

**CULTURAL COUNTERPOINTS:  
Examining the Musical Interactions between the U.S. and Latin America**



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**“Music schools and musical activity in 17th Century New Mexico Missions”**

**Abstract:**

Before borders were established between Mexico and the US as we know it today, a great section of the latter was previously part of New Spain. This paper will present a part of musical history that to this day remains dimly recognized. By taking Franciscan documents from the 17<sup>th</sup> Century, I will demonstrate that by 1630 there proved to be large amounts of musical activity, including orchestras, performed by natives from *La Provincia de la Nuevo Méjico*—what today is New Mexico. They played musical instruments including chirimías, bajones, trumpets, and organs, and sang Gregorian and polyphonic chants, following the same pattern and structure of all other missions in New Spain. Among other activities, the missions assumed the role of teaching both how to read and write music. I will even say that the craft of musical instrument making also took place at the missions of *La Provincia de la Nuevo Méjico*. The musical activity that transpired in these missions during the 17<sup>th</sup> century will perhaps always retain an air of mystery, but enough documentation exists to offer a window into the past. All this activity occurred more than one hundred years before the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (1848) in which Mexico ceded its lands to the US Government. New Mexico became then a US Territory but was not a member of the Union until 1912. This music schools from *La Provincia de la Nuevo Méjico* were the first music schools of what today is the United States.

**How to Cite this Paper:**

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**Editorial Disclaimer:**

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