also independently developed an interest and a solid background on the topic. Most of this background has also a lot to do with my professional interactions with other musicians, some of whom are participants in this project.

For the most part, my survey focused on the most important concern for musicians (and manufacturers), that is, the '*humanization*' of music technology. Due to its mechanic nature, humanization of music technology has been central to the discourse of performance automation. Manufacturers fiercely compete to be the first to attain the next upgrade which can best approximate the rhythmic 'randomness,' fluidity and overall musical interactivity of '*human*' players. My particular interest in this aspect was to discern how technology affects or mediates the social and musical interactions of music practices. Such information helped me to demonstrate not only how musicians musically interact with particular technologies, but also the ways in which these technologies fundamentally affect social and musical relations amongst musicians, and also between musicians and their audiences.

Another area of ethnographic focus which informed the technical scope of my investigation was the pre-programmed and fixed musical elements of partially-automated performance. My goal in this regard was to deal particularly with the discursive category of *real time*,¹² which not surprisingly has emerged as integral and necessary to a technological discourse where an increasingly disjunctured relationship between time and space has occurred in the post-industrial era. As part of the same area of study, I also focused attention

on the aspects of music through which Latin American musicians articulate a sense of place, locality and origin. This entailed discourse examination on selective strategies of repertoire, musical concepts and promotional strategies which implied or intersected with given notions of collective origin, such as nationality, ethnicity and culture. My goal in this regard is to confirm Stokes and Cohen's assertion that music plays a powerful role in the articulation and creation of social space, place and history. Along with these two authors, I challenge claims that technological mediations have resulted in the postmodern dehistoricization of experience.¹³

A personal perspective

My arrival in Canada as a professional musician from my native Mexico in 1971 was very much part of the North American "boom" for live Latin music in various urban club scenes.¹⁴ It also coincided with the very beginning of the migratory waves to Canada from Latin America. As a band leader performing various Latin and non-Latin musics, I have experienced and watched closely the decline of live music venues in Canada subsequent to the decline of the world economy and other related factors since the 1980s. In the midst of a surging new global economic dynamics and technological revolution, I also have had first hand experience with the dilemmas that have arisen with the use of performance automation technology in live performance.

As a professional musician and academic, operating in various musical and social contexts, I consider myself to be an active participant in the swiftly and drastically changing social and economic conditions that have shaped the political and cultural life of Canada in the last two decades. My research topic and theoretical and methodological approaches are thus

very much influenced by very personal experience. In the process of probing the effects technology has had for the musical expression of individual Latin American musicians, I hope to address some of the challenges Latin Americans in Canada face in their contribution towards the forging of a nation. Ultimately, this study is about the lives of Latin American musicians in urban Canada who, through their live performances, are involved in the construction of cultural, social and political identity through their appropriations of technology and the collage of sounds emerging from different cultural, historical, social and geographical contexts.

Chapters' description

This study consists of four chapters. The first three chapters present a social history of partially- automated live performance amongst Latin musicians in Ottawa and Montreal. They are aimed at historically situating Latin Americans musicians by identifying the ways in which partially-automated performance technologies have become part of their musical languages and realities as live performers in the 1990s. In these first three chapters, the musical histories and views of some of the individual musicians have been selected and interwoven into the social history of partially-automated live performance in order to illustrate particular important economic, cultural, political or social aspects bearing upon local musical practices.

In the first chapter, I outline the most important global economic, political and social developments which, particularly in the last two decades, have profoundly affected the local live music economies of Ottawa and Montreal. The phenomenon of globalization, I argue, has been directly and indirectly implicated in the emergence of partially-automated performance as

part of the cultural, economic and musical set of strategic alternatives amongst Latin musicians in the local musical economies of Ottawa and Montreal in the 1990s.

In the second chapter, I examine how those economic and social conditions are involved in current Canadian politics of identity and how together, these contribute to the social and political positionings of Latin American musicians in the two cities. I focus particularly on the processes of cultural and economic interactions and exchanges in which musicians are involved in their attempt to construct a niche for themselves in a local musical economy whose cultural politics are concurrently played out in a global context.

In the third chapter, I examine some of the main ideological premises underlining the issue of musical authenticity in relation to live performance and technological mediation amongst Latin American musicians. Here, I investigate how individual Latin American musicians negotiate particular and often contradictory notions of musical competence and creativity historically embedded in popular music practices and discourses. My intent here is to underline how popular concepts of musical competence and creativity often intersect with ideological premises informed by notions of race, ethnicity, nationality, gender and other interests and aspirations.

The fourth and final chapter deals with the ways in which music technology affects a musician's ability to mediate the significance, representation and organization of space and time in a local musical economy. It first addresses questions which have arisen with the seeming disjuncture of time and space which has come to increasingly characterize late capitalism. Following this, I attempt to identify the various roles music technology plays in a Latin American musician's ability to attain social space in a complex multicultural context.

More specifically, I aim to locate performance as the articulation of a politics of place, place being a site of identity where the control of time and space are collectively negotiated, and assigned significance through performance. In the same theoretical vein, I examine the ways in which musicians mediate some of the rhythmic limitations and/or possibilities offered by digital technologies in live performance. The question is: to what degree is the “mechanical” and “digitized” nature of partially-automated live performance able to inhibit or promote cultural distinctiveness and meaningful musical interactions? Ultimately, this chapter embodies a brief critique of the historical construction of space and time as autonomous dimensions of reality and experience. It addresses issues relating to the creation of space, time, place, origin and history through music. These issues are crucial for Latin American musicians as they position themselves in the postmodern cultural economy of urban Canada.

NOTES

¹*Sequence* is the term local musicians in Ottawa and Montreal commonly use to refer to the digitally pre-programmed musical accompaniment used in the partially-automated live performance of particular songs. However, I will be using the term *MIDI song file* given the fact that it is the term most commonly used at a more globally commercial level. A MIDI song file is a digital data-storage format which contains the pre-programmed instrumental musical performance of a particular song. When played through a sequencer and sound module(s), a MIDI song file produces the audio sound of all or selected instrumental parts of a particular song-arrangement (for example a full orchestra or band, a rhythm, string or horn sections, or any single instrument, such as a bass). There is already a wide thriving market for MIDI song files. Many local musicians are now producing MIDI song files for sale to other local musicians. There are now also MIDI song files of all types of popular musics available in most music stores and also through mail catalogues. They are widely advertised in music magazines and manufacturers' users reports. Many of these distributors are music technology manufacturers.

²MIDI (Musical Instrument Digital Interface) is a communications protocol which, by means of strings of data bytes, allows various hardware and software musical devices such as synthesizers and sequencers to transmit and receive messages such as pitch, note duration, velocity, note on, not off, and tempo, for example. Such technology makes it possible to synthetically produce or reproduce existing or new sounds through *samplers* or *synthesizers*. MIDI technology also allows the pre-programming of music performance automation. Digital

music automation is achieved through computerized devices called *sequencers*. They are based on the mathematical rationalization of space-time in music (a drum machine, for example, is a type of sequencer). There are many comprehensive technical and historical surveys of MIDI available. See, for example, Pressing (1992:86-121), Roads (1989:179-80), and Loy (1989).

³ Two other important works dealing with popular music industry's historical relationship with technology are Jones (1992) and Negus (1992:20-37).

⁴ See also Guilbault's discussions on the role appropriation of music technologies play in the global participation of small industrially developing-countries (1993a). For more specific examples, see Guilbault's discussion on *Zouk*, a musical practice from the French Caribbean (1993b:175) and Waterman's ethnographic study of West Africa's *JuJu* music (1990).

⁵ The so-called "imperialist thesis" whereby appropriation and co-option are argued inexorably to result in cultural homogenization has been vigorously challenged in the last few years. See, for example, Mitchell (1993:309), Garofalo (1993, 1991:255), and Frith (1991, 1989).

⁶ Jameson, for example, cites the structuralist model of Jacques Lacan to illustrate what he considers a state of postmodern schizophrenia whereby there is "a breakdown of the relationship between signifiers" (1983:119). The author claims that "schizophrenic experience is an experience of isolated, disconnected, discontinued material signifiers which fail to link up into a coherent sequence. The schizophrenic thus does not know personal identity in our

sense, since our feeling of identity depends on our sense of the persistence of the 'I' and the 'me' over time" (ibid.).

⁷The five studies dealing with local music scenes which have most influenced my study are: Lise Waxer's study of the roles local Latin music and musicians play in the ongoing cultural exchanges in Toronto's multicultural context (1991); Sara Cohen's ethnographies of Liverpool's rock scene (1991,1994); Ruth Finnegan study on the amateur and semi-professional musical scene in the English town of Milton Keynes' (1989); and also Stephen B. Groce's ethnographic study of two Southern United States rock bands which examines how ideologies implicated in the occupational rhetorics of cover and original bands relate to wider global discourses of authenticity (1989).

⁸Demographic figures were rounded off from records of *Statistics Canada: Immigration and Citizenship 1991*.

⁹See for example, Peter Manuel's (1995) *Caribbean Currents: Caribbean Music from Rumba to Reggae*, a book on the local and transnational impact of Caribbean musical economies. He includes here perspectives on musics from Cuba, the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico. Manuel (1994) also offers a historical perspective in identifying the role of appropriation of Cuban music by Puerto Rican musicians in the creation of a Puerto Rican identity. Juan Flores (1994) deals with processes of appropriation of rap by Puerto Rican youth living in complex multicultural settings in urban United States. See also Ruth Glasser's (1990) historical perspective on the construction of a Puerto Rican identity during the post World War I

period. Roberta Singer (1982) deals also with issues of identity and Latin music in the diaspora. Other studies of relevance towards understanding Latin music and its role in the construction of identities in the diaspora are: Austerlitz (1993, and forthcoming 1995); the very important works on Mexican American music cultures and in particular *Tejano* music by Manuel Peña (1985), and Steven Loza (1994). John Storm Roberts presents a compendium of major Latin musical influences and their wide impact upon American music cultures up to 1979. Similarly, more recent historical perspectives on *salsa* and related musics in the United States are offered in the collection of works by a variety of Latin American specialists edited by Vernon W. Boggs (1992).

¹⁰On the controversial issue of the “world music” category, see Mitchell (1993).

¹¹ My use of the term *historical agency*, borrowed from Aronowitz, is here used to mean: the will and capacity of social groups and individuals to participate in the polity as well as share control of society. My definition is a departure from Aronowitz’s which reads: “the will and capacity of exploited and otherwise excluded social categories to participate in the polity as well as share control of society” (1994:17). Although well-intentioned, Aronowitz definition contradicts the potential power of such a signifier when it is exclusively used as a marker of victimization.

¹²The capability of digital technology to store, manipulate and transfer performance data across disjunctured historical frames has made it necessary to refer to the *here/now* of any action or performance event as *real time*.

¹³Jameson's (1983:119) thesis of historical schizophrenia is one of the exponents of this argument. See note 6 in this chapter.

¹⁴My four-piece band was one of two bands recruited directly from Mexico to work in Canada's capital region of Ottawa-Hull. There was a point in 1973 when five Latin bands recently "imported" from Mexico were performing as house bands in various clubs in the area. Four of them were located on Main Street the central business and tourist thoroughfare in Hull, Québec.

Chapter 1

GLOBALIZATION, TECHNOLOGY, AND MUSIC: THE ECONOMICS OF CULTURE

In this chapter, I examine some of the main forces, which I argue, have largely contributed to the current political, economic, cultural, and social positionings of Latin American musicians in Ottawa and Montreal. These include two mutually influential factors: the effects of the Canadian economy on the musical practices of Latin musicians in the two cities since the 1980s; and the worldwide emergence of music automation technologies as part of the resources now available to, and common amongst musicians at all economic, cultural, and social levels. This chapter seeks primarily to understand how these forces have been closely interrelated in helping to shape the social and economic conditions in which partially-automated live performance has emerged as part of the musical lives of nine Latin American musicians in Ottawa and Montreal.

Globalization, the advent of MIDI, and partially-automated live performance

The following comments illustrate the currency which partially-automated live performance has acquired in Ottawa and Montreal as part of the responses to current economic and cultural conditions.

The owner told us, he was getting full houses with fourteen- and fifteen-piece [local] Dominican *merengue* bands who were playing for [a total of] three hundred [dollars] a week... That was when we decided to form *Chico Band* [*Small Band*, in this case a three-piece band using partially-automated live performance]...The visual [aspect] is always a question, but in most cases people do not even question it or even comment on it.

Rubén Arancibia founder and former member of *Chico Band*, Montreal Feb., 1995.

It saves time, it's more efficient. In *Pambiche* [a fourteen-piece band], we sometimes used one full rehearsal to learn one or two songs. With this band [*Chico Band*] we went through most of the repertoire in one rehearsal. I am not used to that.... This type of [performance] is very common especially at non-Latin clubs. I am not worried about it [audience reception]... I will also make better salary... because this band is able to play in more places, and not just at [the few of Montreal] Latin clubs.

Delsa Germosen, singer of *Chico Band*, Montreal, March 1995.

The best gig in the region is at the Ramada Inn [in Hull, Quebec]. They are employing... three musicians every day of the week [for a total of] 8 hours a day. At least two of these musicians use it [partially-automated live performance]. Claude Roy and Yvon Farmer. They are very well paid... [But] drum machines and computers are not well accepted everywhere. I know of a country band that started to have some difficult times since they replaced the drummer with a drum machine.

Bob Langley, Secretary of the *Ottawa-Hull Federation of Musicians Local 180*, personal interview Feb., 1995.

Since the emergence of MIDI in the mid-1980s and despite its controversies, *digital automation*¹ in live musical performance has gradually become a more accessible and viable alternative for musicians in various local musical scenes of Ottawa and Montreal. The increasing use of such music technologies in these two Canadian cities can be said to be directly linked to global trends, whereby manufacturers and a growing number of musicians involved in live performance in various localities are responding to swiftly and drastically changing economic and cultural conditions.

The economic and cultural implications of digital automation are, of course, not exclusive to local urban music practices such as those in Ottawa and Montreal. In the 1990s, users of digital automation in live performance also include musicians at the higher-end of popular music markets around the world that include Anglo-American stars such as Janet Jackson and Barbra Streisand, and internationally renowned Trinidadian calypsonians and

African artists,² not to mention rap and techno-pop stars whose history can be said to emerge along with that of digital music technology.

Highly fractured and fiercely competitive markets have made the use of music automation technologies a necessity toward reducing production costs and increasing efficiency at all levels of the music industry. At the same time, digital music technologies such as automation have also become, in a diversity of ways, an integral part of the aesthetics and discourses of popular musics at large (Goodwin, 1990). It is clear that partially-automated live performance in the 1990s forms a significant part of what Will Straw terms the emerging “repertory of resources” of a “global pop music culture” (Straw 1991:250; also Mitchell 1993:333).

The wide diversity of contexts in which partially-automated live performance is used points to the multidimensional significance invested in music technologies. I want to argue that, it is precisely this diversity of applications and significance invested in music technologies which highlights the multidimensional nature of human creativity and agency. A useful critique of digital automation and its uses in live performance amongst Latin musicians in Ottawa and Montreal thus requires consideration of the specific circumstances and ways in which individual musicians make use of particular technologies. The purpose of this chapter and the one that follows is to historically situate individuals and the specific circumstances in which specific technologies are invested with particular meanings in musical practices. The aim is to acknowledge the cultural, social and historical circumstances within which individual musicians invest technology and its uses in music with various and sometimes paradoxical meanings.

Each of the nine musicians participating in this project arrived in Canada under contrasting circumstances during different time periods starting in the early 1970s. Like most of the wider Latin Canadian communities, Latin musicians' constituencies are also nationally, racially and ethnically diverse. Although political and economic instability have been underlying factors in the post-colonial exodus from Latin America, not all exiles were destitute or oppressed in their countries of origin. Latin American musicians have, like all other Latin American immigrants to Canada, come from a variety of social backgrounds and express contrasting and diverse political positions.⁵ The musical backgrounds, activities and value systems articulated by each of the nine musicians involved in this study are also very telling of the multiplicity of the historical and social localities to which each belongs (Stokes, 1994:10). Furthermore, the various and often contradictory ideological positions each musician articulates in relation to partially-automated live performance are also indicative of the multidimensional significance attached to particular technologies by each individual musician.

The following is an attempt to highlight important global-local conjunctures and relationships which may be integral to the conditions within which each of the selected nine individual Latin musicians is involved in a transcultural exchange through live performance and uses of automation technologies. I agree with Friedland and Boden that, in order to understand "large institutional themes such as, nationalism, progress, and emancipation and argue their practical realization, one must seriously consider reflexive 'human size' actions and reactions" (1994:2). My intent here is thus to historically situate selected individual Latin American musicians in relation to some of the most important conditions within which

automation technology becomes culturally and socially significant in music practices. I hope to assess the effects such conditions may have on the crucial roles live performances play, not only as sites of social and cultural interaction, but also as modes of collective and individual representation for Latin musicians in Canada's multicultural urban contexts.

Music not only presents unique opportunities to understand the role individuals play in such crucial processes as the construction of collective identities, communities (Anderson, 1983), and traditions (Hobsbawm, 1983). In ways unique amongst all human activity, it also demonstrates how such processes are integral to cultural and social adaptation and exchange. Such pressing issues need urgently to be addressed in the face of massive global population displacements, the recent rise of nationalism, racial and ethnic tensions and other massive cultural and geo-political dispersions and reconfigurations of the late-twentieth-century.

ETHNOGRAPHIC SETTING: GLOBALIZATION AND LIVE LATIN MUSIC IN TWO URBAN CENTRES IN CANADA

The emergence of a Canadian Latin American community and music scene

After a performance in Toronto in 1992, Tito Puente, an international icon of Latin Afro-Caribbean music based in New York, made a very telling comment on the different historical circumstances between the American and Canadian Latin diaspora. He remarked that, in recent years, Toronto seemed reminiscent of the "early days" of Latin music in New York City (the 1940s and 1950s). He was referring to the growth of Toronto's Latino community in such a way that it was now finally in a position to support a local live music scene and capable, to a relative degree, of viable participation on an international scale. Latin American

immigration to Canada is relatively more recent and communities markedly smaller in comparison to those of the United States. Latin musicians, whose earliest arrival in Canada can be documented well before the 1960s, were, prior to the 1970s, playing mostly for non-Latin audiences. Latin American communities in Canada, which are concentrated mainly in urban contexts, started to significantly appear only in the mid- to late-1970s.

The first important Latin American migratory waves to Canada began in the 1970s and coincided with the beginning of fragmentation and shifts in world power arrangements and subsequent population movements. The Canadian Latin American communities have since grown significantly. However, substantial migration from Latin America has also coincided with the decline of the world economy which began to be noticeable in Canada beginning in the 1980s. Severe inflation and rising of unemployment have affected the Canadian standard of living and consumption habits. In the same vein, dire economic conditions brought about the demise of well-established mainstream local live music venues such as large hotel lounges upon which a large sector of professional Latin and non-Latin musicians depended for employment. The use of recorded music as a main form of entertainment in dance venues-- a practice that had started in the early 1970s-- became widespread by the 1980s. Recorded music has since displaced a vast segment of dance club musicians. In the globalized economic context of the 1990s, struggles for local identity and voice have increasingly blurred the distinction between economic and cultural issues.

Urban fragmentation in Canada has emerged as part of those processes in which the economic dynamics of the local music scenes have been radically transformed. Once wider and all-encompassing audiences have now more intricately and confoundedly partitioned along

such lines as generation, class, ethnicity, gender, race, and ideology. Marketing and musical strategies amongst broadcasters, music distributors, club owners, entertainment agents, DJs and musicians have also contributed to this fragmentation. Today, all participants in local musical economies must make serious musical decisions based on the increasingly narrowing musical and demographic scope of particular target audiences.

Emerging new sets of moral and ethical values emphasizing accountability for social behaviour have also contributed to a radical shift in the nature and dynamics of local entertainment markets. The best example to cite here is the emergent more responsible drinking habits of drivers in Canada. Social responsibility and health concerns account for new consumer habits. Many club owners have implemented cover charges and higher prices in the sale of liquor in order to remain in business. In sum, the fragmentation of the local music economy and new social trends have prompted musicians to devise new strategies. With the advent of MIDI in the mid-1980s came partially-automated live performance as an alternative for some musicians. Sequencers and synthesizers have been used to reduce the number of musicians in order for ensembles or single musicians to maintain a viable degree of marketability. But as I have mentioned earlier, the use of music-automation technology has presented musicians with dilemmas where distinctions between economic, ideological, and cultural issues become increasingly blurred.

Marco Zarco, the musician involved in this project who has been in Canada the longest, expressed to me how the economic and cultural changes of the last decade have profoundly affected his professional life. According to him, there is a drastic contrast between

the conditions he found as a musician in the Ottawa-Hull area in 1971 and those of today in the mid 1990s:

When we arrived in Canada [in 1971] everybody had a place to play. There were first, second and third class clubs but everybody would have a place where they could play. At this point musicians stuck together because they needed each other. It all has changed, not many people today are eager to make music their way of life...Today musicians buy play-back tapes or record their play-back tracks by themselves. And if they do not want anything to do with anybody or don't want to depend on anybody, they buy a sequencer and work [totally] alone...When I first saw drum machines and computers come out in the 1980s, I immediately thought that would be my solution. Technology has given me autonomy, [and it] has permitted me to experiment and also play more types of music than I was able to before.

Marco Zarco, Ottawa, December 1994.

Ramón Flores, who arrived in Canada in 1978 (just seven years after Marco), considers that he arrived in Canada at the end of a relatively lucrative era for live music. In 1978, he argues along with Marco, live Latin music, and indeed live music in Canada at large, was on a drastic decline. Local live music economies began to dramatically drop as drastic global economic, social, and political changes began to unfold in the early 1980s.

There was more work when I arrived [in 1978] and life was cheaper. Discotheques were strong but groups of four or five musicians were [still] possible then. That does not exist now... You know the gold-rush of the [old West]? In Canada, I think, I was one of the last musicians to arrive at the end of the "Canadian gold rush for musicians." That is why you do not see many musicians coming now from Mexico.

Ramón Flores, Ottawa, January 1995.

Danilo Brizuela's difficult five-year period following his arrival in Montreal beginning in 1984 was closely connected with the Canadian economic recession already in place as of the mid-1980s.

When I arrived in Montreal there was nowhere to play. There really was no Latin community either, everybody was very distanced. I really had a hard time adapting and felt isolated...I went into a depression ...I did not play music for about five years.

Danilo Brizuela, Montreal, May 1995.

Marco Zarco's, Ramón Flores' and Danilo Brizuela's comments highlight the history of the drastic social and economic changes that took place in Canada beginning in the late 1970s and which were to culminate in the world economic depression of the mid-1980s.

It was the beginning of a shift in global power arrangements that was to have profound impact on the Canadian economy and standard of living. A declining world economy and an increasing number of players taking active and aggressive roles in global trade had fractured the long-standing economic and political structures that were in place in Canada prior to the late-1970s. Fierce global competition for the new fragmented markets had seriously diminished the bargaining power of the Canadian labour force. In the quest for remaining competitive and cost efficient, both the private and public sectors began administering severe spending cuts mainly through downsizing and increasing automation of the workplace (Veugelers, 1994). In short, the early 1980s had brought about a redefinition and redistribution of labour with an emerging technocratic elite (Richmond, 1988:3). In the 1990s, a political climate hostile towards organized labour is increasingly being felt, where even political parties traditionally supported by labour unions are redrawing labour-employer relations with drastic measures largely seen as unfavourable towards workers' interests.⁴ Massive lay-offs, salary freezes and/or reductions by both the private and public sectors have been the order of the day since the Canadian recession of the 1980s. As a large part of the work force retrains and adapts to a changing and harshly competitive technological era, unemployment and frozen salaries combined with higher taxes and inflation have resulted in an increasingly lower Canadian standard of living since the 1980s.

A weakening Canadian economy has had direct effects on the local live music economies of the urban contexts at large. Acute consumer caution has brought about the demise of a substantial number of live music venues. Live dance venues managed by large corporations such as major hotels' lounges have virtually disappeared. Use of recorded music, which initially emerged as the best economic alternative for some dance club owners, is now a well-established and competitive economic and cultural practice on its own right. Discotheques have played a significant part in the displacement of musicians since the 1970s. This drastic decline afflicting local live music economies has rendered the Musician's Union superfluous to the interests of local musicians in Ottawa and Montreal (Langley: personal interview February 1995).⁵

As the budgets and often the physical size of live venues have shrunk, so has the size of the ensembles being hired. In the 1990s, a solo act or duo are the rule rather than the exception in most dance venues using live music. Work-weeks have also been drastically cut as live entertainment is only offered one, two, or, at most, three nights a week in most places. Although Latin communities in both cities are beginning to help generate local live music scenes, their economic scale has remained insufficient as viable source of employment. Danilo argues that as much as he enjoys playing for Latin audiences, Latin audiences and club owners are never willing to pay accordingly for musicians' work. Danilo also still holds the perception that the Latin community and its musicians are still very much divided. According to Danilo, nationalism and class differences divide Montreal's Latin communities. This fragmentation prevents the creation of a solid and viable music economy as the support gets scattered. He argues that audience support of a band or a venue often depends on issues of nationality and

social status. However, he is also certain that the only time he sees Latin audiences and even non-Latin audiences get together and forget their cultural and social differences is on the dance floor, dancing to Latin music. Still, for most Latin musicians in Montreal, Latin nightclubs, community dances, and private functions in the Latin community remain, at best, a part-time source of employment, and at worst, occasional engagements.

As this section has demonstrated, the globalization phenomenon has affected Canadian urban contexts and, in the process, dramatically altered the economic and cultural dynamics of live Latin music scenes in Ottawa and Montreal. Digital automation technologies, I argue, form part of the economic and cultural realities encountered by Latin musicians in the two Canadian cities in the 1990s. In the following section I seek to understand how the relationships between micro and macro cultural social and economic forces have played a crucial role in the musical lives of Latin musicians in Ottawa and Montreal since the mid 1970s.

Local live Latin music in urban Canada up to the mid-1970s

Canada's immigration policy, combined with increasing global political and economic strife, brought about the first substantial immigration waves to Canada from Latin America and other industrially developing countries as of the mid- to late-1970s. Up to this point, immigrants to Canada had largely originated in European countries. Latin American communities in Canada were thus virtually non-existent prior to the mid-1970s. Before this period, and since the beginning of the century, the United States had remained the most likely destination for Latin Americans in search of better social conditions. However, despite their

small numbers, Latin musicians working in important Canadian urban centres can be documented well before the 1960s.⁶ The arrival of Latin American musicians in Canada prior to the early 1970s could be said to be connected with the growing popularity of Latin American music which, at least since the 1940s, had made a permanent impact in the United States.⁷ Thriving local live music scenes in Canada had presented viable opportunities to earlier Latin-American band leaders and musicians to take advantage of Latin musics' international appeal. The global surge in popularity of some Latin American musics, which had been flourishing in various mainstream American music scenes since the 1940s, had also a great impact upon the local music scenes in major Canadian urban centres.⁸

In 1971, Mexican singer and keyboard player Marco Zarco, currently a member of duo *Felicidad*, followed on the steps of those Latin musicians who had established themselves in the larger Canadian urban centres. In Canada, it was in cities like Montreal, Toronto and Ottawa that the cosmopolitan appeal of Latin musics could generate a viable market. It can be said that Marco Zarco's arrival in Canada as a professional musician in 1971 was, to a great degree, facilitated by the then current boom for live Latin American musics. However, his departure from Mexico to Canada, at sixteen years old, represented Marco's second attempt to emigrate to an Anglo-American environment not to play Latin music, but instead to pursue his aspirations as a rock musician. A year earlier, as a member of a four-piece rock band from Mexico city, Marco and his band-mates had aborted their attempts to cross illegally the Mexican-American border at Tijuana Mexico into California. Like many aspiring young Mexican rock musicians (and indeed many Mexicans in search of better social conditions), he felt that he would have better opportunities in the United States. Months after his failed

attempt to emigrate, Marco Zarco auditioned as a member of a new four-piece band for a talent scout who had been sent to Mexico city in search of a Mexican band. The selected ensemble would be the opening house-act in a new dance club in Hull Quebec (just across the Ottawa river from Ottawa). For this audition, the band had to perform a repertoire which emphasized Mexican and other Latin American musics. They were also expected to be able to play some of the standard and current mainstream Anglo-American popular repertoire. Although the Canadian prospect presented a great musical departure for Marco and his band, they took it as an opportunity to finally emigrate to an environment where they could later pursue their original musical direction as rock musicians.

Marco's first Canadian engagement in early 1971 at a club in Hull, Quebec lasted three months. At the end of this engagement, the band was hired by yet another club for another three months. Having overstayed their working visa, Marco and the band were served with a deportation order in late 1971. However, the deportation order was not carried out. A club owner sponsored Marco and his band's appeal of the deportation order by making an official offer of steady work at his club in Ottawa. This engagement, consisting of six nights-a-week, lasted two years and was to be followed by another one of the same length at a club back in Hull, Quebec. The deportation order was lifted a year or so after it had been initially invoked. At this time, the members of the band were allowed to successfully apply for landed immigrant status. They were, in due time, to become Canadian citizens. Canadian immigration laws were then relatively more lax than they had been in the 1990s.⁹

Upon his arrival in Canada in 1971, Marco became part of a relatively small number of Latin musicians who could be found playing five to seven nights a week (mostly long-term or

house-band engagements)¹⁰ in cities like Ottawa, Montreal and Toronto. In order to make themselves competitive, Marco and his band had adopted some of the strategies employed by other Latin musicians who were relatively older and more experienced. For example, after some debate about a name for the band, they called themselves *Tequila*. They felt that this name would be easily remembered by Canadian audiences as it would be associated with the internationally popular Mexican drink of the same name. They also voted to wear uniforms. Uniforms were prevalent amongst bands in Mexico, particularly in tourist centres. Canadian club owners and audiences were usually impressed by uniforms and by the atmosphere that they helped to create in the club. Although uniforms rarely included typical Mexican attire, their purpose was to make the entertainers stand out from audience members and to give performances some sense of a special occasion. As Marco states, these practices made performances, for many, reminiscent of Latin American tourist resorts. These strategies were contrary to their initial practice in Mexico where rock bands would use an English name and would not, as a rule, have a clean-cut appearance, never mind wear a uniform. Most Latin groups in Canada performed at hotel lounges and venues owned by large corporations as well as independent smaller enterprises such as the ones which had initially hired *Tequila*. It was in these types of clubs that ethnic identification of the group was seen as a drawing card for audiences.

For the most part, audiences in such clubs were non-Latin Canadians, sometimes including immigrants from various Latin European countries such as Italy, Portugal and Spain. Audience composition played a major role in the performance strategies deployed by Latin bands such as *Tequila*. This was particularly true in regard to repertoire selection strategies.

Standard Latin songs which had been globally popularized through mainstream American media were high in the Latin repertoire of *Tequila* and other Latin groups. Although various Latin musics remained the most important distinctive marketable aspect of each Latin group, Latin musicians like Marco also kept abreast of mainstream music trends, particularly the hit parade, disseminated mainly through Anglo-American and British music industries. What was later to be known in the 1970s as *top forty* charts formed an important source of the repertoire played by many Latin bands in Canadian cities.

It should be emphasized that neither musicians, audiences nor their responses were monolithic. Depending on specific circumstances, musicians and ensembles exercised their own politics of representation through their selective strategies in terms of repertoire, musical arrangements and overall style of their performance presentations. Such strategies varied not only in relation to audience composition, but also in relation to musicians' own aesthetic values and interests which often, and in many cases openly, intersected and/or conflicted with notions of national, cultural and social identity. Thus, as Marco states, although Afro-Cuban songs may have been part of *Tequila's* repertoire, Mexican songs or even rock songs were also performed, depending on particular situations.¹¹ Similarly, the wide musical variety of mainstream musics also lended itself to various selective strategies and particular styles of interpretation by Latin bands playing in different contexts.¹² For example, in contrast to other Latin bands playing in the area, Marco and his band *Tequila* played some of the rock numbers of the day, including music known then as 'Latin rock' by groups such as *Carlos Santana* and *Chicano*. This choices occurred since, unlike the other Latin bands, *Tequila*, at this time, had a younger following which often included university and college students.

Tequila was a four-piece band, a common size for Latin ensembles in Canada at that time. Most Latin ensembles in Canada tended to be relatively small in comparison to those in Latin America and the Afro-Latin and Mexican scenes in the American diaspora. For example, Afro-Latin bands in New York could often be comprised of twelve musicians or more. This strategy of having small combos in Canada was not entirely a response to smaller-scale economic circumstances and size of market, but also due to the limited number of Latin musicians living in Canada. Although it was common to see some non-Latin musicians working with Latin ensembles, band leaders often had to bring Latin musicians from outside Canada, often directly from Latin America. This was the case with Marco's band when, having lost a member during their first engagements in Canada, they brought a guitar player directly from Mexico. In short, economic and social circumstances made a larger ensemble difficult to put together.

Marco was musically self-trained upon his arrival from Mexico. Once in Canada, he diligently took private music lessons in theory and piano skills for four years. Nevertheless, Marco is quick to point out that watching and interacting with other performers is, and continues to be, one of his main sources of musical training. In 1975, Marco Zarco moved to Toronto where the group felt that artistic and financial opportunities would be better than in Ottawa. After one year in Toronto and just as the band became solidly established in the large hotel circuit in the city, Marco, who was at this point recently married, returned to Ottawa for personal reasons. Marco continued to play steadily with different Latin bands in Ottawa. Between the years 1980 through 1986, Marco played with the most sought-after Latin band in

the Ottawa-Hull area. This band, called *Mexican Connection*, was then playing some of the best paid and longest engagements at large hotels in Ottawa and Montreal.

By 1987, the drastic economic decline in Canada caught up with *Mexican Connection* which, in efforts to remain marketable, reduced itself from a five-piece to a trio. This was accomplished through the still relatively novel practice of partially-automated live performance. Soon after Marco's initial use of automation in live performance, *Mexican Connection* broke up. Marco was forced to go solo, which he accomplished by continuing the use of a computer in live performance. There were very few venues left using live music by this time. Furthermore, they were hiring mostly duos and single acts to play only on weekends. Salaries had also diminished. Marco had to supplement his income by working at a bank as a data processor.

The concept of playing music alone has in fact never appealed to Marco. He concedes that the pressure is very high under such circumstances. That is one of the reasons that, in 1995, he was happy to be playing with Ramón Flores, a bass player, drummer and singer from Mexico. Marco and Ramón initially met as band-mates with *Mexican Connection*. After the dissolution of the band and the difficult economic times of the late 1980s, Marco and Ramón joined efforts in the early 1990s to form the duo *Felicidad*. Since 1994, the pair has been taking advantage of a relative surge in popularity of live Latin music in the Ottawa-Hull area.

Throughout his career, Marco has had an ambiguous relationship with Latin American musics, something not uncommon amongst Latin musicians. While he considers it essential to play Latin music, his preference has been to play a wide variety of musical styles, including popular non-Latin musics. The increasingly growing Latin community in the Ottawa-Hull area

and the surging popularity of Latin musics amongst non-Latin audiences have, however, put pressure on Marco to devote most of his efforts to the Latin repertoire. Dominican *merengue*, *cumbia* (originally from Colombia), and other Afro-Caribbean musics such as *salsa* form most of *Felicidad's* repertoire. In 1995, it had been a year and a half since Marco had quit his day time job as data processor. He is now, at age 40, concentrating mainly on his job as a musician. Along with his second wife who runs a small business, he owns a modest home in Ottawa. In his second marriage and with four children, Marco does not take his current busy schedule as a musician for granted. He concedes that a majority of local musicians are currently under-employed and even unemployed. He states that he has learned, from past difficult experiences, that one should take advantage of new opportunities as they arrive.

The Postcolonial Era and the emergence of Latin Canada

Unlike Marco Zarco, his partner Ramón Flores felt more comfortable with Latin American music as the main repertoire of the duo *Felicidad*. As he stated, in Mexico's south-eastern states where he was born in 1954 and acquired most of his musical training, *tropical*¹³ (African-influenced) musics decidedly dominate the musical scene. As a result, Ramón quickly embraced the relative surge in popularity of Latin music in Ottawa which has kept the duo *Felicidad* extremely busy since the beginning of 1995.

The rise of popularity of Latin musics was also connected to the growing Latin communities flourishing in urban Canada, which since the late 1970s, had been increasingly participating in the global cultural economy. However, like Marco, Ramón cited the economic instability prevalent in Canada since the 1980s as a reason to be cautious about predicting any

long-term prosperity. Ramón conceded that the emergence of Latin communities in Canada has also coincided with a global economic and political instability which has had profound effects on his career.

Ramón Flores first arrived in Montreal in 1978, accompanied by his French-Canadian wife who he had met and married in Mexico. The decision to emigrate to Canada came after Ramón's group, which was based in the state of Campeche in the south-east of Mexico, disbanded after a failed attempt to secure a record contract in Mexico City. Like most groups which had achieved relative success in the interior, Ramón's band's next logical move had been to conquer the capital. His band had already produced an EP¹⁴ and an LP which had earned the band significant popularity and loyal following in the south-eastern Mexican region. Ramón's band was a five-piece band consisting of two electric guitars, bass, drums and a lead vocalist. One of the main features of the band was their multipart vocal arrangements. The material played in live presentations by this band ranged from Latin ballads and tropical dance songs to numbers selected from the American hit parade. However, their original material and recordings consisted strictly of *tropical* type romantic and fast tunes which were the main musical staple around the region.

Ramón Flores had taught himself to play guitar since the age of eleven. He was later, however, to take up the bass and drum set and to sing lead vocals. In Mexico, Ramón had always remained himself incessantly busy as a musician. He had not only performed original material, but he had also amassed a great amount of experience in a wide variety of popular Latin and non-Latin styles. He had heard from some of his Mexican friends about opportunities for Latin musicians in Canada and convinced his French-Canadian wife that they

should try to emigrate. He felt that, with his experience, he would be able to be successful in Canada.

Ramón's first few years in Canada were relatively lucrative. He played with several Latin bands in Ottawa and Montreal, including *Mexican Connection* where he met Marco Zarco. With this band he had enjoyed relative financial security and fairly good working conditions. Upon his departure from this band in 1984, he continued to work with other musicians, sometimes having to travel. Work had by then become scarce and on many occasions he had to supplement his income by working as a cook. Around 1985, Ramón bought himself a sequencer and also taught himself to play a bit of keyboards in order to program musical parts. Ramón had by now re-married. He then began to play in a two- and three-piece band with different musicians occasionally including his second wife who is an accomplished singer and a local entertainer on her own right. He is the father of four children, two from his first marriage and two with his second. He concedes that, as of the mid-1980s, live music was on a steep decline and that only those musicians who could adapt to new changes would survive.

The conditions that affected Ramón's musical strategies, I would like to suggest, are related to the widespread and rapid cultural, economic, and geo-political dispersion and transformations of the late twentieth-century. Radical shifts in global power structures had resulted in a global economic decline that shook long-established political and economic arrangements. It is in this climate that Japan and Germany emerged from post-World War II economic oblivion and, along with smaller countries, such as Korea and Taiwan, achieved full-fledged status in the world trade stage. A transnational dynamics of economic competition

quickly came to replace the established multinational monopolies long-held by economic superpowers and other highly industrialized economic entities such as Canada. As of the early 1980s, global economic decline was sharply felt in Canada and most industrially developed countries. With a burgeoning rate of unemployment, a growing national debt, skyrocketing interest rates, and a declining currency, a state of economic recession had been officially conceded by Canada's Federal government as of 1984. These changes had profound impact not only on the musical life of Ramón Flores but also on the lives of other Latin musicians.

Global economic fragmentation and local live Latin music in Canada

Bass player and vocalist of *Chico Band*, Danilo Brizuela, thirty five years old, landed as a refugee in Canada in 1984. He was born in Santa Ana, the second largest city of El Salvador. As part of the global refugee crisis of the 1980s he initially had fled the bloody and long civil war of El Salvador in 1979 and had settled for five years in the American city of Los Angeles. His anti-government political leanings and his activity as a performer of what he calls 'protest songs' in El Salvador, made it for him a matter of survival to leave the country at that time. Danilo started to play guitar at an early age. He took up the bass at 17 and, at 18, he enrolled in a municipal school in Santa Ana to learn classical guitar. According to Danilo, the public music school was accessible for people with modest means but it was under-funded and the quality of music education suffered. Nevertheless, Danilo was very appreciative of the musical background he was able to attain there.

Upon his arrival in Los Angeles, he found a large and thriving Latin community and was able to work as a musician, putting into practice some of the experience he had acquired

back in El Salvador as a professional musician in the nightclub circuit. He was particularly adept at some of the Latin musics popular amongst Salvadorian audiences, which included *cumbias* and other dance styles. He was also experienced in the then current American dance musics such as *disco*, whose global appeal in the 1970s had also had a great influence in El Salvador. Within the large Latin population of Los Angeles, Danilo found a growing Salvadorian community. However, Danilo and his family found social conditions extremely difficult in Los Angeles. Danilo and his wife decided to move to Canada with their two children. Danilo's most vivid recollection of his arrival in Montreal in 1984 was the small size of the Latin community. He unsuccessfully tried to find work as a musician. His general perception was that the small Latin communities and musicians were quite distant and mistrustful of each other. Also, live dance music at large was at virtual halt in the mid-1980s. He felt isolated and suffered a severe depression. He went into what he referred to as "a musical retirement" for five years. For five years he held types of employment unrelated to music. Around 1989 or 1990, as Latin clubs began to appear in the city, he slowly became professionally involved in the local Latin music scene. Today, Danilo has been with *Chico Band* for nearly two years. He keeps a relatively busy schedule as a musician. He is also currently working on his high school diploma and plans to enroll in Montreal's Vanier College to study bass. His aim is to learn how to read music more proficiently and to be able to teach. He has a passion for Afro-Cuban music as well as Western classical music from the Baroque period. He also continues to play classical guitar.

Severely adverse economic conditions have prompted Latin musicians like Marco Zarco, Ramón Flores and Danilo Brizuela to rethink marketing and musical strategies. On the

one hand, they have been forced to concentrate more on playing popular Latin dance musics, which are gaining significant popularity in Canada-- not only amongst Latin communities but also amongst non-Latin audiences. On the other hand, they have also been forced to adapt musically to highly unstable and adverse economic circumstances. One example of such adaptation is Danilo's *Chico Band* which consists of five musicians specialized in Afro-Caribbean music. The band, by means of partial automation, is able to generate the sound of a large Afro-Latin orchestra. The ensemble plays some engagements as a five-piece band at Latin or other types of dance clubs, but at other times it reduces itself further, even down to a duo. Danilo and keyboard player Jorge Calero often play as a duo at smaller venues and restaurants. Their repertoire changes from context to context. For example, in most venues where they play as a duo, Danilo and Jorge play mainly for non-Latin audiences. According to Danilo, they have over five hundred MIDI song files, ranging from current and standard Latin repertoire and songs from the Anglo-American hit parade. Jorge and Danilo do not program their own material. Instead, they buy MIDI song files from Rubén Arancibia, other independent programmers in Montreal, and from local music stores.

At the same time, Danilo and Jorge do not entirely depend on elaborate MIDI song files for their performance. In the various contexts in which they play, they have to be ready for any requests from the audience. They are usually prepared for requests with their own pre-programmed *drum patterns* which they use as underlying percussion accompaniment. *Drum pattern* is the term most commonly used to refer to digitally pre-programmed rhythmic patterns. They are often used in live performance to substitute or complement the 'live' percussion section in performance. A drum pattern consists of a set number of measures of

digitally produced sound(s) of percussion instruments. Drum patterns can be started and stopped, sped up or slowed down at will by means of a switch pedal. Drum patterns give Jorge and Danilo the flexibility needed to adapt to a great variety of audiences. As well as Jorge and Danilo's duo, it is also common for the other members of *Chico Band* to freelance and play separately in a diversity of other contexts by deploying other types of strategies.

Economic circumstances prevalent in Canada since the early 1980s can be said to play a direct role in the emergence of partially-automated live performance. Drum machines, sequencers and synthesizers have come to replace individual musicians as measures to maintain a certain degree of marketability in a dwindling economy. These circumstances have also given way to a thriving music technology market. But, as some critics have argued, economic conditions cannot be isolated from political and cultural issues. In other words, reformulating notions of live performance under current conditions cannot be simplistically and uncritically reduced to economic explanations under an overarching heading such as 'redefinition of labour.'

In the next chapter, I examine how partially-automated live performances are informed by several political and cultural forces. More specifically, I focus on the ways in which cultural issues inextricably interrelated to economic ones cannot be disassociated from the Canadian political climate which, I argue, presents important implications for Latin American musicians

NOTES

¹Unless otherwise stated, I am using the term *automation* throughout this study to mean strictly *digital automation* (automation through MIDI). This is in an effort to conform to the scope of my project and also to differentiate it from other types of music performance automation such as audio tapes and other types of pre-MIDI electronic devices which have also had particular historical significance in the subject.

²See, for example, Doerschuk's interview with Chukii Booker (Janet Jackson's keyboardist) and his views on the role of automation in Jackson's 1990 *Rhythm Nation Tour* (1990); and Roland Users Group's short report on Simon Freglen and his use of interactive automation in his conducting of a hybrid "human/synthesized" *orchestra* in Streisand's New Year's Eve concert at MGM Grand Hotel in Las Vegas (1994); also Blankinship's advice to musicians on the role of automation and the new skills and attitudes required for a viable career in the Las Vegas strip (1992). Observations on calypsonians and African artists are from my own experience as a researcher in the cities of Ottawa and Montreal in the summer of 1994 and winter of 1995. Amongst international calypsonians using automation (mostly in the form of a complementary *click* or *rhythm patterns* from a drum machine), there were, for example, Mighty Sparrow, Byron Lee, and Drupatee. The African star Yondo Sister also made similar use of automation in her appearance at The Club Balatou in Montreal (March 1995).

³Manuel Angel Castillo (1994) stresses the importance historical, economic and cultural circumstances play in shaping the demographics of migration from Latin America. He also

argues that it is problematic trying to distinguish the political from the economic determinants for migration. The two are usually closely implicated. Further, while those determinants follow from peculiarities of Latin American socio-political history, their significance are also highly prone to change. Thus contingent specificities often bring about new and diverse sets of priorities and determinants for migration.

⁴In Ontario, due to its rulings viewed by many as unfavourable towards workers, the national New Democratic Party, whose political and financial support traditionally came largely from labour unions, was rejected as a representative by many labour leaders in the last provincial election. This seems to follow a global trend: in the United States, President Clinton whose Democratic party traditionally entertained a close relationship with labour has also been criticized by labour leaders for similar rulings.

⁵For example, according to Bob Langley, Secretary for the Ottawa-Hull Federation of Musicians, today there is not even a handful of popular live music venues affiliated to the union in the area. Langley even concedes that, as a result of the virtual loss of its bargaining power, the Musicians' Union has become irrelevant to most local musicians (personal interview, February, 1995).

⁶Some of the most important musicians were Cuban Chicho Valle and Puerto Rican Charlie Rodríguez in Toronto, Mexican Roberto Campos in Ottawa and the Mexican group *Los Tres Compadres* in Montreal (personal recollection).

⁷One of the most important works dealing with the crucial role Latin American musics have historically played in the United States, in both cultural and economic terms, is that of John Storm Roberts (1979). For some more recent insights into some of the historical complexities of Latin musics in the American diaspora, see Waxer (1991; 1994:139-40), Storm Roberts (1992), Manuel (1994), and Singer (1982).

⁸By the early 1970s, Chicho Valle and Charlie Rodriguez, for example, had become two of Toronto's most important agents representing not only Latin, but also, non-Latin Canadian and American acts across Canada. The late Chicho Valle headed the *Chicho Valle Agency*. Charlie Rodriguez led *Carlo-Mar Productions*. The two, and particularly Valle, effectively negotiated long-term contracts for Latin musicians in some of the up-scale hotels in Toronto and other Canadian cities. Chicho Valle also played an important role in the negotiation of labour agreements and betterment of working conditions on behalf of Toronto's chapter of the American Federation of Musicians. (All of the information relating to Charlie Rodriguez and the late Chicho Valle found in this study was acquired informally by myself during my many years as a personal friend to, and in my business interaction with, the two entertainment agents in Toronto and particularly through the period between 1975-85).

⁹Since about the late 1970s, a deportation order must be complied with immediately, and any appeals have to be launched from outside Canada.

¹⁰Engagements of this type could last anywhere from a few months to a few years at the same venue.

¹¹For a similar example dealing with ambiguities in the articulation of ethnic and national identity through music in the diaspora, see Glasser's study of the post World War I Puerto Rican music scene in New York (1990). Glasser dismisses the absolutist imperialist co-option thesis when she points out that the appropriation and playing-up of various Latin stereotypes such as "Mexican," "Argentinean" and "Cuban" by Puerto Rican musicians were not only commercially successful strategies but also a positive contribution to the growth of Puerto Rican music culture in New York.

¹²For example, Chicho Valle and Charlie Rodriguez told me that, during their engagements at clubs in Toronto during the 1940s through 1960s, they had to "tone-down" their Latin arrangements originally heavily influenced by Afro-Cuban styles. That meant that they had to arrange their music to sound more like Latin music heard in commercial North American mainstream recordings. According to Charlie, the music had to be more laid back with tempos pronouncedly slower and with less emphasis on percussion and more on smooth jazz harmonies. Furthermore, they had also to include those Latin songs which had become standard amongst North American popular music audiences. In Montreal *Los Tres Compadres*, a trio from Mexico very popular in Quebec during the 1950s and 1960s, deployed parallel strategies. They not only covered Latin and North American standards, but also sung and wrote songs in French (Pancho Quijano member of *Los Tres Compadres*, personal communication, circa 1973).

¹³*Musica tropical* is a generic term commonly used in Mexico and other parts of Latin America to refer to Afro-influenced popular dance musics.

¹⁴*EP* (extended play) is a long-discontinued vinyl record format which contained two songs per side, as opposed to the *single*, which offered only one song on each side

Chapter 2

LATIN MUSICIANS AND CANADIAN POLITICS OF IDENTITY IN THE 1990s

All of the musicians selected for this study expressed deep concerns about what they considered a drastic change in the general perception of immigrants and visible minorities in Canada in recent years. Although the terms and tenor of the concerns expressed were varied and sometimes even contradictory amongst the musicians, the underlying premise of their opinions was that an increasingly overall negative perception of Latin immigrants and other visible minority groups was emerging at all levels of Canadian political discourse and that this negativity was having significant impact on their musical lives. Their concerns, more particularly, related to current debates linking immigrants and immigration to such issues as unemployment, the depletion of the social safety net, and crime. Most of the musicians interviewed also felt that questions being raised about immigrants and immigration policies articulate current political battles in which economic, cultural, and social issues have become implicated in the current Canadian national identity crisis. In this climate, a sense of belonging in Canada has, in their view, become increasingly elusive for Latin musicians.

Rubén Arancibia from Argentina, for example, expressed a general perception amongst the musicians involved in this study that news coverage often betrayed a current anti-immigrant political agenda.¹ To illustrate his views, he referred to the television coverage of a recent incident involving Latin individuals and one of the best known Latin dance-clubs in Montreal.

There was a shooting two blocks from the *Palacio Latino* and the only thing they show on television is the front entrance of the club... That is what happens in Montreal every time a Latino does something, they put it all over the front page and on TV for about a week. That is going to affect further the work situation for musicians in Montreal... How come they do not do that with all the violence going on at other types of clubs?

Rubén Arancibia, Ottawa, June 1995

Some of the ways in which Latin musicians expressed their concerns also highlighted ambiguities in their relation to a Latin identity. The following reflections by Marco Zarco from Mexico, Carlos Avila from Peru, and Danilo Brizuela from El Salvador, for example, denote how cultural and economic issues intertwine in their musical strategies and views, bringing to the fore questions of national, cultural, generation and class identity.

As a musician who immigrated to Canada in the [19]70s, I resent it a bit. I would like to play a more versatile repertoire... We used to have more revolutionized musical ideas. Today [in the 1990s] we are forced to play more music for the new generation of immigrants arriving from Latin America, we have to play their music.. We have to play more *salsa*, *merengue*, their music. In *Mexican Connection*, in the 1980s, we used to try not to play too much of Latin music not to attract too many Latinos. We knew that the best clubs would not want you if you attracted only Latin audiences. Latinos have bad reputation and it is getting worse with the new immigrants arriving. That is why today, no [large] hotel would hire a Latin band...

Marco Zarco, Ottawa, December 1994, January 1995.

You know who they are, I don't have to tell you this. The Central Americans have brought a lot of problems, they get very violent and hurt everybody's reputation... Some Canadian people have yelled at me: "go back to the war!" [allusion to the civil war in El Salvador]. They think we all come from the same place... That is precisely one of the reasons why I will never play only Latin repertoire... But I would also not play all English and French [Anglo-American or French-Canadian repertoire]. Anyway, my audiences are very mixed and they are used to my blend of music.

Carlos Avila, Hull, Quebec, June 1995

Personally, I prefer to play Latin music at Latin venues, but, you know yourself, Latinos are never willing to pay [fairly].

Danilo Brizuela, Montreal, May 1995.

The Canadian economic decline has resulted in a radically unstable political climate in which cultural and social issues have become increasingly exacerbated. As mainstream political parties battle for a place in an increasingly narrowing span of conservative politics and as old parties and special interest groups crumble and are reformed, issues of national,

ethnic, racial and cultural identity have been increasingly emphasized in ways that have had profound implications for Canadian Latin communities. For Latin American musicians, in particular, the cultural and political re-ordering of Canada has had substantial effects on their musical lives.

In this chapter, I examine how the Canadian cultural and national identity crisis emerging with the global economic and political instability of the late twentieth-century plays a significant role in the ways Latin musicians view and position themselves in Canada's multicultural context. My goal here is to problematize the issue of politics of identity beyond notions of difference which place Latin musicians within particular sets of cultural and social boundaries. To do this, I want to show the multiple and often ambiguous cultural and social memberships and connections that individual Latin musicians have developed and to highlight how these challenge traditional notions of a Latin community or communities as homogeneous and self-contained cultural and social units. My opinion on these issues are based on arguments made by Stuart Hall which, applied to inform our case, would read that, a Latin identity is not just a symbolic, but also, a tangible social and political realm constructed and challenged by individuals of both Latin and non-Latin multicultural constituencies as they position themselves and take part in the current Canadian politics of identity (1990:227-8). In other words, I aim to examine "the relationship between socio-musical practices and *ideology*." The concept of ideology which substantially informs my thesis is based on the assumption that the musical activities of Latin musicians embody the inextricable relationship between "the world of ideas and beliefs and the world of material interests" (Jackson 1989:47). In that sense, I agree with Joan Hartley's definition which reads:

ideology is not a set of things but an active practice, either working on the changing circumstances of social activity to reproduce familiar and regulated senses, or struggling to resist established and naturalized senses thus to transform the means of sense-making into new, alternative or oppositional forms, which will generate meanings aligned to different social interests. (1994:143)²

My aim is to corroborate this assumption. In what follows, I outline some of the most significant aspects of the current Canadian political climate which, I feel, bear significantly upon the lives of Latin musicians. I will then examine the nature of the dilemmas faced by Latin musicians as they participate in a Canadian politics of identity where cultural, economic, social, and ideological issues become inextricably linked.

(Re)making a nation: Canadian Politics and the Economics of Culture

An overall radically populist conservatism predicated upon drastic fiscal and social reform has emerged across all levels of political discourse in Canada. This political climate is having substantial repercussions upon cross-cultural relations at all levels of national life. New political dynamics, whose shift towards conservatism is being characterized by many in such terms as “the rush to the right,”³ are having significant effects on the long-standing and relatively stable power arrangements traditionally underlined by the right/left ideological framework. An increasingly explosive political climate has ensued in the 1990s, not only in Canada, but across North America and in all industrially advanced countries, in which economic and cultural issues are implicitly and explicitly linked to questions of identity, that is, to nationality, culture, class, ethnicity, and race.⁴

A central discourse of extreme fiscal prudence has been invoked by all major political parties across Canada. Economic policies implementing drastic spending cuts and tax increases aimed toward yearly balanced budgets and deficit reductions have been linked to

social, moral and cultural issues. Questions as to the elimination of social programs such as medicare, the welfare system, unemployment insurance, attacks on special interests and minority rights such as job equity and gay rights, immigration, and abortion, have all served as the "emotional hot buttons" by which many politicians have appealed to constituents (Speirs, 1995: B1). As a whole, widespread concerns over economic decline have resulted in a sharp turn towards conservatism across the mainstream political spectrum. Parties traditionally identified with so-called "liberal" or "socialist" ideologies have either virtually disappeared or dramatically shifted political course in attempt to remain in contention.⁵ As some political pundits observe, in the last few years, there has been no such a thing as a safe seat in Canada's political battleground where it was traditionally common for mainstream parties and politicians to enjoy relatively long mandates (Gordon, 1995:13).

Within this political climate, recently-arrived immigrants and other minority groups are deeply worried about the fact that the question of immigrants and immigration is, in their opinion, increasingly being tied to debates over such issues as the depletion of the social safety net, unemployment, and crime. The main concern of Latin communities is that debates about social, cultural, and economic issues in the Canadian political arena have increasingly served to construct a general negative representation of immigrants, very often, in the interest of political gains.⁶ Recent immigration policies implementing costly landing fees and bonds, tougher screening criteria, as well as the repatriation of foreign criminals of selected racial groups, have been highly publicized as urgent responses to solving Canada's social and economic problems.⁷ For many immigrants, the high profile these issues play in political discourse and the media translates into a sense of open rejection. Most Latin immigrants

perceive recent immigration and social policy as a means not only to reduce but, more importantly, to alter the social and racial composition of immigration into Canada. More importantly, they also view these policies as a means of further preclusion from political and economic participation. Immigrants' concerns about such emerging perceptions go well beyond the general scope of federal politics and into deeply specific provincial and more localized political contexts. In the province of Quebec, which is potentially on the brink of separation from the rest of Canada, these questions are compounded and mediated in specific ways by nationalist discourses.⁸

Quebec's growing support for independence illustrates a phenomenon directly linked to the current political instability of Canada and elsewhere: the growing mistrust of the political process and subsequent challenges to the centrality of government. Current Canadian power struggles and debates over material resources and representation bear directly upon immigrant communities. Historically, claims of regional political and economic disparity coming from across the country have continually resulted in regionalist and separatist political waves (Richmond 1988:13)-- none more serious than the Quebec nationalist movement. However, in the last decade, growing immigrant communities have substantially added complexity to democratic processes as they have come to represent new political voices with the potential to significantly help shift political power arrangements in Canada. Immigrants in Quebec, as the best example, face a grave and painful dilemma in that regard in a difficult era when the nationalist movement has come within realistic reach of bringing the province to independence from the rest of Canada. Immigrants are traditionally thought of as federalists and therefore profoundly mistrusted by the separatist movement. However, as some of the selected musicians in Montreal argue, Latin American communities are not unanimous in their

response to the question of a Quebec independence. They argue that there are some serious divisions in that regard amongst Montreal's Latinos.⁹ Nevertheless, as Rubén Arancibia and many others feel, "it does not matter which side of the issue one is on," the problem is that there are significant forces profoundly and openly hostile to immigrants (personal interview Montreal, Feb., 1995).¹⁰

Canada is not alone in experiencing racial and ethnic conflict under current global conditions. Most industrially advanced countries, whose development has significantly depended on non-European immigration, are currently experiencing conflicts focused on immigration. Britain, Germany, Australia, the United States, and France are also amongst those countries where adverse economic and social conditions have fostered an increasing number of "reactionary political movements, resurgence of racism and anti-Semitism," and widely supported policies to restrict immigration and encourage 'repatriation' (Richmond 1988:13). While adverse economic conditions have in the past been linked to unfavourable attitudes and policies towards immigrants and immigration, the staggering *social* change which characterizes the late-twentieth-century, however, has also dramatically accentuated issues of national and cultural identity in these countries (Richmond, 1988:25).

Paradoxically, along with the shift toward conservatism by all mainstream political parties in Canada, a drastic fragmentation of the general electorate has also ensued. Major political parties are finding it increasingly difficult to subscribe to traditionally rigid ideological mind-sets, particularly those constructed upon traditional left/right-wing binarisms. Political parties can no longer purport to speak for a wide homogeneous constituency of particular ideological stripe. It is no coincidence, for example, that Canadian and American political

parties are continually suffering from dissension within their own ranks as issues of local or special interest often transcend their traditional ideological span. As a result, new political figures and parties have emerged whose fundamental marketing pitch is to offer alternatives to the "mainstream" electorate. In the face of such increasing political fragmentation across Canada, Jean Pierre Kingsley, the federal government's Chief Electoral Officer, has even conceded the possibility of a radical electoral reform to accommodate the changing face of the democratic process as we approach the twenty-first century.¹¹

What has emerged as characteristic to current political fragmentation is a growing polyphonic interaction where non-state entities are joining political discourses and increasingly emerging as effective alternative political voices on behalf of local and special interests (Gordon 1995:B1).¹² Non-governmental bodies and other localized or special interest groups are increasingly acting as effective power brokers and taking part in debates on both sides of such contentious issues as the North American Free Trade Agreement, gun control, abortion, national unity, language rights, ecology, and multiculturalism, to name just a few. Furthermore, non-state actors increasing participation is reaching global dimensions, thus drastically altering the dynamics of international relations in ways that "it is becoming increasingly difficult to make any clear distinction between domestic and foreign policy" (Maruca 1994:663; also Rosow 1994).¹³ It is easy to concede that in a globalized climate where the worlds of ideas and beliefs and the world of material interests have become inextricable, the tension between the global and local identity has all but rendered the right/left-wing political paradigm obsolete.

What seems to be at stake in the emerging politics of identity in Canada and worldwide is the issue of racial, ethnic, social and cultural differences and their significance under such all-encompassing abstractions as *nation-state* and *citizenship*. The primacy of the nation-state as an overarching signpost of national identity and citizenship, so essential to the political dynamics of the Cold War,¹⁴ is in crisis in the late-twentieth-century. Tendencies of collective identification and local protectionism along cultural, ethnic, racial, social, and ideological lines have increasingly challenged and dismantled long-established geo-political borders that were largely based on idealized notions of homogeneity (Alonso, 1995). The traditional geographical containment of cultural identity and authenticity is no longer a workable paradigm. For immigrants in diaspora, issues of representation and cultural survival become all the more crucial towards attaining meaningful political and economic participation. For Latin musicians in Canada's multicultural context, issues of representation have become increasingly complex. As Escoffier contends, "[North-American] society in the late-twentieth-century is becoming more racially and ethnically diverse, more polarized along class lines[....] and, as a result, increasingly preoccupied with political conflict over issues of representation" (1991; also Giroux, 1994:29). As part of an emergent global musical economy, local musicians in the Canadian diaspora confront complex issues of representation where difference is at once essential and detrimental for career success, as well as for cultural survival and adaptation.

Having thus outlined some of the important aspects of the dynamics of global cultural politics helping to shape a Canadian politics of identity, I now shift attention to some of the most significant ways Latin American musicians are affected by and participate in such a process.

Conflicting musical mythologies: The Canadian pan-Latin identity

In the late 1980s, *Chico Band* was the first band to implement partial automation in their live performances of *salsa*¹⁵ at some of Montreal's most recognized Latin venues.¹⁶ Although partially-automated live performance was already common practice amongst Latin and non-Latin musicians, generally, the move was nevertheless controversial amongst local Latin American musicians. According to Jorge Calero and Rubén Arancibia, two of the founders of the ensemble, using automation to play Afro-Latin musics, and in particular *salsa*, was prior to *Chico Band* considered "unthinkable." Today however, despite concerns, criticism and contradiction about the so-called authenticity of partially-automated live performance, other local Latin bands have followed suit. The various dilemmas posed by the use of automation in *salsa* music illustrates the complex nature of the paradox Latin musicians must continually negotiate in the Canadian context: Afro-Cuban-influenced musics are some of the most important cultural elements historically contributing to the construction of a collective Latin identity in the diaspora; as such, *salsa music* in particular has represented for Latinos a link to modernity in an emerging global cultural economy (Waxer 1991:114; also in Manuel 1988:46-7), while drawing at the same time on elements informed by a sense of tradition, continuity and history (Waxer 1991:114).

By means of outlining the general trajectory of *Chico Band*, I now will examine the process through which disparate, and often divergent, notions of a pan-Latin identity are articulated, negotiated and resolved through music within the current globalized cultural economy in the Canadian urban context. The purpose is to outline some of the major points of reference and conflict individual musicians encounter as they, through music, position themselves in the political arena of the multicultural Canadian context. This will then allow me to examine how individual musicians negotiate their collective and individual identities as they try to establish a niche for themselves in a local musical economy.

Along with the growth of the Latin communities, *Latin venues*¹⁷ hiring live bands have been flourishing in Montreal in recent years. However, all members of *Chico Band* agree that the local music economy is far from reaching any significant level of viability for local musicians. They argue that utter division amongst musicians has been a major contributor to the current conditions. They specifically blame musicians who are grossly underselling their services. Large orchestras of up to fifteen musicians are playing at some of the most important Latin clubs in Montreal for a salary that "would barely be fair for a duo."¹⁸ This has ironically undermined the efforts by groups like *Chico Band* who, with the aid of music technology, have reduced the number of musicians in order to remain marketable. Furthermore, bands using automation are increasingly being left out by agents and club owners, for reasons to be discussed below. For example, just recently, ANTARA, the most important Montreal entertainment agency handling Latin acts and organizing some of the most important concerts in the city, dropped *Chico Band* from its roster because of its use of automation in live performance.

The members of *Chico Band* are discouraged by what they consider unfair marketing practices on the part of larger ensembles. However, they concede that managers of Latin venues opt for large bands, not only because of the low salaries they pay them, but also because they are visually and musically more in line with Montreal's Latin audiences' current expectations. They are particularly referring to Montreal's large orchestras specializing in *merengue*¹⁹ who invariably have two to four singers-dancers fronting live presentations with elaborate choreographies. For that reason, *Chico Band*'s added musicians, and Delsa in particular with her singing and dancing skills, are as much part of the effort to complement the sonic aspects of performance as to compete with the elaborate visual performance productions of large *merengue* orchestras.

Under these circumstances, *Chico Band* must rely significantly on non-Latin venues and be ready to diversify their musical presentations. As *Chico Band*'s percussionists Roberto and Lazaro explain: "When we go to play non-Latin venues we have to change everything" (Montreal, Feb. 1995). This means they may add not only non-Latin musics, but also Latin musics with which audiences at non-Latin venues are most familiar. These would include, for example, old Latin standards such as mambos and boleros and cha chas from the 1950s; some of the songs from recent Latin movies' soundtracks such as *La Bamba*, *Salsa*, or the *Mambo Kings*; or as they did at a well-known Montreal University pub where I saw them perform, they included a couple of "rockier" songs by the Latin rock band *Santana*. Jorge Calero used a guitar sound in his keyboard synthesizer to emulate Carlos Santana's distinctive sound.

As I mentioned earlier, *Chico Band* is also an ensemble adaptable to different economic situations: they may appear as a duo, trio or quartet. Each of the individual

members is also independently involved in free-lancing and other types of musical and non-musical activities.

While partially-automated live performance has opened new employment opportunities in the complex and extremely competitive Latin musical economy of Montreal, all of the members of the ensemble seem to hold the view that the use of automation is not musically ideal and that its value lays mostly at the economic level. Some of their views echo familiar concerns of technological and capitalist determinism. Jorge Calero, for example, argues that partially-automated live performance narrows the possibilities for creativity and individual distinctiveness. On the one hand, partially-automated performance is seen as an integral part of the efficiency-driven modern musical economy with radically new aesthetic values. On the other, it is seen as dangerously obscuring the traditional notions which, in much of the popular discourse reported by the nine musicians, is said to underpin the categories of musical competence and creativity. It could then be said that partially-automated live performance, in very particular ways, highlights the various dilemmas Latin American musicians face relating to issues of collective and individual identity in Canada's late twentieth-century.

Although for Latin American musicians in Canada issues of cultural identity are complex and manifold, one can elucidate two intimately interrelated factors that play fundamental roles in the formulation of collective identity through the strategic uses of partially-automated performance and the choices of repertoire involved in those strategies: first, the label *Latin(o)* has emerged primarily in the diaspora as a potent social signifier capable of evoking collective identities across the cultural, social, racial and ideological heterogeneity of the diasporic Latin communities. As one of the interviewed musicians stated

to me, “the only time Latin Americans seem to forget their difference in Canada is on the dance floor” (Danilo Brizuela, personal interview, Montreal, May 1995). Socio-musical signifiers such as *Latin music* are not only integral, but also necessary toward political and economic consolidation in an increasingly globalized cultural economy where, as explained earlier in this chapter, traditional notions of *nation-state* and *citizenship* are being contested amidst great political turmoil and to great perils in modern democracies such as Canada.²⁰

Second, the complex historical connotations and fluidity of the label “Latino” must also be taken into account. As Suzanne Oboler states, social signifiers such as *Latino* or, in this case, *Latin music* “can take on a life of their own beyond the control of those who coined them or to whom they are applied” (1995:vii). Diverse attitudes, including derisiveness and ambiguity, towards a Latin identity must thus be looked at as both integral and necessary to a politics of representation on the part of individual Latin musicians in Canada.

Rethinking hybridity, border-crossing, and the contested role of digital music technologies

Latin American musicians in the diaspora are facing an era when, in Western societies, “the extension of democratic ideology and political representation” is increasingly being viewed as a “serious threat to dominant configurations of power and control” (Giroux 1994:33). “As old borders and zones of cultural difference become more porous or eventually collapse, questions of culture [have] increasingly become interlaced with issues of power, representation, and identity (ibid:29). The appropriation of technology by Latin American musicians emerges as part of those resources available in an increasingly heterogeneous and fragmented cultural and social context. In this context, processes of hybridization, border-

crossing, and positioning imply each other as an “ongoing and complex elaboration and definition of values” toward the articulation of individual and collective identities (Mitchell 1993; also in Straw 1991:250).

From this conclusion, it is clear, however, that hybridization and border-crossing are not without political, cultural and economic perils and constraints. For Latin musicians in Canada, struggles over musical authenticity and representation are indelibly tied to economic, social and political interactions played out within a complex global context. As I have outlined in the prior section, issues of representation implicated in the music of Latin musicians are also articulated against a diversity of overlapping and often contradictory and conflictive notions of history and cultural authenticity. In that sense, the significance digital music technologies present for individual Latin American musicians is far from monolithic. One must look not simply at how particular technologies affect particular music practices. One must also determine the place particular technologies occupy in a musician’s life where music embodies articulations of identity as *positionings*. Moreover, one must take into account the fact that these positionings, endowed with cultural and political significance, are continually being redefined and to varying degrees subject to historical circumstances (Hall 1990:229).

With this perspective in mind, I will now focus on the musical life of Rubén Arancibia in Montreal. My intent is to examine how processes of hybridization in music practices embody the negotiation of often seemingly divergent musical values. I will argue here that these complex negotiations are integral part of Rubén’s articulation of identity and difference in an increasingly heterogeneous global cultural economy. I want particularly to illustrate how

Rubén is involved in complex processes of interaction which play a significant role in the way he affirms his notion of nationality, race, ethnicity, gender, class and history.

Rubén Arancibia, a guitarist, bass player, keyboard player, drummer, singer and programmer of MIDI song files came to Canada directly from his native city of Mendoza, Argentina in 1979. Rubén was one of the founders of *Chico Band*, the first band in Montreal to use partially-automated live performance in *salsa* music. At the time of my interviews with Rubén, however, (Montreal in early to mid-1995), he had not only quit *Chico Band*, but he had also substantially refrained from playing live for about a year. Despite being a highly esteemed and sought-after musician in various Latin American circles, Rubén Arancibia had declined all offers of long-term engagement or commitment with any of the established Latin ensembles and musicians working in Montreal's dance-club circuits. Rubén was, at least temporarily, distancing himself from Montreal's Latin club scenes which he had increasingly come to view as not very viable sources of income nor artistic satisfaction at this point.

Rubén cited two factors he felt had contributed to adverse economic and musical circumstances afflicting Montreal's local Latin music scenes. First, he stated that marked divisions along national, cultural, and social lines had prevented Montreal's Latin community from achieving significant economic and political power to sustain a viable local live music market. This fragmentation, according to Rubén, had fostered division and self-defeating marketing practices amongst Latin musicians themselves. According to Rubén, many newly-arrived "part-time" musicians from Latin America had been volunteering their services for salaries that greatly undercut the bargaining power of those "professional" musicians who entirely depended on music for their livelihood. Second, Rubén echoed the general sense

amongst Latin musicians that the overall Canadian political and social climate of the 1990s reflected a growing anti-immigrant sentiment which further affected any prospects of prosperity for the Latin music scene. Rubén felt that recent anti-immigrant attitudes in Canada, and particularly those expressed by some nationalists in the province of Quebec, were some of the aspects contributing to an overall sense of uncertainty and instability, not only for Latin musicians, but for immigrants in general living in Montreal where he had been since 1983. Rubén argued that such climate was further contributing to put Latin musicians, and the Latin community at large, at economic and political disadvantage.

Rubén had grown weary and disillusioned not only with the dire economic state of Montreal's live Latin music scene, but also with the musical alternatives it represents for him at this moment. In his attempts to cross over to other non-Latin music scenes, he had also been discouraged by what he felt was a close-knit elitism amongst non-Latin musicians in other Montreal music sectors. Rubén recounted, for example, how in 1992, on the recommendation of colleagues, drummer Joanne Blondin and saxophone player José Blondin, he submitted a 'demo tape,' hoping to join the back-up band for Claude Dubois' tour of that year (Rubén's two friends were already part of the band). Dubois is an important singer and cultural icon in Quebec. Dubois' musical director at the time granted Rubén an interview but changed his mind shortly before the meeting when he found out Rubén was not a Quebec native. He sent the message that it was not appropriate to have somebody with a foreign accent in a Quebecois act. The fact was that Rubén was not going to sing but only play guitar with the band. I must also clarify here that Rubén, like a great majority of Argentineans, is white with a relatively traceable European background, factors which were

made clear to the producer by Rubén's musician friends in efforts to change his mind. Rubén's European background is Italian (he still speaks Italian). It would be difficult to discern whether or not he is a Quebecois unless one talked with him and heard his accent. As he remembers, his friends were very embarrassed when they told him that he was not going to be hired.

For Rubén, this occurrence resonated very much with the current climate of cultural, racial and ethnic conflict which has come to characterize the political and social dynamics in Canada in the 1990s. More specifically, it illustrates the importance invested in the French language as a signpost of Quebecois culture and nationhood within some of the most controversial separatist discourses in Quebec. Events such as this have also contributed to Rubén's ambiguous view of Montreal's Latin music scene where extremely difficult economic obstacles are also worsening because of the widening divisions amongst Latin American musicians, as explained above.

At the time of the interviews in 1995 however, Rubén was not entirely disconnected from the Latin music scene. He was still arranging and programming *MIDI song files* for other Latin groups, which included, amongst others, *Chico Band*, *Felicidad* and solo act, Carlos Avila (also participants in this project). Rubén has been programming music since the mid-1980s and has a very extensive and up-to-date catalogue of Latin songs. He makes available MIDI song files, mainly of dance Latin material for Latin musicians who do not program their own, or who simply want to save some time in adding some new songs to their repertoire. Rubén's work as a programmer has not been limited to Latin musics, but also includes Anglo-American and French-Canadian pop material. He has also been occasionally asked to program

music for ensembles from other minority cultures, as was the case recently with an Armenian group. He was also teaching bass, guitar, and piano full time at a well-established music school.

Rubén's hiatus as a live performer, it should be specified, was not entirely voluntary, nor simply a response to social and economic conditions, but also a matter of musical dilemmas. In the last year, Rubén had also been attempting to launch a five-piece group consisting of three other Argentinians and a Haitian musician. The goal of this ensemble, which disbanded shortly after my interviews with Rubén, had been to enter a more "cultural scene," meaning, away from the dance-club sphere and into the concert and "festival type" engagement more oriented towards "listening audiences." The band had put together a repertoire consisting of original and cover material, which included musical genres from Argentina and other South American and Haitian music cultures. The ensemble self-consciously fused diverse musical styles such as Argentinean folk musics, American rock and jazz, and Haitian *compas direct*, amongst many others. Translated, *Crisol* means *crucible* or *melting-pot*.

The instrumentation of the ensemble consisted of acoustic and electric guitar, electric bass, acoustic drums, electronic keyboards (played by Rubén), and a female lead vocalist. In contrast with the ensembles in which Rubén had more recently played, this band did not utilize automation at all. Despite his extensive use and avid interest in music technology, Rubén expressed to me an unequivocal preference for "totally live" performance. Rubén's new band *Crisol*, however, did not play a single engagement as it encountered two major interrelated obstacles: a dissimilar commitment towards the project amongst the members, and,

interrelated to this, the lack of a viable market. As Rubén stated to me, the undertaking of this project was a conscious effort to assert a musical identity which diverged from the one subsumed under the “Latin music” label, which is usually associated with dance musics. As Rubén explained, the qualifier *Latin* itself has powerful musical connotations which often conflict with the particular artistic intents of musicians like himself who wanted also to have the opportunity to perform for listening audiences. Rubén’s idea was to present *Crisol* as an ensemble which catered mainly to ‘listening audiences.’ The absence of the term ‘Latin’ in the promotional material put out by *Crisol* was, in itself, very telling:

Crisol

An original creation issued from a restless search, of a need for an answer to express feeling, roots... *Crisol* pours into a melting-pot each personal life experience which is inspired by cosmic and natural forces, influenced by different cultures to finally [sic] express a new musical concept that embraces the entire American continent.

From *Crisol's* promotional kit Montreal, 1995

Rubén admits that he, like many other Latin musicians, has always entertained a very ambiguous relationship with Latin dance musics

As Lise Waxer points out, the hierarchic positioning of “musica para escuchar” (music to listen to) over “musica para bailar” (music to dance to), which forms integral part of the ideological premises surrounding authenticity amongst Latin musicians, is seldom clear-cut in their musical strategies. Further, I agree with Waxer that these ambiguities cannot be seen as simple economic determinism or monolithic positioning on the part of Latin musicians, but rather, they have much to do with their cross-cultural interaction and exchange towards the opening of social and artistic spaces in a complex multicultural context (1991:70-4). In order to understand the multifarious nature of individual identity, one must take into account other historical specificities which inform it. In this sense, Rubén’s seemingly ambiguous positioning

is not entirely determined by Montreal's musical economy, but also by the particular historical circumstances within which he has constructed his collective and individual musical identities.

Rubén along with three other Argentinean musicians emigrated to Canada in 1979 both as part of a plan to pursue their aspirations as a rock band, and to flee the highly repressive Argentinean regime during the 1970s. In 1995, Rubén was 40 years old. He was born in a musical family and enjoyed a very musically active environment. His Brazilian-born grandfather was a clarinet player and his Italian mother was a viola player with the Mendoza symphony orchestra. His older brother, who today holds first chair as a bass player for the Mendoza symphony orchestra, is also an associate professor at the local conservatory and forms part of a jazz ensemble which has been sponsored regularly to represent Argentina internationally.

Rubén first started playing professionally as drummer at twelve or thirteen years old with a small, well-established dance band. This ensemble was a family enterprise led by the father of one of his childhood friends. At a later age, Rubén briefly attended the conservatory to study viola, but when he was asked by his professor to abandon his popular music practices, he quit in earnest. By this time, Rubén had solidly established himself as a freelance musician in Mendoza's relatively lucrative nightclub circuit. He worked mainly as a guitarist, singer, and sometimes as a bass player, accompanying variety shows and playing dance sets. He also often worked in orchestras, backing visiting internationally famous Latin American popular artists.

During the mid- to late-1970s, Rubén was also involved as a lead guitarist, songwriter, and singer with the rock band *Alta Blanca*. *Alta Blanca* was one of Mendoza's

outgrowths of the musical movement, *Rock Nacional*, which had originated in Buenos Aires. Particularly between 1976-1983, the movement represented the Argentinean youth struggle for identity under a highly repressive system (Avila 1989:2). *Rock Nacional* was to become, in the 1980s, one of the most influential rock movements that had emerged outside the Anglo-American and British spheres.²¹ As an enduring representative of a multifaceted constituency and product of difficult historical circumstances, *Rock Nacional*'s audiences and musics were far from monolithic. Its different expressions blended many music styles including rock, reggae, jazz, rockabilly, American country music, Argentinean tango and folk musics, to name a few (ibid.:3). Rubén was, as were many of the followers and prominent figures of the *rock nacional* movement, musically influenced by a wide diversity of Anglo-American and British rock figures dominating the global music scene during the 1960s through 1970s period. Rubén counts rock groups *Cream*, *Led Zepelin*, and *The Beatles* amongst some of his early rock influences.

Rubén's departure from Argentina was connected with his aspirations as a rock musician but also, as for many other Argentineans, it was due to the absence of democracy and violent repression. For example, as in most Argentinean cities, curfews had become part of everyday life in the city of Mendoza. Musicians had to carry special permits and identification cards to travel to and from work after hours. Raids by the military and police were commonplace at all types of music venues. Furthermore, since *Rock Nacional* was commonly perceived as an anti-government and an anti-establishment movement, rock musicians were often targeted and harassed by police and the military.

Upon his arrival in Canada, Rubén and his friends tried unsuccessfully to market themselves as a rock act in Toronto. In retrospect, Rubén views those early efforts as hard but useful lessons in adapting to a different cultural environment as a musician. Rubén clearly remembers today, with some degree of humor, how, shortly after his arrival in Toronto, he had firmly stated to me that he had “not come all the way from Argentina to Canada only to play Latin music.” Although since his arrival in Canada he has been playing a wide variety of styles, ironically, Rubén has, for the most part, played with Latin musicians and relied significantly on Latin repertoire.

Rubén moved from Toronto to Montreal in 1983. After some failed attempts to join efforts with non-Latin musicians there, he began to work with some of the most important local musicians playing *salsa* music in Montreal. It was there that Rubén got his initial “in-depth” training in Afro-Cuban musics with the band *Clan Latino*, an eight-piece band led by Colombian band leader Joe Armando. Afro-Cuban influenced musics are not as popular in the southernmost Latin American countries such as Argentina, Chile and Uruguay as they are in Northern South America and the Caribbean. As a result, Latin musicians in Montreal are aware that, for some Latin musicians from countries like Argentina, Afro-Latin influenced dance musics often represent “[an extraneous] identity as they did not grow up within the (sub)culture that espoused these traditions” (Waxer 1991:114). Some of the musicians in Montreal’s *salsa* circle were skeptical about an Argentinean being able to play in a *salsa* band’s rhythm section. Race, nationality, or regional identities often play an important role in debates as markers of authenticity in Montreal’s Latin music circles, particularly in Afro-

Cuban musics. Around this time, I myself witnessed an exchange in which, to his exasperation, Rubén was told by another Latin musician that he was not really Latin, “Argentineans were more European.”

Rubén played for more than a year with Joe Armando who, along with a few Cuban exiles, were some of the first influential figures of Afro-Latin musics in Montreal’s local scene in the early 1980s. Although Rubén did not play keyboards at this time, he joined this band as a substitute for the keyboard player by means of a guitar synthesizer. He was later to play bass in the ensemble. There were, at this time, only a couple of clubs that could employ an ensemble the size of *Clan Latino* in Montreal. With the Canadian recession of the mid-1980s *Clan Latino* had their salaries and workweeks sharply reduced. Rubén decided then to leave the *big band*²² *salsa* environment. He began playing again with smaller ensembles and was later to become acquainted with partially-automated live performance, often playing with another partner as a duo. Rubén also made use of this technology as a means to learn to play keyboards.

Towards the end of the 1980s, as the Latin communities and the popularity of new Latin dance musics began to grow in Montreal, Rubén, along with Cuban Ray Nerio, attempted to put together a large *salsa* band. Ray was a formally trained and experienced arranger, composer and trumpet player recently arrived from Cuba. Their plan was to pursue two different but mutually supporting artistic endeavours: on the one hand, they would play *salsa* and other Latin dance musics at Latin venues (*música para bailar*); on the other, with the financial resources of the relatively more lucrative Latin engagements, they would be able to pursue different types of artistic endeavours, such as playing jazz and some of the electro-

acoustic and avant-garde compositions written by Ray Nerio (*musica para escuchar*). They began by presenting a proposal to the owner of Montreal's Latin club Salsatheque for the creation of a large Latin band which would be a house act and also could accompany any visiting acts and local singers (Salsatheque is the oldest, and was, for a long time, the only Latin club presenting Afro-Latin dance music in the city. It is considered by many today as an institution). The owner of Salsatheque turned down Rubén and Ray's proposal, saying that he wanted to hire instead a fourteen-piece band consisting mainly of Dominican musicians. This band was not only to play mostly *merengue*-- which had become virtually the musical staple of Latin clubs in the 1990s (DJs usually supply other types of Latin and non-Latin musics)-- but also, it would charge just a fraction of what Rubén and his partners were asking as basic salaries. In Rubén's terms, Maxi (the club owner) was more interested in "commercialism" than in creating a "cultural centre."

It was at this point that Rubén and Ray, who had a lot of experience in partially-automated live performance and the use of new technologies in general, decided to create *Chico Band* (small band, as opposed to *big band*). It was decided that a reduced ensemble would be more marketable under current conditions. Rubén played bass and sometimes guitar, while Ray played *congas*. They called on Jorge Calero to join as a keyboard player. The three of them sang. Rubén and Ray programmed their own MIDI song files. These consisted of horn and string sections and also percussion rhythmic patterns, comprised mainly of *maracas*, *guiro*, *cowbell* and bass drum sounds. Maxi, the owner of *Salsatheque*, agreed later to audition *Chico Band* as a trio. According to Rubén, the following was the response by Maxi after the audition:

When Maxi auditioned us, he said "it is great, you sound just like a big *salsa* band and you are only three! Now all you need are five or six dancers and singers up front..."

Rubén Arancibia, Montreal, February, 1995.

Despite this initial irony, the current rise of popularity of Latin musics allowed *Chico Band* to remain relatively busy in various Latin and non-Latin clubs. Ray and Rubén also performed other types of engagements, including the Montreal Jazz Festival with a larger ensemble which included some of the best non-Latin musicians in Montreal. Ray and Rubén, however, were not completely satisfied with the economic and musical prospects of *Chico Band* in the Montreal scene. Ray left Montreal to pursue his career in Miami where he was hired as an arranger by an important producer in the international Latin scene. Shortly after, Rubén also left for New York to join efforts with three of his compatriots who were attempting to launch a rock band that would sing mainly in Spanish. Rubén and his friends saw new opportunities were being offered by the increasing international popularity of Latin American rock musics, particularly Argentinean rock. They sustained themselves playing with a relatively well-paid Italian wedding band while concurrently trying to organize the rock group. After unsuccessful attempts to launch the quartet, almost a year later, Rubén returned to Montreal.

For Latin musicians like Rubén, questions of cultural and individual identity, as articulated in the complex Canadian multicultural environment, are intimately connected with questions of musical authenticity. Difference, as articulated in notions of musical authenticity, continually plays paradoxical roles. On the one hand, the romantic ideology of popular music and its "seduction of success" is often construed as a tendency to erase cultural difference through commodification. On the other, cultural difference is also essential, not only for

success itself, however it may be defined, but also, for cultural survival and adaptation (Flores, 1994). To that effect, Stuart Hall has theorized diaspora as a hybridizing site which problematizes the enunciation of identity. According to Hall, this is because the diasporic condition entails a real “loss of identity” (1990:277-8). In the case of Rubén’s musical life, a dialectic relationship and a political dilemma emerge in the form of two divergent senses of identity. One is the articulation of identity based on an essentialized notion of collective history which acts as a unifying factor of a Latin American identity. The other is identity that emanates from a ‘play of *difference*’ “that constitutes ‘what [one really is]; or rather-- since history has intervened-- ‘what one has become’” (ibid.). As Hall has concluded, diasporic experience paradoxically uproots and cuts people from their collective past at the same time as it is able to unify people across their difference (ibid.:222). Rubén’s musical life underlines such effects of *displacement*. I am here referring to displacement not merely as the physical reality of exile but also as “the process by which the importance or significance of something is [altered] or transferred on to something else” (Saunders 1994:95)-- a process, I argue, which has increasingly become characteristic to global cultural and economic relations of the late twentieth-century. For Latin musicians, politics of representation in Canada become a politics to assert a historical and cultural collective identity where difference plays a central but shifting role.

Identity then becomes a process of identification through similarities but also a process of differentiation and “positioning.” Rubén’s ambiguities towards a Latin identity is articulated through music where otherness and difference are at stake as political actions of positioning. His interaction and membership across disparate cultural, social and historical realms clearly

illustrate how boundaries of difference are not fixed, but subject to repositioning in relation to different points of reference (Hall 1990:227-8). For example, while in the face of Quebec nationalist politics often hostile to *otherness* Rubén may see himself as essentially Latin American, different and excluded from what he perceives as an essentially Canadian-European identity, he, at the same time, cannot stand in the same relation of 'otherness' as Latin American musicians of different national, regional, racial or ethnic backgrounds who have viewed him also as an outsider. In other words, as a musician crossing a myriad of boundaries, Rubén must also contend with the fact that Latin collectivities have negotiated economic, political and cultural relationships differently "and it is that 'difference,' whether he likes it or not, which is already inscribed in [his] cultural identit[y]" (Hall 1990:228).

John Sorenson's study (1991) about Ethiopian immigrants in Canada ideally summarizes the often ambiguous and shifting nature of the *process* of identity in a multicultural society. His thinking translated to inform the present case could read as follows: Rubén's musical identity "is not simply the expression of a fixed set of cultural attributes but rather a [reflexive] process, fluid and changeable[...] a construction sometimes based upon quite explicit objectives. It is embodied in the interactions through which a musician [aims to] understand [and has understood] not only his own personal and collective or social identity, but also the identity of others involved in the process" (1991:67). Rubén's ability to interact with and enter disparate musical spheres and relationships tells much about the nature of human agency and the fluidity of identity. In this light, identity is a process by which the struggle to adapt and change occurs at the same time as the claiming of social space and history by means of asserting one's difference. For Latin Americans whose identities have

been historically constructed upon a wide, cultural, racial and social heterogeneity that long preceded discursive categories such as *post-industrialism*, *postmodernism* and *post-colonialism*, this sense of simultaneously belonging to various communities have proven to be, not mere random, taken-for-granted celebrations of difference devoid of or unopposed by any political will or significance (Hall 1990:229). In Rubén's case, his musical life and dilemmas show that issues of identity and cultural authenticity have been inextricably linked to questions of economic, cultural and political power, and history.

Notions of musical authenticity as articulated by Rubén Arancibia illustrate the multiple subject positions involved in the construction of identity. Moreover, the multiple and contingent subject positions which Rubén assumed and found himself in also denote the processual and ideological nature of identity.

In the next chapter, my focus moves to the more specific issues of musical competence and creativity. I will be examining how musicians mediate the particular ways in which partially-automated live performance disrupts (or leads them to reevaluate) established notions of musical competence and creativity.

NOTES

¹For example, the shooting death of a police officer by a Jamaican immigrant awaiting deportation became a high profile case in the media. News coverage of this tragedy implicated issues of race and immigration policies exacerbating existing tension and antagonistic perspectives. Allan Thompson's editorials in *Toronto Star*, for example, discuss how this case exacerbated political dilemmas as the federal government is faced with pressures to reform immigration policy (June 4, 1994:C1 and June 11, 1994:W7-8). See the article on this debate which was prompted by the same case (Anon., *The Globe and Mail*, June 11, 1994 E1). The article questions statistical methodology used to measure crime rates on the basis of race and ethnicity. It claims that crime rate figures are based mostly on data collected from grossly unreliable and inconclusive police records. The author here argues that faulty methodology allows for biased interpretations.

²For other important recent discussions and conceptualizations of *ideology*, see for example, Cormack (1992), Hall (1982), Larrain (1979), and Turner (1990).

³A term used by Audrey McLaughlin in her last address as leader of the National Democratic Party (NDP) of Canada. The NDP has been traditionally recognized as the most significant representative of Canadian left wing politics. She was referring to the drastic shift to conservatism by all major political parties and the general electorate which had resulted in the decimation of her party in the last federal elections (CBC Radio News, October 12, 1995).

⁴Nothing illustrates the current volatility of the Canadian political landscape better than the unexpected plebiscite results which saw, in the federal election of November 1993 alone, the obliteration of the long established right-wing end of the federal political spectrum, the Progressive Conservative Party of Canada; its replacement in such a role by the Reform Party of Canada which only recently emerged from Western Canada's grass roots-style provincial politics and whose populist conservative regionalist agenda, which is considered by many to be the most radically conservative yet in federal politics, sent a large contingent to Parliament Hill one man short of official opposition status; also, the controversial and ironic rise to official opposition of the nationalist party the Bloc Quebecois whose top priority has been to secure a mandate opting Quebec out of Canadian Confederation. Political moods are no different at the provincial level. For example, Ontario's New Democratic Party, a socialist party with no significant roots in the province's political history, unexpectedly won a landslide majority in the provincial election of September 1990. In June 6 of 1995, at the end of their first mandate, the Ontario New Democrats suffered a devastating defeat at the polls at the hands of the Progressive Conservative Party, a provincial party whose federal representation, as I have noted earlier, is all but non-existent since 1993.

⁵In provincial politics, for example, Liberal Frank McKenna in New Brunswick, and New Democrat Roy Romanow in Manitoba, not to mention Conservative Ralph Klein in Alberta, are leading the polls with their balanced-budget policies, which invariably include well-publicized cuts to social services and proposed reversal and criticism of such policies as job equity (Speirs, 1995). For editorial commentaries dealing with similar issues in the wake of

Ontario's 1995 election results see also Greenspoon (1995), Wente (1995) *Star*, (1995), and Crane (1995). Similarly, in the American political arena, on June 14, 1995, President Clinton created controversy amongst both his own Democratic party and the Republican-dominated Congress for his alleged appropriation of the Republican agenda with a marked shift towards conservative economic policy, which also included the balancing of the budget and severe cuts to social spending.

⁶The federal government currently led by the Liberal party, which has traditionally been seen as an advocate of immigrants' rights and lax immigration policies, has recently succumbed to mounting pressure to close the doors on immigration. Ironically, it was the Liberal Party of Canada who, in 1971 under Pierre Trudeau, proposed the Canadian Multiculturalism Act which sought to acknowledge the growing heterogeneity of Canadian society and to address issues of ethnic and racial relations. Immigration theory scholar Alan B. Simmons (1994) argues immigration linkage to unemployment trends have historically been used in Canada not so much as a response to economic realities as to political pressures. He argues that the severity of new immigration policies is founded less on its redeeming economic value than its political intents, which promote the perception that the influx of immigrants from particular countries is causing high unemployment, depletion of the social safety-net, and an increase in crime in urban Canada. According to Simmons, in the 1990s the Canadian government is under mounting pressure to reduce immigration below projected targets not so much to accommodate the views of labor or to lower unemployment but to address ethnic tensions in

cities and the perception that some groups of immigrants tend to increase the rate of crime (ibid).

⁷In 1994, Liberal Immigration Minister Sergio Marchi announced policies which included a drastic reduction of 24% of immigration yearly quotas (from 250,000). A tougher screening criteria targets family-sponsored immigrants whose numbers are to be reduced from 57% to 47% of the total number of immigrants allowed into the country. The remaining 63% classified as *independents* will be selected upon rigorous criteria which will consider capital assets, specifically required skills, and knowledge of English or French languages (Dateline Migration 1995). Immigration Minister Marchi is also currently proposing a bond that would cover welfare payments to immigrants whose sponsors stop supporting them. However, a policy has already been in place since the late 1970s which requires a ten-year commitment on the part of sponsors of immigrants to Canada to provide financial assistance to those sponsored if needed. According to critics, this legislation, which was implemented to prevent the use of social services such as welfare by new arrivals, is not new at all; however it was never strictly enforced. Some immigrant advocacy groups have filed a constitutional challenge citing the legislation as a human rights violation which gives way to a hierarchical treatment on the basis of class and ethnicity (Miller 1995). Marchi has also proposed a not so unprecedented \$975.00 landing fee. According to economist immigration specialist Don DeVoretz, the landing fee, added to a \$500.00 fee already in place for the processing of an application to immigrate, further prevents many families from being reunited (Miller 1995).

⁸See, for example, Valencia's outline of some of the advantages and disadvantages a separatist win would have for Latin American immigrants in the upcoming Referendum in Quebec (Valencia November 1995: 14-5).

⁹There seems to be, according to Rubén and some of the other selected musicians, a strong separatist constituency within the Chilean community, for instance.

¹⁰At the end of Premier Jacques Parizeau's public hearings on Quebec's sovereignty, harsh realities of political alienation along the lines of race and ethnicity became emphatically marked. Calls for barring immigrants from participation in the sovereignty referendum issued by some prominent figures did much to foster the view of the separatist movement as radically anti-immigrant. For example, "Jean-Mark Leger, former Quebec envoy to Brussels under the Parti Quebecois, said people who have just arrived in the province-- 'neo-Quebecers' he called them-- should 'think twice' before voting, and should 'generously abstain.'" (Star, 1995) "Poet Raymond Levesque told the hearings that since independence concerns only Quebec's founding-- that is, Francophone population, immigrants should be denied the vote" (ibid.). "Bloc Quebecois MP Philippe Pare said Quebec's ethnic communities should 'butt out of the balloting so that 'old-stock Quebecers' can decide the referendum" (ibid.). "Marcel Masse, who headed the Montreal sovereignty commission, even challenged the legitimacy of spokespersons for the federalist Italian, Jewish and Greek Communities, numbering 400,000." He warned a Jewish community leader that, "people who represent other people are going to have to be more and more careful about how they speak" and also questioned why the

communities he [the Jewish community leader] represented did not 'share the cultural objectives of Quebec society' (ibid.)

¹¹Comments to that effect were articulated by Chief Electoral Officer Jean Pierre Kingsley in a the televised conference "Who is Afraid of Democracy" sponsored by *The Royal Commonwealth Society*. The conference dealt with the role of electoral processes play in the global development and redefinition of democracy (Canadian Parliamentary Channel, Sept 28, 1995).

¹²For example, in their book which criticizes the Federal Liberal Party's departure from their traditional ideology, Barlow and Campbell (1995) recognize non-state or extra-parliamentary movements as important emergent alternative political forces in Canadian politics of the late-twentieth-century (Gordon 1995: B1).

¹³One clear example of this has been the wide participation in the debate over the North American Free Trade Agreement. For example, for many, the significance of the fortunes of Mexican workers and the struggles of the Zapatista rebels in southern Mexico suddenly shifted from being just one of many current international human rights issues, to a matter of clear domestic implications. Labour leaders in particular are highly suspicious of the agreement which they fear is prompting further erosion to the bargaining power of Canadian labour. The implications are that the agreement provides Canadian and American businesses with a powerful bargaining chip which allows them to relocate to Mexico more freely and cheaply and to take advantage of Mexican workers' low wages and virtual lack of social and

political protection. David Broad, for example, argues that a "New international division of labour" has emerged as part of globalization processes. Labour and social policies, he argues, are needed at both the global and local level, in order to halt the "social dumping" caused by trade blocks such as the NAFTA (1995:82-3). The writer states the trade agreement is quickly giving way to the "peripheralization of the centre" or the "Latin Americanization" of Canadian and American workers (*ibid.*:79). On the same issue see also, Stafford, Elwell and Sinclair (1993), Stafford (1991), and Ross and Trachte (1983).

¹⁴For example, William Alonso (1995) deplores the lack of national coherence of the United States as a nation based on the diverse and divergent interests of its citizenry which have become more clearly and strongly articulated in the post-Cold War period. Alonso outlines some of the major problems posed by the challenge to an "institutional symmetry" of the nation-state which he claims has been an essential pre-requisite to a cohesive communications protocol in international relations during the Cold War. Alonso points to questions of difference and special interest as the sources of fragmentation and divergence which have undermined the institutional symmetry traditionally sustained by the American two-party system underlined by the bipolar ideological left-right paradigm. As of the post-Cold War period, Alonso identifies a drastic and fundamental shift in the ideological tenor of discourse dealing with the interrelated notions of nation-state and citizenship. He identifies three major forces inhibiting the realization of nation-state/citizenship ideals: (1) supranational forces are identifiable aspects which transcend geopolitical boundaries. They may be articulated in relation to ethnic, cultural, religious, ancestry, or past injustices; they may be also articulated

in terms of political and economic interests in the form of trading blocks such as the North American Free Trade Agreement, or world bodies such as the United Nations and North Atlantic Treaty Organization; (2) subnational forces are articulated in the form of regional identification and articulation of a politics of cultural and economic autonomy. One such example given by Alonso in this regard is Quebec's nationalist aspirations based on territorial as well as cultural identity; (3) transnational forces deal more directly with the identification processes of immigrants with a motherland or a collective origin. Alonso concedes that this last force is of great and particular importance today in inhibiting a coherent national voice. He makes allusions as to the roles immigrant groups may have on the foreign policies of nation-states. For similar arguments, see Maruca (1995) and Hall (1990).

¹⁵ Since the mid 1970s in particular, a set of popular Afro-Cuban-derived musics has emerged under the heading '*salsa*.' *Salsa* has since become part and parcel of the international Latin and mainstream musical economies. Broadly speaking, the term '*salsa*' is used in reference to particular popular dance musics which present distinct Afro-Cuban characteristics. Afro-Cuban music has, particularly since the 1940s, played one of the most crucial roles in the creation of a popular Latin music international market. The emergence of a Latin global musical economy has involved complex hybridization processes in which Afro-Cuban music has been construed as its mainspring. However, the promotion of *salsa* to its prominent global status has not been the exclusive domain of Cuban musicians nor audiences. Instead, *salsa*'s international market has been developed and sustained by a diversity of Latin American localities and artists, including those in the diasporic contexts of North America. Due to such

factors, *salsa* has been an underlying musical force able to speak to and resonate with the collective memories, everyday experiences and aspirations of diverse Latin American audiences in North America. *Salsa* has thus played a central role in the construction of a musical pan-Latin identity in the diaspora. However, an essentialized European-African ancestry narrative underlies the history of *salsa*. *Salsa*'s particular identification with African origins often results in its ambiguous position as a representative of radically multi-racial, multi-ethnic, and multi-cultural Latin communities in North America, including those in Montreal. For useful historical and ethnomusicological perspectives on *salsa*, see for example: Peter Manuel (1995, 1994, 1992), Lise Waxer (1991; 1994:139-40), Roberta Singer, (1982), Cesar Miguel Rondon (1980), and John Storm Roberts (1994; 1979).

¹⁶ *Salsatheque, Pasacio Latino*, and *La Playa*, for example, are three of these venues (Jorge Calero, personal interview, Feb., 1995).

¹⁷ I refer here to *Latin venue* or *Latin club* as an enterprise whose musical repertoire is primarily Latin American musics, even though these venues may or may not be owned or managed by Latin Americans. For the most part, these venues use mostly recorded music but, increasingly, live bands are regularly being hired to perform on weekends. The repertoire in these venues is mostly dominated by a diversity of Afro-Caribbean and other dance musics (live and recorded) coming from a diversity of important Latin American and diasporic Latin locales. These musics include, for example, *salsa*, *merengue*, *cumbia*, *bachata*, *vallenato* and Latin rap. Deejays and Latin bands, almost invariably, also offer some non-Latin dance musics such as current mainstream hits which may include *techno*, *dance* and *reggae*. But these latter

musics play more of a complementary or peripheral role. Latin and non-Latin audiences come to Latin venues specifically to listen and dance to Latin musics. Generally, the demographics in dance venues include a cross-section of Latin Americans but also a significant number of non-Latin audience members. Both Latin and non-Latin audience members are, in general, well-versed, not only in relation to their knowledge about current Latin musics, but also in executing the diverse and latest dance styles emerging from Latin America and other important diasporic localities.

¹⁸Jorge Calero agreed with this statement by Rubén Arancibia (personal interview Montreal, March 1995).

¹⁹For further information on *merengue*, see Paul Austerlitz's forthcoming *Dominican Merengue in Regional, National, and International Perspectives*; also (1993). See also, Peter Manuel's compact history of *merengue* and its place in the global Caribbean Latin music economy of the late twentieth-century (1995:97-116); Lise Waxer (1991) also discusses the place of *merengue* as part of the live Latin music economy in Toronto.

²⁰ According to James, the-nation state paradigm is being redefined, rather than becoming obsolete in the twentieth-century (1995:70). For a discussion on late-twentieth challenges to the nation-state paradigm, see James' (1995) discussion of Australia which he argues to be "one of the first postmodern nation-states" (ibid.:88).

²¹In the late 1980s, *Rock Nacional* had become “the third most exported rock music in the world, after that of the United States and Great Britain” (Avila 1989:1).

²² Salsa musicians in Montreal often use the term *big band* in a ways analogous to the big band concept in jazz, meaning that the basic rhythm section is complemented by a full horn section.

Chapter 3

LIVE PERFORMANCE, A TECHNOLOGICAL ILLUSION: IDEOLOGY AND REPRESENTATION IN POPULAR MUSIC

In this chapter, I examine the processes through which Latin American musicians involved in the use of partially-automated live performance negotiate historically-grounded and often paradoxical ideological premises informing such notions as musical competence and creativity. As part and parcel of the global popular music culture and as part of its history, technology has continually both reinforced and problematized these notions. However, by virtue of its automated, synthetic, and mechanical nature, partially-automated live performance has given rise to particular dilemmas, debates and controversies amongst Latin musicians, most particularly since the mid-1980s. In this chapter, I will be paying attention more specifically to the various ideological positions individual musicians assume in relation to notions of competence and creativity and the particular circumstances which help shape their partially-automated live performances. My intention is to further corroborate the assumption that “not only there is no ‘natural’ meaning inherent in [musical] events, [practices], objects [and technologies], but also [that] the meanings into which [these] events and objects are constructed are always socially oriented-- aligned with class, gender, race or other interests [and aspirations]” (John Hartley, 1994:143).¹ To demonstrate this, I will examine musical representation as a process, not conditional upon, but instead, as integral to historically specific power relations in which musicians play active cultural, economic, and political roles.²

The paradoxical role of technology in the history and development of popular music has already been well argued.³ As technology has come to epitomize modernity in its thrust towards innovation and progress, it has also come to be regarded as the commodification of music and an ominous threat to traditions, individual and collective distinctiveness, and creativity. I will examine here how these two opposite views are negotiated by Latin American musicians facing ethical and professional dilemmas in their involvement with partially-automated live performance. To do that, I will focus on the musical practices of two of the musicians interviewed, as their views articulate both ends of this ideological spectrum: 1) in Montreal, Salvadorian keyboard-player Jorge Calero of *Chico Band* who considers partially-automated live performance an unfortunate necessity in current economic times, a necessity which, he claims, has negative effects on individual musical expression, creativity, and skills, and 2) in the Ottawa region, from Peru, Carlos Avila who, as a solo performer keyboardist-singer-guitarist, has embraced and exclusively used partially-automated live performance since the beginning of his musical career in the early 1980s.

As a means of grounding these two musicians' historical relationships to the issues at hand, I have examined some of the most important issues connected to debates about musical (mis)representation in the mainstream popular music industry during the late 1960s. This involves the now defunct British and American groups, *The Beatles* and *The Monkees*. The goal here is to show how popular music discourse dealing with issues of musical authenticity inform and is informed by the ways in which live performance has been socially and historically constructed. More specifically, it is to show how technological innovation in musical practices helps shift and redefine notions of musical competence, creativity and knowledge. Due to such disruptions, live performance emerges as a highly contested site

where issues of representation are negotiated. Ultimately, I want to show how the negotiation of these issues orient in many ways how, at a local level, they are articulated, resisted or transformed.

The 1990s 'Unplugged': Latin musicians, live performance and popular music's 'sincerity crisis'

Jorge Calero, leader and keyboard player with *Chico Band*, concedes that technology has become a necessity in his career because of current economic controlling factors, and also because of some of the emerging new aesthetic values which, he argues, have emerged as a result. Although a great part of his livelihood depends on partially-automated live performance, the 34-year old keyboard player dismisses technology as a peripheral aspect of his musical identity and development. Jorge feels that despite its obvious advantages in the efficiency-driven socio-economic environment of the 1990s, technology poses serious dangers to musical creativity, spontaneity, and technical skills. He argues that partially-automated live performance in particular does much to neutralize and/or to mask the musical distinctiveness expressed through the "touch," rhythmic feel and overall musical sensibilities of each individual musician. Jorge has been involved in partially-automated live performances since the early days of *Chico Band* in the late 1980s. He owns and is in charge of operating the sequencer and related MIDI technology in most partially-automated live performance situations in which he participates.

Partially-automated live performance, according to Jorge, contradicts the basic artistic and professional premises which, from an early age, had led him to music as a full-time occupation, namely, that performance must demonstrate a musician's 'natural' musical talents

and learned technical skills. Jorge graduated as a music major from El Salvador's most acknowledged post-secondary institution, *Universidad Centroamericana*. His emigration to Canada was largely due to the political and civil unrest in El Salvador. His hope upon his arrival in Canada, however, was also to grow musically through interaction with other musicians and to create a comfortable artistic and professional niche for himself. To achieve those goals, Jorge was counting on his formal training and also on his professional experience in the various Latin and non-Latin popular styles he had acquired in El Salvador. However, he did not anticipate the grave economic conditions afflicting Montreal's live music scenes in the 1980s. As explained in the first chapter, for Jorge Calero, as for many other musicians, partially-automated live performance emerged as the most viable alternative in current social and economic conditions. Not at all uncommon amongst musicians, partially-automated live performance came into direct conflict with some of Jorge's fundamental views about musicianship and musical authenticity.

In what follows, I focus on some of the most salient artistic and ethical dilemmas Jorge faced in his involvement with partially-automated live performance. My goal is to highlight the power relations prevalent within the realms in which Jorge negotiated notions of musical authenticity in relation, and sometimes in opposition, to differently-situated participants in the local musical economy. These negotiations, in my view, highlight the ideological premises articulating notions of musical competence and creativity which often carry specific political intent toward the creation of social, economic and cultural space.

Partially-automated live performance was being used by Jorge primarily to counterbalance what he perceived as sonic disadvantages, particularly those faced at some of

the larger and most popular Latin dance clubs in Montreal. Jorge stated that audiences' musical expectations in relation to both sound quality and repertoire, often coincided with the standards and choices established by deejays and large live orchestras. Deejays' sound systems are characterized by their powerfully loud, high-fidelity sound. Deejays also play a very important role in keeping the dance community up-to-date on the latest Latin musical trends. Thus, as Jorge explained, the production qualities of recordings reproduced through deejays' powerful sound systems, with thickly textured arrangements and sound effects featured in their selected recordings, had become most influential in the dance club scene:

People are used to it [synthesized sound] now. They expect the "kick" of the bass drum and the clarity and fullness of sound.... strings, horns.

Jorge Calero, Montreal, February, 1995.

While by the 1980s deejays had become a fixture at dance clubs, increasingly, club owners were beginning to hire live bands. However, more often than not, clubs preferred to hire large ensembles. Live bands performing more regularly at well-established Latin clubs were and still are rarely composed of less than fourteen musicians. Jorge concluded that while partially-automated live performance had allowed *Chico Band*, to a certain extent, to remain competitive against the powerful sound systems of the deejays, the band's reduced number of musicians presented an equally significant problem. According to Jorge, disadvantage in relation to large live bands rested less on a disparity of sonic texture and loudness, and more on the sheer visual impact of the greater number of performers on-stage and their highly dynamic performance. As I mentioned earlier, larger bands usually include well-choreographed routines by singers/dancers frontstage. As a result, a small five-piece all-acoustic ensemble like *Chico Band* could not very easily meet audiences' expectations at these venues.

Jorge thus conceded that, in the steep competition of the large Latin venue sector, he had to worry as much about the expectations set by deejays' as those set by live bands. He cited, for example, a typical case in which, while *Chico Band* was performing at a certain venue, the deejay kept playing the recorded versions of many of the songs the band had just played. Jorge took such gestures as competitive strategies where deejays publicly criticize the live band's performance and sound system. As Jorge explained, that is why a harmonious and friendly relationship with the deejay is high on the check list of public relations strategies amongst Latin bands. The ideal deejay/live band relationship would be one of cooperation. In such a case, for example, the deejay would keep track of the songs performed by the band and refrain from repeating any of them on that particular night.

Jorge views deejays as often having the upper-hand in musical negotiations. His views are substantially justified since, historically, the standards at dance clubs-- as far as volume, sound quality, no to mention repertoire are concerned-- have been established by deejays who had become a fixed, and often, central musical figure at the Latin and non-Latin dance clubs beginning in the 1970s. As mentioned earlier, it is only in recent years that a slow trend back towards live music has taken place in the better-known Latin clubs in Montreal. Currently, live bands are mostly being advertised as special feature. Live bands play only one or two nights of the week. In many cases, live bands have been strategically scheduled by club owners as an attempt to improve a chronically poorly-attended night of the week. Deejays, on the other hand, have remained permanently housed at most Latin venues. As single performers, deejays also continue to present the most attractive economic value for club owners. In sum, in 1996, deejays have become indispensable to a Latin club's musical economy in the city. The

structure of such power relations, according to Jorge, often allows for deejays to treat the club as their own turf with live bands perceived simply as the visiting acts.

MIDI song files are one of the means through which Jorge and *Chico Band* have attempted to counterbalance sonic disadvantages and remain competitive at some of these larger and more popular Latin clubs. A MIDI song file is the digitally-stored performance data of a particular piece of music. MIDI song files are stored by conventional digital means such as floppy disks and hard drives. In basic terms MIDI song files are analogous to play-back audio-tape recordings used by some performers to accompany themselves. The *sequencer* acts as a tape recorder able to record as well as to play back MIDI song files. Generally, programmers of MIDI song files strive to reproduce, as faithfully as possible, the instrumental accompaniment of a particular commercial recording. As Jorge states, MIDI song files of current hits are necessary in venues where deejays and large Latin bands dominated the competition. Since they are meant strictly to be used for accompaniment purposes, MIDI song files do not contain vocals but usually include the lead line included instrumentally as a rehearsal guide for users. Jorge customized the MIDI song files he buys according to the size of the ensemble he is to perform with by muting those automated parts which are not needed in actual performance. Thus in the case of *Chico Band*, for example, lead line, keyboards, drums, *congas* and bass are muted. MIDI song files are mainly used by Jorge to obtain a fuller texture by adding the automated parts of a horn or strings section, and/or some other intricacies of Latin music which are impossible to realize with a five-piece band.⁴

The quality of the automated parts depends largely on the ability of programmers to reproduce as faithfully as possible the musical characteristics of the original recording. Ideally,

programmers strive to approximate the sound and overall musical character of a recorded performance.⁵ However, for users like Jorge, the quality of MIDI song files in terms of timbre, attack, decay and other sound qualities depends largely on the types of sound sources (synthesizers, sound modules or samplers) used to play back the sequenced material.

Another crucial aspect that accounts for the quality of sound reproduction of MIDI song files is the quality of the audio system through which the band is amplified. Jorge's sound sources and amplification comprise a compact setup aimed to be practical for a self-contained group which had to move constantly from club to club without the benefit of a road-crew. Jorge's equipment is just adequate in proportion to the economic means of the ensemble. According to Jorge, at larger Latin clubs, *Chico Band* was, however, often at disadvantage in relation to the louder and more spread-out distribution of sound coming from the more numerous speakers of the deejays' sound system which are usually permanently installed around the club's dance floor.

According to Jorge, while automation, to a limited degree, solved some of the sonic aspects of *Chico Band*'s performance at larger venues, it posed, at the same time, problems in relation to the visual aspects. The number of performers on-stage in a live Afro-Latin music act is an aspect of performance which is important for audiences. At the most popular Latin clubs in Montreal, such as Palacio Latino and *Salsatheque*, for example, people expected to see a live band composed of no less than fourteen musicians. This size of ensembles conforms more to traditional as well as contemporary music practices amongst internationally-known performers of *salsa*, *merengue* and *cumbia*. The most common formation of Montreal's large bands usually includes a full percussion section-- drum-set or *timbales*, *bongos*, *congas*,

tambora (in the case of *merengue* bands),⁵ *guiro*, and *maracas*. It also includes piano, bass, a full horn section and one to four singers who invariably dance, and often, perform well-rehearsed and elaborate choreographies.

For about two years, Jorge took measures to counterbalance *Chico Band's* visual deficit by adding two more musicians to the formation. The strategy also involved the reassignment of the roles of the musicians in the ensemble. Roberto and Lazaro, for example, who were accomplished and recognized percussionists, no longer only contributed to the sound of the band, but also provided the visual character and energetic dynamics of a full Latin band. As Jorge explained, the playing of percussion instruments is visually more in line with the notion of Latin music and more dynamic than for example the playing of another keyboard. In the same way, Delsa Germosen provided not only the lead vocals,-- which, in *Chico Band's* case, is difficult for instrumentalists to do when they were busy playing rhythmically demanding parts-- but also provided some of the required visual dimension to the performance by being frontstage singing and dancing. As Jorge explained, it is important for audiences to see that the band is really playing and singing: "People expect a live Latin band to really be playing all the instruments, otherwise they already have the deejay to push buttons."⁷ Thus in larger clubs, Jorge invariably played with the complete five-piece formation of *Chico Band*. According to Jorge, the visual dynamics provided by percussionists Roberto and Lazaro and front lead singer/dancer Delsa helped audiences overlook the fact that there were some automated parts in the performance.

The strategies used by Jorge and *Chico Band*, however, were not always effective at some of the more popular Latin American dance clubs. According to Jorge, audiences at

larger clubs were somewhat hesitant to accept *Chico Band's* type of performance. Furthermore, as mentioned earlier, ANTARA, the foremost Latin entertainment agency in Montreal, dropped *Chico Band* from its roster due to its use of automation and the resulting reduced number of musicians. The agency dropped *Chico Band* also as a response to the harsh criticism waged by some members of the local Latin music community against the use of automation and, in particular, some purists and a number of musicians performing in large orchestras.

According to Jorge and the other interviewed musicians, *Chico Band's* strategies were not as successful as they could have been also because large orchestras were grossly under-selling themselves in order to get hired. All of these factors combined had severely undermined the efforts of *Chico Band* to remain competitive through the use of partially-automated live performance. It should be noted that, in spite of this, according to Jorge, at least four other small Latin bands use automation in the Montreal nightclub scene.

Prevailing conditions forced Jorge to seek employment in smaller Latin and non-Latin venues. According to Jorge, *Chico Band* was better accepted, and sometimes better paid, in the small club environments. The increasing acceptance of *Chico Band* in smaller non-Latin clubs was due in large part to the widening popularity of Latin musics which included the increasing interest on the part of non-Latin audiences to learn how to dance to these genres.⁸ However, because of the demographics, and especially the wide age range of audiences⁹ in these types of clubs, Jorge played a wide variety of Latin styles and even some non-Latin music. He was also expected to be able to play songs and genres which were not necessarily current within the Latin American communities in Montreal or the international music scene.

The atmosphere in these types of clubs tended also to be more intimate and the overall decibel levels of deejays' sound systems less blaring-- a factor which allowed Jorge and *Chico Band* to meet the musical expectations of the audience more easily.

Jorge deeply resented the prevailing working conditions in Montreal which had forced him to use automation. As he explained, that was because he agreed with the fundamental premises of the criticism waged against automation. Some of Jorge's musical views and alternative musical strategies reflected his convictions: that partially-automated performance annulled individual musical creativity, skills, and identity and that it rescinded the overall authenticity of music. For example, Jorge had consciously avoided learning how to program MIDI song files on his sequencer. He usually bought them from programmers like Rubén Arancibia and other individuals, as well as from music stores. Jorge's use of his sequencer was thus virtually strictly limited to play-back functions.¹⁰ That was, he explained to me, because he had a deep aversion for what he termed "over-produced" MIDI song files. Jorge had a preference, and a strategy, for playing songs with little or no pre-programmed elements involved. For example, depending on the song, he often used as little as a single underlying *maracas* rhythmic pattern to complement Roberto and Lazaro's 'live' percussion output. In this context, Jorge felt that the listeners would receive more of a "live" performance in which there would be an element of spontaneity and improvisation, and in which the "true" musicianship of the ensemble and each individual musicians would come through to the audience.

Whenever possible, Jorge opted for such selective uses of automation features in performance. To attain this flexibility, he had programmed a number of basic Latin and non-

Latin drum patterns which he used selectively, depending on the particular type of music to be played. Drum patterns are digitally recorded ostinato percussion rhythmic patterns. Jorge used drum patterns as an underlying rhythmic accompaniment to complement or substitute the percussion section depending on the performance circumstances. The length of drum patterns can vary from as little as a one to an indefinite number of measures, depending on the capabilities of the particular technology at hand. Jorge's sequencer had the capabilities of recording 999 measures per single drum pattern. The majority of Jorge's drum patterns consisted of one to two measures only, a common practice in this type of performance. The sound source for the rhythmic patterns was one of Jorge's sound modules. Sound modules are the hardware devices which store synthesized sounds. The synthesized sounds Jorge most frequently used were *clave*, *maracas*, hi-hat, cowbell, and sometimes a bass drum. From his sound module, Jorge selected the sound(s) required to complement the "live" rhythm section in reproducing particular music styles.

When using drum pattern accompaniment, Jorge counted-in the tune for the band and, as he depressed the sequencer's switch pedal, the band would begin to play in 'sync' (short for synchronization) with the underlying sequenced rhythmic pattern repeating itself indefinitely. The tempo and the length of the song was controlled by Jorge who could speed up, slow down, and stop the machine at will, both manually and by means of a foot pedal. This allowed him to raise or lower the tempo, shorten or lengthen the form of the song in *real time* in live performance. Real time tempo and form variations were contingent upon particular musical situations. For example, Jorge lengthened the song if the audience was dancing and

enthusiastically reacting to a particular song. He also shortened a song in opposite circumstances.

This particular use of automation requires that all musicians be able not only to visually communicate, but also to constantly and clearly hear the underlying automated rhythmic pattern. This strategy allowed percussionists Lazaro and Roberto, who are themselves accomplished singers, to be freer at times and to be able to participate in call-response choruses which are essential to *salsa* and other Latin musics. Adding thus one or a few automated rhythmic parts such as *maracas* and/or *guiro*, for example, relatively lessened the coordination requirements which were particularly demanding for two percussionists who were trying to replicate the full five-piece Latin percussion section and to sing at the same time.¹¹ In some cases, there was no need for complementary rhythmic parts, in which case the band played totally live.

This practice of selectively using particular automation features is not unique amongst club musicians using partially-automated live performance. And it is preferred by musicians like Jorge not only because of the type of musical leeway they obtain from it, but also because it offers practical advantages. In a true sense, this flexible selective use of technology did open doors for Jorge and *Chico Band* in the relatively smaller economy of Montreal's smaller venues which, almost as a rule, hire single acts or duos. On the one hand, MIDI song files allowed the band convincingly to reproduce some of the current Latin American dance musics with a reduced and more marketable number of musicians. On the other, selective and minimized uses of automation allowed the band to play an additional wider range and quantity of songs immediately upon request. The latter was particularly well appreciated at smaller

venues. In fact, audiences and club owners in these types of clubs often judge a band upon its abilities to play requests.

The ability to play songs upon request, at the spur of the moment, in any tonality or rhythm, has been one which has traditionally been highly praised amongst Latin musicians. It is usually seen as a sign of musical maturity, experience and reliability. Bands who depend wholly on MIDI song files run a high risk of being severely criticized by other musicians and audiences for the limitation of their repertoire and the inflexibility or incapacity to deal with contingencies in performance.

Jorge's flexible use of automation also eliminated the necessity to amass a number of MIDI song files to accommodate these types of venues. Such a task would not only have been utterly expensive and time-consuming, but it would have also been cumbersome to implement in live situations.¹² Selective and minimized uses of automation were also more appealing to Jorge because of his very eclectic musical taste, which included a strong influence from the improvisational aspects of jazz traditions, for example. Having control over the form and length of some of the songs allowed Jorge occasional extended solos and variations. According to Jorge, minimizing the degree of automation used in live performance is at least musically more appealing than performing songs where the length and form are pre-determined, leaving little room for musical variation and spontaneity. This strategy, according to Jorge, allows musicians to demonstrate their experience and musicality.

In my interviews, Jorge had no qualms about rejecting automation and expressing his preference for "totally live performance." He anecdotally illustrated to me his feelings on this subject. He had just recently played with his band-mate conga-player Lazaro René, and a

Haitian drummer in a show for high school students. Jorge told me that, although the music they played there was simple, the occasion was uplifting for him because all instruments were acoustic and all the sounds coming out of the performance were being played by “somebody.” “There were no machines.”¹³ Jorge, on piano, was playing rhythmic patterns on his right hand and bass lines with his left hand, while Lazaro and the other percussionist were drumming and singing. Jorge stated that he was enthralled by the all-acoustic non-amplified, non-automated performance because of the looseness and freedom it allowed him musically. Jorge concluded that if one has to use technology, one must be selective, not only as to when and where to use it, but also as to the kinds of technology one should use for given circumstances. However, according to Jorge, the more “machine” one uses in the performance, the less you hear, not only how each individual musician is playing, but even who is really playing. “The more of the machine you use,” Jorge stated, “the less of a good musician you have to be.”¹⁴

Jorge Calero is not alone in facing dilemmas, contradictions and obstacles in an era when new technologies have radically affected all modes of cultural production and representation. MIDI technologies which are essential to partially-automated live performance are part of the late twentieth-century’s technological revolution. Through them, new modes of musical representation have emerged that seriously problematized long-established notions about musical competence, originality and, ultimately, authenticity. Thomas Porcello’s (1994) insightful look at MTV’s *Unplugged* concert series, for example, examined how a host of Anglo-American popular music stars in the early 1990s attempted to deal with what the writer termed a “sincerity crisis” affecting the popular music industry. In the series, mainstream mega-stars like Eric Clapton, Rod Stewart, Paul McCartney, Neil Young, Mariah Carey, and

Nirvana, for example, have openly rejected technology and visual frills in favour of all-acoustic, all-live sets in front of small audiences in the intimate setting of a small concert venue-- as opposed to the mega-concert setting of large stadiums. Unplugged sets, according to Porcello, represent a conscious effort by the industry and the performers to musically validate or re-validate themselves, particularly in the wake of recent highly publicized charges of misrepresentation against some high profile artists (ibid.:2). The most outstanding case of such controversy in the 1990s was that of the American duo *Milli Vanilli*. The duo was stripped of their 1989 Best New Artists Grammy Award when they confirmed rumors that they were not the actual singers on their albums and that, even in live performances, they were only mimicking the vocals inconspicuously provided by anonymous singers.¹⁵ The *Milli Vanilli* controversy illustrated how widespread consumer mistrust had emerged amidst increasing awareness and suspicion of the highly sophisticated new technological manipulations of sounds and images in audio recordings, music videos, and live performances. In most cases, it has become difficult to tell just who is or is not singing or playing in any given recording, music-video or live presentation.

According to Porcello, "Unplugged simultaneously exploits and reinforces a fundamental ideological premise of rock and folk music--that acoustic instruments are semiotic markers of sincerity" (1994:1). Ironically, Unplugged performances were widely successful due to their mass and multi-layered media distribution and only after they had been recorded, mixed, and elaborately re-mixed and edited in post-production with state of the art audio and video recording technology. The fact is that *Unplugged's* metonymic proclamation of honesty through what is presented as musical authenticity is for the most part predicated

upon a particular “aura level” (ibid.) or idealized notions of live performance with deep historical roots.

The ‘Unplugged’ concert series and Jorge’s ambiguous relationship with automation clearly illustrate how reproductive technologies have brought about issues of modes of representation whose principles have collided head on with some of the fundamental romantic ideologies about technology. Novel reproductive technologies such as multitrack recording in the 1960s, for example, have been seemingly able to disperse and confound the historical and social specificity of live performance by radically disrupting its “aura level” or idealized constructions. With the powerful editing and reproductive powers of computers and MIDI in the post-industrial era, live performances have more than ever emerged as *imagined*, historically rooted, and politically contested sites. Jorge Calero’s musical history and his dilemmas with partially-automated live performance reveal how performance is a site where, challenges to and negotiations of notions of competence, creativity and musical authenticity occur.

In the next section, I will examine how notions of competence and creativity are historically embedded in global popular music discourses which have particular implications for the musical lives of Latin American musicians involved in partially-automated live performance.

Who represents whom and how?: technology, competence, creativity, live performance and other issues of power

Paul Théberge (1989) pointed to multitrack recording technologies as one of the most significant technological developments to shift profoundly the significance and nature of live performance. According to Théberge, already since the 1960s and 1970s, with the advent of

multitrack recording, popular music's "producers and artists had shifted from the documentation of a studio performance to the construction of an illusory performance event in their recordings" (Wurtzer 1992:93; also in Théberge 1989). With the new editing and reproductive powers of the recording studio, the musical categories of competence and creativity were radically disrupted and/or reformulated. Multitrack recording technology increasingly turned the studio into a powerful tool providing new ways of creating music. New musical skills, languages, and possibilities allowed for the redefinition of aesthetic values and the socio-musical re-positioning of players. New technological developments also allowed new actors to participate in musical economies. This, for example, can be seen with the emergence of the sound engineer and also record the producer which developed into an independent artistic entity as of the 1960s.

Thus new ways to produce music also brought drastic shifts in the power structures of musical economies. Power struggles ensued as novel and long-established concepts of musical authenticity came to the centre of debate. Differently-situated participants struggled amongst themselves to define and redefine, create and recreate the discursive categories of musical competence, creativity, knowledge, and live performance. A case-in-point was the controversy surrounding charges of musical misrepresentation against the commercially successful 1960s American rock group *The Monkees*.

Widespread skepticism about their musical competence and validity as a rock band emerged as a result of charges that their musical persona had been "manufactured" via the new editing capabilities of the recording and television studio. While defenders of *The Monkees* were showing their support by tuning-in to their weekly TV sitcom and buying

millions in records and merchandise, their detractors were derisively dismissing the group as “talentless cogs of publicity” (Welch 1967:15). The underlying premise of the criticism was that *The Monkees* were unable to play a musical instrument nor could they write their own songs.

Ironically, while *The Monkees* were being dismissed by detractors on the basis of their studio “manufactured” persona, *The Beatles*, who had not performed live in three years, went on to win Grammy awards, including one for “The Best Technically Engineered Album of the Year” with their album *Sergeant Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band*. *The Beatles’* *Sergeant Pepper* was, and continues to be, a landmark in rock and roll history. That despite the fact that all of the material in the album (and virtually all of the songs *The Beatles* recorded since their departure from the live stage in 1966) was never performed live by *The Beatles*. Furthermore, much of *The Beatles* later period material, in the words of John Lennon, was “not doable.” By *The Beatles* own admission, often articulated with pride, much of their music was impossible to reproduce live. The fact was that much of the music recorded by *The Beatles* since their departure from the live stage involved a great amount of studio manipulation and experimentation. In contrast with *The Monkees*, it was precisely this aspect, however, which earned *The Beatles* critical praise. And it was this sort of experimentation that brought *The Beatles* new audiences who began to compare their music with Western art music and the avant-garde. Controversy about *The Beatles’* absence from the live stage and their relevance in rock, however, was often articulated by the press and many of their original fans until they broke up in 1970.

Paul Théberge has acknowledged how-- in ways similar to multitrack recording -- MIDI technologies have facilitated processes whereby “new knowledge and skills” simultaneously bring “new definitions of what it means to be a musician” (1993:294). The *Monkees Beatles* debates and controversies demonstrate how multitrack technologies facilitated the creation, not only of new forms of musical knowledge but, more importantly, new ways of *representing* notions of musical knowledge. New musical knowledge emerges in the form of new ways of organizing and representing culture which challenge and/or reinforce established modes of representation. As Théberge has stated, the ways in which technology facilitates new musical knowledge and skills not only redefine notions of musicianship but also are able to “mobilize” or re-define space of performance or musical production (ibid)

Carlos Avila and his musical practices and views in Ottawa, which I discuss next, further demonstrate how partially-automated live performance forms part of new modes of representation bringing the issue of competence, creativity, and live performance to the core of debates about cultural authenticity, identity and power in the 1990s.

Music technology in the 1990s: locating live performance and “other” musicalities

Carlos Avila is the single most-recognized local Latin American musical figure in the Ottawa-Hull area. His entire career, which began upon his arrival in Canada in 1978, has been as a solo act. Partially-automated live performance has also been central to Carlos for most of his musical life. Carlos concedes that, for many, partially-automated live performance is not an ideal form of musical representation and recognizes that it has put many musicians out of work. However, he stated that, in his case, technology had brought nothing but success. I

asked him what disadvantages, if any, technology presented to him as a performer. He answered:

Disadvantages?...On the contrary. Technology has helped me do everything I am doing now. I have a good job, they are paying me well, thanks to God. I have always been working.

Interview Hull, Quebec June 1995.

Carlos arrived in Canada to take a course in business in Ottawa in January of 1978. By April of the same year, he was playing as a strolling solo singer-guitarist in one of the first Latin American restaurants to open in Ottawa. He was born and grew up in Arequipa, a largely rural area in Peru. There, music had been part of his life from an early age. However, Carlos' singing, self-accompanied with a guitar, remained "only a hobby." For his first two years in Ottawa, Carlos' musical activities' remained largely a source of supplementary income. In those early days, Carlos played mainly at restaurants. Initially, his repertoire consisted of serenade-style ballads and other standard songs from Latin America. He gradually began to include current Latin dance music and songs from Anglo-American and French-Canadian mainstream radio. As his repertoire began to expand in diversity, in the early 1980s Carlos integrated a drum machine as part of his performance. His engagements became longer and he increasingly became known in the area. Music then became his full-time occupation.

Starting in the mid-1980s, for five summers in a row, Carlos *busked* (*busking* is a term referring to performance in open public places such as streets and markets where performers collect donations from audiences composed of passers-by) during the day time at the Byward Market. He often combined this activity with his regular night engagements. The Byward Market is a prime commercial tourist attraction in the National Capital Region. Carlos considers this period as the most significant in his career. He argues that it is through busking

in the market that he became widely-known in the region. I myself was often witness to the large crowds attracted by Carlos.¹⁶ In my opinion and that of many people and other local musicians I know, Carlos did become a popular and almost a fixed musical attraction during his five summers (starting in the summer of 1985) at the Byward Market. He believed that exposure at the market, contrary to the criticism by other local Latin musicians who considered this type of venue undignified, earned him the loyal and strong following of a widely diverse audience that he has enjoyed to date.

During his stint at the Byward Market, Carlos had also been learning how to play keyboards. At the time of my interview, keyboards, in addition to guitar, were an integral part of his live presentations. However, Carlos did not consider himself a musician. He, instead, preferred to be recognized as a “a performer, a show man” (personal interview, June 1995).

When I asked him why he did not consider himself a musician, he responded:

As I told you, I am not a great musician. I play by ear, and more often than not, I do not even know what notes I am playing. When I am programming or learning a song [on the guitar], I pick up the note by ear from the cassette recordings, and when I find it, that's it, I just play it and that's that.

Hull, Quebec, June 1995.

In view of his almost exclusive use of partially-automated live performance, I also asked Carlos if he considered himself a ‘technician.’ He stated that, although he programmed most of his material, he did not consider himself a technician. Recently, he had also been commissioning a local musician to program some of his MIDI song files of current Anglo-American songs. Carlos does not find that an in-depth knowledge of music technology is necessary to validate his artistic persona.

I do not use the latest in technology. I have a couple of sequencers. I could be using more things but ooh! [expressing disinterestedness]. I consider myself more a “performer” than a technician... Right now I could not even tell you the make of my equipment, not even of the sound module. I [always] forget it.

Carlos Avila, personal interview, Hull, Quebec, June 1995.

Carlos explained to me that, in his view, being a performer meant “projecting” to audiences in a more direct and intimate way than simply playing and singing on stage. I asked him to give me some examples of what he meant by “projecting” himself as a performer.

The projection I have with the public [is for example] dancing with them, talking with them, kidding around. I love people. I have always been like this.

Carlos Avila, personal interview, Hull, Quebec, June 1995.

Carlos asserts that, when he performs, he worries little about playing or what people think of his playing, or not playing. For example, in most of the presentations I attended, in the middle of a song he sometimes stopped playing the keyboard or guitar and got off the stage. While the automated accompaniment continued, Carlos strolled or danced amongst the audience. He was mobile all over the club’s premises by means of either a cordless hand-held or head-set microphone. When playing a fast, lively song, he sometimes approached the dance floor to dance amongst the crowd, even stopping to shake hands or kiss people he recognized. Sometimes he did the same while playing a ballad, but instead of approaching the dance floor, he strolled around tables, often stopping to sing directly to audience members. Carlos used this strategy only a few times throughout the evening.

Particularly since the late 1980s, Carlos had become the most sought-after and, according to club owners and musicians, best-paid Latin American musician in the Ottawa-Hull region. His following has been strong, loyal and widely diverse. For example, at the club *Le Marginal* in Hull, Quebec, where he had been playing at least a year when I interviewed him, I counted amongst his audience, French- and English-Canadians, Lebanese, Italian, Iranians, Portuguese, and Latin Americans patrons to name only a few. Carlos also

corroborated my observation that his audiences, in terms of age, encompassed individuals from their late teens up. His repertoire was, likewise, very versatile. Carlos plays a diversity of popular song genres and styles in French, English, and Spanish, from different eras and areas, to accommodate his audiences.

Carlos also stated that he was well aware of the importance of good relations with management and personnel at clubs, in particular with deejays. For example, for a few years, Carlos teamed up with a deejay, a close friend of his. Wherever Carlos played, deejay *Julio*, who was a local figure in his own right, would follow. This made for a cooperative working environment. As Carlos remarked, “things do not work well if you do not get along with other people working at the club, including waitresses and bar tenders” (ibid.).

In comparison to groups *Felicidad* and *Chico Band*, for example, Carlos is not as flexible when it comes to playing requests. Carlos does occasionally use drum patterns in ways similar those of Jorge Calero. However, Carlos keeps this strategy to a minimum. This is because he relies much more on MIDI song files for his performances. Very often, when Carlos plays a request, particularly for a ballad, he prefers to accompany himself with only the acoustic guitar.

Despite his local success, Carlos’ musical practices have been harshly criticized by some, particularly by other Latin musicians. One example occurred at a Latin American music festival in the city which I was directly involved as an organizer. The general view of my partners in the enterprise was that Carlos’ performance practices and music were not representative of Latin American music and culture. Although the arguments focused

primarily on the fact that he was using automation, his choice of repertoire also became an issue. Carlos is known to sing a great quantity of music in English and in French.

I have to admit here that my ideological biases got the better of me and I staunchly argued for Carlos to be invited to participate. In my personal view, it would have been an utter blunder to omit one of the most widely popular and important local Latin American artists. Carlos was finally invited to the festival and no restrictions as to his use of sequencers nor repertoire were ever mentioned to him. The first ever *Ottawa Hispanic Festival* was a success. Tickets were sold-out ten days in advance and artists played to a packed house at Ottawa's *Arts Court Theater*. We had opened the festival also to a wide composition of Spanish-speaking performers from the region, from full-time 'professional' to community-sponsored performers.

The composition of the audience was wide with a considerable number of non-Latin audience members. Carlos played at the end of the first half of the program. It was agreed that Carlos' closing of the first half of the festival would be a gesture of recognition. Carlos had to leave early to play that night at *Le Marginal* and was not available for the second half of the show. When Carlos' turn came to perform, his name had not even yet been announced by the emcee when members of the audience started to cheer in unison, "Carlos, Carlos, Carlos!" He was the only performer whose presence in the event had elicited such display of anticipation amongst the audience. Carlos was received with exuberant enthusiasm. In his first song, Carlos did everything that had set him aside in our debate about his identity as a Latin artist. His first song was a ballad in English. He sang "Can You Feel the Love Tonight" by Elton John, from the sound-track to the movie *The Lion King*. After singing the first few notes of

this song from behind the keyboard, Carlos stopped playing and walked to the end of the stage as he continued singing through his headset microphone. He got resounding applause at the end of this and every song he played. He followed this song with a couple of his up-tempo Latin hits.

Carlos' type of performance seems to appropriately belong to an era in which wide accessibility to technology seems to have had a 'democratizing' effect on musical production. This trend can be traced back to the 1970s with the emergence of deejays and later, since the mid-1980s, with the advent of MIDI, the rise of *hip hop*, and *techno-pop* genres. Théberge has alluded that the democratizing effect produced by wider accessibility to music technologies has resulted in the blurring of the production/consumption nexus. As a result, Théberge argues, the distinction between the categories of "amateur" and "professional" are becoming ever tenuous. Théberge's argument implies that MIDI allows those who are at the margins of cultural production to "reclaim" their voices" (1993:329). However, Carlos' performances are also suspect for some (particularly in a climate of paradoxical anti-technology backlash as exemplified by the 'Unplugged' concert series), as they come to radically disrupt Ottawa's Latin musical economy and some of its particular modes of cultural production. In other words, Carlos' particular use of automation has also been viewed by members of the Latin musical community as inauthentic. In this sense, Carlos musical practices resonate with the 1990s lip-synching controversies of *Milli Vanilli*, Paula Abdul and others. In that light, Carlos' use of automation reinforces the thesis of technological homogenization, co-option and commodification of culture-- a view that, as we have seen in

the debate about Carlos' participation in Ottawa's Hispanic Festival, has the potential for serious consequences on one's musical life.

From the ethnographic account of Carlos Avila's and Jorge Calero's music practices and histories, it cannot be concluded that partially-automated live performance strictly plays an emancipatory role. Neither can it be concluded that these musicians have fallen victim to the homogenizing effects of technology. Both of these assumptions would imply the fixed positioning of Carlos and Jorge on the margins of cultural production. Clearly, Carlos' and Jorge's musical histories demonstrate quite the opposite. Each of the two musicians assumes and finds himself in different subject positions, often at the centre of musical production. For example, while some members of the Latin community may place Carlos' musical practices outside the realm of "Latin cultural authenticity," through his popularity with "outsiders," Carlos has often also been able to assert a place of prominence within the wider Latin community itself. Such was the case with the 1995' *Hispanic Music Festival*. In the same vein, due to their use of automation, Jorge Calero and *Chico Band* are often excluded from the local Latin musical economy by ANTARA, Montreal's most important Latin American entertainment agency. On the other hand, by means of partially-automated live performance itself, Jorge and *Chico Band* are able, independently, to generate new spheres of musical and economic activity and cultural exchange at smaller non-Latin venues. Furthermore, Jorge and the rest of the members of *Chico Band* make selective use of technology as they perform in various settings, not always involving automation. Carlos Avila and Jorge Calero must deal with notions of competence, creativity and musicality in relation to each context since the significance of these notions constantly shifts from context to context.

As the case studies in this chapter have demonstrated, drastic changes emerge both as a result and cause of new forms of knowledge articulated through technology. Partially-automated live performance clearly illustrates how controversies and debates about musical authenticity have much to do not only with symbolic aspects but also, with the material consequences resulting from the disruptive effect new forms of knowledge have on representational practices. It has become clear that the late twentieth-century represents a period of radical changes for popular music. Issues of cultural authenticity as articulated in notions of competence and creativity must be looked at as political positionings in which questions of power and survival are at stake for individuals and collectivities aiming to participate in a globalized cultural economy.

In the next chapter, I discuss how partially-automated live performance plays various roles in the ability of Latin American musicians to participate in a global economy as they negotiate the economic, social and cultural values of time and space in a local urban music scene.

NOTES

¹This assumption adheres to the terms underlying John Hartley's notion of ideology proposed in the second chapter.

²For similar views on representation and ideology see, for example, Grocer's ethnography (1989) which explores the contrasting ideologies behind occupational rhetoric utilized by two local American club bands; See also Ang (1993) and his study based on the fluid and ambiguous strategies of representation by members of a soap opera TV audience. Ang looks at the role ideology plays in modes of representation deployed by selected individuals who may invest various disparate meanings in a single cultural product.

³See for example Cutler (1984), Frith (1986, 1987), and Harley (1993).

⁴*Chico* Band only includes two percussionists, Conga player, Lazaro Rene and drummer, Roberto Martel. In contrast, the standard rhythm section in dance Latin bands usually consists of five percussionists. Their instrumentation includes: drum set (or *timbales*, a two single-head drum set with a cowbell and cymbal), *congas*, *bongos* and cowbell (bongo player switches to cowbell in particular sections of the songs in *salsa*), *guiro* and *maracas*.

⁵Some of the established larger companies will hire well-known musicians and arrangers to program MIDI song files in order to attain consumer confidence.

⁶*Tambora* is a double-head drum used in Dominican *merengue*. The player strikes the drum both with the palm of a hand and a stick. The stick is used mainly to strike the rim or the shell,

while the palm of the hand strikes the skin of the drum. Various playing techniques are used to produce the different tones and sound colors needed in particular *merengue* styles.

⁷Personal interview, Montreal, March 1995.

⁸In the last two years, there has been a great interest in Latin dances with many dance academies flourishing in Ottawa, Montreal and Toronto and also many nightclubs offering free dance lessons and competitions (personal recollection).

⁹According to the members of *Chico Band*, smaller non-Latin venues are attended by an ethnically, racially, and nationally wide diversity of people. They count amongst their audiences in these venues, for example, people of Italian, Lebanese, Portuguese, and African ancestries. There is, of course, also a large attendance by French Canadians.

¹⁰This, in itself, is not too uncommon amongst users of automation, but it is severely criticized by many musicians who see this as a sign of the increasing lack of creativity and musical skills being fostered through technology.

¹¹However, I myself have witnessed, in a performance by *Chico Band* playing as a trio, Roberto Martel's uncanny feat of playing all percussion (*congas* and *timbales*) and singing at the same time.

¹²Uploading songs promptly upon requests still represents a very cumbersome task by means of current accessible technology.

¹³Personal interview, Montreal, March 1995.

¹⁴Personal interview, Montreal, March 1995.

¹⁵ The duo *Milli Vanilli*, consisting of Rob Pilatus and Fab Morovan, had emerged as the record label Arista's most successful act in 1989. Their debut album "Girl You Know It's True" was certified platinum with various single tracks occupying top places in both the dance and pop charts (Richliano, 1989:31). The duo was produced by Frank Farian who had already an established reputation as the producer for successful European dance music star Boney M (ibid.). The Canadian Juno Award granted to the duo was also rescinded in 1991 (*Billboard*, Jan. 12, 1991:65). For other similar high profile cases refer, for example, to the charges against singer Paula Abdul, which were eventually dropped, by a little known singer who claimed to have provided the lead vocal in Abdul's recordings (*Billboard*, July 24:8). See also Wurtzler's analysis of Whitney Houston's controversy and her lip-synching to her own recorded American national anthem for a sports event broadcasted "live" on television (1992:87-103).

¹⁶He made a deal with a restaurant owner whereby he was allowed to use electrical power for his equipment from the restaurant in exchange for simply playing nearby and becoming the entertainment for both the clientele of the restaurant as well as for the passers-by.

Chapter 4
Partially-Automated Live Performance:
The Technological Compression of Time and Space
in the Postmodern Era

It can be ascertained that digital video and audio technology and mass electronic mediations have increasingly been able to conflate various historically disjunctured musical events into illusions of single, unified, and historically grounded musical performances. In other words, digital “technology [is being used] to compress time and space and create the impression, for example, of people singing [and playing] together in the same studio [or live stage] at the same time” (Tiegel 1995:87).¹ Partially-automated live performance’s disruptive effects on representational practices can be said to encapsulate this sort of *time-space compression* which, according to David Harvey (1990), characterizes the so-called postmodern condition of the late twentieth-century. Harvey defines time-space compression as “the processes that so revolutionize the qualities of space and time that we are forced to alter, sometimes in quite objective radical ways, how we represent the world to ourselves” (ibid.:240).² Harvey has stated that such radical shifts in the “mediations of spatial and temporal experience” are a crucial component of new “more flexible modes of capital accumulation” (ibid.:201). The author argues thus:

the history of capitalism has been characterized by speed-up in the pace of life, while so overcoming spatial barriers that the world sometimes seems to collapse inwards upon us... The experience of time-space compression is challenging, exciting, stressful, and sometimes deeply troubling, capable of sparking, therefore, a diversity of social, cultural and political responses (ibid.).

This chapter's ethnographic analysis examines how partially-automated live performance forms part of radically disruptive new modes of organization and representation of time and space which, I argue, have had fundamental impacts upon the musical lives of Latin American musicians living in Canada. More specifically, it looks at the processes through which those Latin American musicians involve themselves in the material and symbolic negotiation of *space* within capital-driven musical economies. The underlying premise here is that musicians are implicated in the construction and significance of space through partially-automated live performance. My approach follows from the recent few, but persuasive, calls by other scholars as to the fundamental, yet neglected, roles spatiality plays as an integral part of social relations.³ The social sciences have virtually exclusively privileged linear temporal perspectives in the study of culture. Jody Berland (1992:39)⁴ has challenged this theoretical 'bias,' particularly as it pertains to popular music studies. Berland argues that the notion that music "contains its aesthetic effect [purely] through its temporal movement" (Harvey 1990:207)⁵ does not take into account the ways in which music as a social practice is able to produce, shape and situate social spaces (Berland 1992:39; 1988). Berland insists that music acquires its social significance through the subjective and objective shaping of spaces involved in the act of listening. She states that:

the production of texts cannot be conceived outside the production of diverse and exacting spaces: that much of the time we are not simply listeners to sound, or watchers of images, but occupants of spaces for listening who by being *there*, help to produce meanings and effects (1992:39).

Following suit, I aim here to corroborate further the notion of space as being not simply the fixed immutable cauldron of social/musical relations. I want to argue, along with Berland and other authors, that space is, in fact, a dynamic, tangible, and symbolic realm produced through social practices.⁶ Furthermore, that it is exactly sound's seeming lack of

spatial dimensions which endow music with abilities to occupy physical and symbolic spaces in ways decidedly distinct from other human activities and expressions.

In the first section, I discuss the theoretical dilemmas posed by partially-automated-live performance in relation to the ability of Latin musicians to participate in a *politics of place*.⁷ I am here defining *place* as the dynamic processes of human interaction and social practices through which space is produced and invested with geographic and historic specificities and social significance. The very *displacement* of musicians on behalf of capital efficiency in partially-automated live performance would support a theory of capitalist and state colonization of social spaces. That is, in a globalized economy, sites of live performance, as spaces of cultural production, lose or shift their social significance through downsizing or obsolescence on behalf of more specialized and cost-efficient practices.⁸ My intent in this regard, however, is not merely to argue for or against capital determinism. I want instead to examine the heterogeneity of the social and economic relations which contribute to diverse modes of organizing and representing time and space in a capitalist environment. My goal here is to problematize the issue of politics of place beyond the traditional dualistic stalemate which pits capitalist determinism and the inexorable colonization of spaces on the one hand, and, what Berland critically terms, the postmodern technological conflation of "pleasure and democracy" (1992:47) on the other.

In the second section, I seek principally to understand how partially-automated live performance forms part of new modes of organizing and representing time and space which have resulted in the dispersion (or re-definition) of place as a site of identity. In other words, I intent to examine the politics of place in which in which diverse interests intersect as

musicians share and compete for the control of time and space through musical performance. To that end, I will illustrate some of the specific musical practices through which musicians mediate the spatio-temporal dimensions of their social/musical interactions. My intent is to show the diversity of ways in which Latin musicians participate in a politics of place through music. The issues involved are particularly crucial for Latin American musicians dealing with questions of adaptation and collective identities in rapidly changing Canadian multicultural contexts.

This chapter's ultimate aim is to formulate questions about the ways in which the material and symbolic temporal-spatial aspects of musical practices are fundamentally implicated in the creation of identities. By examining music as a cultural practice contributing to the creation and dynamic nature of material and symbolic space, I hope to understand further how Latin American musicians are implicated in the construction of place and history within Canadian urban contexts.

TIME, SPACE, KNOWLEDGE, AND POWER

As alluded to at the outset of this chapter, the condition of postmodernity emerges from the struggle to define senses of time and space which have become increasingly disjunct from one another. Time and space have thus become highly susceptible to *compression* through capitalist organizational and representational processes. David Harvey (1990) argues that, despite evidence that different senses of time and space are constructed through historically specific material cultural practices, a taken-for-granted standardized notion of time and space is deeply rooted as a universal, which often runs against particular interests of

collectivities and individuals. Struggles for identity have much to do with the processes whereby the power to represent time and space becomes the means to define and reproduce culture through particular practices (ibid.). Thus, particular technologies and types of knowledge which endow individuals and collectivities to exert control of time and space become crucial in a politics of place. I next focus on some of the ways in which partially-automated live performance forms part of new ways of representing and organizing space and time for Latin American musicians. My analysis aims to shed light on the indelible relationship time and space entertain. The technological mediation of time and space, I argue, plays a fundamental role in Latin American musicians' ability to attain social power in a musical economy.

A common ground for arguments for or against technology has been its impact on human relations. Technology has frequently reduced and even eliminated social spaces and the types of human interaction which created them. This perspective could not be better illustrated than the decline of live music venues and the reduction of music ensembles and through partially-automated-live performance. The following ethnographic account illustrates how the production of space is indelibly tied to the organization and representation of time for Latin American musicians. It aims principally to understand (musical) knowledge as both a mode of representation and a means to assert control over time and space.

In the duo *Felicidad*, Ramón Flores, for example, deeply regrets how the use of technology has virtually eliminated rehearsals for himself and Marco Zarco. Ramón and Marco individually program and rehearse the songs which each sings with the ensemble. They exchange MIDI song files or recordings, and learn them and practice them separately. They

then perform them live. The duo has adopted this system mostly in the interests of time efficiency. Despite the drastic reduction of ensembles through automation, for Marco and Ramón, as for the rest of the interviewed musicians, salaries have not improved. In order to obtain an adequate salary they are forced to find more than one weekly engagement. For the duo which was often working at two or three different places, that meant they also had to spend many hours tearing down and setting up their equipment at the different venues where they were performing. This made for a very tight schedule which had sometimes to be combined with other business and family responsibilities.

According to Ramón, technology tends to distance and even alienate musicians. He argues that the fact that musicians share less time together has an impact on the quality and character of the performance. Marco concedes that social spaces have been eradicated through technology, and also adds that there is no turning back. By focusing now on some of the aspects of the musical life of *Chico Band's* lead singer, Delsa Germosen, I want to illustrate how technologies are related to particular types of knowledge, and how those particular types of knowledge play important roles in the organization and representation of time and space.

Delsa Germosen is a thirty-year old African-Caribbean woman from the Dominican Republic who, at the outset of my field research, had just joined *Chico Band* as a lead singer. Delsa, who arrived in Canada in 1988, had been a musician only for the past two years. In that period, she had been a member of the band *Pambiche* led by Dominican Papo Ross in Montreal. *Pambiche* is the foremost local *merengue* band in the city and is composed of fourteen members. Delsa stated that she had left *Pambiche* because continuous conflicts

within the band and very low wages. Delsa claimed *Pambiche*'s band leader was often disrespectful of members of the band at rehearsals in particular. Also, as I have noted earlier, in most of Montreal's large ensembles many of the musicians, in particular percussionists and singers/dancers, get little pay, if any. According to Delsa, the only musicians who get paid a reasonable salary are those who read music, notably the horn players. Horn players are usually jazz musicians and university students who free-lance in various music scenes across the city. Except for band-leader sax-player Papo Ross, *Pambiche*'s horn players are, almost invariably, Canadian-born. Due to their reading skills, horn players are seldom requested to rehearse and often may even send substitutes to *Pambiche*'s performances when they find a more attractive engagement elsewhere. By contrast, like many Latin American musicians in Montreal, Delsa cannot read music; she learned music by ear and. In the case of *Pambiche*, she was handed recordings of cover and original material to be learned aurally. According to Delsa, the lack of reading skills amongst some musicians was a prime factor for making rehearsals with *Pambiche* very time-consuming. Delsa stated that, similarly to other Latin musicians in *Pambiche* who do not read music, she did not have the time nor the resources to study music formally, due to competing responsibilities.

I asked Delsa her opinion about her first engagement and overall initial impression of her experience with *Chico Band*. Delsa stated that she missed some of the sounds of *Pambiche* which she says "could never be replaced by a machine" (personal interview, March 1995). However, she appreciated *Chico Band*'s efficiency and particularly its uncomplicated politics. As Delsa stated, in comparison with her former band, rehearsals with *Chico Band* tended to be extremely short and productive, as material gets learned very quickly. In

comparison, due to the greater number of band members in *Pambiche*, conflicts were common, particularly when rehearsals dragged on for too long.

Delsa's musical experiences illustrate how different technologies and types of knowledge, such as MIDI or music notation and reading skills, have the propensity to radically affect an individual's ability to organize and represent time and space. What is also clear is that, in a musician's attempt to participate in a complex and competitive musical economy, "time and space coexist and are mutually elaborative through action" (Friedland and Boden 1994:3). As Friedland and Boden argue, time and space are "so indicative and indexical of each other that it is theoretically problematic to think of them separately" (*ibid.*). In other words, for Ramón, Marco and Delsa, diverse types of knowledge impact upon their abilities to control the organization and representation of time and thus upon their abilities to create space. As will be described below, for Latin musicians in Ottawa and Montreal, the "ability to influence the production of [time] and space is an important means to [participate in a given musical economy] and augment social power" (Harvey 1990:233).

Colonization versus democratization of space: technology and its theoretical dilemma

Marco Zarco of the Ottawa-based duo *Felicidad* recounted how, from about the mid-1970s through the mid-1980s, Latin groups like *Mexican Connection* and *Tequila* (two of the bands with whom he played) suited the posh setting of downtown venues such as the lounges of the Sheraton Centre Hotel in Montreal, and L'Auberge de la Chaudière, or the Skyline Hotel in Ottawa-Hull. Such groups were often able to secure long-term well-paid contracts as house bands in these types of venues. In the virtual absence of a Latin community in Montreal

and Ottawa at the time, these Latin groups presented particular 'exotic appeal' which made them commercially attractive for some of these venues. As discussed earlier, the playing up of a Latin identity was used by Marco and his band as a drawing card with audiences. It was in such 'up-scale' settings that Marco was able, for example, to meet Major League baseball figures; singer Tony Bennett after one of his shows in Montreal; and some of his band mates were able to have their picture taken with former Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau. However, as the influx of Latin American and other immigrants made itself noticeable in these two cities, and particularly in the midst of economic decline, political fragmentation and ethnic tensions, the "exotic" appeal of these groups was radically shifted. In Marco's opinion, for example, no large hotel would hire a Latin band in 1995. The rest of the selected musicians echo Marco's view that some of the most profitable and central venues fear that Latin bands would attract mostly Latin audiences who, in the current climate, are increasingly considered prone to violence and not economically viable patrons. In sum, the emergence of a Latin community politically and socially repositioned those Latin musicians who had arrived in Canada before the mid-1980s. As discussed in earlier chapters, this has been an important contributing factor making partially-automated live performance an economically attractive option for both Latin American musicians and for club owners.

In 1995, the interviewed musicians in both cities entertain, for the most part, widely diverse audiences composed of Latin and non-Latin patrons. They mostly play at venues which Bob Langley, Secretary of the Ottawa-Hull Federation of Musicians, refers to as "neighborhood bars" (interview February 1995). These are small venues (75 to 100 seating-capacity) located in semi-residential areas, outside the main business and tourist districts.

These venues are largely attended by regulars, many of whom live close by. Although these places are open at least six days a week, they offer live entertainment one to three nights a week only. Due to the diverse social and cultural composition of the surrounding communities, these venues provide multiple social facilities. Thus, for example, they may advertise themselves as restaurants, dance or disco bars, sports bars and pool halls, all at once.⁹ Places like *Le Marginal* in Hull, Quebec and *Cafe Dello Sport* in Ottawa, where Carlos Avila and *Felicidad* played respectively, qualify as such. For Marco Zarco and Ramón Flores, for example, *Cafe Dello Sport* was one of three venues in an Ottawa semi-residential area known as 'the Village,' where they had been recently playing. The Village has a high concentration of recent immigrants and a long-standing and much publicized crime rate. The area sits between Ottawa's China Town and Little Italy just west of the city's main core. Communities in the Village are quite diverse, however; many Somali, Chinese and Vietnamese immigrants have recently settled there. Marco and Ramón's non-Latin audiences are composed of Italian, Portuguese, Arabic, Caribbean immigrants as well as French- and English-Canadians. Although many patrons live close by, Latin and non-Latin audiences looking specifically for Latin music tend to come to *Cafe Dello Sport* from all parts of the city.

Bob Langley concedes that neighborhood bars have emerged as a response to economic depression, which also results in limited mobility (a factor accentuated by recent stricter drinking and driving laws). Many of the regular patrons live within walking distance from these venues. However, Bob Langley (personal interview Feb., 1995) also cites the intricate fragmentation of audiences and local music markets along musical tastes and cultural

lines as a prime factor in the neighborhood bar phenomenon. In a survey conducted by the Ottawa-Hull Federation of Musicians as part of an effort to increase membership, Langley noted the increasing specialization of musicians and clubs in particular types of musics such as Latin, country and western, heavy metal, or 50s and 60s rock and roll, for example.

It can also be argued that neighborhood bars and their intricate audience and musical specialization are a positive sign of the forging of community at the local level (Annemarie Gallagher, personal communication May 15, 1996). Arjun Appadurai supports this point as he insists that social and political fragmentation prove that, rather than being solely a process of obliterating cultural difference through commodification, globalization processes have also had the strong tendency to exacerbate issues of local identity (1990:307). It is in this light that the neighborhood bar and the intricate partitioning of local audiences along socio-cultural lines can be read as increasing resistance to homogenization. The neighborhood bar phenomenon in Ottawa and Montreal illustrates the greater importance that microeconomies and senses of local identity play in processes of globalization.

As I have mentioned earlier, neighborhood bars are outside the jurisdiction of the musicians' union. Furthermore, their emergence could be said to be closely interrelated with the radical decline of the musicians' union as a significant local labour representative. More often than not, all of the musicians involved in this study negotiate their own salaries and working conditions without any regulatory interventions by the union.¹⁰

Similarly, in Montreal, *Chico Band* and Rubén Arancibia had also been negotiating contracts with small clubs also in so-called "ethnic" areas. As Jorge and Rubén noted, often these clubs are owned by Italian immigrants. In the last year, Jorge and Danilo Brizuela of

Chico Band had also been performing as a duo weekly one-night engagements at 'Chi Chi's, a Mexican restaurant (belonging to an American franchise) located in the city's north end. As I stated earlier, for *Chico Band*, Latin clubs in Montreal had increasingly become inaccessible due to the competition with larger orchestras.

Despite the radical reduction in size of the ensembles through partially-automated live performance, the selected musicians in both Ottawa and Montreal report individual salaries as remaining relatively the same as before. As some of the selected musicians state, expectations of technology delivering better salaries for less effort have resulted instead in quite the opposite. According to Jorge Calero, for example, a one- or two-night engagement per week rarely renders an adequate salary. This often forces musicians to try to find more than one engagement per week or to find other types of jobs. For some of the musicians, these alternative jobs have not always been music-related.

As I have just illustrated, sites of performance available to Latin American musicians seem to have been physically reduced and geographically positioned on the margins of mainstream cultural economies. In that sense, partially-automated live performance emerges as inexorable result of capitalist and state regimes, as I describe below.¹¹ Annemarie Gallagher (1995 after Jackson 1992) urges us to evaluate such power regimes which help to physically and symbolically *shape* and *situate* socio-musical spaces.¹² In her study of Toronto's West Indian *Caribana* festival of 1993, Gallagher points to Carnival, not only as symbolic but, equally important, as a physical site of representation. The shape, size, geographical location and the degrees of freedom of movement and expression in *Caribana* are determined within an ongoing dynamics of power relations. The Caribbean community must

negotiate social and cultural space with and within the “dominant culture” (1995:400) who administers Toronto’s infrastructure and major media outlets. The racialization of crime in recent times by Toronto’s mainstream newspapers is seen by Gallagher to play crucial role in physically shaping and geographically situating Caribana as an ‘Other’ social space in Toronto. Gallagher also argues that the increasing commodification of Caribana in recent years is threatening the social and cultural significance of Carnival. My point in citing Gallagher is that, in order to evaluate the social production of space that Latin American musicians are involved in through partially-automated live performance, it is necessary to take into account those power relationships within which such particular sites of performance are produced.

As Jody Berland states, it is also crucial to examine the “contradictory nature of *location* as a site of music reception[/production] (1988:356). As I discuss below, partially-automated live performance can also be seen as a means to open space for social interaction and cultural exchange amongst Latin musicians and audiences (Latin and non-Latin) who are dealing with issues of adaptation, social and economic stress, and marginalization in an uncertain economic political climate. According to Berland, it is only by acknowledging and examining such contradictions that one will be able to discern “the complex interaction between popular culture and capitalist and state powers” (ibid.).

By the summer of 1995 in Ottawa, my discussions about the local scene with Marco Zarco and Ramón Flores from the duo *Felicidad* had very optimistic overtones. Marco and Ramón were literally having to turn down offers of employment due to their increasingly busy schedule. Their work week had been expanded from three to seven evenings per week at two

different clubs around the Village and one at Ottawa's Byward Market.¹³ The engagement at Seagull's, a club located at the Byward Market, was seen by Ramón and Marco as a sign that Latin music may yet be re-introduced to the main business sectors of the city. As I have mentioned earlier, the Byward Market is Ottawa's main central tourist and business area. The duo was also able to negotiate leave from some of these clubs to perform sporadic one-night engagements at various Latin American and other types of social functions. Musicians are often able to negotiate much better salaries at private or community one-night engagements.¹⁴ According to Marco, *Felicidad* was not only acquiring significant bargaining power in the local scene but, as he and Ramón claimed, they were also "opening doors" and "expanding the [local Latin music] market" (interview, Ottawa August, 1995).

To illustrate their point, Marco and Ramón recounted how the Roof Garden, a sports bar located around the Village had, since their first engagement about two years earlier, become a "Latin place" (lugar Latino). They meant that Latin music had become the club's musical staple during weekend evenings with live Latin music and Latin deejays. Moreover, Marco and Ramón stated that another Latin ensemble had come to take their place at Andy's, another club where they had been playing. Marco and Ramón's point was that they had been the first Latin band to be hired at Andy's and, by doing a good job, they had also opened its doors for other Latin Bands. Marco and Ramón had left Andy's when they opted for a better offer. That club was Cafe Dello Sport, yet another club in the same area wanting to introduce Latin music. As the other two places mentioned, Cafe Dello Sport was also owned and operated by an Italian-Canadian.

To accentuate the point further as to how the duo *Felicidad* was clearly expanding the market, Marco recounted how, while performing at Andy's, which is a very small club, the owner had torn down a wall in order to remodel and expand its seating capacity. I must stress here how space efficiency is crucial in the survival of small enterprises such as neighborhood bars. For example, to attain maximum seating capacity, stages in these venues are often very small and barely large enough to accommodate more than two musicians. Moreover, in their spatial apportioning, club owners usually give priority to dance floors.

As I have illustrated so far, for Latin musicians, partially-automated live performance plays contradictory roles in that it at the same time produces and "annihilates" space.¹⁵ In other words, while Latin musicians in Ottawa may seem to be positioned on the margins of cultural and economic participation, at other times, and from different perspectives, they may also be seen as active participants in the creation of a local musical and cultural economy. They are able to accomplish this by taking advantage of the international surge of Latin American music and the accessibility of MIDI technologies. This contradiction, evoked by Berland, seems to lie in the sense that the logics of late capitalism work on a temporal and geographical perpetual ebb where the flow of investment used to create profitable environments depends on the continuing spatial reduction, and often obsolescence, of those same environments (Berland 1992:45 also in Harvey 1978:101-31).

However, as John Agnew (1989:9-29) has argued, such "universalization of capitalism...undermines the social significance of place" (Agnew and Duncan 1989:4-5). This is because a unitary and universal notion of capitalism does not account for the diversity of social relations through which various specific spaces are assigned significance at various

specific moments. For Agnew, rather than representing the inexorable obliteration or colonization of space, “commodification, and resistance to it, generate new pressures for place.” As he argues, “capitalism,[...] while transforming society, has created new structuring role[s] for place (Agnew and Duncan 1989:4-5). Foucault has also argued along similar lines, stating that the functions and significance assigned to spaces are never totally determined by pre-existing demands originating from social-economic structures nor purely by the influence of new human relations. There is, according to Foucault “an interconnection” and not a primacy of one aspect over the other (in Simon During ed. 1993:167). As Agnew suggests, in order to usefully understand a *politics of place*, it is necessary to go beyond the traditional theoretical dualism: on the one hand, Agnew argues, conventional social sciences have associated the notion of place with that of ‘community’(Agnew and Duncan 1989:4-5), and overlooked the spatial and, therefore, social specificities and multiple significance of place as a site of identity; on the other hand, “Marxist social sciences have had the tendency to absolutize the power of commodification” (ibid.). This latter perspective assumes a universal capitalist scheme in which the production of social spaces entertains a one-to-one mutually influential relationship with particular technologies.¹⁶

As Foucault asserts, as a fundamental aspect of communal life, space entails a dynamic “exercise of power” (in During 1993:168). Therefore, singular spaces may hold a diversity of meanings, sometimes even contradictory ones (ibid.:167). The implication is that the spatial-political relationships of centre-periphery are not fixed nor immutable, but shift according to particular interests and circumstances. This relationship is continually being determined by the different positions and various spaces occupied by individuals at particular moments¹⁷ This

perspective helps to understand the propensity of spaces to hold multiple significance. I now turn my attention to the questions as to how, in such highly complicated context, Latin American musicians achieve a sense of place.

POSTMODERN IDENTITIES: PERFORMANCE AND THE RITUALS OF PLACE

In her study of Liverpool's local rock scenes, Sara Cohen demonstrates how the spatial and symbolic notions of place have been fundamental to the creation of musical identities. Cohen draws the connection between music and locality as she illustrates the "various ways in which people create an image or sense of place in the production and consumption of music" (1994:129). Musicians speak of their music and that of others drawing relationships to particular English urban landscapes and the ethos of the people who live and create music in those places. Music is able to evoke spatial and social geographical specificities and boundaries. In short, music is seen to represent a connection between place and identity. Drawing from Cohen's study, I will now examine how the particular circumstances surrounding Latin American musicians in Canada further problematize the issue of place identity. Particularly, I will attempt to understand how, for Latin American musicians, performance plays a central role in a politics of place.

It could be easily argued that, for most Latin American immigrants in Canada, and particularly in the current political climate, exile is primarily experienced through a feeling of 'otherness' and 'displacement.' Their collective and highly-anonymous institutionalized status as part of 'visible minority groups' says much about this reality, a reality which, as already discussed, is the political part and parcel of massive global demographics shifts at the end of

this century. As I have also explained, Latin musicians who arrived in Canada before the mid-1980s re-experienced a sense of displacement as the immigration influx from Latin America politically and socially shifted the position of Latin music. Process of collective identity and senses of place for Latin American musicians are compounded by the fact that Latin American communities are highly diverse racially, ethnically, nationally and culturally. In addition, a sense of locality or place for a Latin community (or communities) in Canada has had to be constructed without reference to specific territorial or spatial boundaries. There is no established spatially delineated *Latin Quarter* in either Montreal or Ottawa. These conditions present particular a challenge to Latin American musicians, that is, *place*, as a site of identity and power, seems to be drastically dispersed and thus must be continually redefined.

As I have argued in the prior section, control of time and space plays fundamental roles in the attainment of social power and sense of place. Thus time and space are crucial components in processes of identity. In what follows, I will argue along with Martin Stokes (1994), Sara Cohen (1994) that musical performance, for Latin American musicians, plays a crucial role in this process. Musical performance not only reflects the ongoing power relations involved in attaining a sense of place through music; as Stokes argues, “[performance] provide[s] the means by which hierarchies of place are negotiated and transformed” (1994:4). Along the same line, my argument entails the assumption that, through performance, Latin American musicians in particular ways, for various interests, and in different contexts, play a crucial role in a politics of place for Latin communities in Canada.

Performance and the politics of place

Edward Soja has stated that “the social order of human existence arises from the production of space” (1993:147). Live performance, I argue here, is about the production and negotiation of social space and power. The venues in which the musicians selected for this study play can be said to be spaces constructed through diverse socio-musical practices. They are spaces which hold a diversity of meanings or, in the words of Foucault, these spaces are ‘heterotopias’ (in *During* 1993:167). Virtually none of the venues played in by the selected musicians can be said institutionally or historically to hold permanent significance as a ‘Latin venue.’ For the most part, these clubs serve diverse functions for very diverse communities. Neither are they located in an area that may be described as a ‘Latin area.’ These small venues become a Latin club only one to three evenings a week for only a few hours nightly.¹⁸ Such a venue becomes a ‘Latin place’ (*lugar Latino*) by virtue of musical performance.

These spaces momentarily become ‘Latin venues’ through particular modes of social interaction embodied in musical performance. However, even in these moments, their construction as significant spaces remains complex and diverse. The clubs are attended by a wide diversity of Latin and non-Latin audiences. The musicians and the deejays are hired on the premise that they will play ‘Latin music.’ However, this musical category is often defined in contrastingly different ways by both deejays and bands. Audiences also hold diverse and, sometimes, divergent notions of what is considered ‘Latin music.’ The musical interaction in these places reveals the complex nature of ongoing representational practices. These musical practices play important roles in the ways deejays and musicians create kinship and audience networks throughout the city. Many of the audience members also visit more than one of the

various 'weekend Latin venues.' Thus there is great interaction amongst club audiences and performers. It would be difficult to conclude that kinship and fan networks are purely based on musical taste. The fact is, not only that such diversity of people can often concurs at a single particular club, but also that such a widely diverse audience often meets on the same dance floor. However through my personal experience and from the accounts of the selected musicians, musical tastes, in very complex ways, often intersect with aspects such as age, class, ethnicity and race.

Deejays and bands share the evening's time in the spotlight through a rigid schedule by which they alternate their sets. They negotiate the length of their sets as part of their contract with club owners. Invariably, deejays are up-to-date with the newest international Latin music releases. They are also most often able to easily cater to younger audiences, with newer types of Latin musics. Such musics include, for example, *dance* or *techno*, *hip hop*, *meremrap* (*merengue-rap*)¹⁹ and *reggae*, most of them sung in Spanish or both in English and Spanish by Latin stars of the moment. These new types of Latin musics are usually the province of deejays. Both deejays and musicians in Ottawa also interlace their sets with occasional Anglo-American hits. In Montreal and in Hull, Quebec mainstream French-Canadian hits are added. Bands, for the most part, try to present a definite alternative to the deejay's offerings. Thus, it usually works to their advantage to include songs which are not in the Latin charts. Requests for older classic Latin songs are also important for audiences, young and older. These are usually the province of bands. As I have mentioned, playing requests is crucial for performer-audience interaction. Thus, personal dedications of songs are quite important. Very often, performers will dedicate a particular song to audience members from a particular country, for

example. That strategy is common even amongst international Latin stars when they perform in diasporic contexts.

Breaks are also a very important part of a performers' job. It is during the breaks when deejays and band members cater to their fans by nurturing established kinships and creating new relationships. Club owners are very aware of the importance of the kinship networks of performers. Inability or unwillingness to socialize with clientele is often looked at as a liability by club owners. It is also during breaks when contacts for other engagements may appear. Sometimes club owners, agents or contacts for other establishments may drop by to see how a band is doing at a particular place.

Due to the stiff musical competition from deejays, Latin musicians must continually learn new material. Furthermore, as I described earlier, it is not only adequate sound equipment but also the production quality of their musical performance that must be able to compete with the performance of the deejay. Through partially-automated live performance, Latin American musicians are able to approximate some of the sound qualities which audiences have come to expect, despite the fact that ensembles have been drastically reduced. In that sense, as I have argued, partially-automated live performance has enabled the musicians to remain competitive.

Partially-automated live performance has thus enabled the interviewed musicians to be part of the construction of space and to create a sense of place for themselves as well as for various Latin and non-Latin communities. They have thus been active participants in continuing attempts to stimulate the growth of a local musical economy. The interviewed musicians, along with deejays, audiences and club owners have contributed to the creation of

specific spaces whose significance at particular moments is shaped by socio-musical interactions. Through competition and kinship networks, these spaces attain a historical and geographical position within a local musical economy.

As I have so far illustrated, these spaces are continually being constructed and assigned particular meanings at particular moments by musicians, deejays, audiences and club owners. Thus, the selected musicians, through partially-automated live performance, are involved in a politics in which “more than one community lays claim to a particular place[. In such a place,] the meaning of time and space are collectively reproduced, constructed and managed” through performance (Hecht 1994:184).²⁰ It is through this complex conglomerate of cultural practices and exchanges that individuals shape and situate these spaces in a local and a global musical economy. As Simon Frith argues, “even at the most local level, playing music is only one role in a more elaborate set of tasks and relationships which define the musical world (1992:175). It is in this sense that performance involves musicians, audiences and other players in a process towards the continuing creation of place and community through music.

Rhythm and subjectivity: humanizing the machine

As I have discussed earlier, by eliminating certain types of human interaction, technology has also eliminated certain types of social spaces. By so doing, music technology has helped to redefine and, in some cases, eliminate certain types of musical interaction. The ways in which automation has helped redefine musical interaction in live performance conspicuously draw attention to the musical aspect of rhythm amongst Latin musicians. The

'mechanic' nature of automation and its effects on rhythmic aspects of performance are central to debates about authenticity not only in Latin music, but in most popular musics. The aspects of rhythm and interactivity lie at the very core of the dynamic and fierce competition driving an ever-increasingly wide and diverse music technology market. Competition amongst manufacturers to achieve the next upgrade towards better *interactivity* and *human feel* has resulted in a staggering rate of obsolescence in music technology. The compulsion to "humanize" music technology demonstrates, in my view, how sound in music plays fundamental roles in the creation of space by serving as a the medium of social/musical interaction. However, as Andrew Goodwin expresses, electronically-produced sound has done more than create a human/synthetic ideological dialectic. Goodwin argues that through the array of new aesthetic values and ensuing layers of musical discourse, there is even a real sense that electronic technology is becoming "naturalized" (1990:266). The implication is that musicians are able to create theoretical room that allows them to position themselves differently in relation to notions of what may be considered 'real' (human) or synthetic (automated) sound. I will now concentrate on the views and strategies musicians deploy in relation to rhythm and automation. I want particularly to draw attention to the role human subjectivity plays in the construction and significance of rhythm.

According to Andrew Goodwin, there is an increasing "blurring of the distinction between automated and human performance" (1990:264). As he states, technological sophistication has allowed musicians to program machines to "mimic many of the techniques normally developed over time by human 'real time' performers" (ibid.:264). Rubén Arancibia's programming techniques offers one such example. Rubén uses, for example, what

Goodwin refers to as “the elastic placement of the beat (slightly front or behind its ‘correct’ mathematical position) to create a particular rhythmic ‘feel’ (ibid.). Rubén’s programming of horn lines best illustrates this technique: he places brass notes, particularly those which must be accented, slightly ahead of the beat. He argues that due to the slow attack characteristic of brass, players blow slightly earlier, in order for the accented notes to appear to fall on the beat. Rubén argues that this is an important characteristic of brass sound. Another technique used by Rubén is “the use of subtle changes of volume and velocity to create ‘lifelike’ dynamics” (Goodwin 1990:264). When programming bass lines, for example, he may not only displace the beat, but also may accent some of the notes. Rubén also uses what Goodwin describes as deliberate “small changes in tempo to emulate the ways human performers speed up or slow down” (ibid.). He uses this technique often in *salsa* songs which usually must speed up as they progress.

Another technique used to achieve a ‘human-like’ rhythmic feel consists of the programming of musical parts in ‘real time’ into a MIDI song file. Sequencers work in ways similar to a multitrack tape recorder whereby each instrument can be assigned a separate track. When entering performance data in ‘real time’ in a sequencer, the programmer does exactly the same as if he or she were recording on tape. The programmer enters a particular part by playing it on electronic keyboards or drum pads.²¹ Ramón Flores, for example, includes percussion parts in his MIDI song files which he enters in real time. Much of the time these are drum rolls and special shots for which he wants to have a particular dynamic effect in the song. To program such parts, he plays back the MIDI song file and records the complementary parts into an available track by playing them on the drum pad in real time. By

recording in real time, Ramón will get all the ‘discrepancies’ and ‘imperfections’ that, he feels, will make his performance sound more ‘human.’²² More importantly, Ramón feels that, by recording parts in this fashion, his playing style will come through in performance. He uses this technique mostly in songs in which he will not actually be playing drums.

Finally, the most important technique used by musicians towards achieving a particular rhythmic feel in partially-automated live performance is their own live interaction with the automated elements of performance. That is, in live performance, a musician’s own playing interacts with that of the ‘machine.’ In this case, a musician musically positions himself in relation to digitally produced the sounds and rhythms to create a particular rhythmic feel and musical result. This technique says much about the role that human subjectivity plays in the creation of meaning through sound in music.

For example, Lazaro René, conga player with *Chico Band*, demonstrated to me how he interacted with the “machine” in performance. He asked Jorge Calero to play a rhythm pattern on the drum machine. It consisted of a simple two-bar *clave* and *maraca* pattern playing itself repeatedly (*Chico Band* uses this of type of pattern to play *salsa* songs). As Lazaro stated, and as I could also tell, the rhythmic pattern sounded “too mechanic” by itself. Rhythmically, the pattern had been programmed to play the notes with mathematical exactitude. Lazaro then proceeded to play the congas integrating his part to the automated pattern. The sound was drastically transformed into a danceable *salsa* beat. He then asked me to pay attention and to listen. Lazaro kept playing (theoretically) the same notes and note values on the *congas*. However, the inflection of the rhythm had changed. The relation in terms of timbre, volume, and overall rhythmic feel amongst the various notes had also

changed. Therefore, the relation of Lazaro's 'live' notes to those played by the machine had also shifted. And as he stated (laughing), the pattern now sounded like a "twist" or an old-fashioned "rock" from the 1950s. As Lazaro and Roberto Martel explained and demonstrated to me at this rehearsal, in performance they had to be closely listening not only to the other musicians but also to the machine. A monitor system was thus often essential. As they pointed out, this was important in order for them to be able to interact with the 'machine' in such a way as to make the whole performance sound 'real.'

The principle of interacting with the machine is a very important aspect of performance with all of the selected musicians. Rubén Arancibia, for example, places a great value on the ability to interact with a "very mechanic" sounding beat and making it sound 'real.' We both attended a concert by African star Yondo Sister in Montreal in which the drummer was using a drum machine to provide a simple complementary ostinato drum pattern. Rubén was very impressed not only by the way in which the drummer could weave in and out of the simple ostinato patterns to construct the grooves of a particular song, but also with the ways in which he could create impressive endings. Ramón Flores, for example, prefers to play drums in certain songs, not only because it provides certain visual dynamics, but also because he feels that his real time playing onstage brings out more of a 'live' sound. According to Ramón, his 'live' playing of percussion (as opposed to his playing keyboards) interacting with the pre-programmed drum section is sometimes preferable, particularly in up-tempo Latin songs. That is why, in some songs, Ramón will even play keyboards with one hand while playing drums with the other in order to achieve more of a 'live' effect in performance.

The enhancing (as opposed to disruptive) effects of automation clearly emphasize how social aspects of music are articulated through sound and rhythm. The musical strategies discussed above say much about how particular ways of knowing can be repositioned and subverted. Musicians are able, 'objectively and subjectively,' to interact with (or position themselves in relation to) particular technologies and the sounds emerging from them. My ethnographic examples illustrate how human subjectivity plays a central role as an interactive force in music as a social practice. This force is at the core of a musician's ability to attain social mobility and create social space. It is human subjectivity which is able to create space as it transforms sounds into music. Ultimately, those rhythmic 'discrepancies' and particular 'feels' that Latin American musicians are searching for

"have everything to do with Pleasure in the Public Domain: the presence of shared tradition and an ever deepening sense of the subtle ways in which wrights and rites, skills and events, crafts and culture, are connected in public space and time. If the microtiming is not right... If the textural brightness and... relaxed dynamism of the paired trumpets are not there a lot of...dancers may sit tight (Charles Keil 1994:108).

Throughout this chapter, I have attempted to understand how the representation of time and space plays a crucial role in the construction of identity. I primarily attempted to demonstrate that human agency plays an active role in this process. I have tried to do this without attempting to dismiss the importance of forceful arguments in favour of and against capitalism and technological innovation. My intent in this chapter has been two-fold: first, to rethink the notion of commodification prevalent in Marxist studies of music and culture. As my ethnographic accounts revealed, the multifaceted identities and the agency of Latin American musicians clearly contradict those commodification theories which tend to absolutize and universalize the power of capital and technology. Second, I have also

attempted to deal with the complexity of Canadian urban contexts and the challenges that they present to Latin musicians. With regard to this issue, my intent has been to understand the ways by which musicians are able to attain a sense of place through music. For Latin musicians in highly diverse Canadian contexts, performance serves as a site of cultural, economic, and social interaction and exchange. The continuing understanding of these processes, I feel, is crucial towards the construction of a Canadian identity within the current global realities.

NOTES

¹So remarks music critic Eliot Tiegel (1995) in his review of Frank Sinatra's *Duets* album. Fiber optics and digital technologies have made it possible in the 1990s for Frank Sinatra to record a *Duets* album, not only before knowing who his partners would be beforehand, but also without having them come to the studio for a session. Sinatra's partners contributed their part over the phone from different locations around the world (1995:87). A more remarkable example of this sort of technological space-time compression was the 1995 regrouping, at least on record, of *The Beatles*, despite the absence of the late John Lennon who was assassinated in 1980. The remaining three Beatles recorded an album released in 1995 in which they added their parts to Lennon's self-accompanied (on piano) song-compositions taken from some of his private cassette tapes. The tapes had been recorded by Lennon with a simple portable cassette-player which he used as a writing tool. By digitally "massaging" (Rule 1996:46) the sound quality and tempos of Lennon's recordings in order to match the production qualities of the rest of the group's recorded contributions, sound engineers could piece together performances of otherwise non-existent Beatles' music. For a more detailed account of some of the technical procedures implemented, see Greg Rule's (1996) interview with the two sound engineers involved in this production.

²David Harvey warns us not to think of *time-space compression* in relative terms "to any preceding state of affairs" (1989:240). He argues that specific epistemological shifts affecting the organization and representation of spatial-temporal experiences brought particular societal changes which characterized the Enlightenment, modern and postmodern as drastically distinct

eras. See specially the section (pp. 198-323) in which Harvey devotes exclusive attention to the social history of the theoretical relationship between space and time from the Enlightenment to the postmodern era.

³Some of the most important recent critiques on the social construction of space are: David Harvey (1989), Edward Soja (1994, 1993), Michel de Certeau (1993), Michel Foucault (1993); Jean-François Lyotard (1993), and Peter Jackson (1989). Also important are two edited volumes offering a wide but comprehensive number of perspectives on these issues: John A. Agnew and James Duncan eds. (1989) and Roger Friedland and Deidre Boden eds (1994). Canadian author Jody Berland's critiques of musical constructions of space and its political implications (1992; 1991; 1990a; 1990b; 1988) offer comprehensive and deep understanding of the issues at hand. Her works are directly related to the technological spatial mediations of popular music within the Canadian communications context. Two studies which present more specific resonance to the topic of this thesis are Annemarie Gallagher's (1995) and Peter Jackson (1992) studies dealing with the social-spatial construction of Toronto's yearly West Indian Carnival, Caribana.

⁴Berland (1992:39) points out the contribution of Canadian communications theorists such as Harold Innis (1950) and Marshal McLuhan (1964) whose works, since the 1950s, have continued to be at the helm of research dealing with the spatio-temporal dimensions of culture. It is only recently, according to Berland, that Anglo-American and European scholars are paying attention to such issues.

⁵David Harvey draws from Walter Pater's argument that "all art aspires to the condition of music" to make a point about the exclusive privilege given to the temporal aspects of music as the ideal representation of movement (1990:207).

⁶For example, Henri Lefebvre, one of the earlier European cultural critics preoccupied with space and its social construction (1979) stated: "Spatial practice defines its space, it poses and presupposes it in a dialectical interaction. Social space has thus always been a social product, but it was not recognized" (quoted by Berland 1988:343).

⁷*Politics of place* is an expression I am borrowing from David Harvey (1990:234).

⁸One such argument is articulated in Berland's account of the process through which the nineteenth century music hall is gradually rendered economically and culturally obsolete by 'popular cultural technologies.' Berland arguments echo those of David Harvey, (1978:101-31). For more details on Berland's argument and this specific example, see note 11 in this chapter.

⁹ The term *piano bar* (not to be confused with the more standard term referring to single performer playing an acoustic piano bar at hotel lounges for example) is sometimes used in Quebec to refer to type of venues similar to those described here. As Langley confirms, the piano bar tradition, which means a small dance club with live music, has a long history in the province of Quebec.

¹⁰For Latin musicians in Ottawa in particular this is not new. The Ottawa-Hull Federation of Musicians has had a long history of hostility towards Latin musicians since the 1970s. For many years, the Ottawa-Hull Federation of Musicians refused to grant memberships to Latin musicians in the city on the grounds that they were taking away jobs from "local" musicians. The union's strategy excluded Latin musicians from competing for some of Ottawa's better-paid engagements then. That was one of the prime reasons why Marco and his band had opted to move to Toronto in the mid-1970s.

¹¹The thesis that the popular music industry apparatus is able to locate, shape and situate audience consumption habits is one that often deeply resonates with the concerns of local live performers in Ottawa and Montreal (personal recollection). At the core of this concern is the idea that through technology the popular music industry has been able to mobilize social spaces as sites of consumption. The underlying assumption is that the cultural industries accommodate and influence social practices which at particular moment prove to be more profitable; they do this by time disrupting those social practices which are no longer profitable. For many local musicians, partially-automated live performance only confirms an already long-held apprehension: the increasing democratization of music technology and the subsequent obsolescence of live performance as a socially significant and profitable local practice. See, for example, how Jody Berland (1992:41-42) describes the process through which the rise and subsequent obsolescence of the music hall in the nineteenth century emerged as the prototype "industrial practice" of the commodification of popular entertainment. As the popular entertainment industry diversified along musical tastes and social lines, new, smaller and more-

specialized venues emerged. The larger and socially all-encompassing music hall and its performers then became obsolete.

¹²In her critical analysis of local newspaper coverage of Caribana, Annemarie Gallagher reveals the power relations which produce both the societal and material delineation of “barriers” perpetuating the subordinate and exoticized position of Caribbean culture in multicultural Toronto. The newly implemented police barricades separating performers and ‘mas’ bands from the wider public and the transporting of Caribana’s famous parade to the outskirts of Toronto’s main core as of 1993 are taken by Gallagher to be more than mere metaphorical representations of dominance and exclusion. The author argues instead that spatial barriers are integral to an ongoing discourse of (mis)representation, effectively perpetuating social inequality. Gallagher’s discussion resonates with emerging epistemological concerns in social sciences dealing with spatial dimensions of social practices and their role in processes of identity. On the same topic, and dealing with similar issues, see also Peter Jackson (1992).

¹³*Felicidad* was playing Wednesday at the Roof Garden, on Friday and Saturday at Cafe Dello Sport, and on Sunday, at Seagull’s, the latter located at the Byward Market.

¹⁴Such was the case, for example, with *Felicidad*’s engagement at the Mexican Independence celebrations of September 15th, hosted by the Mexican Embassy in Ottawa.

¹⁵David Harvey characterizes the “shrinking” of the world into ‘a global village’ of telecommunications and rapid transport as the ‘annihilation of space through time’ (1990:240-1).

¹⁶Raymond William, Jody Berland, and Paul Theberge, for example, have forcefully argued technology’s propensity to mobilize social spaces as sites of cultural consumption/production in late capitalist societies. More specifically, the three authors discussed the technological infiltration of private spaces by television (Williams 1975), radio (Berland 1992), and MIDI and the ‘home recording studio’ (Theberge 1993:294).

¹⁷As Doreen Massey has argued, a concept of place must be understood as a site “in which spatially extensive fields of economic and political power are mediated through historically defined conjunctures of social interaction specific to localities” (Agnew 1989:9).

¹⁸Musicians usually play one to three nights weekly at the same venue. In some cases, they may play at up to three different venues a week. In Ottawa, musicians play from about 9:00 p.m. to 1:30 a.m., whereas in Montreal, the evening begins at around 10:00 p.m. and ends at about 3:00 a.m.

¹⁹Some of these labels are often interchanged, for example *dance* and *techno*; *Latin rap*, and *merenrap*, which are outgrowths of the African-American and Jamaican-influenced *hip hop* *musics* sometimes also listed under the *reggae* category. Some of the Latin recording artists playing such types of music are *Proyecto Uno*, *El General*, and *Tito Puente Jr.* There are also

some mainstream stars who are recording versions of their hits in Spanish, as is the case with the *dance* album "*Yo Te Voy A Amar*" (in English titled, "*I'll Make Love To You*") by the American group *Boyz II Men*.

²⁰I owe much of the formulation of this perspective to Richard D. Hecht's (1994) study of the complex and intricate politics involved in the construction and management of sacred time and space in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem, historically one of the most important and most contested of the world's multi-faith Holy Places.

²¹Drum pads are a type of sound controller used exclusively to play drum sounds.

²²Indeed, digital technologies and their particular limitations have brought those issues to the fore amongst musicians. Musicians have been forced to be analytical in ways which are influenced by and particular to these technologies--- which is not to say that musicians were not analytical before-- about the issues of sound production in performance. Charles Keil offers a perspective on what he terms the 'participatory discrepancies' of musical performance. Keil regards 'discrepancies' in pitch, timbre and rhythm as culturally-specific sonic aspects of performance. His perspective is important in that he points to aspects of sound in music which have remained largely ignored in both musicology and ethnomusicology. However, I hold reservations regarding his particular view that particular 'discrepancies' structurally correspond to particular culturally-specific 'grooves.' This particular stance does not allow room for change and the role that human agency plays in the construction of musical identity as an ongoing process. See Keil (1995).

CONCLUSION

Through this ethnography, I have attempted to understand the roles Latin American music and musicians play in the construction of collective and individual identities in the Canadian Latin American diaspora. While partially-automated live performance is an optimum example of the novel representational practices that have contributed to current debates on notions of cultural identity and authenticity, it has also presented unique perspectives on those issues. It has highlighted specific dilemmas, obstacles and opportunities facing Latin Americans as they contribute to the (re)forging of a Canadian identity in the late twentieth-century.

My intent in this thesis has been to locate Latin American musicians and their music as active contributors to the polyphonic exchange and interaction that characterizes the global/local cultural economic nexus at the end of this century. This perspective has become increasingly necessary as the current global condition forces us to locate cultures, and the individuals who create them, in ways that go beyond traditional geo-political stipulations. It is because of current socio-economic and political conditions that the global/local nexus has appeared in my study as a dynamic and shifting site of mediation where cultural and economic exchange, struggle and interaction take place. At a general level, I examined those mediations most closely associated with the phenomenon of cultural-economic globalization, namely, the driving force of technology, the crisis of local identities and the ensuing debates over the nation-state paradigm. At a more specific level, and without underestimating the coalescent and accumulative powers of capitalism, I have examined the active roles of musical micro-

economies and human agency as they actively participate in the construction of the global/local nexus as a dynamic site of cultural-economic interaction. In short, this ethnographic study has been aimed at opening new grounds of inquiry that may address the various active and significant roles human agency plays in the creation of local and global musical economies.

In the first chapter, I have established crucial links between major economic and political global developments and the emergence of partially-automated live performance as part of local music practices amongst Latin American musicians in Ottawa and Montreal. These developments have included: drastic global geopolitical reconfiguration and economic decline; the emergence of Latin American communities in Canada as part of subsequent major migratory movements beginning in the late 1970s; and the emergence of MIDI as part of the digital revolution and the economic and cultural realities of the 1990s.

This chapter represented a fundamental first step toward understanding partially-automated live performance beyond the confines of economic determinism. To this end, I examined how the local musical practices of Latin American musicians were articulated in relation to a wider global cultural economy. As Appadurai maintains, in late twentieth-century capitalism, the global/local nexus cannot be understood as a fixed hegemonic centre/periphery arrangement (1990:296). If partially-automated live performance has become an issue of identity amongst Latin American musicians in Ottawa and Montreal, it has become so in direct reaction to forces of technological homogenization and co-option. As Appadurai (1990) has argued, a globalized cultural economy hardly means the inexorable homogenization and co-option of local economies and cultures. Instead, globalization processes have paradoxically

exacerbated issues of local identity and thus radically heightened the importance of micro-economies (ibid.:307).

In the second chapter, I examined how a globalized cultural economy has seriously affected local interests and identities. I showed how, in Canada, this effect has been manifested in a serious national identity crisis. Here, I have tried to describe how material and cultural issues are indelibly linked in the current politics of identity. To do this, I demonstrated how partially-automated live performance constitutes an integral part of the political, cultural and social positioning of Latin American Canadian musicians in the current Canadian politics of identity. In the same vein, I showed how music plays a crucial role in the articulation of a Latin American collective identity in this process. Latin music has historically played a paramount role in consolidating collective political power across racially, ethnically, socially, and nationally diverse Latin communities in diaspora. However, the consolidation of collective will and identity has often been problematic due precisely to such diversity. As I illustrated, notions of musical competence and authenticity play paramount roles in the mediation, negotiation, and continuing (re)definition of notions of race, ethnicity, class, gender and nationality. Partially-automated live performance, I have argued, emphasizes the specific ways in which Latin music, for Latin American musicians in Ottawa and Montreal, has been a site for negotiation, struggle and consolidation of political power.

Examining such processes has thus allowed me first, to recognize the heterogeneity of Latin American communities; second, to acknowledge the complex processes of cross-cultural exchange and interaction in which individual musicians are involved in Canada's multicultural context; and third, to examine the multifarious nature of individual identity. In short, this

chapter challenged traditional notions of community and collective identities as self-contained and homogeneous social units. It did this without framing hybridity as a random fortuitous process which renders music ahistorical. Instead, processes of hybridization, which include the appropriation of technology, were here historically related to the power struggles and politics of representation which have contributed to their institutionalization in Canada.

Having established the ideological nature of processes of identity in the first two chapters, chapter three examined how ideological assumptions inform, and are informed, by historically grounded notions of musical competence and creativity. My ethnographic account in this chapter looked at how established notions of competence and creativity have, through technological innovation, been redefined and challenged in the digital era. My intention here was to show how notions of musical authenticity, competence, creativity, and aesthetic value systems intersect with the material, political and cultural interests and aspirations of individual musicians. In the same vein, I attempted to situate discourses of musical authenticity amongst Latin American musicians within the broader context of the global musical economy. By examining how technology has affected notions of competence and creativity in mainstream musical economies, I tried to demonstrate how global musical discourses and representational practices are appropriated and "localized" (Appadurai 1990:307) by Latin American musicians. As implied by Simon Frith, local musical practices do not emerge in a vacuum but are constructed in close relation to wider global musical discourses (1992:175). In this connection, my ethnographic account served to introduce the dilemmas, debates and obstacles encountered by Latin American musicians involved in partially-automated live performance

and to highlight some of the issues at stake in the politics of representation in the Canadian context.

In my last chapter, I showed how new ways of producing music have helped to redefine power structures in musical economies at large. In the process, I have also showed how these new ways of creating music have had a fundamental bearing upon the geographical positioning and the potential for creating social space of musical performance. My ethnographic account aimed at illustrating how partially-automated live performance, in the local music scenes in Ottawa and Montreal, has played an important role in the abilities of musicians to assert control over space and time. By so doing, I aimed to develop a better understanding of how Latin American musicians are able, through music, to participate in a politics of place in the culturally diverse and dynamic Canadian context.

As a whole, this thesis has been an attempt to examine the roles of technology in ways which go beyond the traditional theoretical impasse, where, on the one hand, Marxist theorists see technology mainly as a threat to cultural distinctiveness and as an instrument of cultural co-option and spatial colonization. On the other hand, it has also been an attempt to challenge postmodern theorists who deem technology as the inexorable democratization of cultural production. What I have tried to show instead is that while technology has contributed to the redefinition of notions of cultural identity, the (re)positioning Latin American musicians socially and geographically at the margins of mainstream musical economies, technology has also been a part of an appropriation processes through which musicians have adapted to a rapidly changing socio-economic climate. To do so, I illustrated how, through technology, musicians have created and re-defined their collective and individual identities by helping to

consolidate various social groups into viable political and economic forces with the potential of creating alternative social spaces in an era of social conflict and economic decline. Live performance for Latin American musicians has been seen here as a site where a politics of place involves the control of time and space with other participants including audiences, deejays, and club owners. In this light, performance has thus been presented as a site of social interaction whereby space is shaped and assigned significance in reference to a wider musical world. As I have showed, place can also only be significant in relation to the positioning of other social spaces, that is, the constant rearticulation of the centre/periphery arrangement is never fixed but always shifts as it is constantly subject to a politics of place.

Music has historically played a fundamental role in the construction of collective identities for Latin American musicians in diaspora. It is my hope that, throughout this thesis, I have shown some of the complexities of this process. Understanding the complex role music plays in the lives of communities and individuals represents, in my view, a significant step towards understanding and recognizing the value of cultural exchange and interaction as part of the construction of identities.

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